

In its 76th year, YPG directly impacts national defense

By Chuck Wullenjohn

The Army has been in Yuma a long time, since 1850, and has played a distinct role in helping Yuma develop into the fine community it is today. Soldiers first came to Yuma on a permanent basis in 1850 to maintain military control over what had become a vital, reliable crossing point on the thousand mile Colorado River — the Yuma Crossing. Soldiers from the fort patrolled hundreds of miles in order to fulfill these duties. YPG continues this heritage today, though the proving ground's modern roots extend only back to the years of the Second World War.

As locals know well, Yuma Proving Ground lies in one of the hottest and driest desert areas in the United States. This harsh terrain lends itself perfectly to thoroughly and reliably

testing weapon systems in the Army's arsenal. This includes armored vehicles like giant 60-ton M1 Abrams tanks, howitzers that fire with pinpoint accuracy at targets dozens of miles away, technologies that defeat the threat of roadside bombs, high-flying unmanned aircraft, cargo and personnel parachutes, and a tremendous amount more.

Drivers see little of the proving ground from Highway 95, which can lead to a dead wrong conclusion. YPG incorporates America's longest overland artillery test range and the nation's most highly instrumented helicopter armament test range. The proving ground contains 240 miles of improved road courses for testing military vehicles, nearly 2000 miles

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YPG's test workload incorporates a wide variety of military systems, including the Joint Air to Ground Missile (JAGM) being fired here. YPG incorporates America's longest overland artillery test range and the nation's most highly instrumented helicopter armament test range. (US Army photo)

Protecting YPG bat species more important than you think

By Mark Schauer

Unlike most Army installations, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's primary purpose is not to train troops, but to conduct natural

environment testing on virtually every piece of equipment used by Soldiers.

Also atypical is the presence of abandoned mines in numerous

locations across the proving ground's more than 1,200 square miles of range space.

Prior to Yuma Proving Ground's existence, Southwest Arizona was

home to all manner of mining—gold, silver, copper, lead, mercury—and there are more than a dozen disused

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moves proving ground
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of fiber-optic cable linking test sites, one of the world's largest vertical wind tunnels, multiple villages constructed to mimic those in Southwest Asia, six airfields for manned and unmanned aircraft, and numerous cleared parachute drop zones, one, the largest cleared drop zone in the entire Western United States. The proving ground itself incorporates 1300 square miles on the ground

and manages 2000 square miles of restricted airspace, much of which extends from the surface of the earth to outer space.

YPG's test workload incorporates a wide variety of military systems, which makes the proving ground vital to our national defense and helps make forces effective and our equipment combat-worthy. Soldiers and Marines in combat areas may not be cognizant of what Yuma Proving Ground did to assure the high quality of their equipment, but many are



As Yuma County's single largest employer of civilians and number one high technology workplace, YPG is proud to be a key player in this military supportive community. The local economic impact is roughly \$450 million each year, which includes salaries, purchasing and other contract dollars.



YPG personnel work countless hours throughout the year, often in extreme, rugged, and trying conditions, to produce the safest and most effective weapon systems on the planet. YPG's workers are essential parts of the community with a tremendous local economic and social impact. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

alive and uninjured today because of what took place right here.

The 2400 men and women who perform the proving ground's mission are your friends and neighbors, folks who call Yuma their home, and most often remain a long time. Nearly all live in Yuma where they own homes, pay taxes, patronize local businesses, send their kids to school, and vote. Many are members of civic boards, teach high school or college classes in the evenings and weekends, and are members of charitable organizations.

They work countless hours throughout the year, often in extreme, rugged and trying conditions, to produce the safest and most effective

tive weapon systems on the planet. YPG's workers are essential parts of the community with a tremendous local economic and social impact.

The dollar impact of Yuma Proving Ground on the community is huge. The local economic impact is roughly \$450 million each year, which includes salaries, purchasing and other contract dollars. It's important to note that most of these dollars stay in Yuma County, putting people to work and directly supporting the local economy. As Yuma County's single largest employer of civilians and number one high technology workplace, YPG is proud to be a key player in this military supportive community.

THE OUTPOST

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Operation Snowbird flies in to Yuma Proving Ground

By Tech. Sgt. Austen Adriaens

U.S. Air Force airmen with the 109th Airlift Squadron and 133rd Airlift Wing participated in a training exercise at YPG in early March.

Operation Snowbird enhanced the Wing's ability to deploy, execute and sustain rapid global mobility around the world.

More than 30 sorties were conducted over the duration of the exercise, which included 44 low-level routes. The missions were carried out both day and night. Airmen from the 133rd Logistics Readiness Squadron loaded a total of four C-130 Hercules with Containerized Delivery Systems (CDS) for airdrops over YPG, then recovered them from the drop zone and transferred them to a holding hanger to be reused.

"We planned 28 airdrops and have executed all 28," said Capt. Daniel Vogel, a combat systems operator with the 109th Airlift Squadron. "That includes dropping high-velocity CDS, a low-cost low altitude system that we use on the C-130, as well as heavy equipment. So, there has been a lot of airdrops and a lot of

training that we planned and executed."

Performing airdrop missions from a C-130 Hercules, in a training environment, allows senior leadership to identify strengths and mitigate challenges that may arise during operations. Recognizing airspace and maintenance issues increases proficiencies of operations for future deployments. Operation Snowbird increased overall readiness and strengthened relationships amongst different squadrons and sections within the Wing.

"Flying in the mountains is very key to our training, especially if we are thinking worldwide operations," said Vogel. "Minnesota doesn't afford us the opportunity to do so. We have been able to work with our intelligence personnel and search and recovery teams to plan and execute various missions that would not be possible back in Minneapolis."

Overall, the mission required support from the entire base: Over 100 airmen participated in the training exercise. This includes airmen from the 109th Airlift Squadron, 133rd



Two Containerized Delivery Systems (CDS) fall to the ground after being released from a C-130 Hercules over YPG. Operation Snowbird, a training exercise, enhances the 133rd Airlift Wing's ability to deploy, execute and sustain rapid global mobility around the world.

Airlift Wing and even a few members from the 161st Air Refueling Wing.

When asked if there was anything unique about this training exercise,

Vogel said, "About a third of the entire personnel that is down here are new to the 133rd Airlift Wing. So, there is a lot of great training opportunities going on."



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Timothy Hemquist (left), a load master with the 109th Airlift Squadron, goes through a preflight checklist at YPG during Operation Snowbird. (Photos by Tech. Sgt. Austen R. Adriaens)

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Shoot'in the Breeze

Pass the Kleenex

By David J. Horn

There was a time in my life where, in addition to my job out here at YPG, my then-wife worked for the Yuma County Health Department, my son was in grade school, my daughter was in day care, and my retired parents were here running around with all their winter visitor friends.

In other words, every cold or flu virus in the entire country would end up in my house.

Now I'm sure as you all read this, there are some of you out there sitting just too close to someone who is at this very minute blowing their nose. Hacking up a storm...probably loud enough that your entire building gets the pleasure of listening in. Their trash can is overflowing with used tissues. They're going through their day oblivious to your less-than-subtle hints, like every time you enter their cubicle, you're wearing a face mask. Look...you sick folks just need to stay home.

I guess that there are a lot of reasons some people still come into work, even when they're one step from death. It may be that late project milestone. They might actually be the only person that can operate that one particular piece of equipment. Unfortunately, too many

people come to work sick simply because they think everyone else will admire them for being tough enough to just crawl in. Look...you sick folks just need to stay home.

Cough. So, you spent the week spraying Lysol all over your desk, the countertop in the office break-room, and everything touchable in the restroom. You've been pumping vitamin C all week. You're using those disinfecting hand-wipes every five minutes.

Cough. Cough. I don't know... maybe it was the guy who sneezed all over your coffee cup. Maybe it was the guy coughing all over the back of your head while you were trapped in your car pool. Anyway, after a week of wondering if you dodged the bullet, you get that first symptom...a sore throat. Within hours, you feel your nose starting to run. Then, the dam breaks.

Cough. Cough. Cough. There'll be one or two days of pure misery. There'll be a couple of more days to clear everything out. With a little luck, it will be over soon and you'll get to experience that "it's great to be alive again" feeling as you emerge from your bedroom to rejoin the world of the living.

Cough. Cough. Cough. Cough. Oh well, here I go again.

Hey boss...I have to go home.

New Medicare cards to be issued

By Greg Dill

Starting next month, the Medicare folks will mail new Medicare cards to all people using the program to help protect users from identity fraud.

Fraudsters are always looking for ways to steal your Social Security Number, so those numbers are being removed from Medicare cards.

New cards will have a new Medicare number that's unique to you. The new card will help protect your identity and keep your personal information secure. The new cards can be used as soon as received and coverage won't change at all.

Medicare will automatically mail the new cards -- at no cost -- to the address users have on file with Social Security. So, if you are enrolled in the Medicare program, make sure your mailing address is up to date.

If your address needs to be corrected, contact Social Security at ssa.gov/myaccount or 1-800-772-1213. TTY users can call 1-800-325-0778.

Once people get their new Medicare cards, take steps to make it harder for someone to steal information:

1. Destroy the old Medicare card right away.

2. Doctors, other health care providers and health plans approved by Medicare know Medicare is replacing the old cards. They are ready to accept the new card.

3. Beware of anyone who con-

tacts you and asks for your new Medicare number, personal information, or to pay a fee for your new card. There are no charges whatsoever for the new card.

4. Guard your card. Treat your new Medicare number like you treat your Social Security or credit card numbers. Only give your new number to doctors, pharmacists, insurers, or other people you trust to work with Medicare on your behalf.

Medicare will never call you uninvited and ask you to provide personal or private information to get your new Medicare card.

Scam artists may try to get personal information (like your current Medicare number) by contacting you about your new card. If someone asks you for your information, or for money, or threatens to cancel your health benefits if you don't share your personal information. If this happens, you are advised to hang up and report him or her at 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227).

If you're in a Medicare Advantage plan (like an HMO or PPO), your Medicare Advantage plan ID card is your main card for Medicare -- you should still keep and use it whenever you need care.

However, you also may be asked to show your new Medicare card, so you should carry this card, too.

If you don't get your new Medicare card by April of next year, call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227). TTY users can call 1-877-486-2048.

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YPG shines at local military appreciation day



Often called the most military friendly community in the nation, Yuma held its annual military appreciation day on historic Main Street in mid-March. Though misted by an unexpected spring shower, the spirits of the Soldiers and the many hundreds of citizens who strolled through were undampened. Though enjoyed by folks of all ages, talking with YPG's Airborne Test Force Soldiers—and trying on the gear they use every day—was particularly special to scores of children. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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BAT

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shafts and mining sites scattered about the installation. Some prospecting digs penetrate the earth only a few feet, while other more elaborate works snake hundreds of feet, with multiple horizontal turns that plunge into deep, sometimes flooded vertical shafts.

Disused for at least a century and frequently excavated out of soft and unstable rock, the mines are isolated and cool, perfect roosting for the 11 species of bats known to call YPG home. They are also incredibly dangerous to anyone who trespasses within the proving ground's boundaries—stories abound throughout the American West of fatal or near-fatal mishaps involving abandoned mines. From treacherous drops to insufficient oxygen, old mines are no place for casual desert wanderers to tread.

"They're hazardous to people, but really good habitat for wildlife," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "Our goal is to keep people safe and keep the habitat available for wildlife."

As such, personnel from YPG

and the Arizona Game and Fish Department recently outfitted several of the more dangerous mine openings with barriers that will prevent unauthorized people from accessing them while allowing bats to come and go. They worked quickly to finish their work as far before the bats' spring mating season as possible to minimize impact on the creatures.

"The worst thing you can do to a bat is walk into its home during the maternity period and disturb it," said Dr. Joel Diamond, a research ecologist for Arizona Game and Fish. "They'll vacate the roost, and that is what has happened in most of our major care systems in Arizona. YPG is a functional refuge since there is no recreational activity here."

All mines are different, and the team had to use different methods to close off each. In one mine shaft that had been drilled through solid rock, they installed a heavy steel gate, with resin covering the bolts that hold it securely in place. In a more complex mine elsewhere on the range with an irregular opening in soft rock that had partially caved in, the team draped a massive single strand of wire-cable mesh that will continue



Healthy bat populations are enormously beneficial to the community as a whole: A pregnant female bat can eat more than double her body weight in insects every day. "Yuma is a big agricultural producer," said Dr. Joel Diamond, research ecologist for Arizona Game and Fish. "In the absence of these bat populations, you would need a lot more pesticides on the crops." (Photos by Mark Schauer)

to block human access as the mound shifts and erodes over time.

With this done, the team soon

emplaced electronic data loggers that will record bat calls from sunset to sunrise over the next six months,



From treacherous drops to insufficient oxygen, old mines are no place for casual desert wanderers to tread. However, they are outstanding roosting sites for the 11 species of bats known to call YPG home. "Our mines are so warm that these bats can stay active all year long," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist.

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Prior to Yuma Proving Ground's existence, Southwest Arizona was home to all manner of mining, and there are more than a dozen disused shafts and mining sites scattered about the installation, some with remarkably well-preserved artifacts. "It looks like a trash pile, but it really tells the story of who was here and when they were here," said Steward.

allowing the officials to track what species of bats are using the mine and in what magnitude.

"We want to determine as soon as possible whether bats are still using it," explained Steward. "Any time you put an alteration on a mine, it will affect the way bats use it."

Fortunately, when Steward placed the data logger in one of the mines there was ample evidence that it was still hosting a large bat population: there were scattered areas of inches-deep guano, full of discarded pieces of insect wings.

Healthy bat populations are enormously beneficial to the community as a whole: A pregnant female bat can eat more than double her body weight in insects every day.

"Yuma is a big agricultural producer," said Diamond. "In the absence of these bat populations, you would need a lot more pesticides on the crops."

As average temperatures increase, so do insect populations, making bats even more necessary than ever. Officials have observed a long-term trend of subtropical bat species migrating north.

"Over the past 50 or 60 years,

we've seen animals that didn't winter in this latitude do so now," said Diamond. "They can now forage all year long. Years ago there were enough cold snaps to kill off the insect population every year, but no more."

Though home to anywhere from 60 to 120 unique military tests per week, YPG actively strives to minimize the footprint of its activities, particularly around desert washes.

"We take great pains to avoid washes whenever we're doing any kind of construction or testing," said Steward. "By doing that we protect the forage habitat of a plethora of species."

In addition to bats, YPG is home to a wide variety of wildlife. It is home to one of the healthiest populations of bighorn sheep in the state, and was specifically chosen as a place for the once-critically endangered Sonoran Pronghorn to recover from the brink of extinction.

"YPG provides a net benefit to a variety of wildlife species," said Steward. "While we're using our land intensively, we're also intensively managing our natural resources."



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Creative program moves proving ground forward in 1950s

By Chuck Wullenjohn,

To more fully use the skills and education of people drafted into the Army, the Scientific and Professional (S and P) program was established in the mid-1950s to assign Soldiers with advanced educational degrees and skills to specific programs. Dozens of these enlisted Soldiers were assigned as engineers to Yuma Proving Ground, then called the Yuma Test Station, working on a wide variety of weapon system test programs and eventually forming much of the proving ground's management team during the next several decades. Workers in the S and P program included mathematicians, electrical, mechanical and civil engineers, architects, scientists, and much more.

Coming from localities around the nation, S and P personnel assigned to Yuma had completed advanced college degree programs prior to being drafted. All had completed basic training. Some were drafted after completing college, some worked in civilian industry for a year or two.

The S and P program lasted only about ten years, with Soldiers assigned to a variety of installations within the United States, including White Sands Missile Range, N.M., and Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md. "I wasn't enthused when I received orders to report to Yuma," said Dick Anderson, one of the Soldiers assigned to the test station in the late 1950s. "As a matter of fact, I vowed



Numerous proving ground stalwarts who performed critical management functions for many years began their tenures at YPG in uniform as part of the Army's Scientific and Professional (S and P) program in the mid-1950s. The program assigned Soldiers with advanced educational degrees and skills to specific programs. (US Army photos)

never again to return to Arizona." He paused for a moment, then continued with a smile. "But now I permanently live in the state."

Mack White worked in Yuma between 1957 and 1959 at the rank of private, living in a two story barracks in the proving ground's main administrative area. Assigned as a structural engineer, he designed a variety of test facilities, such as the 60 percent slope still used to measure the horsepower of tanks and other vehicles, designed roads and built structures on the ranges.

"The Yuma winters were like springtime to us and we got used to the heat of the summer," said White. "The Army got good use of us while we were in Yuma and we never expected our duty to be this good. We enjoyed every minute of it for we had expected to be assigned to the infantry."

White believes he never worked with a more talented group of engineers

than during his time at the test station. "These people could make anything work," he said. "They weren't the conservative number crunchers I saw in graduate school, but were truly amazing guys who could really get things done. We knew we were performing important work."

Bill Lee of Portland was a project engineer on the Little John and Honest John rocket program for two years beginning in 1959. A mechanical engineer by training, Lee remembers the mess hall where they



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Though YPG has always had a primarily civilian workforce, in the 1950s there were approximately six civilians to every four Soldiers.

ate and what he typically considered to be “bad food”. Lots of times he would go to the mess hall, look at the food, then visit the post exchange for a hamburger. “It wasn’t necessarily that the food was bad, it was that the cooks couldn’t cook,” he said with a laugh. “I still won’t eat off metal trays.”

The S and P Soldiers shared a two story wood barracks and spent a great deal of leisure time together. They spent hours on nearby Colorado River beaches and traveled into Mexico

or up to Flagstaff. Some hunted, some fished, some enjoyed exploring the desert. In Yuma, they were frequent visitors to longtime popular restaurants such as Chretin’s and Jack and Rosies.

Lee said one of the Soldiers was an avid bridge player and taught several others how to play so they could have regular card games, some of which lasted most of the night. He says they even played in several bridge tournaments in Yuma, which they didn’t win, but which were lots of fun.

“We really bonded,” said Lee. “All of us S and P’s hung out together.”

Jack Austin served in the flight determination branch measuring muzzle and firing chamber velocities, among other things, in 1959 and 1960. A data reduction specialist, he took data from film and measurement instruments and crunched it into useable numbers.

One winter he traveled to Fort Churchill, Canada, to conduct tests in extreme cold. His mechanical calculator broke during that time. Since a repair technician was not available at that isolated site which was hundreds of miles from a large city, he took the calculator apart himself, found the problem and repaired it.

In some ways, the S and P Soldiers were half civilian and half military.



Now used for assemblies and all hands meetings, YPG’s post theater showed current movies in the 1950s.

“We worked with civilians from 8: 00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. each day, performing as professional civilian engineers,” explained Austin. “When we returned to the barracks in the evening, we returned to the military lifestyle.”

This led to some humorous situations, for, as Bill Lee explained, the S and P soldiers often considered themselves “better than the Army.”

One prank perpetrated by the engineers was played on military policemen working at a nearby stockade. Many of them parked their vehicles outside the stockade at night, playing their radios loud. This disturbed the S and P Soldiers, who retaliated by designing and constructing an electronic jammer to disrupt radio signals.

Another time the Soldiers figured out how to tap into the line that broadcast recorded bugle calls on post, substituting Dixieland music instead.

Despite playing occasional pranks, the S and P Soldiers performed a great deal of detailed, valuable work for the U.S. military that helped protect the nation and the entire Western World from communist aggression during the days of the Cold War.

“But remember, we did it all for \$67.00 per month,” said Rich Sholtis.

The work the Soldiers performed and the bonding that occurred made quite an impact that was explained by Dick Anderson. “We operated as brothers,” he said, “and I don’t forget one minute of it. We were one unit filled with a lot of wonderful guys.”

Many of the Soldiers were offered full time employment at the test station at the completion of their service obligation. Some returned to the private world while others decided to remain in Yuma. Numerous proving ground stalwarts who performed critical management functions for many years resulted.



YPG’s gymnasium was utilized by all Soldiers in the 1950s, including those serving as part of the Scientific and Professional program. Much of the test infrastructure that they designed then is still in use today.

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