

Congressman Randy Feenstra (IA-4)
House Armed Services Committee Member Day Written Testimony
April 15, 2026

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony regarding priorities in my district.

There are four critical military construction projects awaiting funding at the Iowa Air National Guard's 185th Air Refueling Wing (185th ARW): Repair Runway 13-31, Extend Runway 13-31, ADAL Aircraft Parking Apron, and the Warm-Up and Holding Pad. Together, these projects are essential to ensuring the continued operational capability and readiness of the 185th ARW's KC-135 aerial refueling mission and represent a necessary investment in the foundational infrastructure that underpins American military power. I ask for the support of the esteemed members of this Committee for these projects as we work with the House Appropriations Committee to decide the funding priorities for military construction.

The need for these improvements dates back to the 185th ARW's 2003 transition to the KC-135 mission, when the Department of War (DOW) committed to upgrading infrastructure to support heavier aircraft. Sadly, these upgrades have yet to be funded.

The 185th ARW supports operations across all Combatant commands, contributes to nuclear deterrence, and enables global mobility and power projection. These are core elements of the United States' ability to deter aggression and, if necessary, project decisive force. Aerial refueling is fundamental to extending the reach and effectiveness of U.S. and allied air operations.

The investments requested are consistent with the President's FY27 DOW Budget priorities, which emphasize rebuilding the foundations of American military power, restoring force readiness and lethality, and prioritizing resources toward the most acute national security threats. Modern, resilient infrastructure is crucial to achieving these objectives, ensuring that warfighters can operate at full capacity and respond rapidly in contested environments.

The most immediate need is the Repair Runway 13-31 project. The current runway was built for 40,000-pound F-16 aircraft and is not designed to support KC-135 aircraft exceeding 300,000 pounds. Despite temporary repairs being completed in 2022, the runway is expected to remain viable only through 2027. The Wing operates under weight restrictions, has required more than 225 heavyweight takeoff waivers, and can meet only approximately 64 percent of mission requirements. These constraints directly degrade readiness and limit the DOW's ability to generate combat power at speed.

At a time when the DOW is prioritizing investments that ensure warfighters are trained, equipped, and ready to fight and win, continued reliance on inadequate infrastructure places unnecessary strain on personnel and operations.

The remaining projects are equally necessary to restore full mission capability and enable sustained, high-tempo operations. The Runway Extension provides long-term infrastructure resilience for heavy aircraft operations, while the Aircraft Parking Apron and Warm-Up/Holding Pad improve aircraft throughput, staging, and sortie generation. These are key factors in maintaining operational readiness.

All four projects are included in the Construction Programs portion of the DOW FY27 Budget that was released earlier this month. Additionally, they were authorized in the Fiscal Year 2026 NDAA and included on the Department of the Air Force's Unfunded Priorities List, reflecting their importance as high-priority investments in readiness, force strength, and sustained global deterrence.

It is critical that we ensure these projects are funded and executed before current infrastructure reaches the end of its service life.

For these reasons, I respectfully request the Committee's support as we work with the House Appropriations Committee during the funding process to prioritize key projects for mission readiness and ensure the force remains capable of deterring adversaries and, if necessary, fighting and winning.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Randy Feenstra". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a long horizontal flourish.

Randy Feenstra
Member of Congress