

Cobalt Dice Casino Threat

By The Los Angeles Times
LAS VEGAS, Nev. — An electronic cheating scheme using dice coated with dangerous cobalt 60 was under investigation by the Nevada Gambling Control Board. The plot may already have cost one casino \$300,000.

The board is asking Hughes Aircraft scientists to help find a means of detecting use of the device which could break every gambling house in Nevada.

The system also constitutes a possible health hazard. Cobalt 60 is a heavy radioactive isotope used in medical research and in the treatment of cancer. Large amounts give off harmful radiation.

Robert Mulligan, agent in charge of electronics for the Nevada Gambling Control Board, said he talked to the inventor of the device here. He identified him only as a steplejack from San Diego.

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 "It's a feasible trick," Mulligan said. "We are going to release information to all licensees (casinos) on how to prevent it. Its theoretic possibilities are great."

Frank Johnson, chairman of the gaming board, also confirmed by telephone from Carson City that the board was "looking into it seriously."

The board's agents turned to Hughes Aircraft scientists for help because Howard Hughes recently bought the Desert Inn, Sands Hotel and other properties here.

The cheating scheme involves an electronic pulsating device and the rubbing of cobalt 60 on dice. When the pulsating device is turned on, the treated dice will react.

The system is somewhat similar to a magnetic field, but it cannot be stopped by

ordinary magnetic detection methods.

Johnson said he had heard that the device was used at the Dunes Hotel. About a month ago officials at the hotel reported that a fantastic number of points had been made at the dice table, costing the casino \$300,000.

"Someone was in town, they had it and they used it," Johnson said. But he added he is not convinced that it was actually used at the Dunes or that it works.

Mulligan, however, said the inventor of the device told him it was used at the Dunes. The inventor said he checked a gaming table with a scintillator and the instrument detected radiation.

The inventor, according to Johnson, admitted that he made one such device but said that he does not have it now.

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