

Vets Counter Atrocity Charges

Washington

Two Vietnam war veterans said yesterday that American troops have been wariar of war crimes and atrocities in Vietnam than in any other war in the nation's history.

They accused veterans who are against the war of giving the impression that large numbers of troops butchered babies and butchered women."

"They present aberrations as general policy," said John O'Neill, head of the newly formed Vietnam Veterans for a Just Peace.

O'Neill appeared in CBS' "Face the Nation" with Anthony MacDonald, director of foreign affairs for the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

COMBAT

Both served as lieutenants in Navy units in Vietnam, O'Neill in the same unit as John Kerry, a leader of Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

"Americans have restricted themselves in this war more than in any other conflict in our history," MacDonald said. "Americans

have put their lives on the line, sometimes refusing to return fire to protect other lives," he said.

O'Neill said his organization has at least 5000 members in 26 states and was formed after Kerry's appearance before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in April. In the treasury, he said, is \$11.47.

CALLS

After Kerry's appearance, he said, "there was virtually a flood of tearful phone calls" from members of their old unit who disagreed with Kerry's statement.

O'Neill has challenged Kerry to a debate on the war and what most veterans think about it, but he said during the questioning he's been unable to get an answer to his suggestion. "We've been chasing Kerry around the country," he said.

MacDonald said focusing on individual atrocities in Vietnam such as the My Lai massacre is like blaming all citizens of Washington for the crimes committed there.

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