

Act of War: Lyndon Johnson, North Korea, and the Capture of the Spy Ship Pueblo

Jack Cheevers

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In 1968, the small, dilapidated American spy ship USS Pueblo set out to pinpoint military radar stations along the coast of North Korea. Though packed with advanced electronic-surveillance equipment and classified intelligence documents, its crew, led by ex-submarine officer Pete Bucher, was made up mostly of untested young sailors.

On a frigid January morning, the Pueblo was challenged by a North Korean gunboat. When Bucher tried to escape, his ship was quickly surrounded by more boats, shelled and machine-gunned, forced to surrender, and taken prisoner. Less than forty-eight hours before the Pueblo's capture, North Korean commandos had nearly succeeded in assassinating South Korea's president. The two explosive incidents pushed Cold War tensions toward a flashpoint.

Based on extensive interviews and numerous government documents released through the Freedom of Information Act, Act of War tells the riveting saga of Bucher and his men as they struggled to survive merciless torture and horrendous living conditions set against the backdrop of an international powder keg.



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