

**MONDAY MORNING GROUP OF WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY
ANNUAL ADVOCACY TRIP – WASHINGTON, DC
April 9 – 11, 2024**

FAILING NATURAL GAS INFRASTRUCTURE AT MARCH AIR RESERVE BASE

ISSUE: The Contingency Response element at March Air Reserve Base, California (March ARB) will expand to approximately 250% of its current operational capacity in response to national security issues in the Indo-Pacific Theater as the United States shifts towards Great Power Competition (GPC). The geographic location of March ARB in proximity to the Indo-Pacific region reduces the logistical challenges associated with deploying forces over long distances in support of tactical Joint Operations.

However, a large portion of the infrastructure at March ARB has exceeded its expected lifetime, and in some cases, more than twice its designed life expectancy (e.g. the natural gas pipeline). The vulnerability of the infrastructure is high, and the resiliency is low. The natural gas pipeline is a single point of failure for the complex, diverse mission set at March ARB with the consequence and probability of failure both being high.

ACTION: The Monday Morning Group requests Congressional support to drive modernization repair of March ARB's natural gas infrastructure that was installed prior to the Korean War. A design project is currently underway to determine the requirements for the critically necessary modernization repair effort. The design will determine the level of effort necessary to support the warfighters and their ability to respond to real-world events.

The current Programmed Amount for the construction effort in FY21 dollars was approximately \$18.2 million. Considering global supply chain issues and inflation outside of historical norms, the modernization repair is likely to be approximately \$22.7 million with an upper limit approximately \$26.4 million. The funding support from Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC) would consume 25% or more of the command's total Facilities Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization, and Demolition Program (FSRM) budget and would force the difficult decisions of putting other mission requirements at risk. By allocating resources for this critical FSRM infrastructure project, Congress would be championing the cause and demonstrating a steadfast commitment to the preparedness and effectiveness of United States military forces. Thus, ensuring the legacy of the rules-based norm that has existed for more than 80 years.

BACKGROUND: March ARB, home of the 452d Air Mobility Wing (452 AMW), is the largest, oldest, and most complex installation in terms of mission sets in AFRC. The installation provides responsive and resilient worldwide airlift and air refueling operations from more than 3,000 personnel, nine assigned C-17A, and 14 assigned KC-135R aircraft.

In addition, March ARB supports multiple tenant organizations, including the California Air National Guard with six F-16s on alert and U.S. Customs and Border Protection Air Marine Operations Center providing multi-domain monitoring for general aviation and non-commercial maritime activities in the Western hemisphere. The installation was selected as a beddown location for the modern air refueling platform KC-46 that will replace the aging KC-135Rs over the next five years.

March ARB has been a key element in joint military operations for over a century. Thus, playing a vital role in every major conflict since the installation's inception. Infrastructure that can support the warfighter is crucial to U.S. deterrence strategy and its modernization is necessary to support the current and expanding demands on March ARB as an operating location in safeguarding our nation's security interests as defined in the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and other strategic planning documents.

However, due to the lack of sustainment support, infrastructure has severely degraded to the point of failure. The natural gas infrastructure consists of approximately 47,800 linear feet (approximately 9.05-miles) of various diameters. The natural gas pipeline should have the ability to maintain a pressure of 55 pounds per square inch (PSI). Because of numerous leaks along the pipeline the pressure is averaging only 20 PSI, which is insufficient to provide the natural gas flow to support critical assets at March ARB. Currently, leaks are occurring along the entire span of the existing pipeline and creating additional work and funding to make temporary repairs. One of the root

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causes of the leaks in the existing pipeline is corrosion, which could have been mitigated and prevented by utilizing cathodic protection systems. Unfortunately, the lack of funding from FSRM has caused difficult decisions to redirect funds towards other needs.

In addition, the wetter than normal rainy seasons in 2023 and 2024 have caused the water table to rise and increased corrosion, resulting in additional leaks. Due to the severity of corrosion, the natural gas pipeline can only be shut off at the utility feed from Southern California Gas Company. If a major leak were to occur, the entire installation would have its natural gas supply shut off until the necessary repairs are made.

Addressing these negative aspects of dwindling FSRM funding, coupled with aging infrastructure, is crucial for ensuring the continued effectiveness and operational capabilities of March ARB and other integral tenant organizations that support national security efforts. FSRM funding will need to keep pace with the expanding mission requirements at March ARB. Accordingly, upgrading and modernizing infrastructure is an essential step in maintaining a resilient and adaptive military presence to serve as critical hub to the Indo-Pacific Theater.