

# BOB DOLE



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## DOLE ASSURED POTWIN BACK TO NORMAL, BUT SAYS THAT QUESTIONS STILL REMAIN

WASHINGTON -- Senator Bob Dole (R-Kan.) said that his office was in contact today with McConnell Air Force Base Commander Elmer Brooks, who gave assurances that by 8:30 a.m. CST today the Titan II site at Potwin, Kan., was back to "normal operation" and that the area was safe for residents and military personnel.

"I have received assurances from officials at both McConnell and the Strategic Air Command headquarters in Omaha that the Air Force acted quickly in diagnosing the source of the oxidizer leak, and moved to secure the area and begin evacuations in a timely manner," Dole said.

"My first concern, of course, is for the safety of the residents and the military personnel in the area of the leak. Col. Brooks has told us that constant readings of the environment were taken, and that all readings taken registered less than one part of pollutant per million. This is a level that is considered to be safe, and in fact quite normal. The oxidizer that did escape, however, was not spread over a large area because of the calm winds.

"I am gratified by the Air Force's professional handling of this matter. But it does not lessen my concern that the entire Titan II system needs to be examined in depth in an effort to determine just how effective it is as a weapons system and how safe we can count on it being in the future.

"Yesterday I renewed my call for Senate Armed Services Committee hearings on the Titan, so that we can act to resolve this problem. The basic questions concerning this system remain with us today, and are simply underscored by what happened yesterday at Potwin."

Dole personally delivered his request to Armed Services Committee Chairman Senator John Stennis (D-Miss.) yesterday afternoon. In 1979, Dole, along with Senator Nancy Kassebaum, Senator David Pryor (D-Ark.) and Senator Barry Goldwater (R-Ariz.) requested hearings concerning the safety and effectiveness of the Titan II.

Col. Brooks said today that yesterday's leak was discovered at approximately 6:30 a.m., and the missile crew confirmed the nature and severity of the leak at about 7:10 a.m. CST. Col. Brooks made the decision at 8:15 a.m. to evacuate, purely as a precautionary measure, and said today that at no time were any persons, livestock or other animals in danger. The Butler County Sheriff's Department assisted McConnell Air Force Security in conducting the evacuation, contacting residents first by phone, and then by actual person-to-person contact at their homes.

By 2 p.m. CST the leak had been contained and a new pressure cap was put in place. At 3:30 p.m., Brooks said, security forces informed evacuees that the situation was back to normal.