

Q&A with Captain Brian P. Hogan

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE FIRST COMMANDING OFFICER OF THE *USS DELAWARE*

BY JOHN RILEY

» **John Riley:** Please tell us a little bit about your background and why you focused your naval career on submarines?

Brian Hogan: I'm a third-generation naval officer, and I'm proud to continue my family's service. My grandfather flew airships during World War II and my dad flew P-3s during the Cold War. I grew-up planning to join the navy, and I entered the United States Naval Academy after high school expecting to become a naval aviator like my dad and my grandfather.

Fortunately, all midshipmen at the Naval Academy are required to spend several weeks each summer serving in the fleet on what they call "summer cruises." These cruises are opportunities to spend time with each of the warfare communities in the navy and to learn about them: surface ships, marines, aviation squadrons, and submarines. These summer cruises taught me that I did not actually like flying airplanes nearly as much as I thought I would. Instead, I learned that I was attracted to the submarine community.

I graduated from the Naval Academy in 1998, and over the last 22 years I'm privileged to have served on six submarines and with over 1000 submarine Sailors. I have enjoyed and personally benefited from the opportunity to work alongside these highly capable Sailors, and I hope I have been able to add some value to their lives as well.

JR: When did you learn you would be the first commander of the *USS Delaware*?



BH: I received orders to the Delaware in June 2015. I began the Commanding Officer training pipeline that same month and reported for duty in February 2016.

JR: What was the most challenging aspect of preparing to go to sea for the first time?

BH: Taking a submarine to sea is always challenging, whether it's the first time or the hundredth time. A submarine, on its own, does not want to go to sea. It just wants to sit at the pier, and when you do take it to sea it is usually not very cooperative. The only thing that really keeps a submarine in line is the Sailors, who exert a massive amount of energy into it and work together to bend the submarine to their common will. Getting a submarine to sea, and keeping it at sea, requires a great deal of collective willpower on the part of the crew.

It is extremely rewarding to do this well - it is rewarding to see a submarine respond to the crew's energy and willpower, and for the crew to successfully operate in an environment where human beings are not supposed to be able to survive. The feeling of accomplishment that accompanies this is what makes a lot of submariners keep going to sea together.

JR: How long did you command the submarine and what were your special responsibilities during your tour of duty?

BH: Commander Matthew Horton relieved me as Commanding Officer in November 2019, so my tour was 45 months long - almost four years.

The first Commanding Officer of a new submarine has the unique responsibility to establish the initial command culture on their ship - the collective attitude, behaviors, and overall approach toward submarining. Sailors, like all human beings, learn most of what they know through osmosis - they learn by simply being part of a group and conforming their behavior and attitudes to what they observe around them.

Because of this, the culture of a command transcends any single individual - it drives the positive or negative behavior of every Sailor onboard, and it remains largely intact well after those who originally established that culture have left the command.

JR: How does the "Virginia class nuclear attack submarine" differ from other submarines in the fleet?

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BH: The Virginia-class submarine is the most technologically-advanced submarine in the world. The open source literature will tell you that the Virginia-class incorporates the latest in stealth, intelligence gathering and weapons system technology.

From a personal perspective, all of my previous submarine tours were on Los Angeles-class attack submarines and Ohio-class ballistic missile submarines. My recent tour on Delaware was the first time I had ever served on a Virginia-class submarine, and overall, I was extremely impressed.

JR: Tell us a little about your experience becoming familiar with Delaware and state leaders?

BH: Our first experience with anyone from Delaware was our keel laying ceremony in April 2016, shortly after our first group of Sailors reported for duty. The keel laying is the first of four traditional milestones in the life of a ship (along with christening, commissioning, and decommissioning) and it ceremonially marks the beginning of the new construction process. Dr. Jill Biden, who is Delaware's Sponsor, and United States Senator Tom Carper attended the keel laying ceremony and basically introduced us to Delaware - through their speeches and their personal interactions with our crew. Dr. Biden (along with her grandson, Hunter) and Senator Carper stayed at the event long after it was finished and talked to every single one of our Sailors and their families.

We were very appreciative of the time that they invested in our crew, and they clearly indicated that it was important to build a positive connection between our Sailors and the State of Delaware. In the months following the keel laying our Sailors visited Dover Downs for a



Dover 400 NASCAR race, the University of Delaware for a football game, the Elizabeth Murphy School in Dover, the Dogfish Head Brewery in Milton, the Kalmar Nyckel museum in Wilmington, the Delaware State Archives in Dover, and the Delaware State Capital where our crew was specifically recognized by Delaware House Concurrent Resolution #16 of the 150th General Assembly.

During these visits we were very privileged to meet state leaders, leaders in business and education, and private citizens. Every one of our interactions reinforced our experience from keel laying - that it was clearly very important to everyone in the State of Delaware that our Sailors feel connected to their namesake, and proud of their service on a vessel named after the First State. As someone who is not from Delaware, I can tell you that my experiences over the past few years have made me wish that I was. Our Sailors have certainly benefited

from our positive relationship, and on behalf of our future Sailors, I certainly hope it continues for the life of the submarine.

Captain Brian P. Hogan is a native of Fairfax, Virginia. He is a 1998 graduate from the United States Naval Academy with a Bachelor of Science in Electrical Engineering. He also holds a Masters of Engineering Management from Old Dominion University and a Masters of Arts in National Security from the Naval War College.

Captain Hogan has served at sea on both fast attack and ballistic missile submarines. He was Chemistry and Radiological Controls Assistant, Damage Control Assistant, Assistant Engineer, and Operations Officer on USS CITY OF CORPUS CHRISTI (SSN 705), Engineer Officer on USS MINNEAPOLIS-SAINT PAUL (SSN 708), Executive Officer on USS WYOMING (SSBN 742)(GOLD) and USS NEVADA (SSBN 733)(BLUE), and Commanding Officer on USS DELAWARE (SSN 791).

Ashore, he served as the Flag Aide to Commander Submarines, U.S. Pacific Fleet, on the staff of the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations for Undersea Warfare (N97), and as the Executive Officer of the Tactical Readiness Evaluation Team for Commander Submarines, U.S. Atlantic Fleet.

Captain Hogan reported to the Office of the Secretary of Defense in December 2019.



John Riley is author of the recently released book, *Delaware Eyewitness, Behind the Scenes in the First State*. In 2016, John Riley retired after leading government relations for two global corporations. He played a key role in launching the Delaware Prosperity Partnership, including serving as interim CEO. John is an Army veteran and continues to be active in veterans' affairs.