

# **SAN ANTONIO REAL PROPERTY MAINTENANCE AGENCY**

## **MISSION**

## **LINEAGE**

San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency

## **STATIONS**

San Antonio Air Force Station, TX

## **ASSIGNMENTS**

## **COMMANDERS**

## **HONORS**

**Service Streamers**

**Campaign Streamers**

**Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers**

**Decorations**

## **EMBLEM**

## **MOTTO**

## **OPERATIONS**

The San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency was founded on 1 Oct 1978 following a series of studies by the General Accounting Office and the Department of Defense aimed at achieving cost savings through regional consolidation. San Antonio, home to the Army's Fort Sam Houston and four Air Force bases--Brooks, Kelly, Lackland, and Randolph--was a prime candidate for such action. Established at San Antonio Air Force Station, adjacent to Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency consolidated the existing civil engineering organizations at all five facilities into a single entity reporting to Air Training Command.

Thus would end a decade-long effort by the Department of Defense to reduce military facility maintenance and management costs through organizational centralization. With a successful consolidation of housekeeping chores for San Diego-area Navy installations as a model, DOD gained congressional, Air Force, and Army concurrence in 1976 to create a San Antonio maintenance agency to absorb most civil engineering functions of an Army post, four air bases, and several minor military sites. Established in Feb 1977 and fully operational by Oct 1978, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency began operations at the newly established San Antonio Air Force Station, occupying land and facilities on Fort Sam Houston.

The central offices of the San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency began planning the construction and service projects that military installation officials wanted to be contracted out. It designed the projects and determined their cost and time requirements, sending planning packages to the San Antonio Contracting Center for presentation to bidders and for contract award. As the largest and most extensively equipped federal government maintenance and construction operation in the San Antonio/South Texas region, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency contracted its services to various federal agencies. It was also called upon in emergencies, e.g., repairing damage from tornados spawned by the 1988 Hurricane Gilbert.

The San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency maintained field engineering branches at the five major military installations to perform all civil engineering functions other than managing base housing, fire protection, and real estate. Field engineers directed San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency crews in doing general maintenance, contracted construction inspection, and "major projects" (small-to-medium construction projects) on their particular military installations. Branch chiefs served as staff civil engineers to each installation's senior officer. Later, Lackland got a second field engineering branch exclusively to handle Wilford Hall USAF Medical Center.

The new construct wrested control of the civil engineering function from local commanders, who retained ownership of all real property and were responsible for its maintenance, a factor that played a large part in San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency's undoing. In theory, the installation commanders prioritized the work to be done and San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency attempted to meet their deadlines. In practice, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency did not live up to expectations. Initially, commanders had difficulty obtaining such basic information as the status of a work order or the cost of a project, and all were dissatisfied with the time it was taking to get work done.

This centralized engineering and contracting arrangement was never popular among Lackland's leadership, depriving training center, medical center, and base commanders of direct control of essential housekeeping operations. The previous 3700th Civil Engineering Squadron, inactivated in 1978, had been led by military engineers and been part of the chain of command; the field engineering branch of San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency that succeeded it was manned almost exclusively by civilians; maintenance came under a different cost management system with unfamiliar procedures; commanders had less leeway in redirecting their

organizations' budget allocations and materiel resources. Lackland officials also had developed a perception of the San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency structure as generally inefficient and costly in comparison to the old decentralized system.

Over time, mainly as a result of extraordinary management actions, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency's performance began to improve. As that happened, opposition to the consolidated real property maintenance concept began to soften, especially on the part of the Army at Fort Sam Houston.

In 1983, at the direction of the Vice Chief of Staff of the Air Force, ATC prepared an assessment of San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency's performance and of alternate ways to accomplish the real property maintenance mission. While the study findings did not show conclusively that San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency was either superior or inferior to a standard base civil engineering organization, the study group did discern a strong distaste for consolidation with its attendant bureaucratic layering and deep concern among commanders about their diminished ability to influence a function so vital to their installations. In the end, ATC recommended to the Air Staff that San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency be disbanded and replaced by standard base civil engineering organizations.

Not much came of this first major challenge to the continuation of San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency. It got bogged down in the coordination process when the Army suggested tabling the idea until Air Training Command could put together a comprehensive disestablishment plan and assess the costs involved. A review committee, composed of representatives from five San Antonio military installations, took on that job. It turned out that the costs involved were substantial: \$27.6 million in one-time costs to dissolve San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency and annual recurring costs of \$24.6 million under standard base civil engineering organizations.

After some delay and despite the high costs, in the fall of 1986 senior Air Force officials decided to disestablish San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency and return to standard base civil engineering organizations. These actions reflected the strong belief of Air Force leaders that installation commanders should have the authority to decide how to accomplish the civil engineering mission, since they were held responsible for getting the job done. After redistributing its manpower authorizations and equipment to the participating installations in roughly the same proportion as the installations had initially contributed, San Antonio Real Property Maintenance Agency shut down operations and was inactivated on 1 Oct 1989.

---

USAF Unit Histories  
Created: 27 Feb 2023  
Updated:

Sources  
Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.