

August 3, 2001

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE  
"MX MISSILE STAND-DOWN ACT"

**HON. EDWARD J. MARKEY**

OF MASSACHUSETTS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 2, 2001*

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Speaker, today, Rep. TAUSCHER and I are introducing the "MX Missile Stand-Down Act", a measure to take the 50 MX missiles off of hair-trigger alert.

Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld announced on June 27 of this year that the Pentagon would seek to dismantle these 50 MX missiles. Yesterday, the House Armed Services Committee passed by voice vote an amendment by Rep. ALLEN to the Defense Authorization bill to allow such dismantlement, which had been previously prohibited by Congress.

The bill we are introducing today augments these recent steps. According to a preliminary plan by the Air Force, these MX missiles would be dismantled over a 3-year timescale. What our legislation is saying is that there is no need to keep the balance of the silo-busting, heavily-MIRVed MX missiles in a state of ready launch during that time, and therefore we direct the Secretary of Defense to stand-down the MX missiles by removing their warheads over FY2002.

This is a simple but important step. Currently, the United States and Russia have a total of about 4,000 weapons on hair-trigger alert, ready to launch within a few minutes. This state of readiness is unnecessary a decade after the end of the Cold War. As then-Governor George W. Bush observed during the recent Presidential campaign on May 23, 2000, "[T]he United States should remove as many weapons as possible from high-alert, hair-trigger status. Another unnecessary vestige of Cold War confrontation, preparation for quick launch within minutes after warning of an attack was the rule during the era of super-power rivalry. But today for two nations at peace, keeping so many weapons on high alert may create unacceptable risks of accidental or unauthorized launch."

There is a real danger that a false alarm could lead to a nuclear exchange, as evidenced by episodes such as the 1995 incident in which the Russians mistook a scientific launch for an attack and began the process of responding. With the Russian early warning systems having deteriorated since that incident, the hazard is all the more plausible. Therefore, we also direct the Secretary of Defense to make yearly reports to Congress on the condition of the Russian early warning systems, as well as the inventory and alert status of the Russian nuclear arsenal.

This bill continues the process of confidence-building, making a definitive, material statement to the Russians that we do not wish to continue to maintain our nuclear weapons in high-alert and thereby encourage them to follow suit.

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF THE  
"MX MISSILE STAND-DOWN ACT"

**HON. ELLEN O. TAUSCHER**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 2, 2001*

Mrs. TAUSCHER. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join Congressman MARKEY today in offering this important bill which I believe would take an important step toward making the world safer from the threat of accidental nuclear war.

As you may know, Mr. Speaker, the United States and Russia maintain between them, over 4000 weapons on high alert. These weapons are capable of being launched in 3 to 15 minutes and have a combined destructive power nearly 100,000 times greater than the atomic bomb dropped over Hiroshima.

Within a few minutes of receiving instructions to fire, American and Russian land-based rockets with over 3,000 warheads could begin their 25 minute flight to their targets. Less than 15 minutes after receiving their attack order, U.S. and Russian ballistic missile submarines could dispatch over 1,000 warheads.

As you know Mr. Speaker, none of these missiles can be recalled or made to self-destruct.

The Cold War is over but the dangers posed by nuclear weapons have increased because of the heightened risk of an attack resulting from accident, miscalculation or unauthorized use. Indeed, I have serious concerns about the steady deterioration of Russia's early warning and nuclear command systems. According to intelligence reports, critical electronic devices and computers sometimes switch to combat mode for no apparent reason. And many of the radars and satellites intended to detect a ballistic missile attack no longer operate.

During the 2000 campaign, President Bush stated that the "U.S. should remove as many weapons as possible from high-alert, hair-trigger status" because an excess number "on high-alert may create unacceptable risks of accidental or unauthorized launch".

This important bill would take a small but significant step toward reducing the risk of accidental nuclear conflict by de-alerting the 50 Peacekeeper Missiles. By building trust with the Russians and showing them we are serious about arms control, this measure is a serious and responsible investment in our country's security.

In 1991, responding to the August Moscow coup, and along with START negotiations, President George Bush took 450 Minuteman II missiles and all strategic bombers off alert.

In response, Russia announced the deactivation of 503 ICBMs and pledged to keep bombers at low readiness levels.

Mr. Speaker, ten years later it is high time we do this again. Let's deactivate the MX Missiles and send the Russians the same message we did in 1991 that we are serious about reducing the threat of nuclear war.

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DISABLED VETERANS SERVICE  
DOGS & HEALTH CARE IMPROVE-  
MENT ACT OF 2001

**HON. JERRY MORAN**

OF KANSAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Thursday, August 2, 2001*

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Veterans Subcommittee on Health I am introducing the "Veterans Service Dogs & Health Care Improvement Act of 2001." This legislation improves veterans' health care services in several important ways.

It allows the VA to provide service dogs to disabled veterans. It mandates improvement in VA capacity for specialized medical programs for veterans, such as serious mental illness, spinal cord injury, blindness, amputees and traumatic brain injuries. It modifies the VA's "ability to pay" formula so that low-income veterans can receive the care they need. Finally, the bill establishes innovative pilot programs to help us learn how we can improve veterans' benefits in the future.

We all know that dog is man's best friend, but for many disabled veterans, a dog is much more than a friend. Service dogs can greatly enhance the quality of life for many seriously disabled veterans. This bill authorizes the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to provide enrolled veterans with spinal cord injuries, immobility due to chronic impairment and hearing impairment to use service dogs in day-to-day activities. Training, travel, and incidental expenses incurred while adjusting to the dog may also be paid.

This bill also seeks to strengthen mandates for VA to maintain capacity in specialized medical programs, such as serious mental illness, spinal cord injury, blinded veterans, veterans with amputations and veterans suffering from traumatic brain injuries, in each VISN. Although overall capacity has increased in the VA, there has been a decrease in the number of veterans with substance-use and mental illness served in specialized programs. With over 225,000 homeless veterans currently living on our streets, we cannot allow this to continue. Only 11 of 25 spinal cord injury facilities are providing the number of staffed beds specified by a VHA Directive. We must extend the reporting requirement to ensure VA is doing what was directed to care for our at-risk veteran population.

Beyond the VHA Directive regarding capacity, this bill seeks to modify the current VA means-test threshold. For about fifteen years, the VA has determined a nonservice-connected veteran's ability to pay by comparing a veteran's income to a predetermined "means-test threshold." The threshold, expressed in annual household income, is an assumed income level that would be sufficient to a veteran to pay for health care in the community. If a veteran's income is below the "ability to pay" threshold, (currently \$23,688 for a single veteran without dependents) he or she is eligible for VA care, and permits the veteran to avoid the co-payments charged to higher-income veterans for VA health care services.

VA's one national standard income threshold has been criticized for years because of