

Patuxent River native serves aboard advanced U.S. Navy warship half a world away

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SASEBO, Japan – Airman Bradley Morgan, a native of Patuxent River, Maryland, wanted to serve in the military as his father and grandfather did before him. He thought it was his duty to serve. He joined the Navy also to travel and see the world.

Now, two years later and half a world away, Morgan serves aboard one of the Navy's most advanced amphibious ships at Fleet Activities Sasebo, patrolling one of the world's busiest maritime regions as part of U.S. 7th Fleet.

"It's great that I've been able to meet people from all over the country and all over the world, from different cultures and backgrounds," said Morgan.

Morgan, a 2016 graduate of Chopticon High School, is an aviation support equipment technician aboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Wasp in Sasebo, Japan.

"I'm in charge of over one thousand pieces of equipment that support all the aircraft on the ship during fight operations," said Morgan.

Morgan credits some success in the Navy to lessons learned in Patuxent River.

"My father and grandfather taught me that if you want anything in life you have to work hard for it, nothing is handed to you," said Morgan.

U.S. 7th Fleet spans more than 124 million square kilometers, stretching from the International Date Line to the India/Pakistan border; and from the Kuril Islands in the North to the Antarctic in the South. U.S. 7th Fleet's area of operations encompasses 36 maritime countries and 50 percent of the world's population with between 50-70 U.S. ships and submarines, 140 aircraft, and approximately 20,000 sailors.

"Being deployed here is awesome, just to experience other countries is an opportunity not a lot people get to do," said Morgan.

With more than 50 percent of the world's shipping tonnage and a third of the world's crude oil passing through the region, the United States has historic and enduring interests in this part of the world. The Navy's presence in Sasebo is part of that long-standing commitment.

"The Navy is forward-deployed to provide security and strengthen relationships in a free and open Indo-Pacific. It's not just the ships and aircraft that have shown up to prevent conflict and promote peace," said Vice Adm. Phil Sawyer, commander, U.S. 7th Fleet. "It is, and will continue to be our people who define the role our Navy plays around the world. People who've made a choice, and have the will and strength of character to make a difference."

Wasp, one of the Navy's most advanced amphibious ships, is designed to deliver Marines and their equipment where they are needed to support a variety of missions ranging from amphibious assaults to humanitarian relief efforts.

Sailors' jobs are highly varied aboard USS Wasp. More than 1,000 men and women make up the ship's crew, which keeps all parts of the ship running smoothly, from handling weapons to maintaining the engines. An additional 1,200 Marines can be embarked. USS Wasp is capable of transporting Marines and landing them where they are needed using helicopters, vertical takeoff and landing aircraft and other water-to-shore landing craft.

These ships support missions from sea to shore, special operations and other warfare missions. They also serve as secondary aviation platforms. Because of their inherent capabilities, these ships have been and will continue to be called upon to support humanitarian and other contingency missions on short notice, according to Navy officials.

Serving in the Navy means Morgan is part of a world that is taking on new importance in America's focus on rebuilding military readiness, strengthening alliances and reforming business practices in support of the National Defense Strategy.

A key element of the Navy the nation needs is tied to the fact that America is a maritime nation, and that the nation's prosperity is tied to the ability to operate freely on the world's oceans. More than 70 percent of the Earth's surface is covered by water; 80 percent of the world's population lives close to a coast; and 90 percent of all global trade by volume travels by sea.

"Our priorities center on people, capabilities and processes, and will be achieved by our focus on speed, value, results and partnerships," said Secretary of the Navy Richard V. Spencer. "Readiness, lethality and modernization are the requirements driving these priorities."

There are many ways for sailors to earn a distinction in their command, community, and career. Morgan is most proud of being selected for Blue Jacket of the Quarter from his department for the quality of work he has provided.

"I was selected for Blue Jacket of the Quarter which was my biggest accomplishment so far," said Morgan.

As a member of one of the U.S. Navy's most relied upon assets, Morgan and other sailors know they are part of a legacy that will last beyond their lifetimes, contributing to the Navy the nation needs.

"I feel like I'm a part of a greater cause," said Morgan. "It means that people back home can have freedoms to do what they want to do. It's a great honor to be able to serve for my country."

