

YPG Fire Department undergoes training to expand emergency services

By Ana Henderson

As mentioned in its title, the Yuma Proving Ground Fire and Emergency Services Department (YPGFD) provides a variety of services beyond fire emergencies.

“We provide fire response, and emergency medical services up to the paramedic level. We also do air rescue firefighting response, where we provide coverage for the airfield, which is a specialty within firefighting,” explains Timothy Johnson, Assistant Chief of Training at YPG.

Now the YPGFD can add ropes and confined spaces rescue capabilities to that list.

In late September and early October, 21 members of the YPG FD team trained to become certified rope rescue and confined space rescue technicians. They underwent a rigorous, 80 hour rope rescue technician course and 40 hour confined space rescue technician course.

The rope rescue entailed basics of tying a knot and how to create raising and lowering systems for patients and equipment. Teams demonstrated how



YPG FD team trained to become certified rope rescue and confined space rescue technicians. In addition to proving services to YPG, the department provides services for incidents at Hidden Shores, Senator's Wash and Martinez Lake. Timothy Johnson, Assistant Chief of Training at YPG says, “This training is focusing on rescues in that terrain in an area that is inaccessible; above grade or downgrade.” (Photos by Ana Henderson and Timothy Johnson)

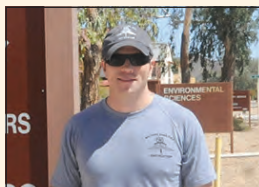


to create a safety system so rescuers and the patients all come out safely from a situation.

This rescue skill is particularly useful around YPG, “The lookout tower for the airfield, if somebody

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Dynamic new Free Fall commander hits ground running

By Ana Henderson

Maj. Derick Taylor is just a few months short of 23 years in the military.

His Army career has taken him many places and provided him with a wealth of experience, yet it started in the most unlikely places...in the United States Marine Corps. Shortly after his enlistment in the Corps, he earned an Army Reserve Officer Training Corps scholarship to attend Georgia Military College, then the University of Florida, where he ultimately commissioned as a U.S. Army Infantry officer.

His unique path has taken him across all three Army components, starting with the United States Army Reserves as a Military Policeman, then the Army National Guard as an Infantry, Adjutants General, and Special Forces Officer. Following transition to the Regular Army, where he continues his Special Forces Career. His diverse experiences in the



Maj. Derick Taylor jumped into the role of commander of the Military Free Fall School based at Yuma Proving Ground just two short months ago. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

military prepared him for his current assignment. "Having served across the components and in Joint Commands, I am able to speak the language of each, which is slightly different, even though we all are conducting the same

Freefall activities; I am able to use all of these experiences, as well as my former civilian career in the Skydiving community to this job" he said.

Taylor jumped into the role of commander of the Military Free Fall (MFF) School based at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) just two short months ago. The MFF School is one of the largest advanced training programs in the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center, and is comprised of students and instructors from each branch of the military, except the Coast Guard.

Taylor has been in special operations since 2003, with his first assignment in Tampa, Florida where he served as a Theatre Special Operations Command staff officer and deployed with a Special Operations Detachment, "I had the unique opportunity to support a mission in North Africa and, after that, I knew this was for me."

In 2007, he entered into the Special Forces Assessment and Selection course. From there his career took him around the world, including Jordan, Kenya, Afghanistan, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, The Baltics, Turkey, Djibouti, South Korea, and all over Western Europe. In the states he's served at Fort Benning, Georgia,

MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, and Fort Bragg, North Carolina, which was his previous duty station while assigned to the Joint Special Operations Command.

The position at YPG gives Taylor stability.

"Over the last decade I have been all over the world, meeting interesting people and doing interesting things, and I am thankful for it. But I am certainly happy, for two years or more, to be here in Yuma commanding the Free Fall School."

While leading the school Taylor has oversight of four programs of instruction. The MFF basic parachutist course, the largest course of the four, which trains almost 900 basic parachutists from all branches of the military each year. The MFF jumpmaster's course, the second largest course, trains about 300 students each year. There is an MFF instructor course, which is only for Soldiers assigned to the school. The fourth program is the Advanced Tactical Infiltration Course (ATIC).

"ATIC is our smallest course, but by far, our most advanced training," explained Taylor. "This is the combat-focused, mission-ready, free fall parachutist course where they are jumping into unmarked and rough terrain, with very large equipment loadouts, and doing it at night; it's about as challenging as it can be outside of a combat jump."

The MFF School trains between 1,200-1,400 students per year.

"We are a very small organization but we have the largest student throughput across the entire Special Warfare Center and School," said Taylor. "We take great pride in the training we provide to the operational force."

Also in the works for the MFF school is a new facility. Currently the school uses 14 smaller and older buildings around YPG. The new facility will bring them all under

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one roof. "As the Army prioritizes modernization, we are all looking at how to do things better, faster, and more efficiently; for the school, modernization of our infrastructure and equipment will ensure we retain a competitive advantage over our adversaries, and also result in long-term savings."

The military construction project is set to break ground in 2021 on the Laguna Army Airfield. "What's exciting for us is the efficiencies that it will bring. Right now our training

committees and their supporting apparatus are spread all across YPG. Once we consolidate these, and put it right next to our special operations aircraft, we gain more training time throughout the day" he explained.

While the number one line of effort is training, Taylor also looks forward to getting involved in YPG and Yuma community events to ensure the story is told. "Every single Special Forces Qualification Course graduate comes here to Yuma for freefall parachutist training-- that's a big story to tell."

Yuma community welcomes YTC commander



YTC Commander Lt. Col. Alicia Johnson spoke at the Yuma County Chamber of Commerce's annual Mega-Mixer event on Sept. 27, thanking the Yuma community for their staunch support of the proving ground, "The citizens of Yuma County are the most patriotic and supportive of the military that I have encountered in my Army career," she said. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Price School receives donation



Ground Combat Systems Director Eddy Patchet and Munitions & Weapons Division Test Officer Robert Archibale donated \$1,100 to the Principal of James D. Price Elementary School, Jacquelin Acedo. The money came from the recent Ground Combat Golf Tournament organized by Archibale. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

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Price Elementary School students get prepared



The American Red Cross visited James D. Price Elementary School for the Red Cross Pillow Case Preparedness presentation. The hour long "class" focused on preparing for earthquakes, fires, and other natural disasters. The Red Cross provided children with a pillow case filled with literature, teddy bears, coloring books all focused on resiliency in an emergency. (Photo by Robert Barocio)

YPG shines at Yuma Community Expo



YPG's largest-ever booth at the annual Yuma Community Expo was a big hit with attendees, who had a chance to get up close and personal with Army gear, along with a sneak peek at the attractions on tap for YPG's Feb. 15, 2020 celebration. Among those on hand to invite the public to the upcoming extravaganza were YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and YTC Commander Lt. Col. Alicia Johnson. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Celebrating ATEC's 20th anniversary



The Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) marked its 20th Anniversary on Oct. 1 with all subordinate organizations conducting a simultaneous cake-cutting as members of the workforce watched the ceremony at headquarters via a live stream. "Across the board, the Army Test and Evaluation Command is a fantastic organization," added YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Honoring the Bushmasters



On the morning of Sept. 28, Soldiers from YPG's Airborne Test Force helped honor the Bushmasters, the Soldiers of the 158th Regimental Combat Team who earned international acclaim for tenacious jungle warfare in the Pacific Theater during World War II, at the annual remembrance ceremony at Yuma's Desert Lawn Memorial Park. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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TRAINING

FROM PAGE 1

had a heart attack up there or was unconscious and rescuers could not walk the person down the stairs, these guys could come in package the patient in a stokes basket or some type of device and lower them down from above safely” explains Senior Instructor with the Regional Emergency All Climate Training (REACT) Center, Matt Trepczyk, who traveled in from the headquarters in Wisconsin.

The YPG FD will purchase equipment to add to their tool kits in addition to the rope for this specialized rescue.

“Our plan is to be fully operational within the calendar year” explains Johnson.

The installation also has areas of confined space starting with the elevators, “There are multiple, what they call, permit required confined space areas on the installation.

Mostly they are inside manholes, but we also have large storage tanks with limited access. We have storm drains, a multitude of telephone and telecommunication vaults. Things along those lines that people go into on a regular basis.”

Adding, “There are different requirements that need to be

accomplished in order to perform a rescue inside a confined space.”

During the training personnel went in to electrical vaults, an empty water storage tank and a drafting pit used to test fire pumps which was drained. Trepczyk also brought different size culverts that extend 24 feet long which the guys had to crawl through while wearing their gear.

Johnson explains the added benefit of performing the training on base versus sending personnel off post, “By using our home turf we are able to go out and access the hazards as they are sitting, and it helps us to develop an incident plan for some of those specific target areas. In the event that something does happen, as the responders we will already have a loose plan in place as to how we are going to tackle that.”

This training came as a result of a risk assessment where it identified Technical Rescue as one of the most needed capabilities for the YPG FD to better serve the YPG community as well as those surrounding.

“We have very limited resources to be able to provide that service, so the Fire Chief has committed to purchasing the equipment, and now acquiring the training along with that equipment, we can provide that service to the community.”

YPG first responders provides services for incidents at Hidden



Shores, Senator’s Wash and Martinez Lake,

“Those populations are continuing to increase and people are becoming more and more adventurous in out-backing and off-roading. So this training is focusing on rescues in that terrain in an area that is inaccessible; above grade or downgrade. We can use these skills to bring the patient to the ambulance and provide

additional care.”

They also respond to accidents on Highway 95, “We respond on average monthly to a vehicle accident on the highway, we are very well practiced at doing vehicle extrication, which is another specialty” says Johnson.

Johnson says this training will reinforce existing skills and add new capabilities to make them a well-rounded rescue team.



Members of the YPG FD team trained to become certified rope rescue and confined space rescue technicians. They underwent a rigorous, 80 hour rope rescue technician course and 40 hour confined space rescue technician course. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

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General Motors celebrates 10 years at Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

It's hard to believe that more than a decade has passed since General Motors (GM) became a long-term tenant at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG).

Today, many Yuma residents can boast of seeing camouflaged test cars with manufacturer's license plates on the public streets in and around town. Anyone who has driven a GM vehicle in North America manufactured in the last 10 years owes their vehicle's reliability in extreme conditions to testing undertaken by GM's engineers at their Desert Proving Ground (DPG) located within the vast ranges of YPG.

The genesis of the facility lies in the early 1990s, just after the first Gulf War. Though YPG was the Army's premier hot weather test site, it lacked a sufficiently specialized facility to conduct continuous high speed testing on paved roads. The Department of Defense (DoD)

recognized the need, but the high cost of constructing the facility was prohibitive at a time when efforts to balance the federal budget squeezed military budgets.

In response to this, a legal device called Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) was developed to allow the military to lease government property to private sector entities whose business was relevant to military needs, with the provision that the Army would be allowed to utilize the private facilities. Simultaneously, GM was interested in relocating from its antiquated hot weather test track in Mesa, Ariz. An isolated state-of-the-art complex when it opened in 1953, by the middle of the last decade the Mesa facility was located on prime land in one of the hottest real estate markets in the United States and severely encroached upon by a half century of relentless urban development.

"The hot weather at YPG is ideal—it's the sunniest spot in



GM's test track includes a variety of punishing road conditions, and the Belgian block course is particularly jarring to passengers in a vehicle. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

the world," said James Schmidt, business manager of GM's DPG. "We were looking at various places in Arizona, but none of the others met our needs."

Aside from the long-term lease and the opportunity to use YPG facilities, GM was also attracted to the unique means of protecting their competitive advantage that the partnership provided: Locating on a secure Army installation with 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace above it eliminated security concerns that had existed in Mesa, where urban encroachment gave people the opportunity to view new vehicles from the windows of houses overlooking the test track. The Army and GM inked a 50-year lease with an option for an additional 50 years at YPG in 2007. In the 10 years since it opened in June 2009, the facility and partnership with the Army has met all of the company's expectations.

"It's been very good overall," said Schmidt. "With two large organizations you always have concern with bureaucracy, but

anything that has come up, both sides have been very willing to come together and work on any issues there are."

YPG personnel have also found the relationship to be fruitful and productive.

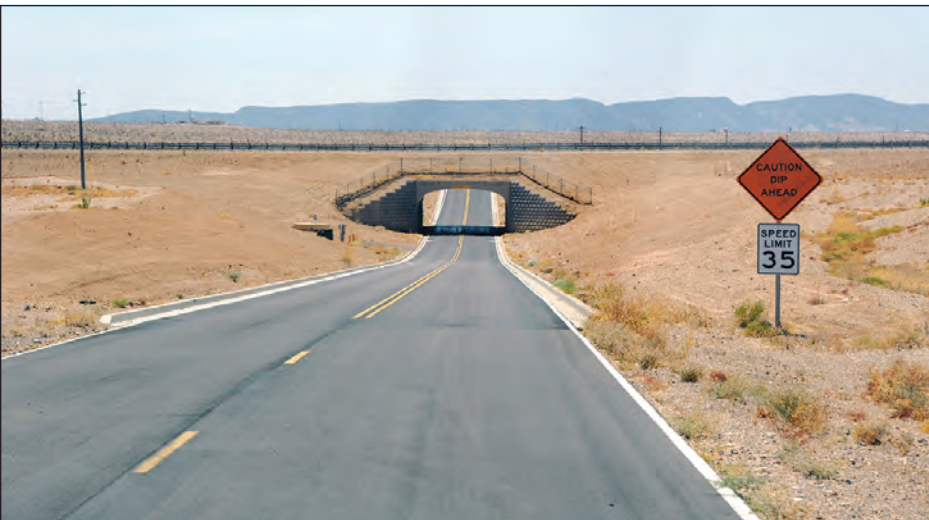
"All in all, the relationship has been stellar throughout the years," said Rob Fillinger, a test officer in YPG's Combat and Automotive Systems Division. "They have always been very accommodating in supporting our test needs."

As part of the EUL agreement, GM funded the construction of a four and one-half mile high speed paved oval road course specifically designed to accommodate the heaviest vehicles in the Army inventory. Yet YPG testers have found the most useful piece of infrastructure to be one GM uses to test ordinary civilian vehicles.

"The most important part of that facility we've used over the years is the vehicle dynamics pad," said Fillinger. "Having access to that large area for test maneuvers is a huge plus for us."



The 14,000 square-foot shop floor is brilliantly illuminated and spotlessly clean, and accommodates rows of brand new GM models, some outfitted with camouflage over their trim. Each of the 40 vehicle bays is outfitted with computerized equipment and sensors.



Aside from the long-term lease and the opportunity to use YPG facilities, GM was also attracted to the unique means of protecting their competitive advantage that the partnership provided: Locating on a secure Army installation with 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace above it eliminated the possibility of surreptitious photography of their test vehicles.

The 1,000-by-1,000 foot vehicle dynamics pad, a flat, unmarked swath of asphalt in which the depth of the asphalt throughout varies by less than the width of five sheets of paper. Testers evaluate vehicle handling on this pad by negotiating an orange cone slalom, then driving fast through a 'J' turn, a sharply banking horseshoe curve that opens onto the wide asphalt.

Surrounding all of this is the three and one-half mile-long circular track to accommodate high-speed testing.

"The normal speed for high speed testing is 120 miles per hour for drivers in the upper lane," said

Schmidt. "Our drivers go through advanced driver training with our traffic safety group. If they don't meet certain qualifications after going through the course, they cannot drive."

GM DPG will be in its current location for at least 40 more years, with the option to renew for 50 additional years beyond that. As such, the facility may well grow in the years to come.

"As we move toward more electrification of vehicles and more driverless vehicles, it may require additional facilities to accommodate that testing," said Schmidt.



After running a vehicle around the circular track at high speeds for an extended period of time, testers park the vehicle to bake courtesy of the unrelenting summer sun—and park it alongside a wind-blocking wall to ensure no ventilation. Afterward, drivers start up the vehicle, crank up the air conditioning, and continue doing laps around the track to see how much heat stress the car can take without overheating or vapor locking.

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Celebrating Hispanic Heritage



YPG honored National Hispanic Heritage Month with a gala luncheon on Oct. 3, featuring folklorico dancers and mariachi from Gadsden Elementary School District #32 and keynote remarks from Amanda Aguirre, President and CEO of Regional Center for Border Health, who said, "Sometimes you don't know what strength you have until you test yourself." (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Raising awareness about domestic violence



October is National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, on Oct. 2, YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger and Garrison Manager Gordon Rogers kicked off a month of awareness events on post with a cake cutting ceremony as members of the workforce looked on. (Photo by Casey Garcia)

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YPG wows visitors at annual G.A.I.N. event



Event-goers enjoyed interacting with Soldiers from YPG's Airborne Test Force and officers from the YPG Police Department during the Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods event in Yuma on Oct. 5. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

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Job at YPG gives amateur MMA fighter ideal schedule for training

By Ana Henderson

If you work at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) you might have seen Tyler "Yogi" Hinton walking the halls. He works for Achieve Human Services, the janitorial crew contracted by YPG.

Hinton has worked with the janitorial crew for one year. "It gives me flexibility. I am up at 4:00 AM, I get off work at 3:30 PM and I head to the gym," he said.

Hinton heads to gym to train because he an amateur Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter who spends up to five hours at the gym daily. Up until three weeks ago his record was 4-0.

He says, "I don't train like an amateur, I train like a pro," adding, "I never miss a day at the gym."

Hinton ended up in Yuma and YPG by chance. While attending college in Goodland, Kansas and wrestling, something he's done since age six, he became friends with a fellow student and wrestler from Yuma. Hinton visited his friend in Yuma and decided to stay.

After moving to Yuma his friend took him to Torture Training Center, Bully Rehab Awareness Gym (BRAG) Inc., to meet Carlos Flores, who is a former MMA fighter and now a coach.

"I could tell by his face he wasn't interested, he said 'I've trained a lot of fighters and they all quit'" Hinton said, "I'm different." Flores responded "I hear that a lot." He convinced Flores to give him a chance.

"My hands, my kicks, were horrible. It was like I had two left feet. I had no hand eye-coordination but I was a good grappler." He's now been training with Flores for two years and



Hinton won his fourth fight in Mesquite, Nevada and had three weeks' notice to prepare for a championship in Las Vegas for Tuff-N-Uff Promotions, which is where Hinton had his first loss but that loss is not holding him down. From wrestling he learned to be a good sport and not be upset with a loss.

has a 4-1 record.

He won his fourth fight in Mesquite, Nevada and had three weeks' notice to prepare for a championship in Las Vegas, which is where Hinton had his first loss. But that loss is not holding him down: From wrestling he learned to be a good sport and not be upset with a loss. "If I lose, I am like, 'man that was a tough fight,' and I hit up the guy on Instagram and tell him, 'man, that was a good fight.'"

After his recent loss he plans to drop down in weight class from 145 to 135. He will make his debut in that weight class on December 21.

Hinton not only trains for his career, he helps out with teaching boxing, kick boxing, and jiu-jitsu. He invites kids to join the gym to help channel their energy, whether positive or negative, since the gym does have the BRAG program.

Hinton's goal is to make it to Bellator or the Ultimate Fighting Championship. He would also like to use his degree in Art Education to become a special education teacher.

For now he is very appreciative of his job with Achieve because it gives him the time he needs to reach his goals.



Hinton not only trains for his career, helps out with teaching boxing, kick boxing, jiu-jitsu. He invites kids to join the gym to help channel their energy, whether positive or negative, since the gym does have the Bully Rehab Awareness Gym program. (Loaned photos)



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