



# USS James E. Kyes Association

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## Korean Defense Service Medal



The **Korea Defense Service Medal (KDSM)**<sup>[3]</sup> is a military service medal of the United States Armed Forces that was first created in 2002 when it was signed into law by President George W. Bush

The Korea Defense Service Medal is authorized for those members of the United States Armed Forces who have served duty in South Korea after the signing of the Korean Armistice Agreement in support of the defense of the South Korean state. To qualify for the KDSM, a service member must have served at least thirty consecutive days in the Korean theater. The medal is also granted for 60 non-consecutive days of service which includes reservists on annual training in South Korea.

The Korea Defense Service Medal is retroactive to the end of the Korean War and is granted to any service performed after July 28, 1954.

On 23 January, 1968, the USS James E. Kyes was steaming at normal cruise speed headed north up the East coast of Hinan Island headed to Japan before heading home to Long Beach, when suddenly the Kyes was ordered to head at full speed to the Sea of Japan. The USS Pueblo (AGER-2) had been captured by North Korea. When the Kyes arrived in the Sea of Japan it was assigned a 10-mile circle in the center part of the Sea of Japan and was told to track all shipping. The Kyes would steam north and south for a while and then east and west for a while. We were told that if the USS Pueblo were to be recovered, the Kyes would likely be assigned to go in to Wonsan Harbor and bring her out because Captain Rollins had experience on that type of ship. Unfortunately, the Johnson administration chose to have our fleet depart the area never to again return. The taking of the Pueblo and the abuse and torture of its crew during the subsequent 11-month prisoner drama became a major Cold War incident, raising tensions between the western democracies and the USSR and People's Republic of China. The USS Pueblo, still held by North Korea today, officially remains a commissioned vessel of the United States Navy. Since early 2013, the ship has been moored along the Potong River in Pyongyang and used there as a museum ship. The USS Pueblo is the only ship of the U.S. Navy still on the commissioned roster currently being held captive by the enemy.

The Kyes remained in the area for more than 30 days and therefore all shipmates aboard the Kyes for the 30 day period after 23 January, 1968 are entitled to receive the Korean Defense Service Medal. Due to the fact that the medal was not authorized until the year 2002, long after all Kyes shipmates left the service, it is very likely that those shipmates never received their deserved medal.

Therefore, the USS James E. Kyes association is honored to bestow a lapel pin version of the Korean Defense Service Medal to any Kyes shipmates (in attendance at our reunion) who were aboard the Kyes during that 30-day period. Be sure to give your name to the secretary if you did not receive your medal at the 2019 reunion.