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Okemos Native Serves Aboard Advanced U.S. Navy Warship Half A World Away

By Lt. Jake Joy, Navy Office of Community Outreach

SASEBO, Japan – Petty Officer 2nd Class Anthony Miller, a native of Okemos, Michigan, said he wanted a way to serve his country and help fight the scourge of terrorism while providing for his family. The U.S. Navy allowed him to do all three.

Now, seven years later and half a world away, Miller 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 a struggle, but it's one of the biggest growth experiences I've ever had in my life," he said, noting that his current tour is as a geographic bachelor, meaning he had to leave his family stateside. "It's hard being away from my family, but I've really grown into my leadership position here, and it's allowed me to really be there for others."

Miller, a 1998 graduate of Okemos High School, is a hospital corpsman aboard the forward-deployed amphibious assault ship USS Wasp in Sasebo, Japan.

"I handle X-rays and all radiological graphic imaging on the ship," he said. "I'm also responsible for hearing conservation, and serve as the medical department training petty officer."

Photo by Senior Chief Petty Officer Gary Ward

Miller credits some success in the Navy to lessons learned in Okemos.

"I learned persistence as a young competitive swimmer with USA Swim," he said. "I found that putting in the hours will ultimately produce results. I'm not one to leave work unaccomplished. I've developed a dogged determination to get through the tough times."

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.

"The Japanese culture has allowed me to explore new ways to learn humility and cross-culture understanding," Miller said. Because of his command's proximity to Nagasaki and Hiroshima, he said he's seen the impact of WWII on the country and came away "really impressed by the character of the Japanese people who were able to bounce back from the tragedies of that war."

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 Miller 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 distinction in their command, community, and career. Miller earned distinction by getting his American Registry of Radiologic Technologists certification within the first month of working at his very first command.

"It's one of my proudest accomplishments," he said. "It's something that makes me certified nationwide in my trade, and I did it without going to any civilian schools. I'm grateful to the Navy for that."

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

"One thing our country has done well throughout history is we have stepped up for causes greater than ourselves," he said. When you join the service, you learn more by traveling places and meeting people

than you will staying in your hometown. I encourage those with a sense of adventure to join the Navy, learn a trade and see the world."

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