



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on February 19, 2014

Australian Christian Missionary Arrested in North Korea

John Short (shown), an Australian Christian missionary, was questioned at his hotel in North Korea's capital of Pyongyang on February 16, and then detained by law-enforcement officials. Authorities had questioned him about Christian writings translated into Korean that he had in his possession.



Short's wife, Karen, learned of her husband's arrest from a friend who had traveled with Short in a tour group originating in China, and who returned to China on February 18.

In an interview with Reuters, Karen Short said that her husband had been open with North Korean officials about his Christian faith and read his Bible in front of government guides during his first trip there. "He won't be intimidated by the Communists," she said.

Short said her husband was visiting North Korea for the second time and his first trip was just last year "so he knew what he was going into," reported Fox News. She said he wanted to be in North Korea "rubbing shoulders with people as much as possible."

"There's risk involved. He knew that too, but when you know what you must do, you do it," she noted. "It's not an open country and it doesn't welcome Christians — yes, we realize that. But that doesn't mean we stand by and don't do anything because we care for the situation and we pray about it but sometimes you have to do more than talk."

In an interview with the Christian Book Room, the Gospel publishing ministry the Shorts run, Karen Short said: "I know he's courageous and he's in God's hands. I believe that at the right time that the right thing will happen and he will be released."

In a telephone interview from her home in Hong Kong with *The Advertiser*, an Adelaide, Australia-based newspaper, Short told of her reaction to her husband's arrest, as well as her hope that he will be returned safely:

We're Christians and we've been here [in Asia] for 40 years. He's a frontline man — this is what he does. But North Korea is very different — that's why his heart was to go there. I'm asking people to pray for him.

The Advertiser reported that since Australia and North Korea do not have diplomatic relations, negotiations to secure Short's release are taking place with the Australian consulates in Hong Kong and Jakarta and with Swedish and South Korean authorities based in Seoul, South Korea.

"That's how these things work, I understand," Mrs. Short said. "Our best hope is that they realize he's not a political campaigner and just throw him out of the country."

The Advertiser also quoted former Australian Foreign Minister Alexander Downer, who said of North Korea: "It's a fascist state and they would take a very dim view of anyone distributing information that



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doesn't concur with the state ideology. A worse place to be caught doing something like that is unimaginable."

The *New York Times* noted that Short's arrest comes more than a year after North Korea arrested Kenneth Bae, an American missionary who also entered the country from China. Bae was sentenced to 15 years of hard labor for committing "hostile acts" against the communist state, and the Pyongyang regime has repeatedly resisted American pressure seeking his release.

A February 7 report from Fox News noted that Bae, who had been moved to a hospital after he lost 50 pounds, was taken back to the labor camp on January 20, the same day he had appeared before news reporters in Pyongyang, wearing a prison uniform stamped with the number 103.

"He's back to eight-hours-a-day, six-days-a-week hard labor," said Bae's sister, Terri Chung of Edmonds, Washington. "We can't help but be concerned about that."

During a special briefing by senior administration and State Department officials held enroute to South Korea on February 13, a reporter asked:

I wanted to ask about ... the fate of Bae, who's in detention, and when anyone's last heard from him and what's known about his circumstances, and he's back in a prison camp. And I know it's not done through intermediaries, but can you update us on that please?

A senior administration official replied:

I can tell you what we know, which shouldn't differ from what you know because we've seen the video released by the North Koreans and by Choson Simbo, the news organization that was in there. It would appear that he has been moved back to the camp and is once again at — in a labor camp performing eight or nine or 10 hours of labor a day. And this makes even more urgent the need to resolve the matter, which is why our efforts continue to prevail upon the North Koreans to accept a visit from Ambassador King to Pyongyang to discuss the matter. And we hope to bring Kenneth Bae back to the United States. So we believe he has returned to a camp. Our protecting power, the Swedes, have sent us some reports. And that's the status as far as we know it at this stage.

The United States has 28,500 soldiers, sailors, airmen, and Marines stationed in South Korea, under the ROK-US Mutual Defense Treaty, presumably to defend that nation from an attack by the North. As of December 2009, there were also 35,688 U.S. military personnel stationed in Japan, to defend Japan under the Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan.

With our nation having made this commitment in human and economic resources to defend two prosperous, industrially powerful nations perfectly capable of defending themselves, it can be asked why our nation is so weak in protecting its own interests and its own citizens.

One of the most blatant examples of our nation's dereliction of duty in protecting its own military assets was the infamous saga of the *USS Pueblo*, a U.S. naval ship captured by the same communist North Korean government that presently holds Kenneth Bae.

On January 23, 1968, the *Pueblo*, a lightly armed cargo ship, was captured in international waters and forced into port at Wonsan on the eastern coast of North Korea. One crewman was killed by North Korean fire. Though the *Pueblo* had been in radio contact with naval security back in Japan throughout the incident, no jets or ships were ever dispatched to come to the aid of the ship. The 82 surviving U.S. crew members were taken to a prisoner-of-war camp somewhere in the interior of the country where



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they were starved and repeatedly tortured.

Finally, 11 months after the *Pueblo* was captured, the United States gave North Korea a written apology acknowledging that the ship was spying and promising that such action would not be repeated.

On December 23, 1968, the crew of the *Pueblo* was taken by bus to the demilitarized zone separating North Korea from the south and the men were permitted to walk across the border, after which the United States retracted its admission, apology, and promises.

Though the men were returned, North Korea kept the *Pueblo*. But the story gets even worse. The *Pueblo* was eventually moved by the North Koreans from Wonson on the east coast of North Korea to Nampo on the west coast — a voyage that required moving the vessel through international waters. Although the U.S. military was surely aware of the *Pueblo's* location, no effort was made to retake or sink the ship.

How can a nation that shows such cowardly weakness in protecting one of its own naval vessels and its crew be expected to be taken seriously when it demands the return of one of its citizens arrested on trumped-up charges? (And after setting such a weak example, why should Australia, with a military far smaller than ours, act any stronger?)

Our national resolve has obviously declined considerably since the famous incident when Ion Perdicaris, an American citizen, was kidnapped on May 18, 1904 in Tangier, Morocco, and held for \$70,000 ransom. President Theodore Roosevelt ordered Navy ships and contingents of U.S. Marines to Morocco. And Secretary of State John Hay sent a telegram to our consul in Tangier, Samuel R. Gummer, reading: "This government wants Perdicaris alive or Raisuli dead."

Perdicaris was eventually released unharmed.

When the message was shared with the delegates to the Republican National Convention, one delegate from Kansas responded, "Roosevelt and Hay know what they're doing. Our people like courage. We'll stand for anything those men do."

If our leaders today displayed similar courage in protecting U.S. interests and U.S. citizens abroad, it is likely that Americans would also "stand for anything those men do."

It is also likely that Australians would support a demonstration of courage and resolve by their government in securing the release of John Short.

Photo of John Short: AP Images



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