

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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DOLE HONORS DAMASCUS, ARKANSAS, TITAN CREW

WASHINGTON -- Following is the text of a floor statement given today by Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) honoring the Titan II crewmen killed and injured in last Friday's explosion at Damascus, Ark.:

Mr. President, I am proud to join Senators Pryor and Bumpers in cosponsoring a resolution expressing our debt to the crewmen who were killed and injured in the Titan II missile explosion at Damascus, Arkansas, last Friday.

One man was killed in that blast, and 21 were injured. One of those men remains in serious condition today. The Air Force has told me that of those 21, two are Kansans.

Mr. President, in recent years the Titan II has become a "problem" missile in our ICBM arsenal, and this tragic accident is just one in a series of mishaps which have recently befallen the Titan system. Because of the destructive power latent within each Titan, it is truly incredible that the Damascus explosion did not take a larger toll. For that we should be thankful.

I commend the bravery of these crewmen and Titan crews around the country who must work with a missile system that is outdated and hazardous. I am only sorry that it has taken another accident to focus the attention of the country on the very real need for re-evaluation of this missile system.

Mr. President, Congress should make certain that adequate safety measures are built into each Titan silo to assure that crewmen are afforded maximum protection in maintenance procedures and other routine duties. Additionally, we must be sure that in case of an accident both the crew and citizens living in areas surrounding the silos receive ample time to clear the area.

But the broader question is whether the Titan II system is in 1980 an effective and safe strategic weapon. This is a matter which the Congress must undertake with diligence at once. We cannot afford more injuries like those which occurred at Damascus, nor can we afford to support an outdated missile. The Congress must determine the limits on this missile's effectiveness, and begin now to correct any defects, or make plans for their replacement.

The men who were injured in this accident can testify to the serious nature of our task. I commend them for their service and give them my word that I will work to see that the Titan II system receives a vigorous and fair evaluation in Congress.