

A View From The Right

By: C. William George

To the blackjack player, the ace of spades is good news, but to the Viet Cong, the Communist forces operating in South Vietnam, it is considered an omen of death — and is this nation's most valuable "psy-war" (psychological warfare) weapon.

On February 7, after a tour of Vietnam, Rep. Craig Hosmer (R-Calif.) delivered a speech in Congress, calling for the dropping of hundreds of thousands of plastic aces of spades on North Vietnam as a "psy-war" measure. Despite the fact that he had gathered evidence to support this proposal, his colleagues in the House ridiculed him. Rep. Wayne Hays (D-Ohio) suggested that Hosmer parachute into North Vietnam wearing a sandwich board with a giant ace of spades on each side.

Allison F. Stanley, president of the United States Playing Card Company in Cincinnati, received a letter on February 16 from the officers of Company C, 2nd Battalion, 35th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, requesting 1,000 aces of spades because they had been "using your ace of spades as our calling cards for nearly two months" and "our supply of cards is rapidly being depleted." Stanley shipped the aces out the same day and advised the GIs to let him know when their supply

ran short again. A few weeks later, the officers wrote back, explaining the use of the aces.

"In Vietnam, the ace of spades and pictures of women are regarded as symbols of bad luck," they wrote. "Since your trademark contains both of these, we have been leaving them as a psychological weapon in areas we have cleared of Viet Cong.

"We have many missions to search and clear local villages. When we enter a village we leave a card at the main gate for all to see as they enter. At each house that we suspect Viet Cong use as a hiding place we leave a card. Often they will not return to this house or village because a jinx has been placed on it. Any VC bodies brought into the village square also have an ace placed on them to show any VC sympathizers the power of the 25th Division. Finally, as we leave the village, an ace is left at each exit."

The GIs said that they wear aces on their helmets, also, and plan to have an ace of spades stencil made for their gun butts.

Apparently, the ace of spades is an effective deterrent to the Viet Cong. Stanley has sent out close to 10,000 aces all free of charge. Requests for more aces keep coming in from GIs, their parents, wives and girl friends.