

# The Outpost

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

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## National Guard support vital to EDGE 23

By Mark Schauer

The Army Futures Command's (AFC) Future Vertical Lift (FVL) Cross-Functional Team (CFT) held their Experimental Demonstration Gateway Event (EDGE) 23 at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) over four weeks in April and May.

As part of the event FVL CFT along with help from its military, industry and international teammates aggressively tested most every facet of the Army's Future Attack Reconnaissance Aircraft (FARA) and future vertical lift capabilities, as well as advancing knowledge on electronic warfare.

Unmanned aircraft, launched effects, and all manner of ancillary technologies to expand communications capabilities and Soldier survivability were tested simultaneously. Participation from dozens of Army National



The Oregon National Guard was on hand during EDGE 23 to demonstrate how groundbreaking elements of their HH60-M Medevac helicopters could inform the medevac variant of the Future Long Range Assault Aircraft. Particularly, a new flexible kit allows for weight savings by things like lighter components and the ability to easily reconfigure things like shelving or the litter pans that carry patients. "We've been testing it and using it for the past two years," said 1st Sgt. Patrick Casha, flight paramedic (pictured). "In Oregon; we do a lot of high-altitude hoist missions for medevac." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Guard Soldiers from four different states was a vital component of everything from air traffic control, to test activities to demonstration of emerging technologies.

The Louisiana and Tennessee guardsmen crewed a Mobile Tower System that was being used in conjunction with YPG's range controllers to coordinate the safe flight of dozens of manned and unmanned aircraft participating in the event, while simultaneously active air assault training exercises were in progress on various parts of YPG's vast ranges. The successfully management of all these activities allowed for other vital testing to occurred simultaneously.

The Georgia Army National Guard furnished a UH-60V for the event. This helicopter is new territory for Army Aviation in its

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# Cold Regions Employee Spotlight: Michael Carston

By Kyle Anderson

Electronics Technician Michael Carston is an indispensable part of the Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) Meteorological Team. Carston operates and maintains a suite of 22 meteorological sites spread over 140 miles and develops unique meteorological capabilities that must operate in the harsh cold climatic conditions CRTC is known for. His efforts are vital to successful meteorological data collection, analysis, modeling and forecasting.

As the only electronics technician in the Meteorological Division of CRTC, Carston's exceptional equipment operations capabilities and project leadership have led to many successful meteorological projects at CRTC. His talents have given rise to several remote meteorological sites that would not have been possible without his skills. Those sites include two extremely remote meteorological sites that are only accessible in winter and other times of the year by snowmobile/ATV and/or helicopter and are separated by rivers, dense

forest, and rough terrain.

Carston's efforts have improved communications and data collection for the entire suite of meteorological sites. He effectively optimized and re-programmed the radio suite to follow the most efficient radio data transfer path. The new set path for stationary radios allows greater flexibility and data throughput. This directed path also eliminates back logs of data not received and increases the reliable distance for transmission. Carston has had to endure difficult wintertime conditions countless times over the years, fixing or replacing damaged weather sensors at the met sites, so accurate data would continue being collected. Given the remote area, he has developed a new portable met station that is quick to deploy, and robust enough for operations in the sub-arctic environment.

At CRTC, Carston has found the



Electronics Technician Michael Carston is an indispensable part of the Cold Regions Test Center's Meteorological Team. Here he's shown working on a project cutting pipe. (Photo by Sebastian Saarloos)

opportunity to stretch beyond what a typical electronics technician does. He operates varied equipment such as: forklifts, loaders and snowmachines. Since the meteorological bucket truck is the only bucket truck in the area, Carston has installed overhead fiber, cameras, downrange lighting, targets, antennas, and many other needed items to execute tests. He has even been

caught cleaning 2nd floor windows on more than one of CRTC's clean up days using the bucket truck.

Carston is always quick to volunteer for difficult or unusual tasks. One such task is the frequent met site battery replacements needed after a major buried power line failure. In addition, Mike has volunteered to be CRTC's Equal Employment Opportunity coordinator, and alternative Test Measurement & Diagnostic Equipment manager.

Carston came to CRTC with an immense amount of electronics, communication, and radio experience. Much of that experience came from his work at Dugway Proving Ground (DPG), Intel Corp, Motorola, and Denso Wireless. He brought these talents with the unique experience and self-reliance of previous living and working in a subarctic environment of Alaska.

He found an opportunity and home at CRTC over a decade ago in 2013, transferring from DPG. He viewed it as an opportunity to return to Alaska with his two sons Ethan and Jacob. Carston enjoys the great outdoors and has taken advantage of the multiple adventures the area has to offer. Numerous hunting, fishing, boating, and off-roading adventures have been completed, in addition to traveling around the great state.

## The Outpost

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# Pilot for upcoming Artemis II space mission has Yuma Proving Ground connection

By Mark Schauer

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) recently announced the crew for Artemis II, the first non-test flight of the Orion Multipurpose Crew Capsule, currently projected to occur in late 2024.

The mission's pilot is slated to be Victor Glover, an astronaut who witnessed multiple developmental tests of the Capsule Parachute Assembly System (CPAS) at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) in recent years.

Most people associate space travel with tremendous speed, but safe deceleration is just as important for the astronauts on board:

Whereas a spacecraft has to travel at approximately 20,000 miles per hour to escape the Earth, to return its occupants safely to the ground the same capsule needs to be decelerated from as fast as 24,500 miles per hour to speeds slower than most people drive automobiles on residential streets.

Meanwhile, the extreme friction generated by the capsule hurtling back into Earth's atmosphere at such a tremendous speed means it's exterior heats to more than 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Safely landing under these conditions is a tremendous undertaking, and large parachutes play an important role in accomplishing it. NASA subjected the parachute system of the Orion space capsule to multiple developmental and qualification tests at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) in recent years.

The is a state-of-the-art reusable module designed to take four astronauts to the moon and Mars, and the CPAS is just as sophisticated. The rope that makes up the parachutes' cord is made of Kevlar, the strong synthetic fiber used in body armor: the change was made from steel as a result of testing at YPG. Each main parachute consists of 10,000 square feet of fabric: the CPAS system is



In case you missed it, NASA recently announced the crew for Artemis II, the first non-test flight of the Orion Space Capsule, currently scheduled for late 2024. The mission's pilot is slated to be Victor Glover, who witnessed multiple developmental tests of the craft's Capsule Parachute Assembly System (CPAS) at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. Here, Glover (center) speaks to media representatives in the moments before a test of the CPAS on August 26, 2015. "A rocket with an American flag on the side of it is one of the most important things NASA is going to do in the near future in human spaceflight," he said at the time. (U.S. Army photo)

designed to deploy sequentially and pass through two stages prior to being fully open: on re-entry, two drogue parachutes deploy to slow the hurtling 10-ton capsule prior to three main parachutes taking it down to a languid landing speed of 17 miles per hour.

Further, the parachute system is designed with redundancies meant to protect the safe landing of astronauts even in extreme scenarios such as two parachutes failing, or

a catastrophic mishap shortly after takeoff. In many of the tests at YPG, evaluators intentionally rigged one or more of the CPAS' parachutes to not deploy to ensure that the remaining functioning chutes could withstand the additional stress of speed and mass the failure would cause.

In addition to being able to outfit the test vehicle with far more instrumentation and cameras than would be possible if it was coming from space, testing over land at YPG

made recovery and examination of the parachutes easier than when the capsule lands in the ocean following a real space mission.

The years of hard work paid off. Following a launch on Nov. 16, 2022, the uncrewed Orion took a 1.4-million-mile round-trip journey that took it past the moon, reentering the atmosphere and splashing down safely in the Pacific Ocean after the CPAS deployed without a hitch on Dec. 11, 2022.

NASA says the approximately 10-day Artemis II flight will launch on the agency's powerful Space Launch System rocket, prove the Orion spacecraft's life-support systems, and validate the capabilities and techniques needed for humans to live and work in deep space.

YPG has hosted developmental testing for NASA since the earliest days of the space program. The precursor to the lunar rover used during the last moon landings in 1971 and 1972, dubbed the 'mobility test article,' was tested at the proving ground in 1966. Astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk on the surface of the moon, visited YPG to witness developmental testing of the AH-56 Cheyenne Attack Helicopter in 1971.

## Cold Regions leadership participates in External Mission Partner event



On 23 May the Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) Commander Lt. Col. Jonathan Brown and Technical Director Jeff Lipscomb participated in Fort Greely's External Mission Partner event, hosted by the Ft. Greely Garrison commander, Lt. Col. Joseph Orr. The event provided an opportunity for members of the Delta Junction community to tour Ft. Greely, and have related questions answered by the garrison leadership. The event started with lunch and included a mission overview from CRTC and Orr. Following a tour of the installation, the group was treated to a tour of CRTC's Mobility Test Complex (MTC), where questions concerning its operations were addressed. (Photos by Sebastian Saarloos)





On March 6 demolition crews gutted the preschool class at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Child Development Center and began the rebuilding process. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



The new pre-school classroom floorplan will eliminate blind spots by moving the bathrooms and closets along the wall. In June, crews began the tile work in the bathroom area. The classroom is expected to be complete in mid-July.

## Child Development Center updates preschool classroom

By Ana Henderson

The preschool class entering the fall 2023 school year and going forward will get to experience the newly renovated classroom at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Child Development Center (CDC).

The CDC was built in 1989 and had an outdated floorplan which led to dings when it came to inspections explains Child and Youth Services Director, Sommer Cloinger.

"The classroom has seen various improvements throughout the years but one of the biggest things structural wise that was a problem as inspections developed, was there was a lot of blind spots, for what the room has evolved into."

The biggest of those blind spots was the immediate wall blocking the view through the room when walking into the classroom. That structure housed the bathrooms which were

in the middle of the classroom. In current times this went against the Higher Headquarters Inspection and the Multidisciplinary Inclusion Team standards requirements.

After an abundance of behind the scenes work to obtain approvals, plans and funding on March 6 the demolition crew took over and gutted the entire room. Cloinger describes the work.

"They tore out the entire floor, they took out the structure that was in the middle of the room, they have laid the floors down, they have added new plumbing, so they can relocate the booth rooms."

The bathrooms that were once obstructing views across the classroom are now placed against the left wall as are two closets along the same wall.

Cloinger praises the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for their diligent work.

"They have communicated everything from the flooring to the cabinets, to the mirrors, to the actual construction on what to expect."

Cloinger and CDC staff feared they might have to close the center because of the construction and were prepared with their contingency plans yet they haven't seen much of a

disruption aside from not being able to use that room.

"They coordinated with the people doing the construction and demo and some of the demolition was done on the weekend so it wouldn't disturb the kids."

CDC staff have been pleasantly surprised by the progress.

"They have worked diligently, quietly, fast, they have done amazing work in such a short period of time."

The CDC has temporarily moved the preschool kids to the Strong Beginnings classroom which is a bit smaller than the preschool room. One perk due to the construction is having the preschool Strong Beginning kids learn out of the Youth Services building during school hours which is where they will be headed next year if they continue receiving before and after care through Youth Services.

When the classroom is complete everything will be new including the furniture and it will create more space so the CDC will open additional spots in the preschool classroom.

"We are excited to set up the environment itself," remarked Cloinger.

The project is expected to be completed in mid-July.

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# Armaments Branch employees recognized for their years of service

Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering visited the Armaments Branch also known as the Gunner's shop to recognize the members for their years of service. (Photos by Eugene Garcia)



10 years  
Michael Gomez



25 years  
Joseph Murrietta



25 years  
Danny Hernandez



30 years  
Ernest Ballard

## Garrison Employee Recognition Ceremony

U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground leaders gathered on the afternoon of May 22 at the Cactus Cafe for the first quarter Garrison Employee Recognition Ceremony. Garrison Manager Ken Musselwhite and Deputy Garrison Manager Dan Carter presented the awards. (Photos by Eugene Garcia)

### Length of Service Awards



5 years  
Mindy Reyes



5 years  
Maiko Black



35 years  
Scott Zaehler

Employees also receiving awards but not present in person.

10 Years of Service

Sasha Belenski

Jhony Roman Rementeria

30 Years of Service

Clinton Stone

35 Years of Service

Steve Ward

Civilian Service Achievement Medals

Ray Lichtenberg

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Tarnell Pritchett

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# Multi-National Collaboration Key to Successful EDGE 23

By Nelson E. Ballew Jr.

The ability to successfully communicate often dictates the outcome of any conflict.

“Success in delivering the Army of 2030 means we must also be able to rapidly and reliably communicate data with ourselves, sister services, and coalition partners,” said Col. Jason

Fryman, chief of staff for Future Vertical Lift – Cross Functional Team. “I believe that we successfully demonstrated that ability at Yuma Proving Ground during EDGE 23.”

For three weeks in May 2023, the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) was a test center for communications and interoperability between the U.S. participants and our 10 international partners during Experimental Demonstration Gateway Event (EDGE) 23; as well as other experiments that were conducted.

“First of all I think we are very lucky and fortunate to have the opportunity to participate in EDGE within this multinational surrounding and especially with our U.S. partners because in my view the U.S. is for us always the yardstick where we have to adhere to and our primary goal was in this given framework of aviation to look at interoperability changes,



Director, Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team Maj. Gen. Walter Rugen co-hosted an international media roundtable at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground following the Distinguished Visitors Showcase of EDGE. Participants left to right; BG Trond Haande, CO NOR Land warfare Center, Brigadier Benoit Viduad, Commanding General of the French Army Armanent Directorate, LTG Andreas Marlow, Vice Chief of German Army Staff, Rugen, Director, Future Vertical Lift Cross Functional Team, Brig. Gen. Chris McKenna, RCAF Director General Air and Space Force Development of Canada (not facing camera). (Photo by Ana Henderson)

because I think from our perspective that is the greatest challenge that we as a coalition are currently having,” said Lt. Gen. Andreas Marlow, Vice Chief of German Army Staff.

During the event Canada, France, Germany, Italy, and The Netherlands as well as other participating international teammates demonstrated successful interoperability and the ability to effectively communicate among themselves as well as U.S. organizations like Future Vertical Lift – Cross Functional Team, the 3rd Battalion, 187th Infantry ‘Iron Rakkasans,’ 3rd Brigade 101st Airborne Division as well as the many other U.S. organizations taking part.

The Royal Canadian Air Force brought a CH147F Chinook Helicopter to EDGE 23. The Chinook’s availability provided the platform for our international

partners to participate in a multi-national air-assault training event in coordination with aircraft and Soldiers from the Rakkasans. Onboard the Chinook were troops representing The Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. The execution was a success.

The air assault from an aviation perspective gave us the plan with, and fly missions in conjunction with Alpha Company, 5-101,” said Lt. Col. Colin Coakwell of the Royal Canadian Air Force. It was a great opportunity for our aircrew to be able to work with our U.S. counterparts to discuss air assault procedures and the required mission planning, airspace deconfliction and coordination of supporting activities with them.”

“With Canada providing the Chinook aircraft to support EDGE 23 experimentation events it also provided the opportunity to work with Italian, German and Dutch

soldiers during the air assault iterations. This allowed our personnel to practice procedures and allowed for great working relationships to be formed, contributing to interoperability,” said Coakwell.

In addition to their air assault mission participation, The Netherlands’ successfully demonstrated the ability to communicate

across joint multi-domain’s by connecting the higher tier of the air domain to the lower tier allowing for shared situational awareness. In their experiment a 5th generation fighter gathered battlefield situational information and relayed it through battle management system at the operations center to a hand-held device in the back of a helicopter cockpit monitors. The ability to create a common operating picture for the U.S. and its teammates, has the potential to change the battlefield geometry against any future adversary.

While the air assault operations and joint domain communications were being conducted French and Italian Unmanned Aircraft Systems were busy carrying sensors and helping to collect data for the German Army in addition to themselves. It was just another example of multi-national collaboration during EDGE 23.

## EDGE 23

FROM PAGE 1

design and implementation of a digital comms/network backbone based upon the Modular Open Systems Approach (MOSA)

protocol. This allows avionics from different vendors to connect and communicate based upon a common interface. Knowledge gained with use will further define MOSA compliant interfaces and ultimately inform the next iteration of its implementation into Future Long

Range Assault Aircraft (FLRAA) and FARA. To illustrate the power of MOSA, new radio software first developed by private industry earlier this year allowed this flight crew to communicate with individuals and entities using a wide variety of different radio systems with a quick

search on a preset page available on their center console’s display modules. The pilots were then able to do radio checks with local emergency frequencies from the air during the event.

“Where it becomes a big leverage for the National Guard is in disaster

response,” said Chief Warrant Officer 2 Sean Brigham of the Georgia National Guard. “We could talk to emergency operations centers, police departments, and fire departments directly. If a fire department set up a landing zone for us to medevac casualties, we could talk directly to them on their own organic radio system.”

The Oregon National Guard, meanwhile, was on hand to demonstrate how groundbreaking elements of their HH60-M Medevac helicopters could inform the medevac variant of the (FLRAA), a nearly full-sized model of which was on hand during the event. Particularly, the new flexible kit allows for weight savings through use of lighter components that provide the ability to easily reconfigure its shelving or litter-pans used to transport patients. The flexibility the kit allows provides extra safety for the aircraft, crew and passengers when operating in

mountains at high altitudes, what seems like relatively inconsequential amounts of weight can make landing riskier.

“We’ve been testing it and using it for the past two years,” said 1st Sgt. Patrick Casha, flight paramedic. “In Oregon, we do a lot of high-altitude hoist missions for medevac, and a heavier aircraft means reduced performance. With this system, we can pull pieces off to fit the mission.”

Integrating these disparate units into the larger test and demonstration picture was made easier by the presence of YPG test personnel who are themselves National Guard service members. Steve Mullins, operations lead, is a pilot in the Alaska National Guard.

“I know how they operate on a day-to-day basis, so I can make informed decisions on planning,” he said. “I have a little more ability to know what the Soldiers are thinking, which helps me properly support their part of the mission.”



The Louisiana and Tennessee guardsmen crewed a Mobile Tower System that was being used in conjunction with YPG's range controllers to coordinate the safe flight of dozens of manned and unmanned aircraft participating in the event, while simultaneously active air assault training exercises were in progress on various parts of YPG's vast ranges. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

## Safety Corner

### Heat injury prevention

**By Jaysen Lockett**

As we start into our summer months, we should plan for work-related heat exposure and the potential for heat-related illness among workers. Exposure to heat combined with physical activity and other factors in the environment can increase the body's temperature and cause heat stress. The body responds to heat stress by trying to stabilize body temperature, a process which can lead to heat strain.

Many factors impact work-related heat stress and heat strain, including air temperature, humidity, clothing, personal protective equipment, and hydration. Heat stress that leads to unrelieved heat strain increases the risk for heat-related illness. Prevention of heat-related illness

in workers may be needed year-round, depending on work duties and the environment. Heat stress and heat strain can also increase the risk of other types of workplace injuries. For example, workers experiencing heat stress or strain have an increased risk of injuries from dizziness or falls.

#### Heat Injury Facts and Tips

- Full heat acclimatization takes one to two weeks.
- Heat un-acclimatization only takes three to four days.
- Consider water a critical safety item and drink frequently.
- Drink cool water rather than cold water because the body absorbs it more rapidly.
- Be aware that dark yellow, infrequent urination is a sign of

dehydration. Increase water intake!

- Follow the WBGT work/rest schedule, per the P-1000.
- Wear lightweight, light-colored, loose-fitting clothing.
- If taking medication(s), be aware of all side effects. Some medications such as allergy medicines and antihistamines, blood pressure and heart medications, diuretics, laxatives, antidepressants, and seizure medication can put you at a higher risk of a heat injury.
- Eat healthy meals and avoid heavy, fatty-type foods.
- ✓ ‘Summer-Soups’ are one of the best sources of foods during the summer. Soups-Summer soups differ from other soups, as they tend to be cool and assist in cooling down your body's temperature. Many people may not think of

eating soup when it is 100 degrees or more outside, but it is actually a pretty good idea. Soups made from ingredients like celery or avocados do a great job at accomplishing this. Along with helping you cool down, vegetables used in these soups usually have high levels of vitamins to give you more energy in your workday.

❖ Soups, stews, and porridge can help with hydration levels.

❖ If you are a fan of spicy chili, it will help you cool off.

❖ When you eat hot or spicy foods, your nervous system senses rising temperature and it triggers a type of sweat gland called eccrine glands to release the salty stuff. Since there are 2 to 4 million sweat glands in the human body, sweating cools you off more efficiently than an ice cream cone or cold drink.

# Local students learn about STEM at YPG



Week one of the Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science camp better known as GEMS got underway at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) on the morning of June 5. Forty students ranging in grades sixth through eighth were selected to learn from engineers and scientist about the fascinating world of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics. During the opening ceremony the children met members of YPG's leadership team.



On day two students looked inside the M88A2 Hercules and the Bradley. The Instrumentation team was also on site with an activity where students tried to pull a percentage of their body weight to learn about linear force. The learning did not stop there-- the students launched rockets and ended the day with a lab lesson. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



The second cohort of GEMS got underway on June 12. The group of Yuma County's youngest scientists were, mentored by multiple members of the YPG workforce. The youngsters learned about trajectory and ballistics with catapults and water balloons, and all about the science of Meals Ready to Eat with a hand from YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Herbert Gill and Soldiers from the Airborne Test Force. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

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# Antiterrorism Awareness Corner

## Antiterrorism program tying it all together

**ATEC Mission Antiterrorism Officer**  
**Alfonzo Brown**



While many aspects tie together in building a comprehensive Antiterrorism (AT) Program, no one factor is greater than the others. In our U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) AT program at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), we have different barriers or considerations that help guide and focus the program.

Everyone has a role in tying the AT Program together and protecting each other from adversaries or unknown threats. No one person can pull all 12 pillars of the protection program together-yet understanding how antiterrorism ties into the pillars will help the Commander better access threats to the testing mission. Each of us is responsible for reporting, staying aware of threats, and understanding the reporting processes.

Taking time to draw from understandings of how social networking platforms and Bluetooth devices affect what we can and cannot do down range. Technology is not going away, nor is our responsibility to safeguard classified information during testing. Tying our ATEC AT Program into those conversations can help prevent social networking or Bluetooth device spillage that could have been prevented. From a comprehensive AT officer perspective our problem has not changed, you don't always know for sure who you are connecting with, nor do you know their full intent for any

information you give.

The most powerful and successful way to protect all of us is through a vigilant and aware ATEC workforce. Keeping your ATO aware of issues that arise at testing. No adversary can defeat the collective power of all of us taking time to review and implement AT protective measures such as "See Something - Say Something". Nor can a knowledgeable workforce be defeated when they take time to ask questions about the ATEC Antiterrorism Strategic Plan which sets a vision to emphasize the ATO role and leaders' role

in building protection in all situations.

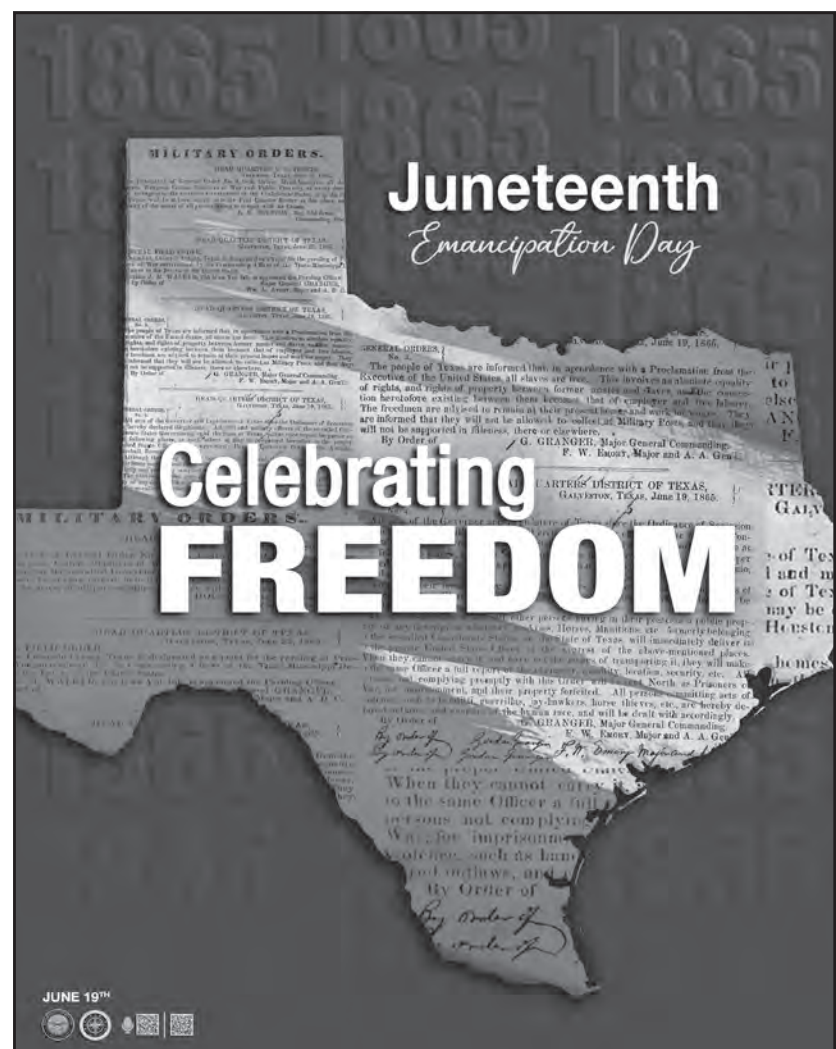
YPG Commander Col. Patrick McFall is the overarching authority on how the YPG ATEC AT Program ties together to protect the workforce. How he does that is through a ATO who understands the Commander's concerns and works with the division chiefs to best provide the protection needed. The ATO understands that protecting the workforce extends past the main cantonment areas such as Walker or Howard -regardless of how remote or far reaching the ATEC AT Program ties everything and everyone in.

Contact me, your YPG ATEC Mission ATO for more information on tying AT Programs together: [Alfonzo D. Brown](mailto:Alfonzo.D.Brown@army.mil), [Alfonzo.d.brown@army.mil](mailto:Alfonzo.d.brown@army.mil) or 928-328-6498

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# YPG Commissary ranked second-best in DeCa

By Mark Schauer

It's been called the heart of the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) community, and the excellence experienced by YPG Commissary customers is being recognized at the highest levels of the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA).

The store was recently named the second-best small commissary with DeCA's Richard M. Paget Award. There are 236 total stores within the DeCA system.

Manager Jason Meade attributes the store's success to good teamwork and flexibility from the staff of nine.

"We all learn every single aspect of the store," he said. "An employee scheduled to be a store worker sometimes may have to go run a cash register or go back and stock the produce and meat. There is no one specific area that anybody is detailed to."

Meant for use by Soldiers, their Families, military retirees, and wounded or disabled veterans, the prices of the extensive variety of items



Store worker Gabrielle Navarro fronts merchandise on shelves at the YPG Commissary, which was recently honored as the second-best small grocery store in DeCa. "We make sure that everything is fronted on a regular basis," she said. "You can ask employee and we usually know what we have on hand, even in backstock. We keep track of literally all of the items."

for sale are noticeably lower than in grocery stores in the private sector.

"We are mandated by Congress to have lower prices than what is on the economy outside the gate," said Meade. "On certain days of the week I go through and do a price comparison with them on basic items we carry like milk, eggs, ground beef, and our prices are below them by a significant amount."

The store boasts of the freshness of its meat and produce, with two deliveries of each per week despite the remoteness of the post.

"We treat our customers the way we

want to be treated," said Meade. "The people who come through our doors are the most-deserving customers in the world: they have earned this benefit, and they need to be treated that way."

The store is also renowned for its customer service, particularly noted by the large population of retirees who winter at YPG's Travel Camp and shop in the commissary. During the wintertime, these individuals constitute about one-third of the store's customers.

"We know most of our customers," said Gabrielle Navarro, store worker.

"Anyone who comes in that is new, we typically try to welcome them and let them know that if there is anything they are looking for that we don't carry, we are more than willing to bring it in. It is a long drive to Yuma, and we want to make sure we have the best variety we can."

The commissary is open every day except Monday due to its small size. Unless there is a noticeable increase in customers, it is likely to remain this way for the foreseeable future.

"We have to be good stewards of the taxpayer's dollars," said Meade. "Right now, we have 10 employees, and two of us are managers. We would need at least one more manager and one or two more employees to open that extra day."

Meade says the warmth of the employees is matched in kind by the customers at YPG.

"This is the warmest welcome I ever had in any place I have ever been, and not just from the weather," he said. "The heartfelt warmth I've been treated with here is incredible."

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