

Pilots Fear 'Vietnik' Phone Calls

By Beverly Deepe

A Special Correspondent

ABOARD THE CARRIER
KITTY HAWK.

A secret fear of pilots on this aircraft carrier is the threatening and intimidating anonymous telephone calls being received by their families from what the pilots call Vietniks.

"Some of our mothers and wives have been receiving phone calls every hour on the hour all night for many nights by people using foul language," one pilot explained. "Even the American public doesn't know about this."

The pilot of a \$3 million A-6a Intruder—who had flown in the first raids as air strikes resumed against North Viet Nam Monday—said: "The wives of two of my friends have been receiving phone calls saying in so many words, 'your husband is a fink for fighting in Viet Nam.'"

UNLISTED

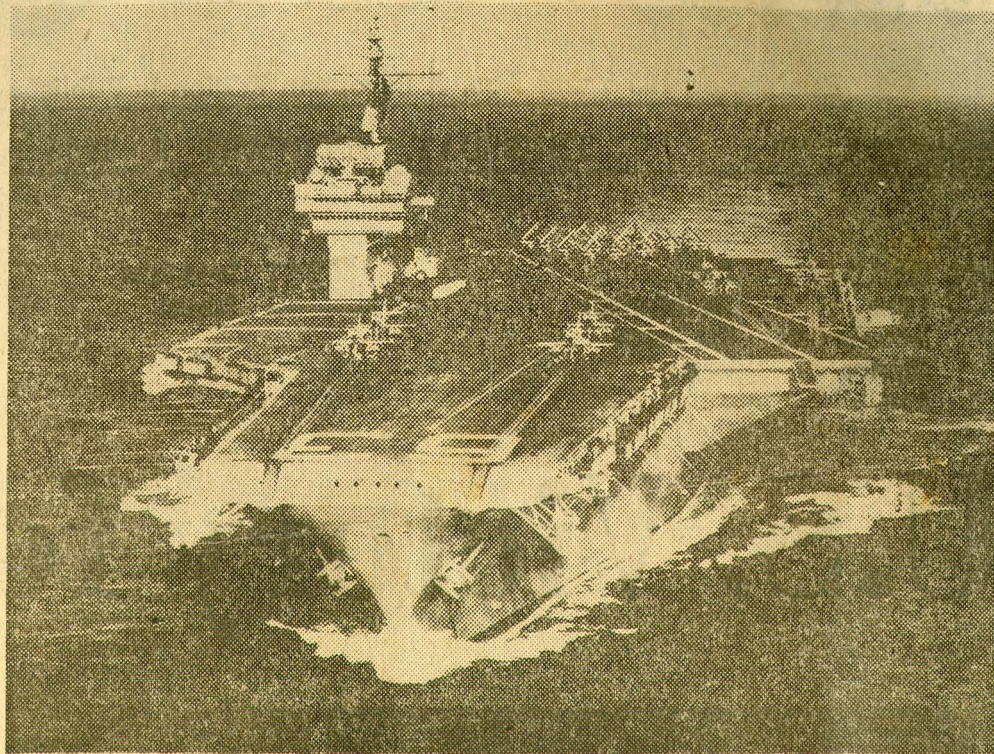
"The only reaction from the husbands," he continued "was to get unlisted phone numbers."

Another Intruder pilot said his wife had also been receiving phone calls, but he snapped, "I don't want to discuss it with anyone." He, too, has told his wife to obtain an unlisted phone number at home.

"We know that the Independence ran into some of this when it pulled into home port," another pilot explained. "The wives were telephoned and told not to meet the ship because it was showing support for our activities in Viet Nam."

All the pilots refused to give their names—and, more important, their home addresses—to correspondents.

One Naval information officer said he had to request more than 20 fighter pilots to appear on a national American television program be-



DOMESTIC CONCERN—The jet pilots stationed aboard the USS Kitty Hawk, shown here steaming in the Pacific, have another concern beyond their bombing missions in North Viet Nam. Their families in the U. S. have been receiving nocturnal threats.

fore finding who would volunteer.

"Of course, we pilots hesitate in talking to the press," one explained, "because we don't want to give our names and get a big spread in the newspapers back home. The Vietniks just look up the names in the telephone book, call up and cause turmoil in our families.

"Also, the enemy is using psychological warfare and this information and creating grief among the pilots shot down over enemy territory.

"The Vietniks have ways of procuring information and feeding it to the Communists, which we haven't encountered in past wars."

Another pilot said his wife

in Binghamton had not encountered any anonymous phone calls.

"The phone calls vary with the area of the country that the family is living in," one pilot explained. "It's not just New York or Pennsylvania. It's not just Kitty Hawk—but other ships as well. It's not just officers, but also some of the enlisted men as well.

VARIATIONS

"The phone calls threaten in one way in Virginia, for example, but in another area maybe it's just foul language and intimidation. One phone call from one group threatened eventual harm to the

family because the husband was over here fighting and it wasn't our business to be here. None of the men like to talk about it—they just accept it as a side hazard of the job."

Some of the pilots brushed off the importance of the Vietniks in America; others were bitter.

The pilot from Binghamton referred to the Vietniks as "the great unwashed back home." Another called them "ridiculous, but not dangerous—just kinda stupid."

And another bitterly remarked, "I wish they'd put the Vietniks out here, give them a gun—and then we'd see if they'd throw away the gun and put up placards."