

Sled to transport equipment tested in Alaskan cold

By Mark Schauer

Deployed Soldiers are constantly loaded down with gear, but nowhere more so than when operating in a cold weather environment.

In addition to their conventional weapons, Soldiers need to utilize heavy equipment such as space heaters, cooking stoves, fuel, and heavy duty thermal tents in order to survive in brutal cold.

To effectively conduct dismounted

operations in the these environments, a sled is the only practical means of transporting all of this equipment, and it needs to be rugged enough to carry not only the aforementioned items, but even a wounded Soldier across many miles of the world's most dangerous and unforgiving terrain.

Enter the Ahkio sled, a venerable

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To effectively conduct dismounted operations in a cold environment, a sled is the only practical means of transporting all the equipment Soldiers need. The Ahkio sled Soldiers in this brutal environment depend on was recently put through its paces at U.S. Army Cold Regions Test Center across many miles of the world's most dangerous and unforgiving terrain. (PHOTO BY SEBASTIAN SAARLOOS)

The heartbreak of sexual assault brought to life

By Chuck Wullenjohn

No group in society is safe – no race, no religion, no economic group. Age plays no role. And it has been a societal problem since the dawn of civilization.

We're talking about sexual assault, which is being highlighted nationally this month. Sexual assault

is different from nearly every other type of crime, for only one of every three such incidents are reported to law enforcement. There has long been a stigma associated with sexual assault that prevented victims from speaking out.

"This stigma has somewhat gone away," said Diane Umphress,

executive director of family advocacy center Amberly's Place, to a large group gathered this morning at Yuma Proving Ground. "There is much more compassion for sexual assault victims than just a few years ago."

According to Umphress, when sexual assault cases were reported in

the past, much of the responsibility was placed on the victim. Intrusive questions were frequently asked: Did you say no? Did they hear you say no? What were you wearing? Did you do something to lure the person? Did you kiss the person? Tell me how you're not responsible?

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STEM Outreach

When more than 350,000 aspiring young scientists and engineers descended upon the USA Science and Engineering Festival in Washington, DC in April, YPG personnel Adam Rinne, Michael Dickerson, Paul Sears, and Iris Espinoza were on hand with a popular hands-on display to inspire the student visitors. YPG's booth featured a high speed camera array that displayed an up-close look at the flight characteristics of projectiles shot from colorful Nerf guns. Below, Dickerson explains to students the concept of projectile instability using a foam round from a Nerf gun. The engineers also discussed in depth YPG's real-world mission testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal. Above, Rinne shows footage of a YPG artillery test to an interested patron.



(US ARMY PHOTOS)



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SLED

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piece of Army cold weather gear which was recently subjected to two weeks of punishing use by testers at U.S. Army Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) with participation from Soldiers stationed at Fort Wainwright, Alaska.

"It is a system you use to move big loads across snow and arctic terrains in all seasons," said Isaac Howell, test officer. "The scope of the test was to accumulate 45 miles on each sled, dragging it in the full spectrum of terrain encountered in the cold weather environment. Regardless of where you are in cold regions you will always encounter snowless terrain, so we really needed to see how the sled held up: One day we dragged it over seven miles of rocks."

Over the course of the evaluation, testers were interested not only in the Ahkio's durability across punishing terrain, but in how easily it could be packed in extreme cold and how much weight it could support. The days were long and exhausting, but testers tried to make them as fun as possible. For example, one day Soldiers and testers trekked to two stunning glaciers in the area around CRTC's ranges.

"That was in part a motivational thing for the Soldiers," said Howell. "We needed deep snow, and that's where the deep snow was. Seeing something cool was the carrot at the end of the stick: the glaciers themselves were not a component of the test."

In a typical squad of Soldiers utilizing the Ahkio, three to five pull the sled while others walk ahead in snow shoes to break a trail. On this day, four feet of virgin snow stood between the Soldiers and test team and their objective, seven miles away.

"That day was pretty daunting. The test team functioned as trailbreakers because we didn't have a full group

of 10 Soldiers."

Howell walked in the center, while two men behind him would put one of their steps within one of his footprints, ensuring the thinner trail the sled would be traversing would be the most densely packed.

A former infantry officer, Howell is cognizant of the Ahkio's vital importance to cold regions Soldiers in all seasons of the year.

"It has applicability to the non-cold seasons," he said, "It all depends on the terrain."

One type of extreme terrain is that is particularly disliked by hikers is muskeg, Arctic bogs that from a distance look like short, grassy plains, but are in reality stagnant pools of waterlogged, spongy vegetation in various states of decomposition. Muskeg is interspersed with stunted trees and concealed ponds of acidic water that can trap unwary animals.

"I have walked in many different terrain types on this planet, and nothing has been harder than walking in muskeg," said Howell. "You have these tussocks that rise two feet above the ground and it's nearly impossible to traverse with a load on your back."

All told, the Soldiers and test team dragged the sled 52 miles on foot in ten grueling days of evaluations. After each march the Soldiers and test officers recorded their comments on the sled's performance.

The test team saved the last day of testing for a destructive test, loading the Ahkio to 350 pounds of weight and dropping it from a forklift raised to different elevations onto its front, back, side, and bottom.

When dropped nose-first from 15 feet, the sled's aluminum frame bent at its impact point, but otherwise remained intact, a fitting end to a punishing test of one of a cold regions Soldier's most vital accessories.

HEARTBREAK

FROM PAGE 1

"Law enforcement personnel are well trained today in dealing with these situations and their response is so much different," she said. "When they start believing the words told by the victim, and he or she feels that, the walls start tumbling down. The victim provides more information simply because he or she feels believed."

Last year, Amberly's Place experienced a 78 percent increase in calls from sexual assault victims in Yuma County.

Amberly's Place personnel respond to YPG whenever called for sexual assault or domestic violence cases. Victims are transported to Amberly's Place in downtown Yuma where necessary medical examinations are conducted as well as any interviews. Overnight accommodations are provided at Yuma's Safe House or in local motels when necessary.

Umphress points out that the problem of sexual assault affects all age groups, noting that the oldest victim to ever use Amberly's Place services was 85 years old. She had been sexually assaulted by a man hired to retrieve Christmas decorations from a storage shed.

Dina Mabry, YPG's Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, says a variety



YPG commander Col. Randy Murray underscored the urgency of preventing sexual assaults-- and reporting them when they occur-- in remarks to the audience. "Take the message seriously, take it to heart," he said.

(PHOTOS BY CHUCK WULLENJOHN)

of activities are taking place at the proving ground throughout April to raise awareness of the sexual assault problem. "Seeing and hearing it from individuals who have experienced the pain of sexual assault brings it to life," she said.

"Take the message seriously, take it to heart," said Col. Randy Murray, commander, before the YPG group dispersed.



Sexual assault victim Heather Griffith says the pictures of the physical violence -- cuts, bruises and black eyes -- she endured for several years will always haunt her. She says her abuser is now in jail, but adds that the justice system should have locked him up years ago.

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Potential dangers require extensive safety program

By Chuck Wullenjohn

An unbelievable quantity of explosives are handled safely by Yuma Proving Ground workers in hundreds of test programs each year. These explosives hurl projectiles dozens of miles downrange and propel missiles at supersonic speeds.

But what if something went awry? What if a powder bag functioned prematurely or a missile blew up in its launching pod? These are situations that would cause not just material damage, but could also take a life.

Needless to say, the topic of safety is not taken lightly at the proving ground.

"As one of the largest and

busiest test centers in the world, everyone at YPG comes to work with a safety mindset," said Roy Van Why, director of safety for YPG garrison activities. "Our intention is to ensure that everyone is sent home safely at the end of each day."

When it comes to explosive safety, Durred Francher in YPG's mission safety office is the resident expert, says Van Why. He boasts years of experience in the field of explosives and has become a model around the Army of the type of knowledge a person in his field should have.

"I've been at YPG for eight years and there have been no



Garrison Safety Director Ron Van Why oversees all safety programs dealing with YPG's infrastructure, such as buildings and roads, but also much more. He keeps a particularly watchful eye on YPG's population of wild burros and horses, which can become major safety hazards when they cross roadways in search of food or water.

(PHOTO BY CHUCK WULLENJOHN)

explosive incidents at all that I'm aware of," said Van Why. "This reflects volumes about the character and commitment of the people at YPG, but I also give credit to Durred Francher."

YPG has two safety offices – one strictly for mission activities and another, Van Why's, to cover garrison activities. Mission activities take place on the huge test ranges, as well as at the ammunition magazines and the activities that occur there. Garrison activities include properties owned by the government, such as buildings and roads, and also water treatment facilities, and police and fire activities.

"The two offices work well together," said Van Why. "We meet frequently and reach out to each other whenever we need to."

He points out that all drinking water at the proving ground comes from wells and is purified at water treatment plants located at YPG. "We recently spent millions of dollars to upgrade and modernize the plants," he explained. "We have expert employees who constantly

test and check the water to ensure safety each day."

A challenge somewhat unique to YPG is caused by herds of wild burros and horses that call the area home. They frequently wander onto roads, including Highway 95, most often during the early morning or evening hours. They typically migrate many hours each day in search of food and water, and return to the same place at night, where they feel safe. Burros and horses most often travel to the same areas where they have located food or water in the past.

"There have been quite a few strikes and near misses over the years," said Van Why. "Drivers need to keep a close look-out."

He says he has experienced encounters with the animals himself. "It's terrifying," he said, "for burros and horses can do a huge amount of damage to a vehicle, aside from hurting you. Everyone needs to think about this."

Signs have been erected along roads in many areas of YPG to

SEE **SAFETY** page 5

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SAFETY

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warn of wildlife crossings. Since burros and horses normally follow paths with which they are familiar, experts can identify areas in which they cross roads.

"That's where the warning signs go up," said Van Why. "We just don't put up these signs randomly – we look for tell-tale paths."

He says people sometimes chuckle or laugh when hearing it, but there has not been a day he hasn't wanted to come to work during his eight years at YPG. "By far, this is the best place I have ever worked," said Van Why. "People care about what they do and I have management support. Plus, there's no better satisfaction than knowing I am supporting Soldiers in the field who are fighting for our freedom."

SAFETY CORNER

Keeping your eyes on the future is your job

Nearly one million Americans have lost some degree of their eye sight due to injuries, and more than 700,000 Americans injure their eyes at work each year.

In 2012, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reported 40% of all non-fatal workplace eye injuries happen in manufacturing, construction, and mining. Workplace eye injuries send 300,000 people to the emergency room nationwide, according to the Centers for Disease Control. 20,300 workers had on-the-job eye injuries that forced them

to take time off work in 2012, which cost an estimated \$300 million in medical treatment, worker's compensation and loss of productivity.

Yet 90 percent of all workplace eye injuries are preventable with proper use of protective eye wear.

The typical eye injuries were caused by such things as flying metal chips, dirt particles, and splinters, or by striking the eye. Chemical burns were second.

Potential eye hazards can be found in nearly every industry. Occupational Safety and Health

Administration standards require that employers provide workers with suitable eye protection. To be effective in preventing injury, the eyewear must be of the appropriate type for the hazard encountered, and it must be properly fitted.

If you are required to wear safety glasses, please do so for your own protection. Eye glasses and contacts are not a substitute for safety glasses, splash goggles, or face shields.

You only have two eyes: don't give one to the workplace.

For more information on eye safety, call the YPG Safety Office at extension 2660. Remember, "NOBODY GETS HURT."



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Earth Day celebrated at YPG

By Mark Schauer

At Yuma Proving Ground, every day is Earth Day.

As a natural laboratory for testing virtually every piece of equipment in the U.S. Army's ground combat arsenal, YPG has a definite interest in responsible ecological stewardship.

Located within North America's most diverse desert, the proving ground is home to a vast diversity of wildlife, including Sonoran pronghorn, desert tortoises and one of Arizona's healthiest populations of bighorn sheep. More than a hundred unique

bird species pass through or call YPG home, and all are attracted by desert washes, whether wet or dry.

"The wash is really the focus of the desert ecosystem," said Daniel Steward, wildlife biologist. "They only cover one or two percent of the desert surface, but they contain over 90% of the desert's biodiversity. Life goes where water flows."

To celebrate Earth Day, YPG school children took a special guided tour of a wash

that meanders across the street from the post library, getting an up close and personal look at a rich natural



As they quietly trooped through the wash, the students observed a wide variety of desert plants and wildlife, including this turkey vulture.

(PHOTO BY MARK HANLEY)



YPG commander Col. Randy Murray (right) kicked off the day's activities by holding a talk with participating school children. "We were given this Earth and are supposed to take care of it," he said.

world that exists unseen while they go about their daily activities.

The youngsters trooped quietly through the wash, using binoculars to watch a turkey vulture soaring high overhead, a squirrel gathering food, and a variety of vocal birds perched in the wash's vegetation. Steward pointed out burrows and animal scat as they went along, and taught the group a few bird calls.

"I'm enjoying it and it looks like the kids are enjoying it," said Carolyn Izaguirre, who teaches first and second grade at Price Elementary School. "We've been watching eaglets grow on an Eagle

Cam, so I think they're really getting into observing and getting hands-on with things."

Having learned that trees stabilize a wash's channel and help prevent erosion, the students helped plant several mesquite and palo verde seedlings in a spot on the wash's bank where tamarisk, an invasive species native to the Middle East, had until recently been growing.

"They're wonderful trees for the Middle East, but here they provide shelter for wildlife and no other resources," said Dr. Laura Merrill, natural resources manager. "Insects can't live on them, so birds can't feed on the insects. They compete with native plants for water and accumulate salt in their leaves: when the leaves drop to the ground, it makes the soil so salty that nothing will grow."

The new honey mesquite trees were donated by Yuma's Greenheart Farms and Merrill is excited about it.

YPG wildlife biologist Daniel Steward (left) gives Price Elementary School students a guided tour of the rich natural world found in a desert wash as part of the post's Earth Day celebration. "The Sonoran Desert is the most diverse desert in North America," he said.

(PHOTOS BY MARK SCHAUER)





Environmental protection specialist Donnett Brown (standing, right) helps students from YPG's Price Elementary School plant a tree seedling. At least one of the children can't wait for the tree to reach maturity: "My favorite thing to do is to climb trees a lot," said Anthony DePriest, first grader.

YPG recognizes Military Children



April is the Month of the Military Child, a time to recognize and appreciate military children for their sacrifice in supporting their parents wherever in the world they serve. YPG's Child Development Center (CDC) celebrated with a morning of activities that encouraged parents and grandparents to join in the fun. Clockwise from top left: As parents watch, CDC staff lead the children in a celebratory chant of "Red, white, and blue, we love you!"; YPG commander Col. Randy Murray says hello to young Quinn Underhill, as dad Lt. Sean Underhill of the YPG Police Department looks on; Garrison Manager Gordon Rogers delights in the exuberance of a passing play car motorist; a group of parents gave it their all in a friendly tug-of-war match, but the laughing youngsters prevailed; there were all manner of games and activities, but nothing beats making a perfect bean bag toss as this young contestant's reaction shows.

(PHOTOS BY MARK SCHAUER)

EARTH DAY

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"They were grown from local seeds," she said. "It's very important to get the same genotype as the area where you are planting: the plants are more likely to survive, and you aren't introducing strange trees to the ecosystem."

YPG officials vow that the annual Earth Day event and efforts to reintroduce native flora will persist into the foreseeable future.

"Our efforts were focused on the kids to try to develop in them an appreciation for the Earth and how important it is to take care of it so it stays around," said Gordon Rogers, garrison manager.

"We're going to reduce the amount of invasive species we have at YPG and replace them with native species, starting with today's celebration," added Angelica Bharat, director of public works. "It is going to take time for things to grow, but in the long run it will be a better environment."

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VIEWPOINTS

YPG personnel arrive at the proving ground from many different locations and walks of life. For this viewpoint, we asked "What brought you to YPG?"



Malissa Donato, library technician: My husband was transferred from New River, North Carolina to Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma in 2014. I was specifically looking to get back into civil service employment when I applied for this job and got it.



Greg Skaggs, energy manager: A 2008 Hyundai Elantra, a promotion, and the desire to move from the east coast to be closer to family in California.



Jorge Barrientos, graphic designer: I grew up in Calexico, graduated from the Art Institute in San Diego, and was seeking employment in the private sector when my career counselor advised me to apply for a job though LinkedIn. I never thought I would find a position in my field working for the government so close to home!

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The Road Often Travelled

By Teri Womack

I've travelled many roads throughout my life and some of them have been under construction. Right now, it's the road I drive to work. With over 30 years of driving on U.S. Highway 95 from the Yuma Foothills to Yuma Proving Ground, my car almost knows the way by itself.

Like others in the YPG workforce, I've spent a lot of time going back and forth on that road. If math didn't hate me and I didn't know that engineers would be reading this, I would do the math. (I figure it at roughly 4,600 hours or 192 days). No matter how you count it, it's a huge number of miles.

A typical drive to work includes inserting my cup of Starbucks Columbia coffee in the cup holder,

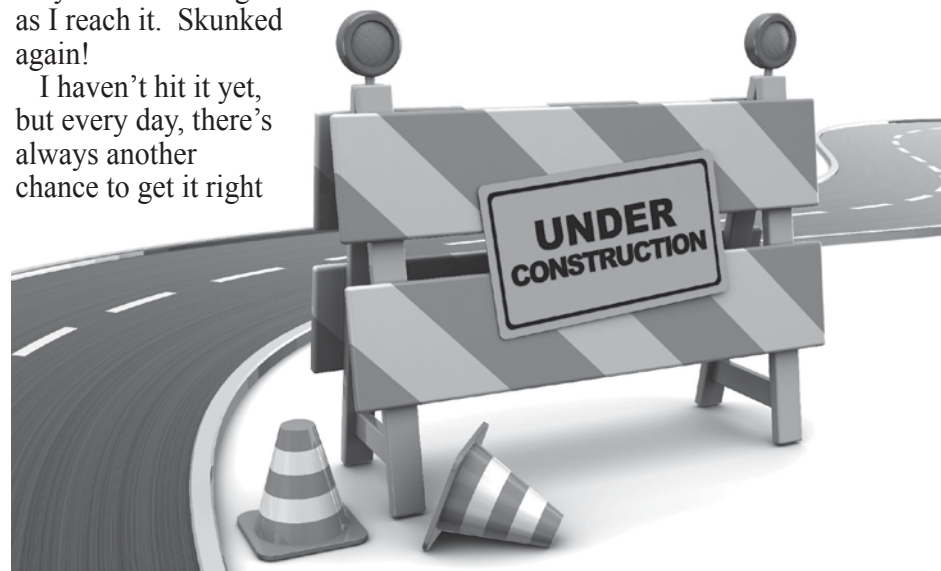
switching on my favorite tunes, turning on the car and heading east. It's almost a straight shot. With the recent construction, my straight shot to work has now been turned into a curvy path of concrete barriers, changing pavement surfaces and multiple changing speed limit signs. The sign that seems to always catch my attention is the one that states that the current speed limit is 45 mph. Right below that is an electric sign that calculates the current speed you are driving in bright yellow flashing lights.

Now, on my daily drive, for about 10 seconds I find myself in competition with that sign. For absolutely no reason whatsoever, I have become single-mindedly determined to hit that 45 mph mark right on the money. Not 44 or 46. 45 – right on the mark. Sometimes

I am thwarted by a slow moving RV or an 18 wheeler making their way through the tight twists and turns and other times it's that darn sign that betrays me by changing at the very last second right as I reach it. Skunked again!

I haven't hit it yet, but every day, there's always another chance to get it right

on my return trip home at the end of the day. Since the construction on Highway 95 is not scheduled to be completed for many months, it looks like I'm going to have a lot of chances.



Month-long Lean Six Sigma black belt training course concludes

Master Black Belt Tony Gingras of the ammunition management division instructs a four-week Lean Six Sigma (LSS) Black Belt training course in April. The LSS system has positively affected a variety of facets of YPG's workload, from minor projects that simplified the in-processing of new employees to major ones responsible for millions of dollars in cost avoidance. LSS doesn't just save money; it streamlines processes, which translates into more productivity and less hassle. YPG is the only Army location in the continental Western United States that holds this training course, which is open to everyone throughout the Army. If you are interested in taking a LSS Green Belt or Black Belt course at YPG, contact Moises Alvarez at (928) 328-6117.

(PHOTO BY MARK SCHAUER)

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CHIEF'S CORNER

Summer Fun

Submitted by By D. L. Brown, YPG Chief of Police

Summer is a wonderful time for outdoor activities with family and friends. For many people, a day at the beach, on the boat, or at a backyard barbecue will include drinking alcoholic beverages. But excessive drinking and summer activities don't mix. Drinking impairs both physical and mental abilities, and it also decreases inhibitions—which can lead to tragic consequences on the water, on the road, and in the great outdoors. In fact, research shows that up to 70 percent of all water recreation deaths involve the use of alcohol.

Boating under the Influence

You might say to yourself, "It's just harmless fun." But operating a boat while impaired is just as dangerous, and just as illegal, as drinking while driving a car. In the state of Arizona the legal limit for blood alcohol is .08 in both cases. According to research funded by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol may be involved in 60 percent of boating fatalities, including falling overboard. And a boat operator with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) over 0.1 percent

(approximately 4 to 5 drinks) is 16 times more likely to be killed in a boating accident than an operator with zero BAC.

Driving under the influence

The summer holidays are some of the most dangerous times of the year to be on the road. When on vacation, drivers may be traveling an unfamiliar route or hauling a boat or camper, with the added distraction of pets and children in the car. Adding alcohol to the mix puts the lives of the driver and everyone in the car, as well as other people on the road, at risk. In Arizona, as in most states the legal limit is still .08. Remember, heat and fatigue are factors that increase the effects of alcohol on your body. Be smart, "drive to arrive alive".

Summer will end, but consequences can endure

You can have fun in the sun and still be safe. Avoiding beverages that cause mental and physical impairment while piloting a boat or motor vehicle is a good place to start. Be smart this summer, think before you drink, and make sure that you and your loved ones will be around to enjoy many summers to come.

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