



## Sept. 21, 2021 Podcast Transcript

[Intro music playing]

**Announcer:** Welcome to HII Talking Points. A Huntington Ingalls Industries podcast. Twice a quarter, we'll sit down with HII leaders to discuss topics of interest in our company and industry.

**Phoebe Richards:** Hi all, and welcome to another episode of HII talking points. I'm your host, Phoebe Richards. And with me today is Chad Boudreaux, HII chief legal officer. Chad, thanks for joining me.

**Chad Boudreaux:** My pleasure. Thanks for having me.

**Phoebe Richards:** So you assumed the role of chief legal officer in March 2020, right around the same time we as a company and as a nation began responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. So I can only imagine how busy you've been in the last year and a half or so. I'd love to get your perspective on HII's legal department and how you serve the company and also how this work has changed because of COVID-19. So with that, let's get started. Tell us briefly about your background and how you got to where you are today.

**Chad Boudreaux:** Yeah, so as we approach the 20th anniversary of September 11, 2001, that was probably a key marker for me in terms of my career, and probably why I'm here when you get down to it. So I was practicing law in Austin, Texas since 1998. I was in a firm. I had aspirations to become a partner at a very early age and had been trying a lot of cases and was on that track. And September 10, 2001, the night before the attacks, I got a call from the Department of Justice in Washington, DC offering me the job to move up there. So I accepted that job, had driven into work the next morning, reciting how I was going to give my go away speech to the senior partner of the firm, if you will. And I saw the attacks happen on television.

**Chad Boudreaux:** And I didn't know at that time what was going to happen with my career, but they called me and said, we need you earlier rather than later. So I moved up to DC and started a job with the Department of Justice, their main justice building. And from that point on my career took a different trajectory and I did a lot of terrorist related work, worked on the September 11 Victim Compensation Fund, and just moved up in that organization. And then moved on to the Department of Homeland Security, where I was the deputy chief of staff for secretary (Michael) Chertoff. So, that was not a legal role, it was a chief of staff role.

**Chad Boudreaux:** And it was during that time period where I really learned how to solve some problems that lawyers normally don't have to confront. So a lot of people like to politicize the border situation and immigration and I get it. But I was largely a part of how to solve, from a business process standpoint, how would you solve the border problem? However you want to characterize that. And so I spent a lot

of time doing that, a lot of time on the ground. And during that process, learned some new traits and experiences in addition to doing a lot of terrorism related work.

**Chad Boudreaux:** So fast forward to a few years after that, when Northrop (Grumman) spun off Huntington Ingalls. They were looking for a head of litigation and the general counsel at the time, Bruce Hawthorne, also had in mind, I need someone else to help with investigations and compliance. And I think that suite of experiences that I had from that past life was something that was intriguing to him. And the rest is history.

**Phoebe Richards:** With your unique background and in your role now, what is your philosophy or approach to legal counsel for a Fortune 400 company?

**Chad Boudreaux:** Yeah. So a little bit of breaking news with the acquisition of Alion. We're now going to be a Fortune 300 company, so thinking big. Yeah. So my philosophy really hasn't changed. It's just from a gut instinct standpoint, I want to shout out, Hey, I want to be a national champion. I want to be a world champion law department. I want to solve huge problems for the company. I want the company business to think of the law department as a solutions provider like no other, where they can go for legal or even business issues and interact with a team of really elite lawyers.

**Chad Boudreaux:** I'll take myself out of that for now, but elite lawyers who can approach any problem and be the best at solving that problem. And we've assembled a team over 10 years, but even before that, those of us who came after the spin inherited a great legal department as well. And I think it's only gotten better over time, but, but we've, I think, proven over time that we can be a solutions provider.

**Phoebe Richards:** Speaking of your team and solving big problems, I would imagine your team has been exceptionally busy since March 2020 tracking the various legal questions and quandaries associated with COVID-19. Can you share a little of what you've seen from a legal perspective?

**Chad Boudreaux:** Yeah. So my first day on this job, some 18 months ago, was a crisis management meeting where we were talking about COVID and what we were going to do. And it was a pretty interesting situation, but there was a few observations that I had from that. First of all, Mike Petters, from the very beginning said we are going in this particular direction. And there was no questions about it, which makes it very easy if you're going to ... and quite frankly, it's not that easy to make that decision, but it's easy once that decision is made to know what you need to do.

**Chad Boudreaux:** And so for me, I looked at it and I said, well, if we had had a leader that had hemmed and hawed on that, it would've been very difficult to provide the best legal advice or business advice in that situation. But once he made that decision, everything went in motion. And we often at this company say we do things better than other people. And a lot of times we do. Sometimes, even in my organization, we probably say that, but we could get better. I really have to say that the division presidents and those supporting them did a masterful job with how they handle the COVID situation, knowing that we were business essential. We were mission critical. We had to go out and just work when many people had to stay at home or wanting to stay at home.

**Chad Boudreaux:** And so because of that, we've put ourselves in a good position. From a legal standpoint, there are a variety of complex challenges, and we will be living with this for years to come and there are several different variations of legal problems and issues. But I really have to hand it to my colleagues, to the leadership of this company and to everybody working down on the deck plate that you've put us in a situation where we are best situated to do what we need to do.

**Phoebe Richards:** Right. You mentioned being mission critical. Did you find from a legal perspective that presented some unique challenges in our industry that other industries maybe didn't have?

**Chad Boudreaux:** Yes. And again, as easy as it is to have that clarity of mission to where you can go out and do it, it still raises some unique challenges. So even to this day, Phoebe, I will be on a call with my colleagues from other defense contractors, many of whom are larger than we are. And the topic they want to talk about is return to work. And so I'm sitting there thinking return to work? I've been to work. And so those issues, they're moot for us for to a large extent. And so I'm happy to have those conversations. I think we're in a situation now where having come through them earlier than many others, we actually can help steer them in different directions. We've had a lot of lessons learned throughout this.

**Chad Boudreaux:** But yeah, when you think about the legal landscape as it relates to ... and the complexities that we've had as we've dealt with this crisis, it's really, every week is a different snapshot. We have different CDC guidelines. We have different things that we need to do with respect to the workforce and how we protect them. But it's been great because when you have a big challenge like this, a lot of times, the legal aspect is important. And it is here too, but the bottom line is, is that we've been in a position where I've provided legal advice along with my team, but the business has to do with the business has to do. And they're making decisions that are in the best interest of the safety of our employees first and foremost. And then in the best interest of our company, as it comes out of that. And really, the customer and the national security as well. So I've been very blessed to be a part of that operation.

**Phoebe Richards:** Very good. Switching gears a little bit, what area of law or aspect of your job excites you the most?

**Chad Boudreaux:** It's really the leadership piece that at this point in my career excites me the most. I mean, I started off as a litigator. I was the kid really who would bring his ... I'd wear my suit on Friday when it was casual day, because I knew that there weren't going to be many people that could go to the courthouse if they weren't dressed in a suit. And so I would get a lot of things handed to me at an early age where I would go to court, because I was the only one wearing a suit.

**Phoebe Richards:** Right.

**Chad Boudreaux:** That was my mindset. And so I'm more comfortable with the litigation, investigation, compliance law enforcement. That was my world. And then after a while, you change as your career evolves. But now I just see I have close to 50 people that are in my department and they are amazing at what they do. And I can tell them, Hey, I want to go in this direction, and I can just let them go and be who they are. And they come back with these amazing results and solutions and ideas. And so every day

it's dealing with people and just the talent that we have, not only in the law department, but just in our company as well. And so I liked that aspect of it. Again, I'll go back to ... I love solving big problems and having really people that are ... surrounded by smarter people than I am, who just have different ways of thinking about things that solve those problems. And so that's the really cool part of the job.

**Phoebe Richards:** Very good. And then a final question. For someone considering a career in corporate law, what advice would you give them besides wearing a suit on Fridays maybe? And what skills would they need to succeed?

**Chad Boudreaux:** Yeah, so my first piece of advice would say, if you want to be a part of corporate law, you really need to understand that when you get out of law school, it's not really about corporate law or another kind of law. Its like, are you going to be a litigator, or are you going to be a contracts professional? And there may be some other things to it as well, but those two general categories of where they are. The people who do best in corporate law probably never wanted to be corporate lawyers, right? Meaning working for a company. You, I would say, go out and be really good at some discrete areas of law practice, be a good litigator, be a good contracts person, be a good tax person. Get some really good experience that other people may not be able to have. And that means taking risk.

**Chad Boudreaux:** I mean, we can talk a lot about the people in my law department, but when you go down and you survey each one of them, almost to a person, they have taken risks in their careers that have enabled them to get in positions where they can work for us, a company like ours, a publicly traded Fortune 500 company that's again, doing things that are really cool. And this is a laboratory for those who are very curious and, again, who feel like the company is bigger than themselves to succeed. And so I would think about it that way. It's not always easy to think about it in those ways, but in retrospect, the people that I have on my team that I see in other healthy law departments are those that got really good at something else besides working for a company.

**Phoebe Richards:** Great, understood. All right. Great insight, Chad. Thank you. And thanks for sharing your thoughts and perspective today.

**Chad Boudreaux:** You bet. Thanks for having me.

[Music]

**Announcer:** Thanks for listening to HII Talking Points. This podcast was produced by Huntington Ingalls Industries corporate communications team. We welcome your feedback and ideas for future podcasts at [www.huntingtoningalls.com/podcast](http://www.huntingtoningalls.com/podcast).