China Lake employee fixes fleet issue while aboard USS Ronald Reagan

NAVAL AIR WARFARE CENTER WEAPONS DIVISION, CHINA LAKE, Calif. - Just four and a half years into her career at Naval Air Warfare Center Weapons Division, Alyssa Williams, an Engineer and Scientist Development Program employee at China Lake, recently traveled abroad to train and assist Navy Sailors with the operation of a NAWCWD-developed system during a trip aboard USS Ronald Reagan (CVN 76).

Through her role as a mathematician for the Mission Engineering and Analysis Department in support of one of the command's warfighter imperatives, Combat Identification and Targeting, Williams and a small group of NAWCWD employees traveled to Yokosuka, Japan to provide training to Sailors of Commander Task Force 70 and Destroyer Squadron (DESRON) 15 aboard Reagan.

“One of China Lake’s roles in support of Naval Air System Command is to provide our warfighters with equipment and tools of the latest technology that improves the fleet’s ability and readiness to support the national defense,” said Rich Zajicek, a mission systems engineer at NAWCWD who served as an experimentation lead during the trip. “The group’s
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task was to introduce a prototype software application, Surface Target Attack Monitor, which enables our Navy to transition from a reactive to a proactive force in surface warfare engagements.”

According to Williams, the STAM team formed out of the Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance, and Targeting group primarily in support of Common Geopositioning Services efforts on base. The team spent over a week aboard the ship familiarizing and training the Intelligence Watch teams on the benefits of it.

“We went out and trained operators, so they could implement it into their concept of operations going forward,” Williams said. “Ideally, it’ll be better for future weapons and longer ranges. The fleet has so many tools out there already, but our goal is to bring a lot of those tools together, help them see what will help them in the end game and train them on how the tools work aboard a carrier. The groups that we cycled through picked it up really well.”

During the trip, Williams noted that the Portable Geospatial Product Library, a NAWCWD-developed and -deployed tool used by Sailors in the mission planning phase, was not fully operating aboard Reagan.

“They have a storage unit full of imagery and we started putting web services on them, one of which aids in the intel portion of mission planning,” Williams said. “It’s one of the projects that I work on in support of the Joint Standoff Weapon Technical Program Office and it wasn’t fully functional onboard, so we kicked it back into gear. Once one of the information technologists there realized I worked on the tool, he had some questions for me. From there, it led to an additional training opportunity for the Sailors.”

Zajicek acknowledged the success and benefit of Williams’ actions.

“On her own initiative and in addition to the time needed to train CTF-70 and DESRON-15 Sailors on STAM,” he said, “Alyssa troubleshooted the hardware and returned the PGPL to its normal operating status. As a result of her initiative and extra work, the air wing’s ability to prepare for a strike mission and optimize the employment of the JSOW was greatly improved and her efforts directly contributed to a more ready force ‘at the tip of the spear.’”

Williams said she recognizes the value of getting the perspectives of the warfighters. As an ESDP employee, she realizes that not everyone is afforded these types of opportunities and encourages those who are to take full advantage.

“I certainly learned a lot that I didn’t know before,” she said. “I would do it again in a heartbeat because we get their direct feedback, good and bad. These types of opportunities are fantastic and I was definitely nervous going out there, but it was a good trip, overall. There are ESDP employees who look for opportunities to make trips like this, but not all the projects have the chance to go. If you ever do have the opportunity, take it.”
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