

Marijuana, the pros and cons

By Jim Koenig

They call it weed, stick, the herb, joint, pot, grass, Mary Jane, cannabis sativa and dozens of other names but all know it as marijuana.

Most users who indulge in the drug describe a feeling of euphoria and complete relaxation. They say, "I enjoy music more while high," or "It improves my sex life." Others add, "I can perform better on my job when I'm stoned." If all of these things are true, then why all the hassle? Why is it such a big deal when someone gets caught "taking a joint."

One reason is motivation, or lack of it. As one 17th Signal junior NCO said, "If one of my soldiers starts smoking pot regularly I'll know it right away. His or her motivation usually drops quickly, so does their military appearance and attitude."

Local drug counselors say smoking grass can cause loss of short term memory, abnormal brain wave patterns and difficulty in solving problems and complex skills.

Dr. Robert Heath who heads the Department of Neurology and Psychiatry at Tulane Medical School says that marijuana causes structural changes of the brain cells and could lead to brain damage.

Another point against "the herb" is

the principal ingredient, delta-9-THC. This chemical stays within the body up to ten days, sometimes longer, after one joint is smoked. The THC is absorbed by many tissues and organs in the body, including the brain and the male testicles. Marijuana use increases heart rate as much as 50 percent.

There's not enough room in the FIVE by FIVE to print all the reasons why a soldier shouldn't use marijuana but those listed are a few.

Let's face facts, a temporary "high" is not worth the hassles and headaches brought on by a drug bust not to mention the long-range harmful effects it has proven to cause.

If you need help see your First Sergeant or Commander or anyone in your chain of command. If that bothers you give the Community Counseling Center a call (2315-732) for an appointment. These counselors are sincere. They don't want to get down on your case, they really want to help.

If you seek help there will be no administrative action or punishment against you but if you get caught through a bust or urinalysis test (and that could be tomorrow morning) then you've got problems - BIG problems.

Parents, Peers, and Pot booklet

"Parents, Peers, and Pot": is a very useful booklet available free from the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

Write for single copies to the National Clearing House for Drug Abuse Information, Room 10A-56, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20857.

