

Fort Gordon (Eisenhower) Renaming Remarks
Augusta, GA
October 27, 2023
1,290 words (~10 minutes)

Thank you for that kind introduction. And thank you to Major General Stanton for your wonderful remarks and for welcoming me to Augusta.

I also want to thank Mary and Susan Eisenhower for upholding your grandfather's legacy of service and for your presence here today.

To the Members of Congress and other elected officials in the audience, thank you for your continued support for the Army's ongoing modernization priorities. Your partnership has allowed us to take better care of our people – including some much-needed upgrades to barracks right here in Augusta.

And of course, a special thanks to the wider Augusta community that has supported the Soldiers and civilians at this installation since it was first established more than 80 years ago. The entire United States Army owes you a debt of gratitude for your unwavering hospitality.

We are here today not simply to change signs and street names, but to honor the legacy of a man who built strong ties with this part of Georgia.

President Eisenhower found in Augusta a place where he could step away from the burdens of Washington and think deeply about the many challenges facing the United States in the years following World War Two.

And as Major General Stanton reminded us, President Eisenhower also carried out one of his final acts as President – an impromptu troop review in January 1961 – right here on these grounds.

He used his brief remarks on that special day to reflect on his own military service, and to describe the inspiration he continued to draw from soldiers and Army civilians long after his own career in uniform came to a close.

Whether for leisure, contemplation, or healing – or for some combination of all three – President Eisenhower chose to return to Augusta, and to this installation, time and time again.

So as the Naming Commission explored options for the renaming of this installation, it is no surprise that they recommended President Eisenhower. And it is with great pride that we rename this installation in honor of one of our great Generals and Presidents.

Today, I ask all of you to find meaning not only in who we are commemorating, but in what this ceremony represents.

It is a culmination of a process that began in 2020, when Congress first wrote the Commission into law.

It was a moment of unrest and significant division in our country, and both parties overwhelmingly agreed that names on certain military installations, and the legacies of those names, were only deepening our social and political divides.

Members of Congress sought to close those divides by focusing the American people on a different set of leaders and symbols that unquestionably represent the best of our nation and our military.

Leadership and personnel at each of these installations have implemented the Commission's recommendations with the utmost professionalism. And this effort would not have been possible without the assistance of surrounding communities, which have for so many years welcomed our Soldiers and their families with open arms.

Change is often necessary, but never easy. So I want to thank each and every person who helped with this redesignation for supporting such an important step forward. [Pause]

The Army is a values-based institution. Today, we choose to honor a man; a General; a President; who upheld the values we want our force to embody – values like loyalty, integrity, and selfless service.

In doing so, we also highlight the critical role this installation has played in defense of our nation over the years, and the expertise and capabilities it will continue to contribute in the years to come.

The Department of War first broke ground on this site in July 1941. And 82 years ago, in October 1941, Camp Gordon opened its gates.

But the paint on those gates was barely dry when, only two months later, bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, officially pulling the United States into the second World War.

Almost immediately, troops from the 4th Infantry, 26th Infantry, and 10th Armor Divisions began training here for deployments to Europe.

Fighting under General Eisenhower's command, Soldiers from Gordon would go on to help liberate millions from Nazi tyranny and restore peace to a world in crisis. [Pause]

In his time, President Eisenhower lived to see a dramatic evolution of the United States Army: from a constabulary organization concerned primarily with the defense of its own backyard, to a dominant land force that would underwrite decades of American strategic supremacy and lay the foundation for a more stable international order.

And when he addressed Soldiers one final time as Commander in Chief during that January 1961 troop review, President Eisenhower reminded them that, with their service, they had helped build “a shield that no enemy dare attack or attempt to break down.”

The world has changed considerably in the years since President Eisenhower left the White House.

With the Cold War and two decades of counterterror campaigns behind us, we are once again reorganizing our Army for dominance in large-scale combat operations.

We are making these changes in part because our adversaries and strategic competitors are growing bolder.

Their technological capabilities, especially in the signals and electronic and cyber warfare domains, are more advanced than ever before. But thanks to the command on this installation, so are the US Army's.

Fort Eisenhower truly embodies our commitment to operating the most technologically sophisticated Army in the world.

Army Cyber Command is headquartered here and is at the forefront of integrating operations in the cyberspace domain with those in the land domain. Army Cyber has deep, technical expertise “on mission,” or as I am told they like to say here, “on keyboard.”

The Army's Cyber Center of Excellence is also here, building the necessary skillsets and high-technology workforce to support this mission, and helping allies and partners do the same.

It is not lost on me that, being at the home of the Army's cyber efforts, October is cybersecurity awareness month. I won't ask you to take out your iPhones and change your password. But I will take this opportunity to thank our cyber workforce, here and across the Army, for the work they do every day to keep our nation safe.

The Army has transformed in the more than 60 years since President Eisenhower's last address to Army troops. But his core message still rings true.

Here at Fort Eisenhower, the Army is continuing to build shields that no enemy should dare attack or attempt to break down.

Today, we find ourselves yet again in a perilous geopolitical environment. And I charge each and every Soldier and civilian at Fort Eisenhower to ensure our capabilities remain more advanced than our adversaries', and to continue preparing for the fight that may lie ahead.

Because for the US Army, the future is our focus. We must continue to look ahead to the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow. We must train hard to perfect our warfighting skills, and we must innovate to make our force stronger than ever.

As the name of this post changes, it does not mean that we have forgotten the service and sacrifice of the many Soldiers, civilians, and families who have called this place home over the past eight decades.

Instead, it signifies that we are embracing the future before us; honoring one of our nation's most storied leaders; and sending a clear signal of the Army we want to be and the values that make us who we are.

Thank you again to the Army Cyber command, the garrison team, the entire Eisenhower family, and the City of Augusta for having me here today.

I look forward to all of the great things that Fort Eisenhower will do for our Army and our nation. Thank you.