

News from Senator

BOB DOLE



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U.S. SHOULD REMOVE HAZARDOUS TITAN II MISSILES, DOLE SAYS

WASHINGTON -- Sen. Bob Dole (R-Kan.) today announced that the United States should take steps toward removing the aging Titan II missile system in Kansas, Arizona and Arkansas as soon as possible.

Citing the health and safety hazards to citizens presented by continued fuel propellant leaks, Dole called on Secretary of Defense Harold Brown and the chairmen of the Senate and House Armed Services committees to begin taking immediate action toward removing the missiles.

On Tuesday, Sept. 18, yet another Titan II leak was discovered in a silo near Conway Springs, Kan. This was only the latest in a series of dangerous incidents. In the past year there have been at least six accidents in Kansas, and last August two men were killed by a propellant leak near Rock, Kan.

"In each instance," Dole said, "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 ensure the safety of the Titan II system. Nonetheless, the incidents continue to occur, and the safety of Kansas residents is endangered. The people of my state have grown tired of doubletalk and are demanding action.

"These repeated, unexplained incidents also raise significant questions about the adequacy of the Titan II system to defend our nation's security. According to Air Force officials, the most recent Conway Springs accident may have damaged the Titan II engine to such an extent that it must be replaced. Such inoperable missiles would do little good in defending a nuclear attack.

"This situation has gotten out of control. The time for studies, meetings and expressions of concern has passed. In light of these continuing incidents, I am convinced that the United States must now remove the outdated Titan IIs as soon as possible."

Dole said that 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 17 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. Eighteen of the missiles are in Kansas, mostly around the Wichita area.

Dole pointed to several possible alternatives, but stressed that his concern at the present time is the safety hazard that continued operation of the Titans presents to Kansas, Arizona and Arkansas citizens.

"The Titan II is outdated and unsafe," he said. "Our weapons systems are literally leaking at the seams. While we must unquestionably protect our national security, we also have a responsibility to protect the safety of the American citizen. Removing the Titan II can do both."