



The Outpost

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

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Combat vehicle testing at YPG essential to future generations of Soldiers

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is at the forefront of Army transformation efforts.

One important aspect of Army transformation involves mobility, and U.S. Army Yuma Test Center's (YTC) approximately 200 miles of surveyed road courses are being utilized to put the next generation of vehicles through their paces.

"That work has been coming to Yuma steadily," said Marco Nixen, Combat Systems Branch Chief. "We've been pretty busy in our division supporting these new priorities."

YTC's rugged conditions closely simulate what a Soldier might experience in a desert combat



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground has approximately 200 miles of surveyed road courses being utilized to put the next generation of vehicles through their paces. A Joint Light Tactical Vehicle is pictured in a cold temperature testing chamber. (U.S. Army photo)

theater, where things like dust intrusion and intense ambient temperatures in summer can stress even the most robust combat vehicles. From paved asphalt to rugged, unimproved desert washboard, YTC's mobility courses run the gamut of types of conditions a Soldier driving a vehicle is likely to encounter.

"The natural environment really puts these systems through stress that you don't see in other places," said Nixen. "Our Middle East course is a cross-country course with a lot of slope and variations with washboard conditions in places that puts a vehicle through a lot of different forces. Our hilly courses have up to

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THIS IS MY SQUAD

Soldier spotlight

By Ana Henderson

Sgt. D.J. Suggs is the newest member the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Chapel team. He serves as Religious Affairs Non-

commissioned Officer.

Suggs' grandfather, a preacher, was his inspiration for choosing his military occupational specialty.

"I wanted to do something to



Sgt. D.J. Suggs is the newest member the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Chapel team. He serves as Religious Affairs Non-commissioned Officer. He keeps busy outside of work by hiking and playing sports with his family which include his wife, a four-year-old daughter and seven- and 13-year-old sons. He's also a volunteer coach on post for children. (Loaned photos)



make him proud," said the Wilson, North Carolina native.

Suggs has now been serving his country for 13 years.

His hobbies include playing any sport with a ball and being physical. He played, semi-pro football for 14-years and in the last three years won two semi-pro football championships.

He keeps busy outside of work

by hiking and playing sports with his family which include his wife, a four-year-old daughter and seven- and 13-year-old sons. He's also a volunteer coach on post for children.

Suggs says he, "enjoys working with people."

His goals after serving in the Army are to become a state trooper or a college campus police officer.

The Outpost

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Employees recognized for their work



Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. Patrick McFall gave praise to Melissa Rossi-Schultz, Teresa Elizalde and Paula Rickleff for their work in planning, preparing, and executing the Multi-Domain Operations Senior Leader Modernization Forum. Their work led to a highly successful event for U.S. Army War College instructors, YPG senior leadership and the Army Test and Evaluation Command. Each received a Certificate of Appreciation. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Col. McFall recognized Stefanie Jacobs the Chief of the Plans Division with a Certificate of Appreciation for her team's work in planning and executing the first YPG Organization Day since COVID. The workforce was able to enjoy team building activities with their colleagues due in part to the work by the Plans Division. (Photo by Gene Garcia)



Technical Director Larry Bracamonte looks on as Col. McFall presented Mike Barron with a Civilian Service Commendation Medal for a job detail at the U.S. Army Futures Command headquarters in Austin, Texas. During the six-month detail Barron supported "key missions of the U.S. Army Futures Command, the synchronization of Army Test & Evaluations priorities to Army modernization while enabling Army Futures Command G-3 efforts across Army Futures Command and the Army." (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Cold Regions Soldier recognized for exceptional work



Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) Commander Lt. Col. Jonathan Brown presented Staff Sgt. Benjamin Wolf, COMSEC Account Manager, assigned to the 49th Ground-based Mid-course Defense Battalion for his continued support to the CRTC on March 21. Wolf has provided secure communications support CRTC for multiple test event and continues to provide communications training and administrative oversight of each test's communications security activities. Wolf is a communications subject matter expert and has been a major contributor to CRTC's success.



While Wolf's support to CRTC's test mission is appreciated by all, it was Danielle Schmidt, one of CRTC's test experts, who took it upon herself to selflessly recommend he be formally recognized. (Photos by Sebastian Saarloos)

Yuma Proving Ground

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Airborne Test Force Soldiers train at wind tunnel



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Airborne Test Force Soldiers trained at the Military Free Fall's wind tunnel in late March in preparation for an upcoming quarterly training. The training focuses on free fall relative skills and in air video skills. The Soldiers typically have another jumper equipped with a camera tracing their moves so they can review video for training purposes. BELOW: Army Test and Evaluation Command Chaplain Lt. Col. Bill Kim was able to see the Soldiers train during his recent visit to YPG. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Cold Regions hosts U.S. Air Force delegation



Cold Regions Test Center hosted a delegation from DLA Energy Americas-North on March 22. The organization's current commander, U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Barton Land, Deputy to the Commander, Randy Banez, and incoming Commander, U.S. Air Force Maj. Daniel Moritz traveled from Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson to Ft. Greely as part of Moritz's transition as the next commander of DLA Energy Americas-North. The group received a brief on CRTC's Arctic test mission and a tour of CRTC's Mobility Test Complex and saw the team in action maintaining the various ground surfaces that supported the ongoing vehicle testing. Group photo (left to right) Maj. Moritz, Lt. Col. Land, Lt. Col. Jonathan Brown and Banez. (Photos by Russell Hollembaek)

YPG kicks off Month of the Military Child



The Month of the Military Child, April, is celebrated throughout the military to emphasize the importance of our young people. Yuma Proving Ground got a head start on the morning of March 30, with a proclamation-signing ceremony followed by a superhero costume parade featuring students from the Child Development Center and Price Elementary School on the march as proud parents looked on. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month



On 30 March, Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. Patrick McFall, Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Gill, and Garrison Manager Ken Musselwhite signed proclamations recognizing April as Child Abuse Prevention Month and Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month in a ceremony in the Range Operations Center atrium. The Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention program, known as SHARP, exists so the Army can prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults before they occur. Proactive steps require a personal commitment from both civilian and military members. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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Invisible spectrum, visible results: Air Force veteran continues service at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

Even in an organization where it is common to find people who are passionate about their work, Michael Stoltenberg, Electronic Warfare Radiofrequency Support Lead at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), stands out.

“He’s very passionate about what he does,” said Justin Crouch, Cross Functional Team Integrator. “You can tell he really understands what he is doing and thoroughly enjoys it.”

The Air Force veteran has worked at YPG for 15 years, and sees his civilian career as a continuation of his duties while in uniform.

“I was an instrumentation and telemetry technician, pretty much the same job I do here,” said Stoltenberg. “There were only 600 of us in the entire Air Force, and none of us were allowed overseas. It was heavily focused on research and development.”

The Orange County, California native liked drafting and drawing growing up, so started pursuing classes toward an architecture degree at Fullerton College. When he was 21, however, his life changed unexpectedly.

“My college dropped my major and I needed some time to think and figure out what I was going to do with my life.”

He enlisted in the Air Force and scored high on his Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery tests. When offered his choice of military occupational specialties, he chose based on his already-long years of tinkering with electronics: the Radio Shack catalog was a longstanding companion throughout his youth.

“I actually built my own satellite dish when I was a kid,” he recalled. “I was re-wiring tools but didn’t understand electricity at the level I should have. I think I ended up in electronics because I kept electrocuting myself as a



Michael Stoltenberg, Electronic Warfare Radiofrequency Support Lead served in the Air Force and has worked at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground for 15 years. He sees his civilian career as a continuation of his duties while in uniform. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

kid: I wanted to learn how to not electrocute myself.”

While assigned to the 746th Test Squadron at Holloman Air Force Base, New Mexico, he had dealings with testing conducted at White Sands Missile Range, part of the Army Test and Evaluation Command, and through this experience first heard of YPG. After his enlistment was up, he went to University of Arizona, graduated in 2006, and quickly found work in the private sector, only to get laid off during the Great Recession in 2008. Already familiar with YPG, he found work here as a contractor for the-then National Counterterrorism Counterinsurgency Integrated Test and Evaluation Center (NACCITEC), which was working feverishly to field counter-improvised explosive device electronic systems into Iraq and Afghanistan. He became a government civilian working in his current branch in 2011.

Though YPG does not have to

contend with encroachment from houses and buildings, it is not exempt from the crowded radio spectrum that facilitates much of modern life. Every time you use a cell phone, microwave oven, or garage door opener, you are using parts of the radio spectrum, the invisible resource that YPG relies on to support their highly specialized testing, from using radar and telemetry in evaluation of artillery rounds to replicating the radio spectrum as it is in various places around the world to facilitate the testing of technologies to counter unmanned aircraft.

“A lot of testing involves really complex, dense radio frequency environments. If a system under test doesn’t work, the customer can go back to the bench and work on it, and when they come back we can put up the exact same environment they used last time.”

Part of Stoltenberg’s job involves identifying the causes of potential

spectrum conflict on the test range and finding solutions to allow the mission to proceed.

“Spectrum is a precious resource. If I can’t change the frequency, I can change the time of day or locations for two conflicting tests. It may solve the issue, but we still have to get approvals from the FCC and FAA.”

Toward this end, the tools of his trade to conduct radio frequency investigations on the range include handheld spectrometers and GPS tools. If testers experience radiofrequency dropouts on the range, he can make a computer model to predict a good alternate location for their activities. More important, though, is modeling and coordination to prevent conflicts from occurring.

“We talk regularly to keep each other in the loop so we are not interfering with each other. The idea is to keep ensure the safety of individuals and the security of communications.”

He also assists YPG’s Cold Regions Test Center at Fort Greely, Alaska and Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC) in Central and South America. When TRTC conducted a major test of the Armored Multipurpose Wheeled Vehicle (AMPV) in Central America last year, he helped the test team with their communication devices they needed conduct operations safely in a triple canopy jungle.

“We made sure all of their equipment worked here before they shipped it down there. They went down and everything worked well.”

Off duty, he plans to pursue a Master’s Degree in applied physics soon, and still tinkers with electronics just as he did in his youth.

“It’s what I like to do,” he said. “I’m teaching my son about RF. I have my own equipment at home that I’ve picked up over the years.”

TESTING

FROM PAGE 1

about a 30% slope in places, so you are taxing transmissions and other parts of the vehicle heavily.”

Like the road courses the vehicles are tested on, a test vehicle plan can vary widely.

“It depends on what the customer wants: is it a full vehicle up system test, or just a specific component like a new cooling system or engine?” said Nixen. “We do everything from sub-systems to the whole system.”

In the case of reliability, availability, and maintainability testing, vehicles run miles of simulated missions across road courses featuring various terrain conditions. As they traverse these road courses, test vehicle operators continually verify performance of all the platform’s sophisticated electronics, as well as the vehicle’s braking, acceleration, and steering performance on slopes and steep grades, even through a fording basin and on a dust course tilled for maximum sediment. Samples of the vehicles’ fluids are collected and analyzed at various points throughout the tests. During

performance testing, the evaluators collect dozens of channels of data, including things like the displacement and temperature of each road arm on a tracked vehicle. The testers monitor if the system deteriorates through use and try to discern a trend that will help estimate the normal rate of deterioration. As it runs, the exact location and terrain conditions of any possible anomaly can be identified. In addition to the hundreds of miles of road courses, YPG has the range space to safely conduct live function fire tests of a vehicle’s weapons from both stationary and moving positions.

In recent years, this has meant hosting tests of everything from the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and the nearly-fielded Armored Multipurpose Vehicle, successor to the venerable M113 armored personnel carrier that dates back to the early 1960s, to items like the Infantry Squad Vehicle, a fast and lean four-wheel drive vehicle that carries up to a nine Soldier infantry unit and their heavy gear.

“As the Army looks at what it learned from 20 years of irregular warfare and coupled it with the previous knowledge they had when they developed the ‘big five’ weapons



From paved asphalt to rugged, unimproved desert washboard, Yuma Test Center’s (YTC) mobility courses run the gamut of types of conditions a Soldier driving a vehicle is likely to encounter. An Armored Multipurpose Vehicle is shown on a road course at YTC. (U.S. Army photo)

systems to see how they can create a solution that will support a fight against a near-peer adversary or an irregular warfare adversary,” said Jacob Obradovich, Next Generation Combat Vehicle Cross Functional Team Integrator. “The Army wants to be smart about it and make something modular and scalable that can be in service for decades.”

This extends to platforms such as the Optionally Manned Fighting Vehicle, which YTC has already done testing on behalf of using surrogate vehicles to evaluate potential components of the future system.

“As we start to see more and more unmanned vehicles in the private sector, the cost is dropping

drastically and the maturity is increasing,” said Obradovich. “We have a lot more data to draw from than we did even 15 or 20 years ago in the Future Combat Systems days.”

During Project Convergence 21, for instance, complex scenarios involving hundreds of Soldiers and test personnel were carried out successfully and without injury.

“The things we got to see with Project Convergence was just the tip of the iceberg,” said Obradovich. “The YPG customer service and safety mentality and our flexibility is going to be an asset to the Army and DOD because they know they can come to YPG and get the support they need to make their mission successful.”



“Our hilly courses have up to about a 30% slope in places, so you are taxing transmissions and other parts of the vehicle heavily,” said Marco Nixen, Combat Systems Branch Chief. An Infantry Squad Vehicle is shown on a road course. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Outpost Outspoken episode 31

Hear Combat Systems Branch Chief Marco Nixen talk more about the importance of testing military vehicles in a natural environment. Plus, Durred Francher, YPG Explosive Safety Manager, talks about how his hobby of sewing opened a world of opportunities. Scan the QR code and select the link that appears.



YPG Explosive Safety Manager uses sewing as a stress reliever

By Ana Henderson

Durred Francher is known as the safety guy at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. He's worked at the proving ground since 1999. In 2011 he became the Explosives Safety Manager and is responsible for examining explosive operations to ensure procedures are executed in the safest manner possible.

As you can imagine it's a stressful job. To combat that stress Francher takes a creative approach.

"I enjoy making everything, because for me sewing is relaxing, I can sit there, I can concentrate on sewing and forget about everything else and I enjoy it."

As a child his mother taught him and his siblings to sew. He began sewing and making quilts when he was eight years old, and it came in handy while serving in the military.

"When I joined the military, I basically quit sewing but I did my own patches and my own stuff for my uniforms."

It became a labor of love once he and his wife Mary had children and grandchildren.

"It wasn't until I got married and honestly when I had a daughter that I really got back into sewing."

He made everything from crib sets, burp rags, bibs, pajama sets and clothing to accommodate his tall children.

He adds, "My daughter and my wife have benefited the most from my sewing."

And now his grandchildren are



Francher sewed his daughters-in-law's wedding dress with a matching hooded coat when she married his son who got a matching vest. His daughter-in-law designed the dress, and he made her vision come to life. Durred Francher has made everything from canopy bed sets, crib sets, burp rags, bibs, pajama sets and clothing for his children and grandchildren. (Loaned photos)

spoiled by his sewing too.

"My granddaughter and my daughter did the same thing. She wants clothes for her dollies. My granddaughter wanted clothes for her bear, so she has a matching outfit for her bear to match one of her pajama sets."

Throughout the years Fancher's creations have made it the performance stages, the alter and pageants.

Francher has sewn ballet performance costumes for his daughter when she was a child, he sewed his daughters-in-law's wedding dress with a matching hooded coat

when she married his son who got a matching vest, and he sewed a formal gown for a Miss Hawaii contestant. He'll tell his favorite project severed a more practical purpose for a young lady when he lived in Dugway, Utah.

"She had a skin disease that just touching her skin caused huge bruises" he explains. "We made a temple dress out of silk and it was lined with silk on the outside and it went all the way down her hand to coverup all of her skin because being out in the sun could cause problems. She and her parents were very appreciative."

Francher adds, "That's the type of stuff I enjoy doing. I don't see it as stressful — it's fun."



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Chaplain's Corner

Rule No. 2, treat yourself with care

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain Capt.
Ryan Pearse



Rule No. 2 in Dr. Jordan Peterson's book "12 Rules for Life: An Antidote to Chaos" is treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping.

Oftentimes, I notice leaders in our ranks who spend more time cultivating work relationships and let their health or the health of their family go to the wayside. It is extremely honorable to exhibit selflessness in the service of your job and Soldiers around you, but not to the extent that you harm yourself or your relationship with your family. If you are not properly administering self-care and care to your family, your job will inevitably crumble around you.

Peterson notes that one-third of individuals in America who get a doctor's prescription never fill that prescription. Out of the two-thirds who fill their prescription, only half will take the medication as directed. And yet, a caretaker who is responsible for another individual, will always make sure they fill and take their medicine. In fact, people are better at filling and properly administering prescription medication to their pets than to themselves. People appear to love their dogs more than themselves.

Remember, we live in a chaotic world yearning for order. How can we be responsible for others if we aren't responsible for ourselves? Galatians 6:2 tells us, "Help bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ."

Let's be responsible in the treatment of others, but not forget to be responsible in the treatment of ourselves and our family as well. Treat yourself like someone you are responsible for helping.

Desert Rat Testament: Bill Heidner



Host Mark Schauer talks with former museum curator at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Bill Heidner. A well-known figure in Yuma, he was also an adjunct professor of graphic design at Arizona Western College from 2007 to 2019. Learn more about the life and career of Heidner in the next Desert Rat Testament by scanning the QR code and selecting the link that appears.



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YPG Commander speaks with Yuma community



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. Patrick McFall appeared on Z93 radio's "Today in Yuma" show and on the KBLU 560 AM radio show "Chamber Chatter" in recent weeks. In both appearances he discussed YPG's position at the forefront of Army transformation efforts, the post's 80 years of service to the national defense, and the upcoming Gains in The Education of Mathematics and Scienced summer science camp for students entering grades six through eight. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

Wellness program hosts plank challenge



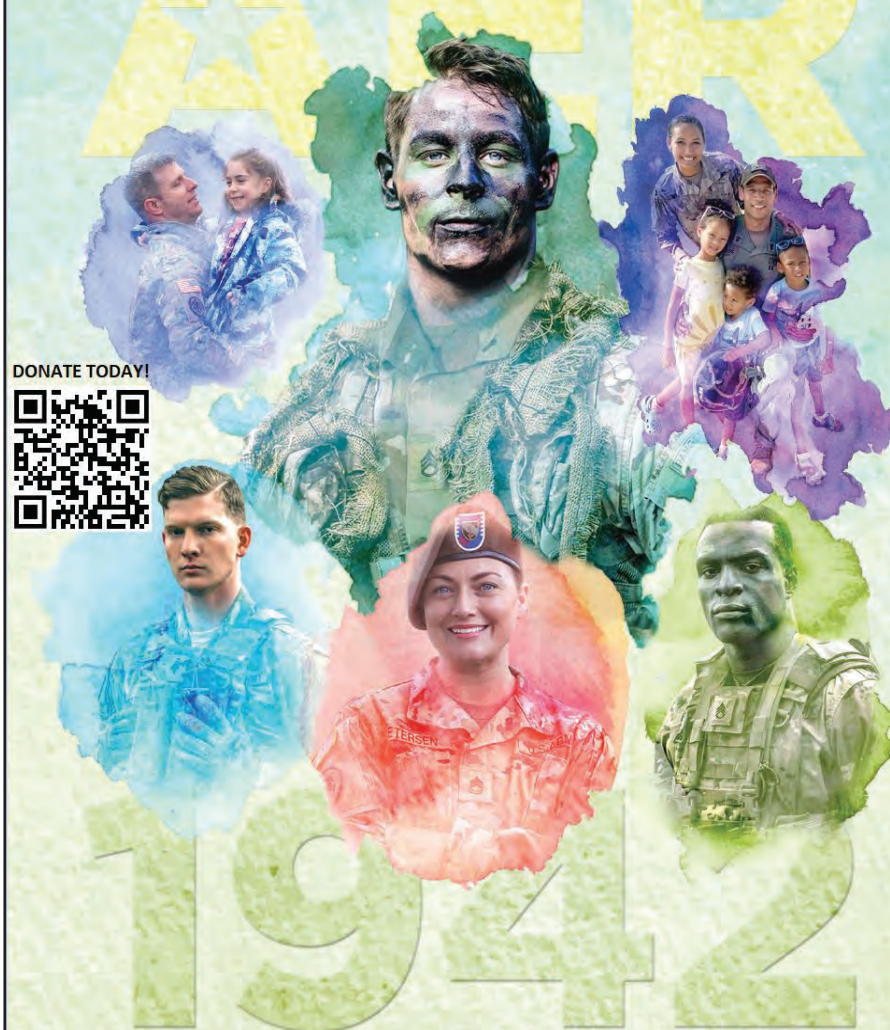
Four employees were up for the plank challenge hosted by the Yuma Proving Ground Wellness Program. A crowd gathered in the atrium just outside of the ROC Café to cheer on the participants. Times are as follows. 5:08 Jonathan Olbert, 5:02 Michele Dominguez, 3:07 Alfonzo Brown and 3:01 Tom Cook. Lt. Col. Shane Dering and Dillion Black judged the contestants while Ekta Shrestha kept time. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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