

Beat: Politics

Released U.S. detainee admits deliberately leaving Bible in N. Korea

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USPA News - American tourist Jeffrey Fowle, who was detained in North Korea for five months until his release more than a week ago, admitted Friday that he deliberately tried to leave behind a Bible in the reclusive country, which led to his arrest and subsequent detention. Fowle, a 56-year-old former city worker from Ohio, was arrested in mid-May after entering North Korea as part of a tour group.

North Korea's state-run news agency said he had been arrested for illegal acts "contrary to the purpose of tourism," but it provided no other details. Fowle later said that the charges stemmed from him trying to leave a Bible at a hotel. In his first public statement since his sudden release on October 21, Fowle told the Dayton Daily News that he intended to leave a Bible in North Korea even before he left the United States, but said no one knew about his illegal plan. He said his Bible was discovered by the authorities just a few days before his arrest, after which interrogators warned him that he could face life in prison for his action. The North Korean severely restricts religious activities, except by a few groups which are tightly supervised. Commenting on why he planned to leave the Bible in North Korea, Fowle told the newspaper that he has "a strong motivation to help the Christians," but added that, in hindsight, he would not do it again. "My faith in God is intact," he said. "It's good to be back. ... I got back on my feet pretty quickly." It remains unclear why North Korea decided to release Fowle on October 21, as the government had announced in late June that it would put Fowle and a second American on trial. A brief dispatch from the state-run Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) on June 30 said "suspicions about their hostile acts" had been confirmed by evidence and their testimonies. The second American, 24-year-old Matthew Todd Miller, was arrested in April after he allegedly ripped up his tourist visa at immigration and demanded asylum from North Korea. A third American, U.S. missionary Kenneth Bae, was arrested in November 2012 and sentenced in April 2013 to 15 years of hard labor after being found guilty of committing hostile acts aimed at toppling the North Korean government. The family of the jailed Korean American has denied the allegations, describing Bae as a tour operator and Christian missionary. But the state-run KCNA news agency said the "hostile acts" allegedly committed by Bae had been proven in court with evidence, although it has provided no information to support the conviction.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2863/released-us-detainee-admits-deliberately-leaving-bible-in-n-korea.html>

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

United Press Association, Inc.
3651 Lindell Road, Suite D168
Las Vegas, NV 89103, USA
(702) 943.0321 Local
(702) 943.0233 Facsimile
info@unitedpressassociation.org

info@gna24.com
www.gna24.com