

## Strong partnership benefits YPG and MCAS Yuma

By Mark Schauer

Having co-existed in Yuma County together for over 60 years, it stands to reason that U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma (MCAS-Yuma) have historically had close relations.

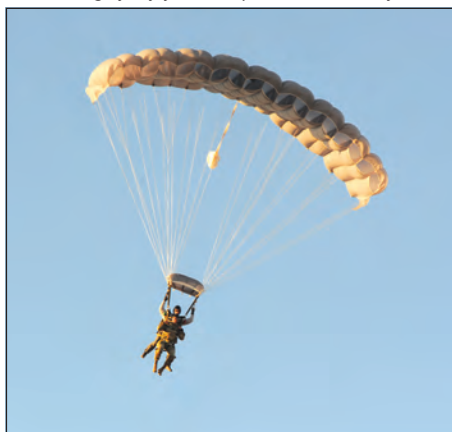
“It’s important to have good communication between us to more effectively share resources,” said Col. Ross Poppenberger, YPG commander.

It is even more important for the national defense of tomorrow, given that the Army’s top modernization priority is long range precision fires. The Army aspires to field systems capable of accurately firing at targets 100 kilometers away in the next four years, a dramatic increase over the 30 kilometers a currently-fielded 155-mm howitzer shell is capable of traveling when fired at top zone with rocket assistance. YPG testing has already achieved significantly increased distances—so much so that the range eclipses the distance of YPG end-to-end at its furthest boundaries. Guided munitions are designed for pinpoint accuracy, yet safely testing them requires an enormous amount of range space.

Fortunately, the nearby Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR), under



YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger was joined by Marine Corps Air Station Yuma Commander Col. David Suggs for a tandem parachute jump with instructors from the Military Freefall School at YPG. The jump was the first ever for Suggs, who thoroughly enjoyed the experience. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



joint control of MCAS-Yuma and Luke Air Force Base and primarily used for operational testing of high-performance aircraft, is even larger than YPG, and has successfully hosted several long-range test fires conducted by YPG personnel.

Each time, the test personnel had to transport and emplace numerous pieces of large, specialized, and expensive test-support equipment to the site, then quickly take it down and return it to the proving ground, a multi-day effort. It was an arduous task, but a vital one—and one that couldn’t have been accomplished without the necessary permission to test there. Poppenberger credits MCAS-Yuma Commander Col. David Suggs for facilitating this.

“Anything he needs on my ranges, he can just pick up the phone and call and he’ll get it, because I understand the importance of what his command is doing,” said Suggs. “As for our ranges, roughly 80% of all aviation training in the Marine Corps takes place on them.”

The creators of BMGR likely never imagined that the range would be used to occasionally test very long-range artillery, Suggs acknowledges.

“You have to evolve,” said Suggs. “You can’t just sit back and allow

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YPG supports  
Veterans  
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Test officer hopes to  
encourage others  
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YPG opens doors  
to community  
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# Soldier spotlight



Sgt. Christian Konkel is currently assigned as Parachute Technician for the Military Freefall School at Yuma Proving Ground and serves as the Lead Pack Instructor. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in 2012 from his hometown of Puyallup, Washington. Sgt. Konkel deployed to Kuwait in support of Inherent Resolve. He is married to Victoria and has two children, Nash Konkel age two and Scarlett Konkel who was just born last month. He enjoys spending time with his family, traveling and working out. (Loaned photo)

# THE OUTPOST

The Outpost is an unofficial publication authorized under provisions of AR 360-1. The Outpost is published every two weeks by the Public Affairs Office, Yuma Proving Ground. Views and opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Army. This newspaper uses material credited to ATEC and ARNEWS. While contributions are solicited, the PAO reserves the right to edit all submitted materials and make corrections, changes or deletions to conform with the policy of this newspaper.



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# YPG honors Veterans at parade



The Yuma community turned out in force for the annual American Legion Post #19 Veterans Day Parade, and YPG returned the favor, with YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, YTC Commander Lt. Col. Alicia Johnson, Chief of Staff Minerva Peters, and Soldiers from the Airborne Test Force all participating. A hearty thank you to all of our nation's veterans! (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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# Shootin' the Breeze

## No snoozing allowed

By David J. Horn

So there you were, earlier this morning in the middle of this great dream where you are having a really interesting conversation with an old high school friend, when all of a sudden you hear an obnoxious "Beep...Beep...Beep." Your alarm clock just ruined everything.

Time to drag yourself out of bed, clean yourself up a bit, and head out to Yuma Proving Ground (YPG). One of the prerequisites for working at YPG, is a bullet-proof alarm clock. Mondays are especially hard. For those folks who work the odd hours down range, it's even harder. One of the things I really look forward to when I retire, is taking my alarm clock and just pitching it.

It wasn't always that way. When I was a kid back on the farm, we didn't have electrical outlets in the upstairs bedrooms of our old farm house, so I had this old wind-up alarm clock. It had a really nice, old-school sounding bell. Since my dad woke us up each morning by yelling up the stairwell that it was time to milk the cows, I didn't set the alarm very often. The only times I actually set the alarm was on some special occasion, like when I wanted to get up early to get ready to go on a vacation or something like that. Happy times.

All that changed when I started my wprofessional career. It was the

1970s and digital alarm clocks with big glowing numerals were all the rage, so I got a new alarm clock. While the numerals looked really cool, the next morning I discovered that the electronic alarm tone was a bad copy of the siren from a French police car. Nasty.

I've now had that obnoxious alarm clock for 41 years. There are no feelings of happiness anywhere associated with that alarm going off. An interesting thing recently happened to a coworker of mine, when he got one of those new alarm clocks where you can program it to play one of your favorite songs when it goes off in the morning. After a couple of Mondays, he commented that his favorite song, wasn't his favorite song anymore.

So, here's the plan, I'm going to keep using my siren alarm clock up until the day I retire. Then, I'm going to look for a box in the back of my closet to get...you guessed it...that old wind-up alarm clock I had as a kid. I think that with a little WD-40, it will run just like brand new. That way I won't be late when I go out to have breakfast with my already retired friends, or to attend those fun classes I'm going to take at the nearby college. Happy times.

In the meantime, I wonder if I think really hard about that old high school friend all day today, is there a chance...

## Thanksgiving

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# Chaplain's Corner

## Stop and give thanks

By Chaplain Maj. Ronald Beltz

Abraham Lincoln, in the midst of the Civil War in 1863, established the annual celebration of Thanksgiving. Lincoln had learned how important it is to stop and thank God in the midst of great difficulties.

Lincoln wrote, "We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we have been grown in numbers, wealth and power as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the

deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us. It has seemed to me fit and proper that [the gifts of God] should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged with one heart and one voice by the whole American people. I do, therefore, invite my fellow citizens . . . to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens."

# PARTNERSHIP

FROM PAGE 1

things to stay status quo."

Poppenberger credits the strong personal relationship with his fellow commander for facilitating this, along with the presence of Marine Corps instructors at YPG in both the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Military Freefall School (MFFS), the YPG tenant unit that trains elite military parachute jumpers from multiple services, and military working dog handler training courses. The most recent instance of this was Poppenberger and Suggs opening a mid-November day with a simultaneous tandem parachute jump with MFFS instructors into one of YPG's drop zones.

"He's invited me to come out on things, and I've invited him to do things," said Poppenberger. "A handful of our Military Freefall instructors live in housing at MCAS-Yuma. I thought it would be good for him to see part of the mission that he indirectly supports by housing some of our instructors, both Army and

Marine Corps.

In so doing, the two colonels were also helping MFFS personnel maintain their readiness at conducting tandem operations.

"We aren't able to get every member of the DoD family military freefall qualified," said Maj. Derick Taylor, MFFS commander. "Oftentimes there are specialists out there, from working dog handlers to intelligence analysts, even a chaplain, who might be needed at a given place in theater, and the best way to get them there is to jump them in. That is when tandem jump capability comes in handy."

As it turns out, the parachute jump was Suggs' first.

"I'm a jet guy," he said with a laugh. "If you're a jet guy and need a parachute, you're having a bad day."

Having come into command of their respective bases within a few weeks of each other, Poppenberger and Suggs will continue to cooperate with each other for the remaining seven months of their tours. The partnership between their two installations, however, should continue far into the future.

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# Test officer inspires future engineers

By Mark Schauer

From military vehicles to tank and artillery cartridges, Combat Automotive Systems Division Test Officer Savanna Silva has worked on many of ground combat's largest projects in her nearly nine years employed at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG).

Her passion for the job is obvious. "My job consists of three pieces: planning, execution, and reporting. My favorite part of the job is execution—I enjoy firing these rounds, seeing them function as intended, and seeing the magnitude of what they are capable of."

A native of Oklahoma who has lived in Yuma since she was 13, Silva knew she wanted to pursue a technical career after an impromptu airplane trip in her uncle's Cessna 172 when she was 17. After reading the airplane's manual for a few hours, her uncle let her take the stick as they flew.

"It was so exciting and exhilarating, and stemmed from just reading the manual. From that I knew I wanted to do something technical."

Her first exposure to engineering was while working as a data collector for the Combat Automotive Systems Division at YPG, a job she pursued after a former co-worker was hired here. Originally majoring in child development, she switched majors and set her sights on an engineering degree. That it was challenging in multiple facets appealed to her.

"Engineering tends to be a male-dominated field. I as a person do not like to be told, 'no, you can't do that.' I always took that as a challenge."

She left, and was hired back as a military vehicle test officer once she obtained her bachelor's degree in systems engineering from the University of Arizona's partnership program with Arizona Western College, graduating in the program's second cohort—and as its first female



Combat Automotive Systems Division Test Officer Savanna Silva speaks with engineering students at the University of Arizona's Yuma regional campus as part of a panel comprised of local engineers. A graduate of the program who is approaching completion of a Master of Science in Systems Engineering, Silva discussed her job and offered encouragement to the students. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



more so. They need to see there is a bright future ahead of them, not just one that's been predetermined by circumstances set forth by their

family."

She hopes that current and future students will take inspiration from her experiences.

"If you put your mind to it, you will succeed. If you just give in to the circumstances, you're never going to get anywhere."

As for her own professional aspirations, Silva expects to progress further in time.

"Eventually I want to cross the threshold into leadership. I know that's sometime down the road, but that's the goal."

For now, though, a brother in the Air Force who is about to deploy helps to motivate her work.

"It gives me another reason to make sure that what I'm assessing here is doing what it is supposed to do. I don't want to send my brother out there with something that is faulty."

graduate.

These days, she tests a variety of tank munitions and artillery at work while pursuing a master's degree in systems engineering on her own time. In her last semester of the graduate program, she still finds time to speak to students of all levels, including recently serving on a panel of engineers that spoke to current students of her old undergraduate program.

"Talking to students is rewarding. You see the struggle and strife they go through—sometimes they put limitations on themselves by saying, 'I can't do that because of my race,' or, 'because I'm female,' or some other label that society puts on you, and that just fuels me even

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# YPG welcomes community for YPG 2020 event

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is getting ready to pull out all the stops for its biggest celebration yet.

“The commander’s vision on this is pretty simple. He wants to get out to the Yuma community to let them know what we do here at YPG and to thank them for all the support over the years,” explains YPG’s Family Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR) Director Rick Bessett.

Similar to YPG’s 75th Anniversary celebration, the installation is opening the doors and welcoming the community.

Along with the open house

showcasing the static displays of testing equipment, the legendary band Grand Funk Railroad will be the headlining entertainment.

YPG’s FMWR enlisted Army Entertainment for their services. “They are doing all the staging and all the lighting. It’s going to be absolutely fantastic.”

Army Entertainment produces shows around the world at large installations and now they are bringing those top of the line services to Yuma.

FMWR has not settled on a local band for the mid-afternoon show, but will bring back the crowd-pleasing



The Manhattan Dolls are returning to the stage at the YPG 2020 celebration.

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Manhattan Dolls for the opening act. Miss Yuma and Miss Teen Yuma along with Miss Yuma County and Miss Teen Yuma County will also make an appearance.

Other entertainment lined up includes a K-9 stunt show, demonstrations with the Predator drone, and local marching bands. “We are going to fill the day with activities from 10 in the morning until 7 p.m. at night when the fireworks start. It going to be a fun-filled day,” says Bessett.

The Military Freefall School, a tenant of YPG, will play an important role at the celebration, jumping in the flag during the opening ceremony.

Bessett is also hoping to secure a fly-over but that is not set in stone. What he does have scheduled for sure, “There is going to be an outstanding fireworks show to close out the celebration.”

This event will have something for all ages including a kids’ zone, zip line, and food and non-food vendors. Bessett notes there are still vendor and sponsorship opportunities available. Those interested can call 928-328-2020, the official YPG 2020 hotline. For updates the official website is [www.YPG2020.com](http://www.YPG2020.com).

Bessett gives a huge thank you for MGM Design out of Yuma, whose



The Military Freefall School will play an important role at the celebration, jumping in the flag during the opening ceremony. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

team has worked closely with the YPG Marketing team to create a website and also other sponsors who have already pledged their support: The Yuma International Airport, TRAX Test Services, Shearwater Mission Support, IHG Army Hotel and Michael’s Military Housing.

“Those people who support us are so important to make this happen.”

The YPG 2020 celebration is taking place on the YPG installation on the Howard Cantonment. The gates open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., on Saturday, Feb. 15, and is free to attend.



# 2019 Org Day brings out the YPG workforce for team building fun

The 2019 Org Day at Yuma Proving Ground did not disappoint. The YPG workforce came out ready to enjoy some friendly competition. (Photos by POA staff)

**Winners:**  
**Aviation Systems & Electronic Test:**  
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Land Ski Relay - ATF 1  
 Fitness Agility Relay  
 Trifecta - ATF 1  
 Wacky Relay - Purple Cobras

**Munitions & Weapons Division:**  
 3 on 3 Basketball - MW  
 4 on 4 Volleyball - MW  
 Bowling - Artillery 1

**Instrumentation Division:**  
 Free Throw Shoot - TKO  
 Closest to the Pin - TKO 5 - Chris Kline

**Combat Automotive Systems Division:**  
 Tug-O-War - CASD 1

**YPG Command & Staff:**  
 Corn Hole - The Big Dippers

**Vet Clinic:**  
 Football Throw - Specialist Jeremy Blue

**Directorate of Operations:**  
 Poker - Paul Fletcher





# Army credentialing and continuing education: Today's preparation determines tomorrow's achievement

By Lindsay Kelly, Test Examiner/  
Multi-Use Learning Facility  
Coordinator and Erin Beam,  
Education Services, Chief

Starting Dec. 1, Soldiers  
will be eligible to apply for the  
Credentialing Assistance Program.

## What is the Credentialing Assistance Program?

A credential is an occupational license or certification obtained from an organization that assesses and confirms a credential seeker is competent and qualified to work in that field.

The Army Credentialing Assistance (CA) program provides funding for voluntary off-duty courses and/or exams leading to an industry-recognized academic or vocational credential listed in the Army Credentialing Opportunities On-Line website found at [www.cool.army.mil](http://www.cool.army.mil).

The CA program offers three credentialing options: Credential related to a Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) (as long as it is not an MOS requirement), related to an academic degree or certificate, or aligned to a civilian career field.

## What Do I Get?

Soldiers may use both tuition assistance (TA) and Army CA; however, the combined amount

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cannot exceed \$4,000 per fiscal year. CA pays for classroom, online/blended and hands-on learning/training plus associated exams,

materials and all required fees (i.e., manuals, books, supplies, study guides, and recertification of credentials).

## Do I Qualify?

Soldiers must meet basic TA eligibility. Soldiers may begin work on their first Credentialing Occupational Pathway upon achievement of MOS qualification and successful completion of Advanced Individual Training, Warrant Officer Basic Course, or Basic Officer Leaders Course.


Soldiers establish eligibility for a second Credentialing Occupational Pathway upon achievement of MOS qualification and successful completion of Advanced Leaders Course, Warrant Officer Advanced Course, Captain Career Course, or equivalent. Ensure course/exam completion date is before date of separation.

Visit your local Education Counselor to apply! Be sure to activate your GoArmyEd account (if not currently active).

## Credentialing Assistance Website:

<https://home.army.mil/imcom/index.php/customers/credentialing-assistance>

For more information: contact YPG Education Office at 928.328.3926 or [lindsay.m.kelly5.ctr@mail.mil](mailto:lindsay.m.kelly5.ctr@mail.mil). You can also visit Building. 2100, Room 8 during office hours Monday-Thursday 7 a.m.-3 p.m.

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Share your event with the Yuma Sun's online calendar!



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Go to  
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928-446-9519

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**REPAIR & INSTALLATIONS**

Water Heaters,  
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We also do all types of roof coatings!

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If you are out of work, looking to make a move up the corporate ladder or need extra spending money that a part time job can supply, the Yuma Sun Employment section is the place to look.

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25 years of quality service

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Small repairs to complete new roof systems. All 100% guaranteed.

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**ADVERTISE HERE!**



## FMWR welcomes back winter visitors



FMWR welcomed back the winter visitors who temporarily make the YPG Travel Camp their home. The lunch time event consisted of a potluck meal. While the crowd enjoyed their meal they received welcome briefs from YPG Commander Col. Ross Poppenberger, YTC Commander Lt. Col. Alicia Johnson, FMWR's Director, YPG Protection Division and YPD Fire Protection and Prevention Division along with representatives from the Medical and Vet clinic. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



11 DECEMBER 2019

1815 HOURS | COX FIELD



# CHRISTMAS TREE LIGHTING



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# THANKSGIVING BUFFET

**THURSDAY  
NOVEMBER 28TH  
1PM - 9PM**

Turkey • Ham • Chicken Pot Pie  
Mashed Potatoes • Stuffing • Soups  
Green Bean Casserole • Sweet Potato  
Casserole • Dessert Bar • Salad Bar

ONLY  
**\$22<sup>99</sup>**  
FOR ADULTS

Buffet closed from 12PM - 1PM



# BLACK FRIDAY WEEKEND

PROGRESSIVE DRAWINGS

WIN UP TO  
**37 TIMES EACH DAY!**

**FRIDAY & SATURDAY  
NOVEMBER 29TH - 30TH | 1PM - 10PM**

It's a black Friday weekend blowout! Every 15 minutes you could win \$50 Rewards Play. If no winner is verified, the prize rolls over to the next winner! There is no limit to how many times you can win each day!

Earn entries beginning at midnight on November 29th. Qualify when you play slots or table games with your Rewards Card.

See Reward Club for details.

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