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COVER STORY

Former National Security Advisor joins Signature Resolution

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Former national security advisor Robert C. O'Brien has joined Signature Resolution's panel of neutrals, following a three-year tenure in Washington, D.C.

O'Brien will also serve as of counsel at a boutique firm he founded now known as Larson LLP and have a separate consulting practice that will focus on advising companies on geopolitical matters.

The national security post "was an opportunity to serve the American people of a lifetime," O'Brien said in an interview last week. "But I'm really looking forward to getting back home to Southern California to my friends and family and getting back into the private sector, which is a very dynamic, fast moving and a much less bureaucratic way of working than in the federal government."

At Signature, O'Brien will draw on experience gained from his involvement in mediating a number of international disputes, including the Abraham Accords between Israel and several Arab states and normalizing economic relations between Serbia and Kosovo, as well as past experience as a litigator, mediator and arbitrator.

"When it comes to working domestically and working on cases between private parties, if we can help broker and help show a path to peace between two nations that were literally at war with each other it shows me that there's a path in almost every case, to find a solution to a dispute that both parties can live with," O'Brien said.

He will handle complex disputes related to business and commercial contracts, class actions, employment, entertainment, securities and corporate governance.

Prior to his recent work in government, O'Brien practiced at what was then Larson O'Brien LLP, specializing in complex commercial litigation and arbitrations. He also served as a special master and discovery referee in both state and federal court litigation.

Before co-founding the boutique, he was California managing partner of Arent Fox LLP, where he presided over significant growth in Los Angeles and opened a San Francisco office.

O'Brien also held senior roles in federal government under previous administrations, including as co-chairman of the U.S. Department of State's public-private partnership for justice reform in Afghanistan and U.S. alternate representative to the 60th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

After stepping down as national security advisor in 2021 following the election of President Joe Biden, O'Brien was approached by retired Los Angeles County Judge Louis M. Meisinger, a former general counsel at the Walt Disney Co. and one of the founders of Signature, about the opportunity to join the firm.

"It was an opportunity I didn't want to pass up because he's put together just an incredible team of neutrals," O'Brien said.

"Ambassador O'Brien brings unprecedented credentials to this latest chapter in his esteemed professional career," Meisinger said in a statement. "A highly respected, nationally prominent business trial lawyer and the managing partner of

a major U.S. law firm, he has spent the last several years serving his country. ... Now he brings his considerable talent and skills to the private sector as a mediator and arbitrator. We are proud to welcome him to our distinguished panel of neutrals."

Signature Resolution Managing Member Dario Higuchi echoed those sentiments, adding, "His broad background makes him uniquely qualified to handle a wide variety of litigation matters."

"The ambassador's affiliation with our firm has opened opportunities to expand our practice to the East Coast, which we plan to pursue," Higuchi said.

O'Brien first entered the Trump administration in 2018 as a special presidential envoy for hostage affairs and was given the rank of ambassador a year later. He helped secure the release of Andrew Brunson, an American pastor who was imprisoned in Turkey, and Danny Burch, an oil worker held in civil-war-torn Yemen. He was also sent by President Trump to oversee the criminal proceedings of rap celebrity A\$AP Rocky, who was jailed in Sweden in 2019 on assault charges.

O'Brien called the experience rewarding and said the most difficult part of stepping away from government work was knowing there are hostages that have yet to be returned home.

"My heart is still breaking for those families, but there's a good team in the new administration that's working to try and bring them home," he said. "So I feel confident that those cases are being attended to." ■

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