

BOB DOLE



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TITAN II ACCIDENT IN ARKANSAS UNDERSCORES NEED FOR RE-EVALUATION OF SYSTEM

WASHINGTON-- Last night's accident at a Titan II missile site in central Arkansas, which reportedly injured ten U.S. service personnel, "once again underscores the urgent need for a complete re-evaluation of this aging weapons system," according to Senator Bob Dole, Republican of Kansas.

"This accident is just one in a series of mishaps," said Dole. "In recent years the Titan II has become a 'problem' missile. In 1978, for example, two airmen were killed and 29 were injured in Kansas and Arkansas in two accidents involving 'leaks' of highly toxic liquid propellant used in Titan II's. Then, on April 22, 1980, another major 'leak' occurred at the Potwin, Kansas, missile site. Fortunately, no one was injured. But then, last night, tragedy struck in Arkansas," Dole said.

Largest Missile

"The Titan II is the largest ICBM in the U.S. arsenal and is capable of carrying a 24-megaton atomic warhead 18,000 miles per hour to targets 6,000 miles away. The Titan II system is now almost 18 years old, however. It's propellant system, using liquid fuel, is old-fashioned in terms of missile technology. The 54 Titans in Kansas, Arkansas and Arizona were established in 1963-- with a life expectancy of 10 years," said Dole.

Senator Dole has been the leading critic of the Titan II missile system. He has repeatedly asked that hearings be held on the weapons system to determine both its military effectiveness and its safety. Specific requests on October 1, 1979 and April 23, 1980, have been referred to staff at the Armed Services Committee.

Dole, along with Senator David Pryor (D-Ark.), just this past Tuesday, September 16, was able to get the Senate to accept an amendment to the Military Construction Authorization Bill that will require the Air Force to install alarm systems at all 54 Titan II sites in the United States capable of giving residents and personnel an early warning of possible leaks.

"I'm only sorry that it took another accident to demonstrate the very real need for such a warning system," said Dole. "I only hope the Air Force does not wait until the next accident to move to either convince the Congress of the need of these missiles, or to make plans for their replacement. I have been trying to make my point on this for three years or more and, quite frankly, my patience has worn thin," said Dole.