



The Outpost

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

VOLUME 72 NO. 9 APRIL 24, 2023

1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) tests new prototype glider at YPG

By Sgt. Thoman Johnson

1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) successfully tested a new unmanned aerial delivery platform, the GD-2000 glider in February. The glider is an alternative to the current means of supply delivery into diverse environments. Implementation of the glider will result in enhanced capabilities of the Special Forces detachments deployed through varied, and often restrictive, terrain.

Timely and accurate resupply is imperative to the success of combat operations.

This success does not only lie with the operators on the ground but also with utilizing emerging technology. The GD-2000 is a glider platform that Special Operation Forces innovators



Soldiers from the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) recover the GD-2000 glider after its landing at Yuma Proving Ground Feb. 13. 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) released the glider from the air multiple times over several days to test its aerial delivery capabilities. 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) is committed to innovation and enhancing the endurance of the warfighter. (Photo by Sgt. Thoman Johnson)

hope will revolutionize aerial delivery to Green Berets in the field.

"It's an autonomous aircraft that carries 1,500 pounds of payload," said Chip Yates, CEO of Yates Electrospace, and the creator of the glider. "It flies for 15 minutes, flares and lands where you want it," he continued.

Traditional supply delivery systems can be more cumbersome and more detectable by the enemy when compared with the glider. It was birthed out of a request from the U.S. Marine Corps as an alternative to the Joint Precision Air Drop System (JPADS). JPADS tend to be both larger in size and have limited ability to maneuver through the air,

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YPG officer jumps into action to pull woman from wreckage

By Ana Henderson

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Police Department Sgt. Christopher Spolski is drawn to helping people, and his career choices reflect that.

He served his county in uniform with the U.S. Marines for four years.

Then his community. First, as a firefighter with YPG in the early 2000s, then he transitioned into a security role and by 2010 he was working as a civilian security officer at YPG.

It was on one of those nights patrolling where all those skills Spolski acquired over his career came into play in mid-February. He was ending his shift, heading south on Highway 95 when he noticed a car in front of him swerving a bit. He saw the car swerve left toward oncoming traffic, then back right causing the sedan to hit the shoulder.

"I saw some dust kick up, then it over corrected and shot left and that's when I saw the car just went right across the highway, and I just saw dust kicking up everywhere," recounts Spolski.



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, Garrison Manager Ken Musselwhite presented Sgt. Christopher Spolski with a Civilian Service Commendation Medal for his actions in mid-February when he witnessed a rollover accident on Highway 95 and helped the driver. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

"I remember saying to myself, 'here we go.'" He quickly called in the accident to dispatch and then pulled over to see what he could do to help. The

sedan has landed on its roof, on the opposite side of the road on a sand berm.

"I asked, 'are you okay' and she said, 'yes' and was talking, so I knew she was alert."

He advised the driver not to move if she was hurt, she said she was okay and was trying to get out of the vehicle where she was basically hanging upside down, so Spolski

reassured her, "I am going to get you out." And that he did.

The car was up against sand and the door was stuck.

"I was wanting my tools from when I was in the fire department."

Yet he was able to use his strength fueled with adrenaline, "I gave it three of four good yanks to open it enough to get her out."

The woman reassured him she was able to walk, so Spolski helped her exit her car. "I got her arm and helped her out."

YPG's Fire and Police Departments showed up on scene shortly after, as did two Arizona Highway Patrol units. Spolski knows the feeling on the emergency responders' side driving to a scene. "It feels like we cannot get there fast enough."

Experiencing it from the other side, he said seeing the lights was a relief.

He describes night as being pitch black in the desert and with few cars passing by. Spolski estimates the women's car was 15-20 yards from the highway. He looks back and wonders how long she would have been there alone in need of help if he hadn't been there.

"I took a moment and said thank you Lord for having me be there. I just said it out loud. Thanks for letting me be there."

The Outpost

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The Editor, Outpost, Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, AZ, 85365
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Commander: Col. Patrick McFall
Public Affairs Officer: Mark Schauer
Public Affairs Specialist/Outpost Editor: Ana Henderson
Public Affairs Specialist: Brandon Mejia
Visual Information Manager: Eugene Garcia
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YPG hosts small number of private industry testing

By Mark Schauer

Unlike most military installations, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) primary purpose is not to train troops for combat, but to test the equipment they use to ensure it works as it should.

With a unique mission, YPG's funding model is also unique. Perhaps 30% of YPG's funding comes from an allocation from the Department of the Army to cover overhead expenses.

"We have a different model than basically the rest of the Army where we depend on reimbursable work," said Jeff Rogers, Air Combat Director. "When we're given our budget, we're not funded at 100%, so we have to get customers to supplement us."

Most of this reimbursable work comes from other customers within the Department of Defense, but some comes from private industry customers. In recent years, companies from General Atomics to Facebook have conducted testing at the proving ground with the support of YPG personnel. These customers pay all costs associated with their respective testing.

"It keeps our skills sharp and current, because they can work with the customers and see the newest technologies coming down the pipeline," said Rogers. "It's good for the Army because a lot of the systems the Army uses are spawned out of private industry. It's not that the Army has a big workforce that goes out and creates a whole bunch of new stuff: a lot of what is later used is adapted or adopted from private industry technologies to meet the Army's needs."

YPG is a Major Range Test and Facility Base (MRTFB), and The National Defense Authorization Act of 2003 makes facilities with this designation available to other users who have a valid need for them.

"Whenever they decide to execute a test at Yuma, my office takes care of all of the initial contracting and monitoring the contracts," said Omar



Members of the Arizona Defense Industry Council (ADIC) visited U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) for a capabilities tour Feb. 12. The goal of the ADIC is to expose defense contractors to the services YPG can provide. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Silva, Range Operations and Training Division Chief. "We do that not only for Yuma Test Center, but also for Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) and Tropic Regions Test Center: we standardize the contracting process across the YPG enterprise."

Though YPG supports private industry testing, it never competes with private industry.

"There's law that requires that MRTFBs in general across the Department of Defense to not compete with private industry facilities," said Silva. "Every time a private industry customer wants to come out and test, we need to make sure we aren't competing with private industry."

YPG does this by providing a public-facing list of capabilities located here, and attempting to send potential customers to private industry facilities that provide the same services or capabilities prior to agreeing to conduct a test.

"A lot of the time, private industry customers come to us because of our restricted airspace," said Silva. "You see a lot of private industry aviation testing done here because of the extensive restricted airspace we have that private facilities can't provide."

Most of the airspace over the United States is unrestricted. To fly their craft in these conditions, unmanned aircraft developers must acquire a certificate of authorization (COA) from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This is a lengthy and exhaustive process

that can take months and is specific not only to the aircraft, but the specific configuration of the aircraft. Thus, if developers want to modify their aircraft in response to their testing, they must get a new COA after every change. Achieving these stringent conditions is unrealistic for an untested unmanned aerial systems (UAS) in the early stages of development. Additionally, an important part of the developmental process is testing worst-case scenarios. It is unlikely that the FAA would allow such testing in the national airspace. YPG's 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace, on the other hand, is above miles and miles of land far from any populated area.

There are other benefits to private industry customers conducting aviation testing as well. YPG's unsurpassed capabilities allow for extensive testing without having to compete for runway and airspace with manned fighter jets as at other installations. Another critical bonus of testing at YPG is the presence of a wealth of other infrastructure meant for other sectors of YPG's broad test mission that can be leveraged to support UAS evaluations. YPG is home to things like technical and tactical targets, as well as generator and combined maintenance shops, all of which are useful for UAS testing. YPG's spectrum management office can also ensure they have the frequencies they need for their

specialized testing: YPG has nearly 600 permanent radio frequencies assigned to it, and uses more than 1,000 temporary ones in a given month.

"If we can squeeze them in, it's great for them and great for us: we get to keep our folks employed and reap the benefit of getting that workload without impacting military test and maximize the air space and range time that we have," said Silva. "Going to a training base or some other DoD installation can be hard to get into because of training and deployment schedules. As for us, we are an MRTFB and can work them into the schedule."

All three of YPG's subordinate test center have done testing for private industry customers and reap the benefits in ways both similar and unique. For example, since its construction in 2004, multiple private industry customers have used the CRTC Mobility Test Complex for their testing.

Hosting commercial testing means the test center's mobile snow-making machines and other specialized track grooming equipment not found elsewhere in the Department of Defense keeps moving, which saves maintenance costs in the long run. Further, continuous use means the skill the test center's equipment operators have gained operating the esoteric machines doesn't degrade for instance, in unskilled hands a mobile track dryer could ruin the track's asphalt while melting snow and ice.

"When we have low military workload, being able to do commercial testing allows us to maintain equipment capabilities and the expertise needed for doing those things," said Jeff Lipscomb, CRTC's Technical Director. "That way, whenever a military test comes, we're not scrambling to figure out how to support it. To me, the biggest benefit of the commercial automotive workload is that it keeps us on the cutting edge of automotive testing."

YPG brings attention to Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month

April marks the Army's Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. On the morning of April 5, Yuma Proving Ground leaders brought awareness by greeting the workforce at the installation gates and providing handouts.



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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 Ana Henderson)

National Child Abuse Prevention Month outreach



In April, National Child Abuse Prevention Month encourages communities to educate and increase awareness about the importance of children and family's well-being. On the morning of April 4, Yuma Proving Ground's Garrison community outreach departments hosted a coffee drive-thru to benefit YPG's Soldiers and Families. The drive-thru featured various booths as well as offered free flu shots from the Medical Clinic. (Photos by Gene Garcia)



Month of the Military Child Family Fun Day



The Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) community gathered on Cox Field for the Family Fun Day on the evening of April 14. Child Youth Services hosted the fun filled event in partnership with several community services and entities including the Desert Oasis Housing, Library, Commissary, Army Community Services, Fire and Police, Morale, Welfare and Recreation and the Military and Family Life Counseling Program. Month of the Military Child is a time to recognize military kids for their sacrifice and bravery. (Loaned photos)

YPG hosts WTI battle drills

The Weapons and Tactics Instructor course better known as WTI is back in town. The seven-week training event hosted by Marine Aviation Weapons and

Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), providing standardized advanced tactical training and readiness, and assists in developing and employing aviation weapons and tactics.



ABOVE: U.S. Marine UH-1Y Venom helicopters, assigned to MAWTS-1, prepare to land during a battle drill exercise, part of WTI, at Laguna Army Airfield at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) in early April.

LEFT: U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter, assigned to MAWTS-1, flies overhead during a battle drill exercise, part of WTI course, at YPG's K-9 Village.

BELOW: U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter, assigned to MAWTS-1, lands during a battle drill exercise, part of WTI course, at YPG's K-9 Village. (Photos by Cpl. Jaye Townsend)



YPG briefs Staff Delegates on its capabilities

A delegation of Congressional staffers from Arizona's elected U.S. House and U.S. Senate members visited the proving ground April 5 to learn about Yuma Proving Ground's capabilities and future needs and priorities. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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Yuma winter sees wildlife water catchment improvements

By Mark Schauer

With more than 1,200 square miles of land area, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is the fourth-largest installation in the Department of Defense in terms of land area.

Testers see the proving ground as a natural laboratory, and thus have a vested interest in good environmental stewardship.

Home to a wide variety of animals, including the Sonoran pronghorn and one of the largest and most genetically diverse populations of bighorn sheep in Arizona, YPG helps sustain the creatures with 25 wildlife water drinkers situated across its mountains and desert range.

“These waters are some of the most phenomenal things we have for wildlife,” said Daniel Steward, wildlife biologist. “It allows animals to spread across the range and get full use of the habitat.”

The drinkers are a stabilizing presence in one of the nation’s driest desert regions, with mechanical apparatus to keep a steady supply of water available for wildlife. Mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, multiple bird species, even bees benefit from their presence.

“We have captured eagles on camera using those waters, lots of migratory birds, even quail,” said Steward. “Any kind of wildlife out there will use them.”

Wildlife officials are meticulous about keeping the drinkers a viable and perennial presence on the range. This past winter, YPG personnel joined up with the Arizona Department of Game and Fish and dozens of volunteers to upgrade the massive tanks that store water for drinkers at two locations: one saw work done in January, the other in



Home to a wide variety of animals, Yuma Proving Ground helps sustain the creatures with 25 wildlife water drinkers situated across its mountains and desert range. (Loaned photos)

March.

“A lot of our volunteers come from groups like the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club and the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society,” said Steward. “We had various folks affiliated with other outdoor groups and a group of students from the Cibola High School Future Farmers of America. We had volunteers from a lot of different walks of life.”

Both locations were in extremely remote and isolated areas of the range, requiring helicopters to bring in the people and materials necessary for the work. The more recently installed storage tanks across the range are made of PVC and filled by water runoff from the desert’s rare rain events. A steady rain event can fill the massive tanks, and they are situated with care near washes that will run, but not large ones that will run so violently that the tank fills with sediment instead of water. Experience has shown that rainwater has a lower saline level than water from local wells, which means less sediment buildup to foul water apparatus’ moving surfaces. At the site that saw

work in January, the volunteers helped install a much larger tank that should eliminate the need to drive more than 90 minutes off-road hauling a 1,000-gallon water tank filled at the closest standpipe.

“It is an incredible feat of logistics to haul water that remotely,” said Steward. “The new system we put in at this site is 23,000 gallons, and we put the catchment in an area with a pretty good catch basin that should be able to fill it with a decent rain event. When it gets completely full, it should be able to stay full for a couple of years.”

At the site that saw work in March, volunteers laid and cemented piping to two 5,000-gallon PVC tanks and a smaller 2,500 gallon tank near a natural tenaja that can hold roughly 10,000 gallons of water depending on sediment levels. The volunteers used water from the tanks to mix the concrete on site, then toted it in buckets across the craggy mountainside. The tanks are UV-resistant and meant as a supplement to the water in the tenaja, which is stronger than a human-made drinker, but more prone to evaporation, and

possible crisis for the wildlife that depend on them.

“The natural tenajas can go dry,” said Steward. “If they go dry, you’re putting a lot of wildlife at risk.”

In the past when they went dry, personnel hauled water in by helicopter, which is both time and resource intensive.

“Our hope is that we won’t have to helicopter water in to fill those tanks very often, if at all,” said Steward. “We can’t really predict the weather that well: all we can do is build resiliency.”

An important innovation for the drinkers in recent years was the addition of sensors to continuously monitor water levels. The sensors spare personnel from having to regularly travel to monitor water levels and allow for a rapid response if there is a sudden and catastrophic loss of water in one of the drinkers. The instrumentation accurately measures the daily water loss rate, which changes with the seasons and soaring desert temperatures. The two tanks worked on this winter now sport inexpensive, but state-of-the-art sensors for this purpose.

Though the proving ground is the nation’s largest artillery tester, it also encompasses the best preserved and protected Sonoran Desert landscape in the American Southwest. The healthy proliferation of a diversity of desert creatures under careful stewardship is, undoubtedly, one of the positive results of this.

“Our waters are doing really good right now,” said Steward. “We’re entering our driest time of the year for the desert—usually we don’t see rain again until July if we’re lucky. Only time will tell.”



LEFT: “The new system we put in at this site is 23,000 gallons, and we put the catchment in an area with a pretty good catch basin that should be able to fill it with a decent rain event. When it gets completely full, it should be able to stay full for a couple of years,” said Daniel Steward. RIGHT: Wildlife officials are meticulous about keeping the drinkers a viable and perennial presence on the range. This past winter, YPG personnel joined up with the Arizona Department of Game and Fish and dozens of volunteers to upgrade the massive tanks that store water for drinkers at two locations: one saw work done in January, the other in March.



Jaysen Lockett: serving as a civilian brings son of Soldier pride

By Ana Henderson

Jaysen Lockett has maintained a career on the grounds of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) since 1989. While he only just recently became a civilian employee, he served in a variety of roles with contractors on post.

Lockett grew up in Yuma, Ariz. which is known as a military town. It's home to YPG and Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma.

His father, who passed when Lockett was 11, served in the U.S. Army and then continued a career in construction.

"The little me was always out there with Dad on the construction sites, that naturally inspired me to like construction and remodels. That's what inspired me into this type of work," recounts Lockett.

Throughout the last decade most at YPG will remember Lockett in roles as the Safety Department Manager with TRAX International, the Installation Support Services Project Manager for Shearwater Mission Support, and the Regional Manager for Eagle Harbor which provides critical infrastructure services to YPG.

After years of serving as a contractor Lockett was hired into the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation team (ATEC) in 2022 in a government position with YPG's Mission Safety Office as the Occupational Health and Safety Specialist. A proactive, prevention-focused approach to safety is the culture at YPG.

Lockett explains, "The folks in the field are the ones that know where the real challenges are and the effective solutions to prevent potential accidents and injuries. So, being able to have that level of trust and respect of the workforce to provide that vehicle to gather critical information and develop effective mitigations that the workforce will embrace because they are able to have, is a part in the process."

During his year-long stint in the



In February of 2023, Jaysen Lockett was named the Combined Maintenance Branch Chief for Ground Combat Directorate at Yuma Test Center. (U.S. Army photo)

YPG Safety Office, Lockett was able to use his passion for solving problems to resolve an issue that would have had an impact on testing.

That was the case when he was presented with a catch box issue affecting testing. Lockett served as the Project Manager who coordinated with multiple internal stakeholders to have the issue repaired for a fraction of the original estimated cost and could have taken several months to repair and completed it in three days. Lockett stated, "That's just another example of the outstanding talent and drive the YPG workforce has to make the right thing happen in a short timeframe and do it all safely."

In February of 2023 Lockett left the Mission Safety Directorate and stepped back into a supervisor role as the Combined Maintenance Branch Chief for Ground Combat Directorate at Yuma Test Center (YTC). He oversees the Combined Maintenance, GSA center, and the

Welding and Machine Shop which is made up of a dozen government employees plus contractors.

The supervisor role is not new for Lockett, he's worked as a supervisor in several positions, but it was his position as a project manager for Shearwater that had him feeling as though he had gone full circle in his career.

Lockett started as a landscaper mowing grass for a contractor in 1989. It's those humble beginnings that remind Lockett not to lose sight of his employee's wellbeing. One example of how Lockett stayed grounded

was by putting on the Shearwater work shirt and heading outdoors for physical labor.

"It allowed me to demonstrate to my team that I am willing to do whatever it is I ask them to do. Additionally, it was a good way for me to stay grounded and not lose sight of the challenges my workforce faced while performing their job duties."

Early on Lockett knew to move up the ranks he needed to continue learning. He used the resources his employers provided to access education. He earned his associate's degree, a bachelor's and in 2023 his Masters in Applied Science with an emphasis in Occupational Safety and Health. He is also passed all the required exams to become a Certified Safety Professional, through the Board of Certified Safety Professionals.

Lockett's commitment to his community, his country and ATEC stems from his father's time in the Army, it's his way of honoring his late father.

"This is the closest I will ever get to serving our country in a different capacity. I know that the direct products of what YPG does every single day is what allows the Warfighter to do their job safely, so they can come back home to their family safely." Lockett added, "I don't know if there could be anything to inspire anybody any more than that in itself."



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Antiterrorism Strategic Plan

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The Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Antiterrorism Strategic Plan (ATSP) sets a vision to emphasize the Antiterrorism Officer's (ATO) role and leaders' role in building protection in all situations. Our ATSP provides our employees with guidance for decentralized action that depends upon constant assessment, integration with plans and activities, and studied collaboration with Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) headquarters' Antiterrorism Program and

YPG's program. The vision of this year's YPG ATSP is to remind our employees that the best solution for protecting against terrorist activities and other harmful attacks against us is vigilance and reporting suspicious activities.

The ATSP assigns priorities to ATEC building coordinators in the event a location needs to start protective measures during an attack or threat to employees or the test mission. Building coordinators are the ATEC ATO's direct link to what is needed to protect the workforce. The plan instructs the building coordinators on what actions are required and what should be reported to the ATEC ATO. The ATSP addresses current shortfalls, and builds for the

future, anticipating changes in the organization's structure by embedding AT training and awareness in every aspect of the testing community.

Finally, the ATSP addresses the requirements to integrate and coordinate with ongoing security-related strategic actions in other fields and functions. This is done to ensure overlapping cohesive plans exists that provide the best protection to employees testing the Army's future equipment needs. The ATSP and your ATEC ATO are important elements in the YPG Protection Plan, the Mission Assurance process and developing AT Awareness Programs. All of us within ATEC need to remain engaged with protection awareness related functions to sustain an affective ATEC ATO ATSP.

Contact me, your ATEC ATO for more information at Alfonzo.d.brown.civ@army.mil or 928-328-6498.

Volunteers thanked for their service



There is nothing more valuable than a person's time. Recently, 23 individuals who have given their time to either the YPG Chapel or Army Community Services (ACS) were the guests of honor at the Volunteer Appreciation Dinner in late March at the Cactus Cafe. The event co-hosted by ACS and the Chapel with Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Gill serving as the guest speaker. (Photos courtesy of ACS staff)

Self-checkout now available at YPG library



Envisionware Technologies made a visit to Yuma Proving Ground's post library to install the radio frequency identification gates and the self-checkout kiosk in late March. This new equipment will allow patrons to check out media from the library and make reservations to use the computers in the computer lab on their own. Library staff members, Bianca Carpenter and Beatrice Brimmage are shown assisting two patrons with self-checkout. "We are excited to bring this new technology to our YPG community and hope they enjoy using it," said Carpenter. (Loaned photos)

Chapel hosts dog safety class



The Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Chapel hosted a Dog Safety Class for kids on the afternoon of April 17. Children listened attentively while dog trainer and YPG resident Sarah Bartley taught the kids the do's and don'ts of dogs safety. The kids learned to ask before approaching a dog and how to avoid an unfamiliar dog by crossing their arms and not making eye contact. Afterwards the kids colored dog themed worksheets. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

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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