

# Navy Air Powerful Force in West Europe

By ALLAN JACKS

Associated Press Writer

USMC (AP) — The twin-jet, two-man F4 Phantom, loaded with bombs and guided missiles, rockets off the aircraft carrier with the shrill of a crowd. Every few seconds another one follows it into the clear Mediterranean sky.

In a matter of minutes the 60,000-ton Independence has catapulted 60 to 70 Phantoms and other roaring jets, many of them supersonic, into the air and out of sight. A few miles away the USS Shangri-La has flung a similar number of planes off its 1,000-foot flight deck.

Once away from the 6th Fleet's two huge carriers, the planes form one of the most powerful single forces in Western Europe today.

Gen. Lyman L. Lemnitzer, supreme commander of North Atlantic Treaty forces Organization, calls the 6th Fleet's two carriers and its 45 other ships the

able of delivering a nuclear punch, a tremendous "power for peace."

Whenever there is trouble in the Mediterranean, units of the 6th Fleet are close by.

In 1966 the Marines landed in Lebanon at the request of the Beirut government for help in its civil war. The fleet moved toward Suez during the 1966 in-

vasion by Israel, Britain and France. In the Arab-Israeli war of June 1967 the fleet moved close to Israel and Egypt against their formations, occasionally attacking one of its ships, the communications vessel Liberty, was hit by Israeli planes.

Even when there is no hot-spot crisis, the fleet stands as a guardian of U.S. and NATO interests in the Mediterranean area.

One part of the Mediterranean or another, planes fly off carriers almost daily in tasking. Sometimes they are loaded for tactical landing exercises. Occasionally they go loaded for practice. More often than not they are watched and tracked by units of the Soviet Union's expanding Mediterranean fleet, now numbering about 40 surface ships.

Sometimes the Soviet ships come in close enough to allow camera-carrying sailors of both fleets to take snapshots on each other. Twice recently the Russians even rendered formal salutes, dutifully returned by astonished American commanders.

When not dogged by Soviet naval vessels, 6th Fleet com-

manders usually spot curious for their persistence. Russian merchantmen, tankers and Russian warships watched planes take off and land, saw them shoot down targets with Sidewinder missiles, highly useful port facilities in Alexandria and Port Said.

Last week the Russian rubbers attended a bigger when they shot down a drone plane. Through binoculars they could see an unmanned helicopter fly off by remote control and drop a torpedo.

Two 1,600-mile-an-hour Phantoms also treated the Libyans to a couple of close-in sonic booms that must have rocked the little tanker to its keel.

U.S. admirals are openly concerned about the Soviet naval buildup in the Mediterranean. Adm. Martin this area is any match for the one of the first to air such 25,000-man 6th Fleet. But Mc-

Present for the show were Lemnitzer, from his new NATO headquarters in Brussels; Adm. John S. McCain Jr., commander of U.S. Naval Forces in Europe, NATO admirals from Italy, Greece and Turkey—and two Soviet tankers, the Gruzny and the Ljubyetzy.

The Ljubyetzy clung to the In-dependence like a waiting tend-der all day and was well reward-

ed for its persistence. In the Mediterranean, McCain said, Russian naval units have with within a few hundred yards Alexandria and Port Said.

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EAGLE—Robert Hall, 17, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hall, Featherbed Lane, Concord, has been awarded an Eagle badge. A member of Boy Scout Troop 386, sponsored by St. John's Episcopal Church, Robert has been in scouting nearly 10 years, starting as a Cub Scout. He is assistant junior scoutmaster of the 1968 graduating class of Concord Valley High School and plans to study premedicine this fall at Franklin & Marshall College. He is employed as an orderly at Riddle Memorial Hospital in gain experience.

TO RETIRE—Dr. Earl F. Sykes, president of West Chester State College, has announced his retirement after a 30-year association with the college. In his seven-year term as president, the college has undergone major building, curriculum and enrollment expansion.

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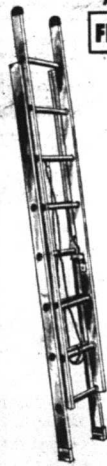
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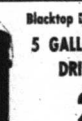
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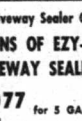
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