

The Outpost

U.S. ARMY YUMA PROVING GROUND, YUMA, ARIZONA 85365

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ERCA's rate of fire increase under development at YPG

By Brandon Mejia

As the Army's Futures Command continues its modernization efforts with long range precision fires (LRPF), its cross functional teams along with U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) are working to develop new capabilities to increase the Extended Range Cannon Artillery's (ERCA) rate of fire from an outsider's perspective.

ERCA possesses the capability to fire twice as far as any currently fielded U.S. cannon artillery and its ongoing development to increase its rate of fire, always has room to enhance developmental outcomes. That is exactly what the Long Range Precision Fires Cross Functional Team (CFT) and the U.S. Army



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Application Lab (AAL) hopes to achieve.

Starting in October 2020, fifteen private companies brought their perspective to the table in efforts to potentially increase ERCA's rate of fire while decreasing the physical load on the Soldier. "We help shape their problems and solicit solutions for problems," he said. "It'll help shape how the Army fights." As the Army sought outsider perspectives, only five of the companies were selected to continue with their capabilities testing and were sent to the proving ground to get a firsthand look at their potential enhancements. "We are about halfway through a

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Airborne Test Force Soldier earns promotion

By Brandon Mejia

Congratulations are in order for U.S. Army Staff Sgt. Anthony Apodaca of the Airborne Test Force at Yuma Proving Ground.

A pinning ceremony was held on the afternoon of Aug. 11, where Apodaca was promoted from Sergeant to Staff Sergeant.

"I am really looking forward to continuing my career getting some

guidance from some of the best paratroopers in the Army, thank you so much," said newly promoted Staff Sgt. Apodaca.

Apodaca previously served in the Marine Corps for 3 ½ years. His former U.S. Marine Corp military comrade who was part of Apodaca's unit and went through rigger school with him was present to pin his new rank.



YPG Command Sgt. Maj Herbert Gill was present for the pinning ceremony and congratulated the newly promoted Staff Sergeant following the ceremony. (Photos by Brandon Mejia)

The Outpost

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988: Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

By Scott Zaehler

September is recognized as National Suicide Prevention month. Every year, the National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline and other mental health organizations and individuals across the U.S. and around the world raise awareness of suicide prevention.

A notable change is the recent addition of 988 as the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline. While many are familiar with the still active 1(800)273-TALK crisis lifeline, users can now dial 988 to access the same crisis resource. The Lifeline provides 24/7, free and confidential support for people in distress, prevention and crisis resources for you or your loved ones. This resource is available to anyone, not just veterans or service members.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), people can call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org for themselves or if they are worried about a loved one that needs crisis support. 988 serves as a universal entry point so that no matter where you live in the U.S., you can reach a trained crisis counselor. There is a need for 988; too many people are experiencing suicidal crisis or mental-health related distress without the support they need, and sadly, the pandemic

only made a bad situation worse when it comes to mental health and wellness in America. In 2020 alone, the U.S. had one death by suicide about every 11 minutes, for people aged 10-34 years, suicide is a leading cause of death, and from April 2020 to 2021, over 100,000 individuals died from drug overdoses. Yet there is hope. The 988 Lifeline helps thousands of struggling people overcome suicidal crisis or mental-health related distress every day.

Throughout the month of September, the Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Suicide Prevention team will be providing information and displays to raise awareness about what each of us can do to raise awareness and take action.

The theme is #BeThe1To – be the one to ask how someone is doing, be the one that is there for someone in need, be the one to keep them safe, be the one to help them stay connected, and be the one to follow up.

SAMSHA offers the following tips:

Ask: Research shows people who are having thoughts of suicide feel relief when someone asks after them in a caring fashion.

Be there: Individuals are more likely to feel less depressed, less suicidal, less overwhelmed, and more hopeful after speaking to someone who listens without judgment.


Keep them safe: Studies have indicated that when lethal means are made less available or less deadly, suicide rates by that method decline, and frequently suicide rates overall decline.

Help them stay connected: Studies indicate that helping someone at risk create a network of resources and individuals for support and safety can help them take positive action and reduce feelings of hopelessness.

Follow up: Studies have also shown that brief, low-cost intervention and supportive, ongoing contact may be an important part

of suicide prevention, especially for individuals after they have been discharged from hospitals or care services.

Finally, you can make a difference. Take some time to learn a little more about what you can do by visiting the SAMHSA's Suicide Prevention website (<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/988>). For more information, contact the YPG Suicide Prevention Program Manager/Employee Assistance Program manager, Scott Zaehler at scott.r.zaehler.civ@army.mil or (928)328-2249.




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988 will serve as the new direct dial number for the
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988

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Enhancing the path for artificial intelligence at Yuma Proving Ground

By Brandon Mejia

As the battlefield continues to evolve globally, so does the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and that is why senior leaders from all three test centers under U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) command, as well as directorate heads gathered for a two-day workshop to start the conversation of how AI can be applied, tested, and evaluated at the proving ground.

Professor Neil C. Rowe from the Naval Post Graduate school was front and center for basic introductions into AI but from there it was in the hands of those in attendance.

Break-out groups formed to spark discussion and develop strategies for getting and cleaning data when it comes to areas like preventative maintenance on vehicles to even finding anomalies in aircrafts. However, the possibilities are endless.

"We want to learn how to test and evaluate AI systems," said Paula Rickleff, who is leading the efforts in the installation's Employee Modernization Effort for Relevant Growth and Enrichment (EMERGE) program.



While the U.S. Army is committed to the design, development, and deployment of Artificial Intelligence technologies, senior leaders, and directorate heads at Yuma Proving Ground are hoping to evaluate it from a testing perspective. (Photos by Brandon Mejia)

Initiated in 2019, the Army's Future Command activated the Artificial Intelligence Task Force. A task force equipped to lead Army AI efforts and synchronize them across the Army enterprise.

The initiative covers a vast variety of programs such as but not limited to; autonomous platforms, AI and machine learning, data visualization and synthetic environments, assured

position, navigation and timing, sensing, computation, human performance, and underpinning methodologies.

While the Army is committed to the design, development, and deployment of AI technologies, senior leaders, and directorate heads at YPG are hoping to evaluate it from a testing perspective.

"Let's get some basic knowledge

of AI, what that means and as we look at Army modernization how it helps shape what we do at YPG and how we can integrate AI to meet future requirements," said Garry Rosene, chief of development division within the Technology Investment Directorate.

From a technology investment perspective Rosene sees the need to get his team educated on how they can bolster their current technology and tackle investments in the AI sector.

"We went in thinking AI was a huge unknown," Rosene recalled. "After coming here, it is not so bad, we have a lot to learn but I believe we can do it with the right steps ahead."

In efforts to assist the human in making better decisions, one could take the various sources of data you want and run it though an AI model for probable solutions.

In theory it is supposed to help you make correlations that you could not do by yourself, according to Rosene. And while it is not so much robotics taking over control like in movies—AI systems have the potential ability to improve YPG's test and evaluation process.



Professor Neil C. Rowe from the Naval Post Graduate school was front and center for basic introductions into Artificial Intelligence but from there it was in the hands of those in attendance.

Marcus Giddings: YTC Mission Employee of the Third Quarter

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Test Center (YTC) leadership recently named Marcus Giddings the Mission Employee of the Third Quarter for his work as a test officer in combat systems.

"I was excited when I first heard about it. I put in a lot of hard work while we were testing and to be selected for this is an honor because I know the work, I am putting in really has an impact on what we are doing out here."

That work is testing equipment before it gets into the hands of the Warfighter. YTC Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering presented the award to Giddings during his division's safety meeting.

"I was a little nervous at first, but you think back on all the work you've done and why you are here. It's good to be recognized among your peers."

Giddings extended a shoutout to his co-workers, Alexis Baez Ruiz and Ramon Morales, who were by his side during those months of testing that he received recognition for.

"Those guys were pivotal in the success of the program and how the testing went."

Giddings has worked at Yuma Proving Ground for five years on various combat vehicles. He started working on AMPV, then moved onto testing Bradleys and Abrams.

Most recently, he's been



Marcus Giddings was selected as Yuma Test Center's Mission Employee of the Third Quarter for his work with combat systems. (U.S. Army photo)

working on active protection systems. To better describe the capability Giddings explained, "It's a bolt on kit for the system and it essentially tracks incoming threats and then will deploy a counter-munition of sorts to stop the threat from reaching the vehicle. We test the effectiveness of those systems."

Giddings' days vary from time

on the range preparing combat vehicles for testing to office days working on reports.

"The fact that I can go out with the crews and be really hands on with the vehicles and be part of the big picture step of the process is exciting."

He goes on to explain what a day can look like for a test officer.

"If we are setting up for a shoot then I will be prepping the vehicles on the range to be able to put the vehicle in whichever configuration we need it to be in. If we are running performance tests, then I am prepping those."

Giddings went to school for biomedical engineering and after his first job in semiconductor factory for about a year he decided it's not what he wanted to do and found out about YPG.

"I've loved it since day one." Adding, "I like the culture and the comradery that I have with my teammates."

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ERCA

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two-year sprint to improve rate of fire for the ERCA system,” said CPT Mark Touns of the Army’s LRPF CFT.

The initial ERCA prototypes, designed by DEVCOM Armament Center at Picatinny Arsenal, are currently being tested at YPG.

“Our chance to touch and feel the ERCA equipment is here at YPG because they (YTC Test Crews) are testing it, shooting it, and the selected companies are looking at how can we shoot the system faster,” Kehler noted. “These companies have a new eye, are new to the Army, new to artillery, but they also know engineering and how can we take this process and optimize it and look at it from a different lens,” said LRPF portfolio manager Walker Williams. Walker serves as the liaison between industry and Army for the AAL.

The current rounds used for ERCA are large and can weigh more than 100 pounds. “Loading those can result in fatigue or back injuries,” Williams explained. “During our last soldier touchpoint, a soldier dropped it on his foot and broke his foot,” Williams explained. “So, we can assist the soldier in optimizing that fire mission process, while leaving the soldier to do what he does best.”

From July 26 to July 27 those



“We are about halfway through a two-year sprint to improve rate of fire for the ERCA system,” said Cpt. Mark Touns of the Army’s LRPF CFT. (Photos by Brandon Mejia)

companies selected took to YPG to engage in equipment and inert munitions, data collection and discussions.

“YPG is at the tip of the spear when it comes to real-time data, videos, access to vehicles and testing crews,” said Williams. “These companies will be delivering an increased rate of fire to ERCA, if all goes planned.”

Once the selection process is finalized, those enhancements will be presented to the Army’s senior leaders in fiscal year 2023, according to Touns. And from there that will decide whether they are fielded to the war fighter.

“With these capabilities of increasing the rate of fire and increasing the lethality of this system, it is extremely important for the fielding of these capabilities in the future,” Walker said.



“These companies have a new eye, are new to the Army, new to artillery, but they also know engineering and how can we take this process and optimize it and look at it from a different lens,” said LRPF portfolio manager Walker Williams. Walker serves as the liaison between industry and Army for the AAL.

Arizona House Rep. visits YPG



Rep. Brian Fernandez of the Arizona House of Representatives visited Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) on the morning of Aug. 15. YPG Commander Col. Patrick McFall gave Fernandez an overview brief. He then visited YPG’s range control, mission control room, and a vehicle test course. “Yuma Proving Ground is so important to our economy,” Fernandez said. “We need to make sure that they can depend on us to continue the mission.” (Photos by Brandon Mejia)



CRTC leadership participates in 11th Airborne Division’s operations overview



Led by Commanding General of the 11th Airborne Division Maj. Gen. Brian Eifler, Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) Commander Lt. Col. Jonathan Brown, Technical Director Jeff Lipscomb along with Matt Bower and other professional staff members took part in a CRTC test operations overview on Aug. 16. It provided a first-hand account and operational understanding of mobility testing challenges in the arctic, the need for arctic-capable equipment, Soldier training exercises, and a cold chamber demonstration to show the degradation of materials and Soldier functionality in extreme subzero temperatures. (Photo by Sebastian Saarloos)

Diep Ho: From refugee to legendary YPG test officer

By Ana Henderson

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Yuma Test Center (YTC) is comprised of individuals who are passionate and dedicated to their work testing equipment for the Warfighter. They each have a story of how they've made an impact, yet there are only a few who have created a legacy with their ingenuity in testing.

Diep Ho is an artillery test lead in the Munitions and Weapons Division and has had a hand in many high-profile artillery tests over the last four-decades at YTC including the Excalibur and the Extended Range Cannon Artillery.

Long-time friend and colleague Wayne Schilders has known Ho since the mid-80's when he was a gunner and Ho a test officer. Gunners and test officers work long hours side-by-side on the range, so the two men spent countless hours working on tests together, the first being a fuze test that lasted years.

"Diep is a lot of fun, he's a work hard, play hard type of guy," said Schilders.

The two have travelled together for testing. Ho was the first YTC test officer to travel to White Sands, New Mexico to test artillery. Testing also took him to Alaska for extreme cold testing and of course he's worked through the long hot summers in Yuma. He laughs reminiscing that he wore a three-piece suit the first day of



Those who walk by Diep Ho's office will notice a collection of caps. Those represent just a fraction of the tests he's taken part in. And although he's pretty much a living legend in the YPG testing world, Ho stays focused on the mission to support the warfighter. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

work at YPG in the middle of July.

"He has a commitment to the test mission that's almost unmatched," remarked Munitions and Weapon's Division Chief Kermit Okamura.

Ho has a fighting spirit. He was born in Vietnam during the war and came to the U.S. as a refugee on a boat as a young man and lived in a refugee camp for a year. He and his brother defied odds to make it to America. Once here he dedicated himself to his studies earning a degree in Mechanical Engineering from University of California Santa Barbara and was hired by the U.S. Army in Texas. His dedication to supporting the mission of his adopted country is unmatched.

"He is a 'Let's get it done, make it happen' type of guy," tells Schilders.

Ho is determined to say the least.

When testing is involved, there is no barrier that he will not try to overcome with his engineering mind.

"I tell the customers, you tell me what you need, and I'll figure it out for you," remarked Ho.

This is where his engineering mind and problem-solving mentality comes into play.

"Some of the unique novel test fixtures that we have here at YPG have come because of necessity to get the tests done that have had some specific requirements. When you think of Diep, he's like 'We'll figure it out' that's kind of his thing," notes Okamura.

One instance is when a requirement came down to recover rounds to test their survivability, Diep designed a vertical gun position. He's built an extractor, a rammer, targets, a gun position for vertical firing to name a few. He says he consults, with the customer, the user, the machinist, welders, and carpenters to get these designs to be safe and functional for their purpose.

Okamura jokes, "There should be a spot in the museum with Diep and all fixtures he came up with and new testing methodologies. It's amazing to me."

Another claim to fame – Ho was

featured in the Future Weapons show for his work on Excalibur. He's been recognized by colleagues yet the most special person who recognized him was his nephew, "He was watching tv and said 'That's Uncle Diep! That's Uncle Diep!'" recalls Ho.

And while he could be in a management position Ho prefers being on the range.

"With Diep, you know he's going to shoot a lot of rounds. He's going to shoot all day. You're going to work hard that day. He's known for that," tells Schilders.

Ho has the can-do attitude that YPG is known for, "We are here to get things done, that's what we are here for. To get it done and get it done right," stated Ho.

It's that love of being on the range that inspired Okamura to make a unique promise to Ho.

"I told Diep whenever you retire you tell me what firing impact area you want named after you."

Those who walk by his office will notice a collection of caps. Those represent just a fraction of the tests he's taken part in. And although he's pretty much a living legend in the YPG testing world, Ho stays focused on the mission to support the warfighter.

His division chief Okamura said, "The guy is very humble, he's not looking for accolades he just wants to get the mission done and that's commendable."

Schilders adds, "He's one of the best guys I have ever met out here."



Diep Ho is an artillery test lead in the Munitions and Weapons Division and has had a hand in many high-profile artillery tests over the last four-decades at YTC including the Excalibur and the Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA). He's seen walking up to the ERCA after firing.

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Yuma Proving Ground spin-off podcast debuts soon

By Mark Schauer

The first episode of the second season of Outpost Outspoken, the official podcast of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), was released on Aug. 8, 2022.

All episodes of both seasons of the bimonthly series are available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/podcast/498/outpost-outspoken> as well as on popular streaming services Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts, Amazon Music, Spotify, and Stitcher Radio.

The new spinoff series, Desert Rat Testament, will be a monthly anthology devoted to the stories and recollections of retired longtime



YPG personnel and former post commanders. The first episode will be released on Aug. 31, 2022. All episodes will be available at <https://www.dvidshub.net/podcast/538/desert-rat-testament>, as well as on the same streaming services Outpost Outspoken plays on.

Cold Regions hosts welding modernization training



ABOVE: Cold Regions Test Center's (CRTC) Allied Trades Workshop hosted a welding equipment modernization training the week of Aug. 15. The welders conducted classroom and hands-on instruction on the latest welding techniques. Sam Porter with CRTC's Allied Trades said, "The fabrication industry is always evolving, and this course allows us to move with or slightly ahead of it. RIGHT: The team also, visited the local welding schools University of Alaska Fairbanks Partners for Progress and Delta Junction High School and spoke on welding technologies and future workforce for places like CRTC. (Photos by Sam Porter)



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Safety Corner

YPG safety knowledge check and information

By Jaysen Lockett

Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) professionals, do you know the answers to the following safety questions:

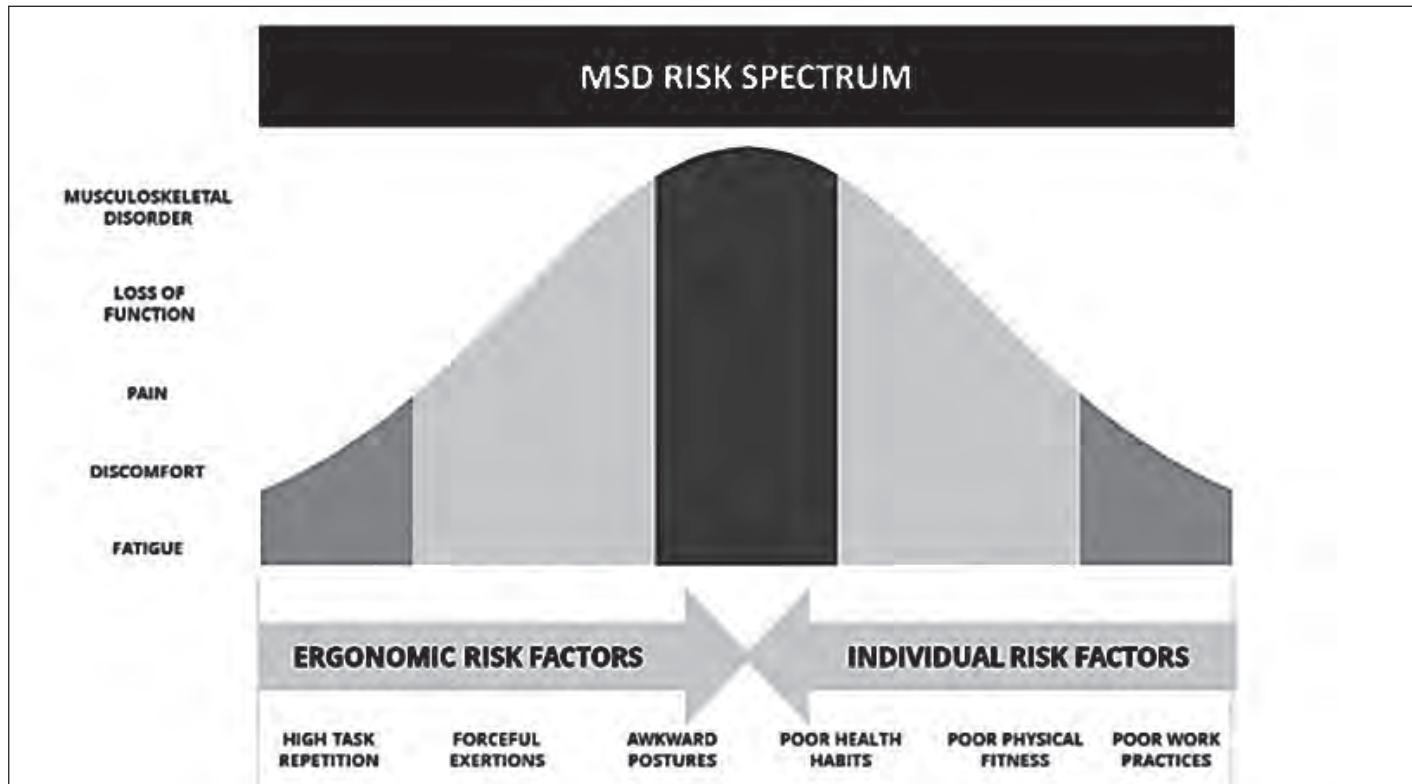
Knowledge exercise 1:

- What are the top four personnel injury types at YPG?
- What is the difference between and strain and a sprain?
- How can we reduce the top four injury types, and other types of injuries at YPG?

If any of your answers to question one included strains and sprains, slips/trip/falls, struck by, and insects bites/stings, you are correct.

YPG's most common injury type is strains and sprains, often the result of a slip, trip, or fall and have similar symptoms but they are two very different types of injuries. The common symptoms include pain, swelling/inflammation, difficulty moving the injured part of body, and limited range of motion just to mention a few. However, strains are soft-tissue injuries (tissue being stretched too far) along with bruising in the area of the injury where sprains are ligament injuries (bands of tissue that connect bones to each other to prevent abnormal movement) and do not show any bruising in the area of the injury.

The key to reducing injuries is to understand what they are and why/how they occur. The most common causes of strains and sprains



Worker fatigue, discomfort, pain, lost function, and Musculoskeletal Disorder (MSD) incident probably increases as workers are exposed to individual and ergonomic risk factors. (Graphic Credit: Ergo-Plus.com)

include fatigue, awkward postures (ergonomics), abrupt movement, twisting motions, slips, trips, falls, and repetitive activities.

Knowledge exercise 2:

- Are there any illnesses that cause tendons to weaken?
- Are there any other contributing factors to strains and sprains?

There are illnesses that may cause tendons to become weak and more likely to tear which include: Kidney Disease, Hyperparathyroidism,

Gout, Leukemia, Rheumatoid Arthritis, and Diabetes. Also, some other contributing factors include dehydration, poor nutrition, lack of rest when not in the workplace, and a skewed perception of risk (desensitized how much effort is required with routine job duties, such as lifting items).

Knowledge Exercise 3:

- Do risk factors impact the likelihood of injuries?
- How can we reduce the number of strains, sprains, and other work injury types?

Yes, the higher the ergonomic and individual risk factors are, the higher the likelihood of an injury and degree of injury.

The two most effective way to reduce injuries is to know that everyone has the right and responsibility to stop any unsafe action and to take the extra time needed to perform your duties in a safe manner and always use the

right tool for the job. Other effective tools can be broken down into three categories, which include Ergonomic Controls (eliminate or reduce awkward postures with ergonomic modification), Administrative Controls (job rotation, breaks, eliminate forceful movements) and Individual Controls (education and training, foster a culture that encourage risk identification and reporting, act on near-miss incidents, eat nutritional meals and stay hydrated).

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Chaplain's Corner

Are you placing God's armor in the right spots?

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain Capt.
Ryan Pearse



Abraham Wald was a mathematician in World War II who is best known for his work that helped minimize damage to the Allied bomber aircrafts.

Many aircraft on dangerous missions were shot down and never returned home. When aircraft would return from their missions, the analysis of the damage helped inform how to reinforce these aircraft for future missions.

Other researchers simply saw where most bullet holes in the planes were and surmised these were the areas in which reinforcement was needed. Wald, however, was the only one who took "survivorship bias" into account to paint a more accurate and comprehensive picture.

Survivorship bias is a logical error - like all logical errors - that leads to incorrect conclusions. It focuses all the attention on the survivors, which leads to incomplete data,

which in turn leads to faulty conclusions.

Abraham Wald observed the exact same information the other researchers had observed and came to the opposite conclusion. His colleagues wanted to concentrate the armor on the places getting hit the most. Wald believed the concentration of armor should be at the places where the planes that survived didn't get hit. He concluded that the aircraft not returning home were not returning home because they were hit in those places. His statistical analysis and ability to fight the survivorship bias, led to the right amount of armor making it to the appropriate spots on the planes. His efforts greatly contributed to the Allies success in World War II.

Wald's work teaches us to not jump to conclusions too quickly, don't always follow the crowd, analyze all available data, learn to ask the right questions, and place your armor in the right spots. Ephesians 6 talks about the armor of God. I encourage you to read this passage of scripture and ask yourself if you're placing God's armor in the right spots in your life.

YPG's Chaplain provides invocation at city council meeting



Yuma Proving Ground's new chaplain Capt. Ryan Pearse had the honor of providing the invocation at the Aug. 17 Yuma City Council meeting. Those in City Hall bowed their heads as Pearse prayed for the protection of the residents of Yuma and the military serving our community. (Loaned photo)



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