

'Never Struck Colors,' Says Cmdr. Bucher

CORONADO (AP) — The captain of the USS Pueblo said today he never struck its colors and "I never thought I was surrendering per se."

Cmdr. Lloyd M. Bucher told a Navy court of inquiry he felt he was simply overwhelmed by the odds against outrunning North Korean gunboats and surviving an all-out attack on the open sea.

Bucher came under intensive questioning from Navy lawyers in the final days of the inquiry into the capture of the Pueblo last year and the 11-month imprisonment of its men.

He made these points:

—He was "given to understand" that it was not necessary for him to know about activities in two or three of the intelligence compartments in his ship.

—He was turned down at least twice in efforts to get explosives that could destroy classified equipment or scuttle the ship.

—He did not report to his operational or administrative commander his difficulty in aiming the vessel's machine guns.

—He doesn't remember making his decision to give up the Pueblo known to his crew.