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HR 1013

By: Representatives Sorvillo, *F. Allen, Ballinger, Beck, Branscum, Burch, Cavanaugh, Coleman, Collins, Cozart, Davis, Della Rosa, D. Douglas, Drown, Farrer, K. Ferguson, V. Flowers, Fortner, Gates, Hammer, Henderson, G. Hodges, Hollowell, Jean, Ladyman, Lemons, Lowery, Lundstrum, A. Mayberry, McCollum, G. McGill, Miller, Murdock, Petty, Richey, Richmond, Rushing, Rye, Sabin, Shepherd, B. Smith, Sturch, Tosh, Tucker, Vaught, Watson, D. Whitaker, J. Williams, Wing, Womack*

## HOUSE RESOLUTION

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

### Subtitle

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

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

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

*WHEREAS, the public had very little idea that there were nuclear weapons capable of reaching Moscow in 30 minutes being stored all over Arkansas, including in Antioch, Bald Knob, Damascus, Heber Springs, Judsonia,*



*Mountain View, Plumerville, Republican, Rose Bud, Springhill, Velvet Ridge, and Wonder View; and*

*WHEREAS, on September 19, 1980, Senior Airman David Powell was doing routine maintenance on a Titan 374-7, a 350,000-pound missile with a nine-and-a-half-megaton thermonuclear warhead attached, when he dropped an eight-and-three-quarter-pound socket, which pierced the fuel tank of the missile causing a very serious fuel leak; and*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

*WHEREAS, retired Colonel Gray, the former vice-wing commander at the Little Rock Air Force Base, called it a "tremendous explosion" and thought that it was one of the worst mishaps in the existence of the missile wing at the base. Colonel Gray said, "It should in no way detract from the outstanding contributions thousands of men and women of the 308th organization made over a twenty-five-year period. Their dedication and sacrifice ensured a lasting peace through nuclear deterrents. We were an outstanding unit...but there are lessons to be learned.";* and

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

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

*NOW THEREFORE,*

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

*THAT the House of Representatives recognize the sacrifices made by the members of the 308<sup>th</sup> Titan II Strategic Missile Wing and honor them for their service.*

*BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that upon adoption of this resolution, a copy shall be provided to the Little Rock Air Force Base by the Chief Clerk of the House of Representatives.*

*/s/Sorvillo*