

Clifford D. May

Founder and President, Foundation for Defense of Democracies



Clifford D. May is the founder and President of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a nonpartisan policy institute focusing on national security created immediately following the 9/11/01 attacks on the United States. Under his leadership, FDD has become one of the nation's most highly regarded think tanks and a sought-after voice on a wide range of national security issues. He has helped assemble a staff and advisory board of the most compelling scholars and experts whose research, ideas and recommendations have shaped important policies and legislation on terrorism, nonproliferation, human rights, Islamism, democratization and related issues.

In August 2016, Mr. May was appointed by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), an independent, bipartisan U.S. federal government commission that makes policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State and Congress in order to advance the pivotal right of religious freedom around the world and integrate religious freedom into America's foreign policy.

Mr. May has had a long and distinguished career in international relations, journalism, communications and politics. A veteran news reporter, foreign correspondent and editor (at The New York Times and other publications), he has covered stories around the world, including datelines from Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Israel, the West Bank, Jordan, Turkey, Sudan, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Chad, Mexico, Northern Ireland, China and Russia.

A former syndicated columnist for Scripps Howard News Services, he is now the weekly "Foreign Desk" columnist of The Washington Times. He is a frequent guest on national and international television and radio news programs, providing analysis and participating in debates on national security issues.

His writing has also appeared in The Wall Street Journal, National Review, Commentary, USA Today, The Atlantic and many other publications. He is the co-editor of a book on the conflict in Afghanistan and Pakistan, as well as one on energy policy.

In 2006 he was appointed an advisor to the Iraq Study Group (Baker-Hamilton Commission) of the United States Institute of Peace, an independent nonpartisan national institution established and funded by Congress. He also received a two-year appointment (2007-2009) to the bipartisan Advisory Committee on Democracy Promotion, reporting to Secretary of State Condoleezza

Rice. In 2008, he was nominated by President George W. Bush to serve on the Broadcasting Board of Governors, the entity responsible for all US government and government sponsored, non-military, international broadcasting. In 2009, the U.S. Department of State awarded him a "U.S. Speaker and Specialist Grant" for a series of speaking engagements and meetings (with government and religious leaders, academics and journalists) in Pakistan.

He served as the Communications Director for the Republican National Committee during the historic 2000 cycle in which Republicans won the presidency, the Senate and the House for the first time in 48 years (as well as a majority of state legislatures and governors' mansions).

Mr. May holds master's degrees from both Columbia University's School of International Affairs and its School of Journalism. His undergraduate degree is from Sarah Lawrence College, and he holds a certificate in Russian language and literature from Leningrad State University, USSR. He is a member of the Washington Institute of Foreign Affairs. He is married and has two children.