

Senator Wayne Allard

Statement on U.S.S. Pueblo - 40th Anniversary

January 23, 2008

MR. PRESIDENT – I rise now, 40 years since the North Korean government unlawfully captured the lightly armed U.S.S. Pueblo while it was on a routine surveillance mission in international waters. The U.S.S. Pueblo was the first ship of the United States Navy to be hijacked on the high seas by a foreign military force in more than 150 years, and is currently the only commissioned U.S. Naval vessel that is in the possession of a foreign nation. 40 years ago today, eighty-three crew members were kidnapped and one sailor was killed in the assault. Following the capture, our men were held in deplorable, inhumane conditions for more than eleven months before being released. While we were grateful to see the return of our brave sailors, 40 years later we are still waiting for the return of the U.S.S. Pueblo.

The U.S.S. Pueblo remains a commissioned naval ship and property of the United States Navy. Currently, the North Korean government flaunts the Pueblo as a war trophy and a tourist attraction in Pyongyang, North Korea's capital. We must not continue to remain silent about North Korea's continued violation of international law by possessing our ship, the United States Navy's ship. Each day tourists visit and tour the USS Pueblo, similar to the way visitors see retired naval ships in New York and San Diego.

Americans in particular are encouraged to be photographed by the U.S.S. Pueblo. As recently as April 2007, it was reported that President Kim Jong Il stated that the Pueblo should be used for "anti-American education." North Korea's capture of the U.S.S. Pueblo is in blatant violation of international law and the further exploitation of the Pueblo is tasteless and disingenuous. I believe 40 years of relative silence on this issue is far too long, and it is important that the United States Senate take action and denounce the current situation.

The U.S.S. Pueblo bears the name of the town of Pueblo, Colorado, a city with a proud military tradition and is the only city to be home of four living Medal of Honor recipients simultaneously. In fact, in 1993 Congress deemed Pueblo the "Home of Heroes" for this unique distinction. Many in our state and all over the country want to see the vessel returned to its proper home. To this end, I am reintroducing a resolution seeking the return of the U.S.S. Pueblo to the United States Navy. This bill is cosponsored by my good friend and proud veteran, Senator Daniel Inouye, and I encourage all of our colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this legislation and see to it that the USS Pueblo is returned to the United States Navy.

Mr. President I would also like to insert into the Record an editorial that appeared in the Pueblo Chieftain today regarding the Anniversary.