

Crew, family remember USS Pueblo ordeal

by UPI

SAN DIEGO -- Family members say time has not erased the agony of 1968 when the USS Pueblo was seized by North Korea. One sailor was killed during the incident and 82 shipmates were taken prisoner by the communist government 40 years ago this week, the San Diego Union-Tribune reported Wednesday. The crew remembers facing interrogations, beatings, starvation and humiliation for 11 months until the U.S. government finally secured their release, the newspaper said. When they got home, the Navy accused the crew of surrendering too easily and letting classified material and equipment fall into North Korean hands. While the Pentagon finally awarded the Pueblo crew members the Prisoner of War Medal in 1990, many Pueblo sailors and their wives have suffered health problems and post-traumatic stress disorder from the 1968 ordeal, the newspaper said. "It was a lot harder for the wives than for us," said James Kell, 71, who was chief petty officer on the ship. "We knew what was happening, and we could cope with it. But they didn't know. They could only imagine." The ship's captain, Cmdr. Lloyd "Pete" Bucher, died in 2004.

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