

1 State of Arkansas
2 91st General Assembly
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4

As Engrossed: H2/27/17

HR 1013

5 By: Representative Sorvillo
6

7 **HOUSE RESOLUTION**

8 HONORING THE 308TH TITAN II STRATEGIC MISSILE WING
9 AND THE RESPONSE TO THE 1980 MISSILE EXPLOSION AT
10 DAMASCUS, ARKANSAS.
11

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13 **Subtitle**

14 HONORING THE 308TH TITAN II STRATEGIC
15 MISSILE WING AND THE RESPONSE TO THE 1980
16 MISSILE EXPLOSION AT DAMASCUS, ARKANSAS.
17

18
19 *WHEREAS, On September 19, 1980, the 308th Titan II Strategic Missile*
20 *Wing experienced a day none of them will ever forget, in which several heroic*
21 *airmen and their commanders tried to prevent a nuclear explosion near*
22 *Damascus, Arkansas, evacuated their comrades, and warned nearby residents to*
23 *flee the area; and*
24

25 *WHEREAS, nearly a third of the nation's Titan missiles were installed*
26 *in Arkansas beginning in the 1960s at the behest of Representative Wilbur D.*
27 *Mills, the once powerful Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, who*
28 *made certain his district received most of the 18 Titan missiles; and*
29

30 *WHEREAS, the public had very little idea that there were nuclear*
31 *weapons capable of reaching Moscow in 30 minutes being stored all over*
32 *Arkansas, including in Antioch, Bald Knob, Damascus, Heber Springs, Judsonia,*
33 *Mountain View, Plumerville, Republican, Rose Bud, Springhill, Velvet Ridge,*
34 *and Wonder View; and*
35

36 *WHEREAS, on September 19, 1980, Senior Airman David Powell was doing*



1 *routine maintenance on a Titan 374-7, a 350,000-pound missile with a nine-*
2 *and-a-half-megaton thermonuclear warhead attached, when he dropped an eight-*
3 *and-three-quarter-pound socket, which pierced the fuel tank of the missile*
4 *causing a very serious fuel leak; and*

5
6 *WHEREAS, the crew was told several times to evacuate the missile silo,*
7 *but several airmen went back to try to stop the leak, including Senior Airman*
8 *David L. Livingston and Sergeant Jeff Kennedy, who went back into the silo*
9 *shortly before 3:00 a.m. and attempted to turn on a fan to contain the fuel-*
10 *vapor fumes; and*

11
12 *WHEREAS, missile crew commander Captain Michael Mazzaro and deputy*
13 *commander Lieutenant Allen D. Childers also stayed at the site to try to*
14 *control the fuel leak; and*

15
16 *WHEREAS, at around 3:00 a.m. on September 19, 1980, the silo exploded,*
17 *sending the missile and its warhead hundreds of feet into the air, but thanks*
18 *to safety features, the warhead did not explode; and*

19
20 *WHEREAS, Colonel James L. Morris, the head of maintenance at the 308th*
21 *Strategic Missile Wing, also stayed behind to try to control the leak and*
22 *carried the wounded on his back after the explosion; and*

23
24 *WHEREAS, Senior Airman David L. Livingston, who was the last person to*
25 *leave the silo, was badly injured in the blast and died from gas poisoning at*
26 *Baptist Medical Center in Little Rock, Arkansas; and*

27
28 *WHEREAS, 21 people were injured in the explosion, and the residents of*
29 *the area experienced ill effects from the fumes; and*

30
31 *WHEREAS, Colonel Jimmie Gray found the warhead in a ditch 200 yards*
32 *from the silo after it was blown 1,000 feet into the air; and*

33
34 *WHEREAS, retired Colonel Gray, the former vice-wing commander at the*
35 *Little Rock Air Force Base, called it a "tremendous explosion" and thought*
36 *that it was one of the worst mishaps in the existence of the missile wing at*

1 *the base. Colonel Gray said, "It should in no way detract from the*
2 *outstanding contributions thousands of men and women of the 308th*
3 *organization made over a twenty-five-year period. Their dedication and*
4 *sacrifice ensured a lasting peace through nuclear deterrents. We were an*
5 *outstanding unit...but there are lessons to be learned.";* and
6

7 *WHEREAS, the explosion occurred during the Cold War era, when the Titan*
8 *II missile was a nuclear deterrent and the most powerful missile in the*
9 *United States arsenal; the thermonuclear bomb on the Titan was 1,700 times*
10 *more powerful than the bomb dropped on Hiroshima, Japan, at the end of World*
11 *War II; and collectively, the 18 Titan missiles in Arkansas had more*
12 *destructive power than all the bombs in human history combined until that*
13 *time; and*
14

15 *WHEREAS, lessons learned from the accident brought about security*
16 *improvements for nuclear weapons across the United States,*
17

18 *NOW THEREFORE,*

19 *BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE NINETY-FIRST GENERAL*
20 *ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:*
21

22 *THAT the House of Representatives recognize the sacrifices made by the*
23 *members of the 308th Titan II Strategic Missile Wing and honor them for their*
24 *service.*
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26 *BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon adoption of this resolution, a copy shall be*
27 *provided to the Little Rock Air Force Base by the Chief Clerk of the House of*
28 *Representatives.*
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31 */s/Sorvillo*
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