

SFChronicle
Navy Denies
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Knowledge of
Pueblo Offer

San Diego

The U.S. Navy denied knowledge yesterday of any offer by the North Koreans to release the spy ship Pueblo and its 83-man crew before their actual return.

The chief of naval information's office released a brief statement in response to charges by the Pueblo's former executive officer that North Korea was prepared to free the ship and crew more than two months before they were released on Dec. 22, 1968.

Edward R. Murphy Jr., a former Navy lieutenant, said Thursday that "self-centered antics" by former Pueblo skipper Lloyd M. Bucher prevented the crew from being freed on Oct. 11, 1968.

Murphy said he and another officer accepted an offer from their captors to man the ship and return home but that Bucher and other officers rejected the offer.

Associated Press