

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20510

September 19, 1980

*This letter went out to all Senate Armed Services Committee members
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Honorable John C. Stennis
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear John:

As you know, on September 18 and 19, 1980, yet another Titan II "incident" occurred near Damascus, Arkansas. This is the latest in a series of dangerous and disturbing incidents involving the outdated Titan II missile. In the past year, we have had numerous accidents in Kansas. One of them claimed the lives of two Air Force personnel.

Beginning with a leak of fuel propellant at a Titan II missile silo complex near Rock, Kansas, on August 24, 1978, which killed two Airmen, the safety and adequacy of the Titan II system has been called into question. Since that incident two years ago, additional leaks have been confirmed in Mayfield, Wellington, El Dorado, Cheney, and most recently, in Potwin, Kansas.

In each instance, the lives of Air Force personnel and residents of southeast Kansas have been endangered. In each instance, state and federal elected officials have called for various investigations and studies, and have conducted meetings with Air Force officials. In each instance, we have been assured that procedures are being instituted which will insure the safety of the Titan II system. Nonetheless, the incidents continue to occur, and the safety of Kansas residents is endangered. I, and the people of my state have grown tired of doubletalk and are demanding action.

The 54 Titan II missile silos in Kansas, Arizona and Arkansas were established in 1963 with a life expectancy of 10 years. The system is now almost 18 years old, and as it begins to show its age, it threatens the safety of Air Force personnel working with the missiles and the residents living near the silos.

These repeated, so-called "incidents" also raise significant questions about the adequacy of the Titan II system to defend our Nation's security. The fact that this "incident" occurred when a three-pound wrench socket fell from about 70 feet and punctured the fuel tank leaves me with some very serious doubts about this system's structural reliability.

Honorable John C. Stennis

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For some time, I have urged the Senate Armed Services Committee to conduct an objective study and analysis of this seemingly outdated and unsafe weapons system. This system is literally leaking at the seams.

Once again I request that the Senate and House Armed Services Committees immediately commence an independent, comprehensive, and objective re-evaluation of this weapons system.

I look forward to your earliest response.

Sincerely yours,

BOB DOLE
U. S. Senate

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