

Ashland Completes Forward Deployment to Sasebo



The amphibious dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) departs Commander, Fleet Activities Sasebo, Japan (CFAS) March 22, 2023. Ashland's new homeport will be San Diego after serving as a forward-deployed ship in U.S. 7th Fleet since August 2013. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Jeremy Graham)

[Release from Expeditionary Strike Group 7 Public Affairs](#)

From By Lt. Cmdr. Andrew Degarmo, Expeditionary Strike Group 7 Public Affairs Officer

SASEBO, Japan – The dock landing ship USS Ashland (LSD 48) departed Sasebo March 22, 2023 for its new homeport of San Diego, California.

This will be a permanent change of station for the crew and family members.

“I can't thank the wonderful city of Sasebo enough for all their warm hospitality,” said Cmdr. Dirk Sonnenberg, the commanding officer of Ashland. “I've done multiple tours in Japan, but Sasebo will always be special to me as the warmest and most welcoming city to be hosted at. The experience will never be forgotten by the Sailors who served here. It has been an extreme privilege for Ashland to have served the U.S./Japan Alliance for nearly 10 years from Sasebo.”

Ashland arrived at Sasebo in August of 2013 and conducted operations under Expeditionary Strike Group 7.

The ship participated in numerous exercises and operations, to include Iron Fist, Balikatan, and Cooperation Afloat Readiness

and Training (CARAT) series events. Additionally, the crew conducted humanitarian assistance and disaster response operations in Saipan and Tinian in 2015 and 2018.

Ashland's operations included first-in-class and proof of concept tasking to increase the interoperability of the U.S. Navy with Allies and partners in the region.

"Coming from Shelbyville, Kentucky, it was amazing to come half-way around the world to experience Sasebo and everything the Western Pacific has to offer," said Hull Maintenance Technician 3rd Class Stephen Ruddy. "Everyone in Sasebo was so helpful and friendly. I'll miss the camaraderie of being stationed in such a great town."

Maintaining a forward-deployed naval force capability with the most advanced ships supports the United States' commitment to the defense of Japan and the security and stability of the Indo-Pacific region.

Ashland's homeport change complies with the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which mandates that U.S. Navy ships forward deployed to Japan not exceed 10 years. The ship expects to arrive in San Diego in mid-Spring, following her Trans-Pacific voyage.