

# THE OUTPOST

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# Secretary of the Army visits YPG

By Mark Schauer

Escorted by YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, Secretary of the Army Dr. Mark Esper visited the proving ground on November 29, seeing a variety of YPG assets that support six of the Army Futures Command's Cross Functional Teams building the Army's future force.

His visit was particularly focused on observing a test fire that was part of the Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA) program, which

support's the Army's top modernization priority: long-range precision artillery fires.

"I had a great visit to Yuma," said Esper. "It was a wonderful opportunity for me to see an installation that is central to our modernization efforts. We talked a good deal about all the test equipment and expertise that is found in Yuma that is critical to our Cross Functional Teams."

The Army aspires to field systems capable of accurately firing at targets



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100 kilometers away in the next four years, a dramatic increase over the 30 kilometers a currently-fielded 155mm howitzer shell is capable of when fired at top zone with rocket assistance. YPG testing has already achieved significantly increased distances in test fires conducted at both the proving ground and the nearby Barry M. Goldwater Range.

"The more lethality you can put on a target at great distances, the more overmatch you have," said Esper.

YPG supports six of the Army Futures Command's Cross Functional Teams building the Army's future force, which seeks to retain overmatch with near-peer adversaries in a high intensity conflict while maintaining the competency in waging irregular warfare that has been achieved since the 9/11 attacks. Heavily interested in supporting multi-domain operations in support

of other service branches, Esper described the effort as part of the "Army Renaissance" that is currently in progress.

"Yuma is essential to that because we will need to test all of that equipment and make sure that it meets the needs of our Warfighters and ensure we are successful on the future battlefield," Esper said.

Esper also stressed that YPG's role as independent arbiters of new materiel's performance ensures that the Army gets value for its money.

"Yuma is also providing an important role in terms of being good stewards of the taxpayer's dollars," said Esper. "We invest a lot of money into modernizing our force and want to be sure we get what we pay for."

Esper's message for the YPG workforce and Yuma community is that YPG is vitally importance to the

## THE OUTPOST

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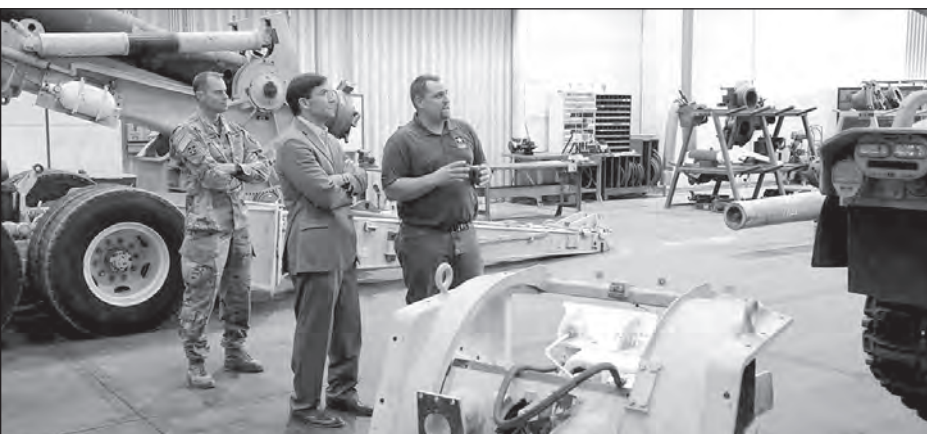


"The work that is happening here at Yuma by our military and a large cadre of civilians is critical to our nation's security," Esper said at a press conference that concluded the visit. "It is important because we want to make sure we deploy weapons that work as we expect them to, that deliver to the Soldiers what they need and when they need it." (Photos by Mark Schauer)

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## Chaplain's Corner

# I packed your parachute

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

Charles Plumb was a US Navy jet pilot in Vietnam. After 75 combat missions, his plane was destroyed by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb ejected and parachuted into enemy hands. He was captured and spent 6 years in a communist Vietnamese prison. He survived the ordeal and now lectures on lessons learned from that experience!

One day, when Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant, a man at another table came up and said, 'You're Plumb! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!

'How in the world did you know that?' asked Plumb.

'I packed your parachute,' the man replied.

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude.

The man pumped his hand and said, 'I guess it worked!'

Plumb assured him, 'It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today.'

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb says, 'I kept wondering what he had looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat; a bib in the back; and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many

times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything because, you see, I was a fighter pilot and he was just a sailor.' Plumb thought of the many hours the sailor had spent at a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute, holding in his hands each time the fate of someone he didn't know.

Now, Plumb asks his audience, 'who's packing your parachute?' Everyone has someone who provides what they need to make it through the day. He also points out that he needed many kinds of parachutes when his plane was shot down over enemy territory - he needed his physical parachute, his mental parachute, his emotional parachute, and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety.

Sometimes in the daily challenges that life gives us, we miss what is really important. We may fail to say hello, please, or thank you, congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them, give a compliment, or just do something nice for no reason. As you go through this week, this month, this year, recognize people who pack your parachutes.

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## Shootin' the Breeze

# Time to celebrate

By David J. Horn

For most of the year here at YPG, we work on our tests and projects and taskings, with just the regular distractions. Month after month, we work the long days, and for some... lots of overtime hours, to get the job done. Usually before we get the last job done, we roll right into the next test or job or tasking. If you asked me what I was doing six months ago, or maybe even just last week, I couldn't tell you. It's a blur.

Then, all of a sudden...the holidays are here! And what's the first thing that jumps into our minds? Is it the stress of all that holiday shopping? Is it the stress of having to attend your spouse's employee Christmas party where we'll have to spend the evening trying to make small talk with all sorts of "strange"

people? No!! For too many of us, the first thing that jumps into our mind is, "How am I going to burn off all my 'use or lose' vacation?!"

That's right. Burn up all that vacation we put on the books by not taking the time off earlier in the year. We spent the entire year being "John the Mechanic" or "Jane the Logistics Specialist" and it became the total definition of the self-image of who we think we are and how important we must be. While we say we "work to live", we end up doing just the opposite. When we stop on the way home to buy groceries, we're not just "Bob" out shopping. We're "Bob-The-Tank-Driver" out shopping. And, we just like the sound of that!

But now, in spite of how important we are, our boss is telling us that we must leave the office and go

home to live life as only that "core" person that's left when all the YPG wrapping paper is peeled off. A lot of people find that prospect kind of scary.

One of the things I like about Christmas, is that we can all just slow down. We have the time to be just "Mom" or "Dad." To be a brother, or a sister, or a friend, or a neighbor. It's kind of amazing, that when people peel off the external wrappings of their job, they discover that all along, there has been an incredible person living inside there.

In a couple of years, maybe your kids will be all grown up and will have moved away. In a couple of years, maybe your parents will be gone. In a couple of years, maybe your old body won't have the

strength to take your boat (the one sitting in the backyard surrounded by weeds) out to the lake anymore. Maybe you won't have a couple of years. Are you going to remember what you did with the extra cash you earned working overtime on that day that your kid was presented that award at school?

So, spend time with the kids, shop for Christmas presents, decorate the house, enjoy all the activities at church, party with your friends, and enjoy your hobbies. And after the holidays are over, keep doing these things so you don't end up with another pile of 'use or lose' again next year! Keep celebrating the things in life that are so important to all of us....faith, family, community, and country. Merry Christmas everyone.

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# Farewell to Former President George Herbert Walker Bush



Former President George H.W. Bush, the oldest living ex-president in American history, passed away on November 30 at age 94. Serving as President from 1989-1993, Bush presided over a major period of transition at the conclusion of the Cold War. After his term of office, President and Mrs. Bush visited YPG in March 1997, where he conducted his first parachute jump since bailing out of his Avenger torpedo bomber after being struck by enemy fire as a Naval aviator in World War II. Fair winds and following seas, Mr. President. (US Army photos)



## YPG Commander announces 2020 celebration



Providing a YPG overview as part of keynote remarks to Yuma's Noon Rotary Club on November 27, YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger announced that YPG's '2020 and Beyond' public celebration will take place on Saturday, February 8, 2020. He also stressed YPG's support of six of the Army Futures Command's eight Cross Functional Teams that are creating the Army of the future, as well as a significant increase in private industry customers conducting testing at the proving ground. "YPG has been the Army's busiest test center for the past nine years, and will continue to be busy for many years into the future," he said. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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# World War I Centennial, 1918-2018

## World War I Memorial and Museum a stirring reminder of American values

By Mark Schauer

\$100 million is a lot of money. Such was the sum raised by private donations that turned the National World War I Memorial and Museum in Kansas City, Mo., originally dedicated in 1926, from a stolid memorial with a tower and two modest galleries into a 32,000 square foot multimedia extravaganza that overwhelms the senses and sears the soul.

The rifles and side arms, howitzers and field mortars, artillery shells, and even airplanes are present in abundance, but so are the songs, the speeches, and the stories of the common and famous alike, from all nations. Young British officer Robert Graves later earned worldwide acclaim as a novelist—here in red letters on a wall panel with a photo of weary front line troops is a quote from his memoir *Goodbye to All That*: “I only once refrained from shooting a German.... While sniping from a knoll... I saw him taking

a bath in the German third line. I disliked the idea of shooting a naked man, so I handed the rifle to the sergeant with me.... He got him, but I had not stayed to watch.”

Visiting the World War I Memorial and Museum is particularly poignant this year, the centennial of the end of the conflict. For most of us today, World War I was the war of a great grandfather or great-great uncle-- The last surviving American veteran of the “war to end all wars,” Frank Buckles, who lied about his age to enlist in the Army at age 16 and volunteered to drive ambulances after being told it was the quickest way to get to the front, died in 2011.

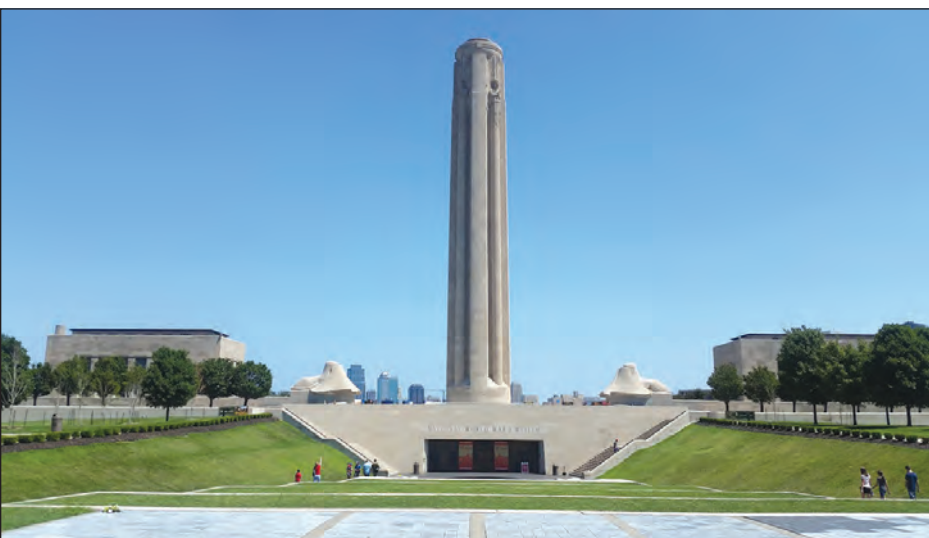
World War I lasted over four years, and saw nearly 70,000,000 troops from 15 nations and empires mobilized by land, sea, and air. By the close of hostilities in 1918, more than 9,000,000 were dead, and another 20,000,000 had been wounded. Nearly 8,000,000 were declared

missing in action. The civilian death toll exceeded 7,000,000. The horrific melee was triggered by the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, in June 1914. At the World War I Memorial, a 1910 9mm Browning pistol of the same model used in the crime is the first artifact on display, in a low alcove where an adult of average height has to kneel to get a close look: every other artifact and interpretive sign-- displayed on the floor, in wall cases, suspended from the ceiling, and under glass in the floors—stems from this easily-concealed handgun.

Regardless of the nation and motives for fighting, in 1914 the leaders were confident a swift victory was at hand. British newspapers assured the troops they would be home by Christmas. Kaiser Wilhelm declaimed that the German Empire would defeat France and its allies inside of six weeks.

The reality, however, was far less neat. The conflict quickly stalemated into brutal trench warfare that no combination of modern weaponry could break. By the end of May 1915, chlorine gas choked the muddy trenches of Ypres, and British civilians were being bombed by intermittent German air raids.

By the time the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917, France was devastated. 35,000 miles of trenches crisscrossed the obliterated and denuded Western Front. A third of the French male population between the ages of 18 and 30 had died in uniform. Many observers doubted that France and Belgium could be saved: in fact, the highest councils of the German government did not anticipate the appearance of fresh American troops would make a noticeable difference in the war. “American entrance is nothing,” opined the German war council, citing the nation’s small



Dedicated in 1926, the National World War I Memorial and Museum in Kansas City, Mo. is a stirring and comprehensive reminder of the debt of gratitude the nation- and world- owes to the more than 4,000,000 American Soldiers who served in the “war to end all wars.” 2017 marks the 100th anniversary of United States involvement in the conflict.



Until the middle of the last decade, this gallery and another like it combined with the memorial tower constituted the entire World War I museum. A 30,000 square foot underground expansion last decade turned the somber and venerable museum into a multimedia extravaganza that overwhelms the senses and sears the soul. (Photos by Mark Schauer)





This German 24.5 centimeter heavy trench mortar weighs over 1,600 pounds and had a range of over 3,000 feet. The Germans favored mortars for their economy in both manufacturing costs and use of powder.

military and supposed lack of popular support of a fight. Further, the German government assumed their submarine fleet could easily torpedo whatever ships brought American troops toward Europe.

Their assessment was wrong. The United States military drafted nearly three million men into service in 1917, with another 500,000 to 1,000,000 new civilian employees

providing support. A massive public relations campaign encouraged Americans to economize their food and material consumption and buy war bonds to finance the war. By the spring of 1918, 10,000 new American troops were arriving in France per day. At Cantigny, Chateau-Thierry, and Belleau Wood the Americans and Allied Forces turned the tide against German attacks, and American participation in the Hundred Days Offensive decisively broke the German populace's will to fight. An armistice was signed at 11:00 a.m. on November 11, 1918.

The United States military's losses exceeded 100,000, with over 200,000 wounded and nearly 4,000 missing in action. Historians will debate for the rest of our collective lifetimes whether or not a war prosecuted to total German defeat could have prevented the even-more devastating Second World War. Yet American participation in the conflict marked the beginning of the nation as a global superpower, and, after decades, a world where the kind of grave mistakes of 1914 were less likely. To visit the museum and reflect on the United States' great privilege and responsibility, won with the sacrifice and blood of Soldiers past, is particularly moving this year.



American entrance into World War I in 1917 decisively turned the tide for the Allied forces. At the time, however, it was far from a foregone conclusion that France and Belgium could be saved from the grinding German onslaught. "American entrance is nothing," opined the German war council.

## Farewell to Former Congressman Ed Pastor

Yuma Proving Ground mourns the loss of former Representative Ed Pastor, who died on November 27. While representing the Congressional districts that encompassed YPG from 1991 to 2003, Congressman Pastor supported the proving ground in many ways, one of the most visible being his help to secure funding for a large aircraft hangar and maintenance facility that was subsequently dedicated to longtime YPG employee Chet Janosky. The building's dedication, seen here, took place on November 27, 2007. (Photo by Yolie Canales)



## YPG Commander speaks at dedication of local World War I Centennial memorial



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger provides keynote remarks at the dedication of the 100 Cities/100 Memorials World War I Centennial Memorial at Yuma's Armed Forces Park on November 28. In addition to honoring the sacrifice of those who served in what was thought to be 'the war to end all wars,' Poppenberger thanked community leaders for their support of the proving ground and stressed YPG's history, busy workload supporting the Army Futures Command, and bright future. "YPG is a strong organization," he said. "We've been here for 75 years and with the initiatives we are doing, we are leading the Army well into the future." (Photo by Mark Schauer)



# Christmas truce comes to blasted landscape of World War I

By Bill Heidner

They were the enemy, the Hun, the Boche, and senior Army commanders encouraged an attitude of hatred toward them, but for a relatively brief period of time during Christmas 1914, impromptu tree-lighting ceremonies and the singing of Christmas carols ushered in a holiday truce. In some instances, this truce lasted well into January.

This truce was unofficial and those same senior commanders who preferred a hateful attitude toward the enemy were not at all pleased. Officially, the situation along the Western Front was thought to be so bad that when the Pope proposed a Christmas truce, it was deemed impossible to carry out, and, therefore, rejected. But to common soldiers occupying their muddy trenches, in some cases only 60 yards apart from their enemies, it went from the realm of impossible to improbable and finally to a wondrous historical footnote to a war that created 8.5 million dead among the combatants. (The total death toll for World War I, including civilian deaths, was well over 20,000,000.)

It began in many areas with impromptu tree lighting ceremonies held by the Germans. British troops, in particular, had been told to be wary of a possible attack, and at first the appearance of small lights above the parapets of the German trenches were taken as signs of impending combat action. In many cases, British soldiers fired at the twinkling lights and were surprised when return fire didn't come. Often what they received in return were renditions of Silent Night or O' Tannenbaum sung by German soldiers in their front line trenches. Although the words were unknown, the melodies were familiar, as was the tradition of the decorated and lighted tree. While there are many legends regarding the tradition of the Christmas tree, almost all of them point toward Germany. The custom became the rage in Victorian England when Prince Albert, a German, decorated Buckingham Palace with a candle-lit tree for his wife; Queen Victoria.

Little by little soldiers from both sides of the deadly trenches exposed themselves and came forth into the deadly no-mans-

land to exchange Christmas greetings and goods. Each side had received Christmas boxes from their governments and loved ones, which were shared between the sides. In one exchange, a heated discussion arose over the virtue of British cigarettes made of fine tobacco from Virginia versus the German preferred Turkish tobacco. Onlookers from both sides laughed as they smoked each others offerings.

What began on Christmas Eve blossomed to a wide-spread truce by Christmas day. Each side took advantage of the peace to recover and bury dead comrades who had been left in the deadly no-mans-land. In one sector, a keg of beer was traded for plum pudding. When writing home, a British soldier remarked that he knew who had received the best exchange on that deal. In some areas, impromptu soccer matches occurred. The scores vary depending on who is telling the story, although in the more organized of these matches it is reported by both sides to have been a German victory.

For the most part, the truce ended on Christmas day. In one case, company com-

manders from the two sides had agreed on an appropriate signal. On the British side, they unfurled a sign that said Merry Christmas. The Germans unfurled a bed sheet that said thanks. The British commander fired three shots in the air. The two commanders saluted each other and exchanged bows. When they had each descended back into the trenches, the German commander fired his pistol twice. The war was "officially" back on. In most sectors the immediacy of death to anyone exposed above the trench lines was back in full effect.

The truce would have more lasting effects in some areas. One British soldier wrote home that he wished every day could be like that Christmas day. Some sectors reported a complete lack of the back and forth sniping that had occurred previously. But the memories would have even farther reaching effects. The few survivors of the war who witnessed this remarkable occurrence all remembered the sad irony of the night and day when "peace on earth - goodwill towards man" poured forth from the deadly landscape of 'the war to end all wars.'

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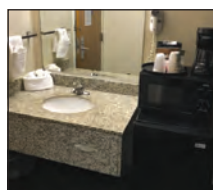
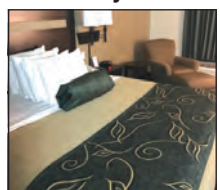


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# Budget officer brings a multitude of military experience

By Tina Villalobos

When a Soldier leaves the Army, the most logical thing to do, is go back to the Army—at least that's how it worked out for Raul Velasquez, YPG budget officer.

The budget section at YPG provides support to all test programs at YTC, CRTC, and TRTC, and is one of the three sections that constitute resource management, in addition to manpower and accounting.

"My job here at YPG is actually my first civilian job since leaving the active duty Army," said Velasquez. "In my duties at YPG, I provide guidance and analysis of funds through budget execution, including financial review, analysis, and reprogramming of funds. Another important part of my job is preparing, researching and verifying financial reports for requirements in support of test and evaluations."

With a team of 10, the budget section coordinates with a variety of sections at Army Test and Evaluations Command (ATEC) for resource requirements as well as funding and execution of funds, according to Velasquez.

"There are a lot of knowledgeable people on my team, and we're always happy to be of help to everyone here at YPG," he said.

Velasquez comes to YPG with a plethora of experience from a variety of commands, where he gained skills in every finance officer job function, preparing him for his current duties. He's been a disbursing agent, deputy disbursing officer, commander, executive officer, financial management analyst and budget officer in the Army in support of both peacekeeping and counter-contingency operations. His experiences have included working closely with the Navy, Airforce, Marines, DFAS and US Treasury.

But there are some key differences between active duty finance officer



Raul Velasquez, YPG budget officer, comes to YPG with a plethora of experience from a variety of commands. In his spare time, he is working toward a doctoral degree in organizational leadership. (Photo by Tina Villalobos)

responsibilities and working as a civilian budget officer comptroller, according to Velasquez.

"One of the main differences between active duty and my current job is the amount of military personnel I interact with," said Velasquez. "In uniform I always worked side-by-side with our civilian counterparts, but there were usually more military personnel than civilian. Terminology is also different, and it has taken me a while to learn the terms civilians use instead of those I learned in while I was in the Army."

Having worked at YPG for just over one year, Velasquez was quick to point out that there are also many similarities between his military and civilian responsibilities.

"Just like in the military, there are additional taskers and duties that need to be completed," said Velasquez. "Also, I am always quoting the DoD and Army regulations when I do things. I have learned through the military about correspondences, counseling, evaluations, leadership and training, which are all important in the military and as a civilian."

Velasquez is enthusiastic to learn more specific civilian nuances in the arena of finance, as well as employing his own depth of knowledge and experience.

"My favorite thing about my job here at YPG is the learning experience," he said. "In every organization I have been in, I was able to learn new things. I have been learning a lot of interesting things about the test and evaluation community, which supports the Warfighter."

Velasquez has taken his love for learning a step further: In his spare time, he is working toward a doctoral degree in organizational leadership.

Striking a balance between work, Army Reserve duties, school, and leisure time is challenging. As an Army Reserve soldier, Velasquez is required to maintain all the same standards as any active duty soldier, including maintaining his physi-

cal fitness, weapons qualifications, medical readiness, and completing all required trainings.

"Being a Reservist is much harder than I thought it was going to be," said Velasquez. "Trying to maintain the Army standards while working a civilian job is difficult. I used to workout everyday with my Soldiers—but, now I tend to work out by myself and when I have time."

Originally from San Diego, where he grew up with his two sisters, Velasquez quickly adapted to the advantages of desert life.

"I love bike riding, using my recreational vehicle, and off-roading," he said. "During the weekends, it is very nice to load up my RV and take the jeep out in the desert to explore. I really do enjoy the outdoor activities here, because I could never have been able to do these living in a big city or small town."



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