

Christopher S. Hickey

Partner

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With extensive aerospace experience, aviation industry clients look to Christopher Hickey to represent their interests in a range of issues from accident-related product liability litigation to commercial and government contracting disputes. An accomplished trial and appellate lawyer with years of military service and an experienced private pilot, Chris has a unique perspective on how aerospace manufacturers can manage risk, achieve positive results in litigation, and, ultimately, grow their businesses.



Chris focuses his practice on complex product liability and commercial litigation matters. He has represented clients at both the trial and appellate levels in the United States and has successfully resolved matters brought against clients in Japan, Canada, China, Turkey, and Russia. Informed by his deep industry knowledge, Chris also advises clients on contractual and regulatory matters including government contracting (including the Other Transaction Authority, or OTA, contracts applied to innovative technologies), international treaties, and privacy law.

Chris speaks and writes extensively on emerging issues in international and aviation law and is recognized as an authority in the field of unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) regulation.

Chris is a lieutenant colonel in the California Air National Guard and has served as a legal advisor to U.S. Air Force aircraft accident investigations involving F-16 fighters and unmanned aircraft operations.

Chris is the Deputy Lead of the firm's Product Liability, Mass Torts & Environmental Practice Team.

EXPERIENCE

Representative Engagements

- Trial counsel for helicopter manufacturer in a wrongful death action in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California. Obtained defense verdict after a three-week jury trial.
- Defended landing gear manufacturer in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Washington against product liability and contract claims stemming from a Cessna Citation landing gear collapse. Successfully brought motion for summary judgement and argued appeal at the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeal. Established new law related to the General Aviation Revitalization Act (GARA).
- Successfully defended engine manufacturer in wrongful death action resulting from crash of Piper Malibu turboprop conversion.
- Obtained dismissal for helicopter manufacturer in action brought by Russian operator.
- Defended Japanese manufacturer in arbitration concerning series of component part issues and assisted client in renegotiating supplier contracts with business jet manufacturer.
- Mediated successful resolution to lawsuits filed in China, the United States, and Canada stemming from aircraft accident in Shanghai, China.
- Obtained dismissal for medical equipment manufacturer in six lawsuits brought in four separate states.

Education

University of San Diego School of Law, J.D., 1998

University of California, Los Angeles, B.A., Political Science, 1990

Bar Admissions

California

U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit

U.S. District Court for the Central District of California

U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of California

U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California

U.S. District Court for the Southern District of California

U.S. Air Force Court of Criminal Appeals

Professional Memberships

American Bar Association

Los Angeles County Bar Association

Lawyer-Pilots Bar Association

Aviation Insurance Association

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

"Preparing for Litigation: Lessons Learned & Current Trends," (co-speaker) Verticon, Houston, TX (March 12, 2025)

"AI Technology, and How It Is Transforming The Practice of Law," (co-speaker) ABA TIPS Aviation & Aerospace Law Conference, Arlington, VA (September 19, 2024)

"Visual Evidence in the Courtroom," (speaker) ABA Tort Trial & Insurance Practice Section (October 29, 2021)

"Lessons From Recent Aviation Product Jury Trials," (speaker) Aircraft Builders Council: 2018 Annual Conference (September 18, 2018)

"Unmanned Aircraft Laws, Regulations and Recent Litigation," (speaker) Santa Ynez Valley Bar Association (June 28, 2017)

"Parallel Investigations by Civil and Military Authorities in the U.S. and Abroad," (speaker) American Bar Association, 23rd Annual National Institute on Aviation Litigation (June 8, 2017)

"Recent Developments in Aviation Law," (speaker) Aircraft Builders Council: 2016 Annual Conference (September 19, 2016)

"A Step Closer to the Age of Drones: The FAA Issues Comprehensive Rules for Commercial UAS Operations," (author) Aircraft Builders Council Law Report (January 1, 2016)

"Game of Drones: Regulators, Lawmakers and the Courts Maneuver to Determine the Future of Unmanned Aircraft Operations," (speaker) Aircraft Builders Council: 2015 Annual Conference (September 21, 2015)

- “Congress Side-Steps the FAA: The Commercial UAS Modernization Act Aims to Regulate Drones Until the FAA Establishes Permanent Regulations,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council News (June 1, 2015)
- “Drones - The Future of the Sky,” (speaker) CREATE CONFERENCE - UCLA Anderson School of Management (May 8, 2015)
- “Global Use of Unmanned Aircraft - The Commercial Use Of UAS Is Not Years Away, Just An Ocean,” (speaker) Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University: 2015 Aviation Law and Insurance Symposium (January 30, 2015)
- “The Game of Drones: Commercial Unmanned Aircraft Operations Are Not Years Away – Just an Ocean,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council Law Report (January 1, 2015)
- “Sky's the Limit: Unmanned Aircraft Operations, Regulations and Risks,” (speaker) European Air Law and Insurance Associations (September 1, 2014)
- “Commercial UAS Flights are Legal in the US ... Well, Maybe,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council News (June 1, 2014)
- “The Future is Now ... The First Litigation Involving the Operation of a Civilian Drone is Currently Before an Administrative Law Judge,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council News (January 1, 2014)
- “GARA Update: Two New Cases Expand the Reach of GARA to Used Aircraft Parts and Overhaul Manuals,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council Law Report (January 1, 2013)
- “Emerging Trends in the Admissibility of Government Reports,” (speaker) Oregon Bar Association (October 5, 2012)
- “Rise of the Machines: The Growth of Unmanned Aircraft and an Overview of the Issues and Liability Concerns with Their Commercial Use,” (author) Aircraft Builders Council Law Report (January 1, 2012)

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Staff Judge Advocate (current rank: Lieutenant Colonel), California Air National Guard, 146th Airlift Wing (2004-present)