

106TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. CON. RES. 177

Expressing the sense of the Congress that nuclear weapons should be taken off hair-trigger alert.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

AUGUST 5, 1999

Mr. MARKEY submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on International Relations, and in addition to the Committee on Armed Services, for a period to be subsequently determined by the Speaker, in each case for consideration of such provisions as fall within the jurisdiction of the committee concerned

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Expressing the sense of the Congress that nuclear weapons should be taken off hair-trigger alert.

Whereas accidental or mistaken launch of a nuclear missile could devastate a city, and launch of a nuclear force could wreak worldwide destruction;

Whereas the United States and Russia currently maintain thousands of nuclear weapons on “hair-trigger” alert, such that they can be fired within minutes;

Whereas in several incidents false signals of missile attacks have triggered a process in which national leaders had to decide in only a few minutes whether to fire nuclear weapons;

Whereas the failure of computers to recognize the year 2000 date change could infect command, control, communications, and intelligence systems, causing false signals or blank monitoring screens;

Whereas Russian monitoring and control systems are deteriorating;

Whereas a massive preemptive attack attempting to destroy the nuclear weapons capability of either Russia or the United States is extremely unlikely, and mutual measures to slow the firing of nuclear weapons would make a preemptive strike even more difficult;

Whereas much of the nuclear force of each country, including submarines at sea and mobile land-based missiles, is almost invulnerable and thus would preserve retaliatory ability through a nuclear attack, making immediate firing of weapons unnecessary;

Whereas President Bush in 1991 ordered a unilateral stand-down of United States strategic bombers and de-alerted some missiles, and Soviet President Gorbachev quickly reciprocated with similar actions, improving bilateral relations and national security;

Whereas removing further missiles from hair-trigger alert would help alleviate recent tensions between Russia and the United States; and

Whereas there are several ways that land and submarine based weapons could be temporarily disabled, with times ranging from minutes to weeks in order to reactivate them: Now, therefore be it

1 *Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate*
2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of the Congress that—

1 (1) the United States, Russia, and other nu-
2 clear powers should negotiate an agreement to take
3 all of their nuclear weapons off of high-alert status
4 in order to decrease the risk of accidental or mis-
5 taken firing of nuclear weapons;

6 (2) to further such an agreement, the United
7 States should immediately take off of hair-trigger
8 alert as many of its nuclear weapons as is feasible
9 and consistent with national security, and should en-
10 courage Russia to reciprocate;

11 (3) the Department of Defense and the State
12 Department should study methods to increase fur-
13 ther the time needed to launch all nuclear missiles
14 and study the effect these actions would have on nu-
15 clear deterrence, relations with other recognized nu-
16 clear powers, the international nuclear nonprolifera-
17 tion regime, and other aspects of national security;
18 and

19 (4) the President should expedite the establish-
20 ment of a United States-Russian joint early-warning
21 center to ensure accurate detection of any missiles
22 and effective communication in the event of a false
23 alarm, computer malfunction, accident, or diplomatic
24 crisis, as set forth in the “Joint Statement on the
25 Exchange of Information on Missile Launches and

1 Early Warning'', agreed to in 1998, and should fa-
2 cilitate the establishment of a temporary center be-
3 fore the end of 1999 that could address any prob-
4 lems which might arise due to the failure of com-
5 puters to recognize the year 2000 date change.

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