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Caribbean American Congresswoman Reintroduces Legislation Calling For Renaming of Military Bases Named After Confederate Leaders

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WASHINGTON, CMC – Caribbean American Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke has re-introduced legislation in the United States House of Representatives calling for the renaming of military bases and other property named after Confederate leaders.

Clarke, the daughter of Jamaican immigrants, who represents the predominantly Caribbean 9th Congressional District in Brooklyn, New York, said that the legislation requires all US Department of Defense (DOD) property that is named after Confederate leaders to be renamed within one year.

With heightened awareness about and desire for change around racism in America, Clarke said the legislation, “The Honoring Real Patriots Act,” was reintroduced from her 2017 legislation of the same name – this time with 30 original co-sponsors.

“The response across the country to George Floyd’s murder is evidence that this nation wants racial justice,” Clarke told the Caribbean Media Corporation (CMC) on Saturday. “Our country is at a crossroads to move forward from our racist, troubling past by making actual changes, which is why I’ve taken legislative action in introducing ‘The Honoring Real Patriots Act’ to rename property that’s been glamorizing Confederate leaders.

“Instead, we must memorialize the true patriots, those brave men and women who fought for our country, not against it,” she added.

Clarke said “The Honoring Real Patriots Act” would require any military installation or other property under the jurisdiction of the DOD that has been named after any individual who took up arms against the United States, during the American Civil War or any individual or entity that supported such efforts, to be changed within one year.

Military bases, streets and buildings are examples of property that would be required to be renamed, the congresswoman said.

She said future property would also be required to abide by this naming convention.

But, in response to the US military publicly stating its openness about changing the names of military bases, US President Donald J. Trump has tweeted his support of and commitment to maintaining military bases named after Confederate generals.

“America is in crisis. Black people are dying at disproportionately higher rates from COVID than other races,” Clarke said. “Meanwhile, racism and police brutality continue to plague our Black community.

“Instead of properly leading and managing this country through crisis and addressing the actual problems here, America’s ‘Bigot-in-Chief’ chooses to spend his time as a keyboard warrior romanticizing America’s racist history,” Clarke continued.

On Thursday, Clarke and US Congressman Max Rose, an Army combat veteran, who represents parts of Brooklyn and Staten Island in New York, called on the US Secretary of Defense Mark Esper to rename two streets at Fort Hamilton, a US Army base in Brooklyn, named after Confederate generals Stonewall Jackson Drive and General Lee Avenue.

Clarke and Rose’s push follows comments by the Secretary of the US Army, who said he is open to renaming bases named for Confederate leaders.

“We write to urge you to rename two streets located at Fort Hamilton, Brooklyn that are currently named after generals of the Confederate States of America, Stonewall Jackson Drive and General Lee Avenue,” said Rose and Clarke in a letter to the US Secretary of Defense.

“We swore an oath as public officials to ‘support and defend the Constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic,’ and to ‘bear true faith and allegiance to the same,’” they add. “While we were encouraged by news this week that the Army might consider renaming military installations named after Confederate generals, men who violated that oath to our country, we are similarly disturbed by recent social media posts suggesting that these names are part of a

‘Great American Heritage’ and are ‘Hallowed Ground.’”

The congressional representatives said Shiloh, Antietam and Gettysburg are hallowed ground, “places where Americans gave their lives to end the practice of slavery in our country; bases named after men who sought to keep their fellow men and women in bondage are not.”

“We hope that you will act swiftly to rename the streets in Fort Hamilton and all places named after Confederate figures,” the letter says.

“It is impossible to disentangle these men’s identities as individuals from the cause they rebelled against our nation to defend,” it adds. “US military bases and property should be named after men and women who’ve served our nation with honor and distinction, not sought to tear it apart to uphold white supremacy.”

Clarke and Rose said American servicemembers deserve to serve on bases that honor their ancestor’s contributions to the nation – not those who fought to hold those same ancestors in bondage.