

exceptional courage and learned measures in order to save lives. I am proud to recognize Officer Napolitan.

I and Hoosiers throughout Indiana's Second Congressional District are extremely grateful to Officer Napolitan on this occasion and to all our law enforcement officials serving on the Thin Blue Line for the dedicated—and often dangerous—work they do day in and day out to go after the bad guys and keep our communities safe. God bless Officer Dan Napolitan and all those who protect and serve.

UNWINNABLE RACE: CONGRESS'S  
RESPONSIBILITY TO PREVENT A  
NUCLEAR ARMS RACE

**HON. JOHN GARAMENDI**

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Wednesday, June 12, 2024*

Mr. GARAMENDI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to call on this body to fulfill its responsibility in addressing an existential challenge facing our nation. For decades, nuclear weapons have threatened the safety of our country and our planet. Today, as nations re-arm and competition re-emerges, we run the risk of repeating our past mistakes and entering a new cold war. A nuclear arms race is well underway, and it poses an existential threat to all. This Congress must stand up and stop the escalatory spiral before it's too late.

It's well past time for our voices, the voices of restraint and risk reduction, to be heard in the nuclear arms debate. The United States, the Russian Federation, and the People's Republic of China are locked into an extraordinarily dangerous nuclear arms race. All three countries are rapidly increasing their nuclear firepower with new and more capable bombs, more long-range missiles, new stealth delivery systems, bombers, and submarines. And as tensions heighten, all of this is dependent on the newest field of warfare: space. All three countries depend upon their space assets to observe, detect threats, and communicate the commands to act.

We must cut through the rhetoric of fear and doomsaying that dominates our nuclear policy debates. We can no longer allow the thoughtful, calm voices to be drowned out by fearmongering cries. We must rise above the noise. Instead of developing cost-effective military systems that provide security while defusing tensions, we have fallen into the fallacy that more missiles make us more secure. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Today, we must call out the failures of our current approach to nuclear modernization and demand that we treat arms control and de-escalation with the same dedication and focus we give to our nuclear weapons development. It is long past time to develop a strategy that sets priorities, recognizes limitations, and strives for a safer future.

It is important to step back and consider the history and broader context of nuclear weapons and Congressional involvement. Since their development almost 80 years ago, the destructive capability of nuclear weapons has terrified and shocked, but also led governments to pursue their own arsenals and develop the capacity to destroy our civilization multiple times over. Governments have justified expanding stockpiles with convoluted

theories of nuclear deterrence that often defy common sense.

It wasn't until arms control programs and treaties were established that Russia and the United States de-escalated this spiral of stockpiling bombs. Through four decades, progress was made, the number of deployed and existing nuclear bombs was reduced, and even the most adversarial countries agreed that "a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought." Yet, despite this understanding, we continue to maintain and modernize our arsenals with a belief that these weapons dissuade others from employing theirs. The threat of nuclear conflict remains, and with it, life on our planet ending or becoming dramatically changed.

It would be useful to remind people of the arms control agreements and the leaders that negotiated them. I'm sure that some of my congressional nuclear warriors would be surprised to see that their most ardent national security heroes negotiated the reductions and controls.

I recognize the nuclear threats posed by countries like North Korea, Russia, and China. I do not deny the challenging security environment we face. I am fully aware of the Taiwan/China threat, as well as China's military build-up and South China Sea expansion. The North Korean regime is dangerous and could precipitate a conflict at any moment. I condemn Russia's unprovoked invasion of Ukraine, irresponsible nuclear saber-rattling, and dangerous nuclear exercises.

Despite these serious threats, we must be wise in preparing our defense and response. Aggression should not be our first thought when faced with threats, uncertainty, and misunderstandings. Therefore, I strongly support efforts by the U.S. and Chinese governments to engage in meaningful dialogue that results in specific, concrete actions to reduce the risk of miscommunication or escalation.

As we navigate these complex geopolitical landscapes, it is imperative that we pause and reflect on the strategies guiding our nuclear policy. Strategy must be more than a word thrown on top of grandiose statements. True strategy is making the hard choices to align our country's limited resources with our unlimited aspirations.

The greatest problem facing our nuclear strategy today is that we fail to realistically consider that balance, revisit our assumptions, adjust course when programs fail, and figure out new paths forward. Once approved, weapons programs persist, even when they nearly double and triple their budget. No one stops and says, "Enough."

Too often, we allow these debates to be driven by military calculations and how "experts" would fight a nuclear war. But we must not forget that in a democratic society, the military is the extension of the political and not the other way around. When it comes to programs and strategies that threaten our very existence, we, as a whole society, must decide what costs we should bear and what risks we must take. Our nuclear strategy must be balanced and rational, allowing for deterrence and defensive actions while encouraging collaboration for a more peaceful future.

We in Congress are part of the problem. We have bought into the assumption that more nuclear weapons will make us safer. Ever-growing costs reflect the irrationality that has plagued our nuclear policy. In the name of

"modernization," we've taken on hundreds of billions of dollars of additional spending, and the nuclear accounts grow without question or scrutiny.

An example is the nuclear modernization efforts. The political price tag for New START was the modernization of all three legs of America's nuclear triad. Proponents told us the multi-billion-dollar cost was necessary to ensure that we continue to have a viable deterrent. Today, we can and should debate whether every part of modernization is cost-effective and necessary for deterrence. We must also fully understand the reasons for the massive growth in the cost of all these programs.

Let's turn to the new Sentinel ICBM, which is destined to replace the Minuteman III. It has incurred an egregious 37 percent cost overrun, making the program's cost almost 211 percent higher than the Air Force's initial 2015 estimate. This has triggered a critical Nunn-McCurdy cost overrun, forcing a stop and a full statutory review. Despite the new estimated cost of \$130 billion, there are loud and clear reflexive signals that the Pentagon and Congress intend to plow ahead no matter the cost or the necessity. "We'll do whatever is necessary."

While this may be convenient, the law requires a complete and full review that addresses five critical steps. (1) The program is essential to national security; (2) there are no alternatives to the program that will provide acceptable capability; (3) the new cost estimates have been determined to be reasonable; (4) the program is a higher priority than programs whose funding will be reduced to cover the increased cost of this program; and (5) the management structure is sufficient to control additional cost growth. It is imperative that the Pentagon conduct a thorough examination to assess the necessity and feasibility of continuing the program in its current state. Equally necessary is that Congress engage in a full debate to assess the Pentagon's rationale. Without public pressure, it is doubtful that any hearings will occur, and that's why our Congressional Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control Working Group will hold its own hearing on July 24th.

For years, Congress has dictated in the annual NDAA that the U.S. maintain a minimum of 400 ICBMs. A number founded not on logic but because "that's what we have always had." The number of ground-based ICBMs should not be set by the number of existing concrete silos but in the honest analysis of nuclear strategy. Such a review must consider the risk of a catastrophic mistake inherent in the Sentinel program. In the event of an attack, it is assumed that the first target is the well-known locations of the ICBMs. It's a use-it or lose-it situation. Therefore, a "Launch on Warning" is the operational imperative. The President has only minutes to decide if the attack is real.

If the nuclear program is for deterrence, then the submarines, airplanes, and their missiles offer sufficient firepower to dissuade an adversary. These systems have the benefit of stealth, and the President has the time to gather all information and then decide to use the nuclear response. If that weren't enough, we also have ample conventional weapons capability to deter potential adversaries.

However, the Sentinel program is not the only problem. The hidden costs of ground-

based ICBM modernization are found in unexpected and little-noticed places like the “Energy and Water” appropriations bill, which would spend \$19.8 billion for “Weapons Activities,” a \$2.7 billion increase from the previous year. So, what is the \$19.8 billion for? This year, the Department of Energy/NNSA requested a \$3 billion down payment for the production of “plutonium pits,” which are the hollow plutonium shells used to trigger the nuclear reaction. On its own, this number is astonishingly high, but it doesn’t include the anticipated \$8 billion to build the production facility in Los Alamos and the second facility at Savannah River, which alone has a projected total project cost of \$18–25 billion, nearly six times the initial estimated cost for construction. It will be the most expensive building in America. And there is the \$1.4 billion requested for stockpile sustainment, the \$1.1 billion dollars for the Sentinel warhead development at Lawrence Lab, which has grown by 63 percent, and the untold cost of the six other warheads and bombs that support the other nuclear modernization programs.

Even proponents of modernizing nuclear programs should be concerned about the high costs. The January 2023 GAO report found that the NNSA has not developed a comprehensive schedule or cost estimate and has not identified all necessary activities or milestones to achieve the required 80-pit-per-year production capacity. And why do we need to produce 80 pits per year when America already has over 4,000 plutonium pits in storage? Has anyone studied the potential of repurposing these pits for the new bombs? The bottom line is this: Senior officials at the NNSA admit they won’t meet deadlines and have no idea what the ultimate cost will be.

I have tried to force common-sense reforms to better estimate cost. For example, I offered a straightforward amendment that would change the current law requiring 80 pits per year to a lower number that represents the realistic number of plutonium pits our country needs and can feasibly produce. To some, this is seen as an “extreme radical position,” and my proposal was voted down. Time and time again, I have been denied the opportunity to bring important nuclear matters to the floor for debate.

Across the nuclear enterprise, costs are soaring, fears are growing, and it remains unclear what goals we are achieving. Yet, amidst soaring costs and escalating risks, it’s imperative to reassess our nuclear priorities. Investing more of the modernization budget into diplomacy, arms control, and education could yield far-reaching benefits, fostering a stronger and more secure nation. Congress must fulfill its duty to allocate taxpayer funds responsibly, avoiding excessive expenses on wasteful nuclear programs that do little to enhance genuine security. Maintaining a “safe, secure, and effective deterrent” does not necessitate these costly modernization plans, especially given the pressing needs in other areas critical to national strength and stability.

The significance of arms control cannot be overstated. Prioritizing de-escalation isn’t just an idealistic notion; it’s a necessity. Arms races cannot be won. When we attempt to outpace our adversaries in weapon development, they inevitably respond in kind, draining our limited resources and fostering international instability as fear predominates and the world’s most devastating weapons become a more likely option.

The critical role of arms control in preserving global stability and security is evident from history’s many close calls. We can’t afford to wait for another Cuban missile crisis to recognize the dangers of miscommunication and the failure to engage in dialogue.

Only a few lonely congressional voices have joined the clarion call put forth by the Arms Control Association, Ploughshares, Council for a Livable World, Union of Concerned Scientists, Friends Committee on National Legislation, Nuclear Threat Initiative, and other well-known arms control organizations. Year after year, funding proposals and resolutions to support non-proliferation, nuclear fissile material control and verification, and weapons negotiations have been made to draw attention to the importance of arms control. Like Sisyphus pushing the boulder up the hill, it is often thankless work, fighting and clawing for progress only to see it roll back down again, as had happened in the Intermediate Range Nuclear Missile Treaty, New START, and the Iran nuclear agreement. But the work could not be more important. Unlike that Greek myth, I do believe that we can get the boulder to the top of the hill and develop robust arms control regimes that will help us all to avoid an existential threat.

There are three key pillars in this endeavor. First, knowledge of the destructive power of nuclear weapons and an understanding of their role in modern warfare. The library is full of studies on nuclear war, deterrence, the risks of misunderstanding, compelling arguments for risk reduction, and the value of arms control. We cannot forget the horrors that nuclear weapons would inflict if they were ever used again. This work cannot be understated. It’s been 79 years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki and 40 years since the movie “The Day After” aired, showing Americans and their leadership just how terrible such an event would be. It is a hard truth, but one we must face. We can’t allow nuclear weapons rhetoric to be divorced from the very real consequences of their use.

Secondly, encouraging dialogue and fostering open communication channels are essential. While it may appear impossible to have any arms control negotiations with Russia as it conducts its war of aggression in Ukraine, it is important to remember that many of the previous arms treaties with Russia began at the moment of maximum international tension. The recent dialogues with China’s political and military leaders are encouraging. We should accept China’s offer to discuss “No first use” policy. We don’t know where the discussion may lead, but it’s an opening.

Lastly, garnering political support is crucial. Non-profits and advocacy groups have laid the groundwork; now, we must amplify their efforts and call on Congress to act. For too long, our focus on arms control has waned, and members of Congress have paid too little focus.

This is the moment to redouble our efforts. In a world marked by uncertainty and growing competition, building bridges and fostering understanding is more critical than ever. However, this effort must start at home. Inevitably, Congress must reconcile our infinite desires with our limited means. That means making hard decisions about how and where to spend taxpayer dollars to achieve real security. Hundreds of billions of dollars and 14 years have been spent in the modernization of America’s

nuclear weapons programs, and it has yielded a three-nation nuclear arms and space race. Are we more secure?

The Sentinel ICBM program, now estimated to be \$150 billion, breached the cost escalation limit of the Nunn-McCurdy law. The Pentagon and Congress must now justify the continuation of the program. Congress and the American public must not waste this pivotal moment to study the reality of the nuclear weapon arms race and make a decision to shift course. It’s past time to maximize our efforts to negotiate an end to the race and seek paths to reduce nuclear arms and the associated existential threat.

We face real challenges in this world, but too often, hyperbole and fear are being used to drive our decision-making. Competition need not mean hostility. It is time we returned to reason and rationality. Together, we must confront the challenges before us, not by building ever more dangerous weapons, but by placing the same priority on effective arms control and risk reduction measures that we currently place on modernization. We may face challenges, but we still have the choice of which future we will pursue. We know the risks, we know the dangers that modernizations and the inevitable arms race could hold, but that’s why it is so important we redouble our efforts toward making de-escalation real. Let us take this moment, this opportunity, to engage in a meaningful dialogue and choose the path towards a safer and more world.

HONORING FLORA WILSON

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, June 12, 2024

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mrs. Flora Wilson, a distinguished native of Batesville, Mississippi.

Mrs. Flora Wilson is a prominent Batesville, Mississippi, native who has resided in the City of Indianola since 1969. A respected member of her community, Mrs. Wilson is well known for her dedication, generosity, and service.

Mrs. Wilson is a proud mother of four, a grandmother of twelve, and a great-grandmother of four. She started working at a daycare at the age of 18, marking the beginning of her journey of dedication and service to people. After serving for twenty years at Stapleton-Staple Cotton Cooperative, she worked for nine years at Harvest Select Catfish Farm to wrap off her professional career. She retired in 2004 to take care of herself and her only daughter during a health difficulty.

After retiring, Mrs. Wilson has embraced an active and purposeful life. As the church mother at Mt. Zion Church of God in Christ (COGIC) in Rolling Fork, Mississippi, she has committed herself to full-time church service and serves her congregation by offering spiritual support and advice. She also acts as a caretaker, lending her empathy and support to others in need.

Additionally, Mrs. Wilson has also continued to use her skills as a seamstress, repairing and altering clothing for residents. Her work not only meets a practical need but also fosters a sense of community and care among her neighbors. Moreover, she has been an unwavering supporter of her granddaughter’s,