

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2024

Major General Duke Pirak
Acting Director, Air National Guard
1000 Air Force Pentagon, 4E126
Washington, D.C. 20330

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
U.S. Department of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Major General Pirak and Secretary Austin,

We write to update you on the significant progress made by the 185th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) on its requested military construction (MILCON) projects and ask that they be considered for inclusion in the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) required in the Department of Defense (DOD) Financial Management Regulation. These projects are the Runway 13/31 Replacement (VSSB202002), and the Aircraft Parking Ramp (VSSB202003).

This past August, the 185th ARW reached the 35% design stage for the Runway 13/31 Replacement, and Aircraft Parking Ramp. Last month, the Air National Guard Readiness Center/A4 (ANGRC/A4) approved the final DD 1391 forms for the projects. As you know, this makes them eligible for inclusion in the Future Years Defense Program and for MILCON funding. The projects are expected to hit the 100% design stage in the coming months, likely by the summer of 2025. These two milestones would have the projects prepared for construction by Fiscal Year 2026.

This fall's milestone was the most recent step by the 185th ARW and Sioux City to secure the promised construction after taking on the responsibilities of the KC-135 Stratotanker (KC-135) over twenty years ago. In the early 2000s, the 185th ARW converted from housing F-16 Fighting Falcons to housing KC-135s, which are approximately 250,000 pounds heavier and require an increase in ramp and runway resilience. At the time of the conversion, DOD pledged to invest fully in the needed ramp and runway augmentations. Due to the events of September 11th, 2001, those DOD resources had to be allotted to other projects related to mobilization for the War on Terror.

Major General Stephen Osborn, the Adjutant General of Iowa, has elevated these runway and ramp improvements to the top priority for the Iowa National Guard. These improvements are needed as the 185th ARW has had to rely on temporary fixes to maintain mission readiness. The most recent repairs to the runway took place in 2022 and will likely only extend the life of the runway until 2027. Given the time that the runway improvements will take to begin construction we ask that the funding is allotted for Fiscal Year 2026.

Even with these repeated repairs, the 185th ARW can only meet 64% of current mission requirements and has had to rely on more than 110 takeoff waivers over the previous six years. The delays in improvements also require KC-135s deploying overseas to make an additional refueling stop at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas.

Despite these limitations, the 185th ARW is an award-winning unit. It has received multiple Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, most recently the Air Force Meritorious Unit Award in 2022. The unit also passed Mobility Command inspections in 2022 and 2023 with great results.

Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota residents make up 94% of the brave men and women who serve at the 185 ARW and fulfill its mission. On top of their dedication to protecting our country, the nearly 900 Airmen are essential to the Siouxland region's economy and are a staple of their communities across the tri-state area. It is crucial that they are provided with the necessary funds to complete the runway and ramp resilience and continue their work in a safe and efficient manner.

In this time of increased military modernization and tensions with the United States' enemies, we appreciate your leadership of the Air National Guard. We ask for full and thorough consideration of these runway and ramp projects for the upcoming FYDP.

Sincerely,



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



John Thune
United States Senator



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



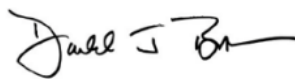
Zach Nunn
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks
Member of Congress



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator



Don Bacon
Member of Congress