

9/16

STATEMENT OF SENATOR BOB DOLE

TITAN II MISSILE INQUEST

THE ALLEGATION THAT A TITAN II MISSILE WAS ALMOST ACCIDENTALLY LAUNCHED FROM A SILO HERE IN KANSAS HAS SENT CHILLS THROUGH ALL OF US. BECAUSE THIS VERY SERIOUS CHARGE WAS MADE IN A NATIONAL PUBLICATION WITH A CIRCULATION OF 22 MILLION, AND BECAUSE OF THE VERY REAL CONCERNS OF KANSANS WHO HAVE LIVED WITH THESE HUGE ICBM'S FOR TWO DECADES, ON AUGUST 11 -- AFTER PUBLICATION OF THE JACK ANDERSON STORY -- I CONTACTED DEFENSE SECRETARY CASPAR WEINBERGER TO GET THE FACTS. ADDITIONALLY, MY STAFF HAS SPENT COUNTLESS HOURS SINCE THAT TIME LOOKING INTO THE MATTER AND TALKING WITH PENTAGON OFFICIALS.

YESTERDAY, IN MY WASHINGTON OFFICE, I MET WITH THE PENTAGON'S CHIEF TITAN II OFFICER AND THREE OTHER AIR FORCE OFFICIALS TO HEAR FIRSTHAND IF THERE WAS ANY TRUTH TO THE WIDELY PUBLISHED "NEAR LAUNCH" STORY.

TODAY, I AM RELEASING A TEXT OF THAT INQUEST, A COPY OF SECRETARY WEINBERGER'S LETTER REFUTING THE ACCIDENTAL LAUNCH STORY AND A COPY OF THIS STATEMENT.

GIVEN ALL THE AVAILABLE INFORMATION, IT SEEMS TO ME THAT NO ONE WILL EVER FULLY KNOW THE MINUTE-BY-MINUTE, POINT-BY-POINT DETAILS OF THE TITAN II TEST IN QUESTION. HOWEVER, AFTER EXTENSIVE RESEARCH, I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO REASON TO BELIEVE A NEAR LAUNCH EVER OCCURRED.

ACCORDING TO THE AIR FORCE, SAFETY PROCEDURES FOLLOWED PRIOR TO PERFORMING THE SCHEDULED TITAN II TEST DO NOT ALLOW THE

MISSILE TO LAUNCH OR THE WARHEAD TO DETONATE. THEREFORE, I AM PLEASED TO SAY THAT AT NO TIME WERE KANSAS RESIDENTS IN DANGER.

UNFORTUNATELY, BECAUSE THIS INCIDENT TOOK PLACE THREE YEARS AGO, INVENTORY RECORDS AND CREW LOG BOOKS WHICH WOULD PROVIDE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE. UNDER MILITARY REGULATIONS THOSE RECORDS ARE DESTROYED AFTER ONE YEAR. OBVIOUSLY, THE FACT THAT THOSE RECORDS ARE NOT AVAILABLE DOES NOT MEAN OR SUBSTANTIATE THAT THERE WAS A NEAR-LAUNCH.

IT IS DISTRESSING, THOUGH, THAT DOCUMENTS WHICH MIGHT HAVE PROVIDED CONCLUSIVE AND IMMEDIATE PROOF THAT SAFETY PROCEDURES WERE FOLLOWED ARE NO LONGER AVAILABLE. IF ANYTHING POSITIVE CAN COME FROM A CONTROVERSY LIKE THIS, IT MAY BE THAT IT WILL PROMPT THE MILITARY TO REEVALUATE ITS RECORD KEEPING REGULATIONS SO THAT IF AN ALLEGATION OF THIS SORT IS EVER MADE AGAIN IT CAN BE QUICKLY ADDRESSED.

ADDITIONALLY, THERE IS NO RECORD THAT CREW MEMBERS QUOTED IN THE ANDERSON ARTICLE RECEIVED COMMENDATIONS, NOR IS THE INCIDENT RECORDED IN THE REPORT PREPARED ON THE TEST. FURTHERMORE, THE LAUNCH CREW'S SUPERIORS AT MCCONNELL DISPUTE THE ANDERSON STORY. IN SHORT, THERE IS NOTHING TO SUPPORT THE ALLEGATION THAT A MISSILE WAS NEARLY LAUNCHED.

I MIGHT JUST ADD AS AN ASIDE THAT I WAS PARTICULARLY PROUD, AS A KANSAN, OF THE WAY THE WICHITA EAGLE-BEACON HANDLED THIS MATTER. LONG BEFORE MR. ANDERSON CAME IN THE PICTURE, THE EAGLE INVESTIGATED THE VERY SAME ALLEGATIONS. THEY, AS I HAVE, CONCLUDED THAT THE STORY LACKED SUFFICIENT CREDIBILITY AND CHOSE NOT

TO PUBLISH IT. THE EAGLE-BEACON DESERVES COMMENDATION FOR THEIR  
JOURNALISTIC STANDARDS.