



## (U) A Very Southern City

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*A civilian who "got in on the ground floor" at GRSOC describes life in the Augusta area (U)*

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(U//FOUO) It has been said by some in our peculiar business that a shop sometimes becomes like its target. Given the growth both in the Augusta area and in the Fort Gordon Regional Security Operations Center, one could say that the station is mirroring its host area.

(U) Augusta, Georgia, and the surrounding area, known to the locals as the Central Savannah River Area, or CSRA, has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 6 years. While the city of Augusta/Richmond County touts itself as the second-largest city in Georgia, it still has somewhat of a small-town feeling -- a great contrast to the crowded Baltimore-Washington corridor. Taking the correct route, it is still possible, even during rush hour, to go from one side of the city to the other in about a half-hour.

(U) Augusta is a very southern city set in a very southern area. It is not unusual to see a rebel jack or an old Georgia state flag decorating a house or pickup truck, and there are still some who are suspicious of those who come from north of, say, Charlotte NC. But, overall, Augusta's southern hospitality shows through in its friendly people and moderately paced lifestyle. And, given the size of the area, one could not ask for a more family-friendly environment.

(U) Lake Thurmond, a large artificial lake created by the damming of of the Savannah river north of Augusta, is only 20 to 30 minutes away from Ft Gordon, providing boating, fishing and camping opportunities for those who need to get away from it all. For those who enjoy watching sports, Augusta has minor league baseball and hockey teams. Should you need major league entertainment, Atlanta is only two hours to the west and Charlotte two and a half hours to the northeast. And, while Augusta will never host a Superbowl, it is the home to major competitions in barrel horse racing, cutting (cutting off one calf from a herd while on horseback), speed boat racing, and, of course, the Masters Golf Tournament.

(U) Augusta does have a symphony orchestra, theater groups both in the city and out at Ft Gordon, and numerous movie theaters and restaurants. One can find Mexican, Italian, German, Greek, Indian, Chinese, and, of course, homestyle southern food without any trouble. And if you need to work off the meal, gyms and sports clubs are located throughout the area. I have even taken up fencing during my stay here.

(S//SI) The GRSOC has already been around for 10 years; however one could argue that it is now really hitting its stride.

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While the last of the original missions phased in almost 6 years ago, GRSOC has changed with the changing Middle East -- and expanding to meet these challenges. Our targets have been in the thick of things since 9/11 -- Iraq and Afghanistan are worked here -- which has meant a high ops-tempo and sometimes long hours. However the increased workload has also meant higher visibility in the SIGINT community and an increased awareness of one's contribution to national security.

(U//FOUO) Ft Gordon is by far the most "military" place I have ever worked. The main mission of the post is the training of members of the Army Signal Corps. Not having prior service, I had to get used to the ubiquitous drill sergeants marching formations of young troops from place to place, occasionally dropping one or two for push-ups if an infraction of etiquette or discipline warranted. Because the GRSOC civilian contingent is currently relatively small in comparison to the military workforce, one learns quickly the culture of the various services.

(S) At first, the fast-paced work combined with a slower, southern lifestyle may seem like a strange mix. However, despite the growth of both the GRSOC and the CSRA, there is still a feeling of small town/small site friendliness. My family and I have enjoyed our years in the CSRA, and we are looking forward watching the area and the station grow.



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