

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2023

Lieutenant General Michael A. Loh
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 Lieutenant General Loh and Secretary Austin,

We write to ask that the crucial Military Construction Projects requested by the 185th Air Refueling Wing (ARW) in Sioux City be considered for inclusion in the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) as they meet the design stage milestones required in the Department of Defense Financial Management Regulation. The projects that are much needed by the 185 ARW are the Runway 13/31 Replacement (VSSB202002), Runway Extension (VSSB139004), Aircraft Parking Ramp (VSSB202003), and Construction of Maintenance Hangar and Shops (VSSB199004).

Over two decades ago, the 185 ARW converted from housing and deploying the F-16 Fighting Falcons to the increased burden of the KC-135 Stratotanker which has a gross weight of 297,000 pounds. Along with this conversion, the Department of Defense pledged investments to fully fund the ramp, runway, and hangar augmentations needed to support the much heavier aircraft. As you know, those plans had to be halted due to the tragic events of September 11, 2001, as the country's military resources were needed for mobilization for the War on Terror.

The 185 ARW has since needed to find ways to maintain mission readiness. Precautions have been taken with its runway and ramp's inadequate thickness and length, requiring operational weight limitations and airfield waivers. Additionally, the base is getting by with a 1957 vintage hangar that inhibits the efficiency of operations, causes increased wear on vehicles, and suffers from deteriorating water and electrical systems. Given these current limitations, the wing can only meet 64% of current mission requirements relying on more than 110 takeoff waivers in the last six years, and most KC-135's are required to make an additional refueling stop at McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas before being deployed overseas.

Despite these challenges, the 185 ARW has received multiple Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, including the most recent Air Force Meritorious Unit Award in 2022. They have also passed their last two major Air Mobility Command inspections in 2022 and 2023 with excellent results. The continued stellar performance of the 185 ARW has pushed these project requests to be the top priority of Major General Stephen Osborn, the Adjutant General of Iowa.

The brave men and women who operate the 185 ARW reside in Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota. The base and its nearly 1,000 Airmen, 300 of whom are full-time, are critical to the Tri-State region's economic stability and provide area employers with a highly-skilled workforce. Our Tri-State Region is grateful for their service, and earlier this year, the Governors of all three states signed on to a letter, which we've attached here, to support the needed investments in the 185th Air Refueling Wing.

We thank you both for your leadership of the Air National Guard and ask for full and thorough consideration of these runway and hangar projects for the FYDP as they reach the necessary design stage requirements.

Sincerely,



Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress



Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator



Ashley Hinson
Member of Congress



Mariannette Miller-Meeks
Member of Congress



Zach Nunn
Member of Congress



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



Dusty Johnson
Member of Congress



John Thune
United States Senator



M. Michael Rounds
United States Senator