

# The Outpost

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

VOLUME 73 NO. 2 JANUARY 15, 2024

## YPG's Airborne Soldiers help Marine Corps pilots re-qualify on sling loads

By James Gilbert

With the assistance of members of Yuma Proving Ground's elite Airborne Test Force (ATF), three Marine Corps pilots and their flight crews were able to practice conducting sling load operations during a joint training in late August.

"We don't do it very often, so it was a chance to refresh our skills as well," said Sgt. 1st Class Cody Lavalla, air drop operations noncommissioned officer (NCO) for ATF. "Practice makes perfect."

Lavalla explained that the ATF maintains a good working relationship with VMX-1, the test and evaluation squadron from Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, and on occasion are asked to help its pilots and crews to fulfill various



Three Marine Corps pilots and their ground crews were able to remain qualified to conduct sling load operations during a joint training at Yuma Proving Ground in which they were assisted by Soldiers and noncommissioned officers from Yuma Test Center's Airborne Test Force. (Loaned photo)

required qualifications.

The joint training, which took place downrange at a site named Cherokee Flats, consisted of one V-22 Osprey with three crews taking turns picking up an A-22 cargo bag assembly dummy load weighing 1,600 pounds and dropping it back off at the same spot after a short flight.

"What the operation ended up being was each crew doing three lifts and set downs, then landing and swapping out crews for a total of nine lifts," Lavalla said. "The Osprey then flew off, waited until dark and came back under night vision goggles and did nine more."

In addition to rigging and

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# YPG Soldiers spread holiday cheer at Arizona State Veteran Home Yuma

By Mark Schauer

The residents of the Arizona State Veteran Home Yuma had cheerier holidays after a visit from Soldiers from U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG).

Among the visitors to the residents' Christmas gathering on Dec. 21 were YPG Commander Col. John Nelson and family, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, and Yuma Test Center

Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering.

"I love spending time with veterans who served their country so selflessly," said Nelson. "I appreciate this amazing facility and the people who work here supporting the residents."

Four Soldiers from YPG's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers (BOSS) program also attended, sharing fellowship with residents.

"Doing this gives the single Soldiers something to do and the opportunity to learn from our veterans, and it allows our veterans to interact with the younger generation," said Millare. "Hopefully it brings a little bit of joy during the holidays."

"I feel like I want to get some insight from veterans who have served," added Sgt. Jason Yang, a pharmacy technician at YPG's Health Clinic and president of the YPG BOSS program. "It's really interesting to hear their stories and learn about what they experienced."



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson and family, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, and Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering visit with residents of the Arizona State Veterans Home Yuma during a holiday gathering on Dec. 21, 2023. Four Soldiers from YPG's Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program also attended, sharing fellowship with residents. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



## The Outpost

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# YPG Garrison signs cost-saving agreement with Yuma Airport Authority

By Mark Schauer

For more than a year, the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Garrison has been exploring possible agreements with local government agencies that will lower costs for both parties.

The mechanism is called an Intergovernmental Support Agreement (IGSA), and it has been in use within the Department of the Army since first piloted in 1998.

Since then, there have been well over 100 formalized IGSA's approved throughout the Department of the Army. At Fort Riley, Kan., for instance, the garrison and a local government share a contract to acquire salt and sand to treat icy roads in the winter, and the garrison allows both to be stored in a disused building on post.

"The efficiencies that get created doing it together means a little



On Jan. 4, Ken Musselwhite, Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Garrison Manager and Yuma International Airport Director Gladys Brown signed an Intergovernmental Support Agreement between the YPG Garrison and the Yuma County Airport Authority for facility and infrastructure construction and maintenance as officials from both entities looked on. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

lower price for both partners," said Ken Musselwhite, YPG Garrison Manager. "It has to be mutually beneficial in order to do it."

On Jan. 4, Musselwhite and Yuma International Airport Director Gladys Brown signed an IGSA between the YPG Garrison and the

Yuma County Airport Authority for facility and infrastructure construction and maintenance as officials from both entities looked on.

The process to reach the agreement took more than a year culminating with the approval of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Army

for Installations, Housing and Partnerships last month. Estimates project the 10-year agreement could save the YPG Garrison in excess of \$800,000 per year.

"We are able to utilize local contractors and those relationships we've built over the years through our federal and state projects," said Brown. "This is most definitely a good move not just for the Airport Authority, but also for a lot of our local contractors."

The agreement has the potential to save time in addition to money, but doesn't prevent the garrison from contracting with other entities for construction and maintenance.

"They are a source for us to go to," said Ben Rix, chief of YPG's Plans, Analysis, and Integration Office. "We have multiple sources we can go with: if they come in better and cheaper, we go with them."

## White Sands Missile Range command team visits YPG



Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering and other YPG senior leaders hosted White Sands Missile Range Commander Col. George Turner, Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Cordery, and Technical Director Vincent Liddiard for a comprehensive briefing and tour of YPG's range on Jan. 3. Turner also serves as the Army Test and Evaluation Command's Deputy Commander for Developmental Testing and assumed duties in November. "It is exciting to see YPG conducting developmental testing for Army 2030 and Army 2040," said Turner. "It's good to see many good Americans working extremely hard to build and maintain the most lethal Army in the world." (Photos by Mark Schauer)



## Staff delegates learn about YPG's capabilities and priorities



Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) hosted members of Arizona Staff Delegation representing Senator Kyrsten Sinema. Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Shane Dering gave the delegates a command briefing highlighting YPG's capabilities and priorities. They also heard from the post's Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare and subject matter experts in testing.



Afterward the group of delegates toured YPG and made various stops, including at the Instrumentation Division, a gun position and taking a ride on M1A1 combat vehicle. (Photos by PAO staff)



# Trespassing on YPG is dangerous, illegal

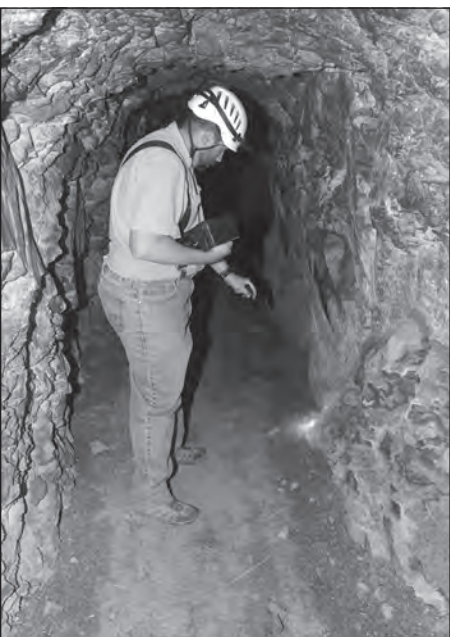
By Mark Schauer

Trespassing on the vast desert ranges of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG)'s Yuma Test Center (YTC) is dangerous.

Unauthorized entry into any military installation is a crime, but the proving ground has a host of hazards that are as unique as its mission testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal in a natural environment.

In addition to the possibility of unexploded ordnance from the proving ground's distant history as a World War II training facility, YTC's 1,300 square mile ranges accommodate the surface danger zones for test fires of powerful long-range artillery shells and airdrops of cargo parachutes carrying multi-ton pallets of equipment or military vehicles. The testing of laser targeting technology in the area also carries the risk of causing serious eye injuries to unwitting persons traipsing in areas that they do not belong.

The dangers to life and limb are



Yuma Proving Ground's successful wildlife conservation efforts have provided ample habitat for numerous species of bats in several abandoned mines that predate the proving ground's existence. The mines, however, also attract trespassers, which can wreak havoc on fragile roosting locations for the bats, natural predators of all manner of pesky insects. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

bad enough, but trespassing within YPG's borders can also degrade the proving ground's range conservation efforts and mission readiness.

"We want to preserve wildlife habitat, but the larger objective is supporting our test mission," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "These ranges are our natural laboratory and we try to keep them as pristine as possible."

Steward says that federal law allows for some public access to military installations, an obligation the proving ground takes seriously.

"We provide for some limited public access where it's not interfering with our mission," he said.

"We permit hunting in very specific areas and with our range controllers notified of where it is taking place to keep people safe. If we have unauthorized access and range control is not aware of it, it puts people in danger and affects our test mission."

Steward believes that some members of the public may conflate YPG with the Barry M. Goldwater Range (BMGR), a training range jointly controlled by the Marine Corps and Air Force southeast of YTC that allows significant public access to people who apply for and obtain a permit, particularly for off highway vehicle (OHV) use. Such a liberal policy is not possible at YPG, however.

"Our mission is so much different than that of BMGR," explained Steward. "They're not doing as intensive work on the ground as we do at YPG. Also, the experimental nature of YPG's mission has a lot more safety and security concerns than theirs."

Steward doesn't anticipate any significant changes to this policy, either.

"The areas we do allow hunting in are very remote and with a volume of visitors we can sustain without impacting our test mission," he said. "There is a huge demand for OHV

recreation, and we just couldn't sustain allowing unlimited public access."

YPG's successful wildlife conservation efforts have sustained a variety of creatures that are imperiled in many other places of the American West, from bighorn sheep and Sonoran pronghorn to fringe-toed lizards and the Sonoran desert tortoise. They have also provided ample habitat for numerous species of bats in several abandoned mines that predate the proving ground's existence. The mines, however, also attract trespassers, which can wreak havoc on fragile roosting locations for the bats, natural predators of all

manner of pesky insects.

"When there is a bat breeding colony in a mine, one entry is all it takes to wipe out an entire reproduction season for those bats," said Steward. "A lot of bat species are very high conservation concern because of the lack of habitat availability."

Additionally, Steward adds, isolated abandoned mines are extremely dangerous places for people to visit.

"Mines are flat-out hazardous," Steward said. "They have bad air, unstable ground and ceilings, and deep, sometimes flooded shafts. They are real death traps. Stay out and stay alive."





# Familiar face becomes new Army Community Services Director

By Ana Henderson

U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground's Army Community Services (ACS) named Clarissa Benavides formerly Ayala, as its new director. Benavides was hired in April of 2023 as the Family Advocacy Program Manager.

Prior to this position, Benavides worked as a social worker for a local hospice facility and mental health consultant with the Easter Seals Blake Foundation. The bulk of her career was spent as an advocate with Amberly's Place of Yuma which provides services to victims of abuse.

Benavides was born and raised in the Yuma community with family roots in Mexico. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees from Northern Arizona University both in Social Work.

She originally started schooling to become a nurse yet her life led her to this career.

"I have a traumatic background,



Clarissa Benavides came on board in April of 2023 as the Family Advocacy Program Manager with Army Community Services (ACS). She recently stepped into the role of ACS Director. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

as far as my upbringing, coming from a parent who was in a domestic violence relationship. That kind of pushed me into this without me even realizing it."

As the director of the community centered directorate, Benavides hopes to, "Increase awareness to all the programs and services ACS offers not only to active-duty

members and their Families, but to DOD civilians and their families as well. Hopefully starting with an ACS Open House in the near future."

Benavides along with the rest of the ACS team is located on the Howard Cantonment in building 309 and are available 6 a.m.-4:30 p.m. or by calling extension 3224.

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# Allied Trades shop in the arctic

By Ana Henderson

The Allied Trades shop at Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) located on the Fort Greely installation in Alaska is the one stop shop for specialty manufacturing needs. The shop supports arctic testing at Cold Regions which falls under Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) extreme weather testing umbrella.

"We work on everything that is metal, wood, plastics, and some glass. We produce a wide array of products with those materials. So, anything you could possibly need for the center, especially on tests, we build it here," explained Chief of the Test Support Division, Kyle Anderson.

The four members of the shop, made up of civilians and contractors, all have varied skills sets.

Ben Selvaggio's specialty is in welding, Seth Brennan comes from a metallurgical background and brings the artist side, Stan Musgrove is a CDL driver and heavy equipment operator and puts emphasis on the heavy equipment side of the work. Sam Porter specializes in machine work.

The shop uses a combination of high-tech and manual tools ranging from CNC machines, plasma tables to hand cranked machinery. In fact,

Porter shares that the team's favorite piece of machinery is one of its oldest. A gigantic industrial drill press that precisely drills and taps large holes.

"This is not replaceable. There is nothing out there to replace it with to do what it does," said Porter, "It's as efficient as the day it was built."

In late 2023, YPG's command team along with CRTC's command team toured the Allied Trades shop just after the Allied Trades team had finished manufacturing a truck bed on an end dump truck.

The team appreciates the variety in work and learning from each other.

"You start here with some basic skills and then you learn a wide range of them along the way," remarked Selvaggio. Together they fulfill requests which provides continuity in the process.

"Everything is fabricated in one place. We do all the design work as well as the building. We work a lot with the test Program Offices to work on the design of support materials/tools. In many cases we will see our design later in production," tells Porter.

Working in the arctic does add obstacles so Porter mitigates them with good planning.

"We are definitely more



In late 2023, YPG's command team along with CRTC's command team toured the Allied Trades shop just after the team had finished manufacturing a truck bed on an end dump truck.

Porter explains, "Everything has to be inventoried and ready to go in the shop. We typically go through our test season without any purchasing. It's major effort in the summer for

us to inventory our parts, pieces, materials, machines, to make sure they are ready to go."

The shop recently went through an overhaul – with the team saying it's a 30-year or more life cycle refit and are ready for the arctic test season.

restricted when it comes to material availability. It's one of the challenges," tells Porter.

One huge undertaking the entire CRTC team does is prepare for the heavy testing season.



The four members of the shop all have varied skills sets. Stan Musgrove (left) puts emphasis on heavy equipment. Ben Selvaggio's (right) specialty is in welding, Sam Porter (back right) specializes in machine work and Seth Brennan comes from a metallurgical background (not pictured). Klye Anderson (back center), chief of the Test Support Division, tells Col. John Nelson and Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare about the shop. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



The shop uses a combination of high-tech and manual tools ranging from CNC machines, plasma table to hand cranked machinery. In fact, Porter shares that the team's favorite piece of machinery is one of its oldest. A gigantic industrial drill press that precisely drills and taps large holes.



# Recovery project saving the rare Sonoran pronghorn

By James Gilbert

Fourteen Sonoran pronghorn were transferred last month from semi-captive breeding facilities on the Kofa and Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuges to a holding pen on the eastern edge of Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), where they would be released into the wild.

“This is all part of an ongoing recovery effort for the endangered Sonoran pronghorn. It is an effort to basically boost the number of pronghorns throughout their range for the recovery of the species,” YPG Wildlife Biologist Daniel Steward said. “There is a tremendous amount of habitat to the east, so we wanted to get them moving in that direction.”

The Sonoran pronghorn is an extremely rare subspecies of the pronghorn and can only be found in the deserts of southwestern Arizona and northwestern Mexico. Once vast in numbers, man-made obstacles to food and water, droughts, and the spread of agriculture caused its population numbers to plummet, resulting in the pronghorn being protected since 1967 under a precursor to the Endangered Species Act. Then in 2002, following one of the hottest and driest years on record,



Dozens of people have lined up in preparation to enter the boma through a sliding gate. Once inside some lined the walls of the chamber to prevent the Sonoran pronghorn inside from accidentally injuring themselves, while other used long nets to capture them. (Photos by James Gilbert)

the species was nearly wiped out with all but 21 Sonoran pronghorns perishing as the result of a severe 13-month drought.

Two years later, federal and state wildlife biologist stepped up to save the species from extinction by providing them food and water and developing a captive breeding program, which has proven to be extremely successful. Thanks to these efforts, it is estimated that there are more than 650 Sonoran pronghorn in the state now.

In preparation for the recent gathering, the pronghorn in the Kofa breeding pen were baited with food to get used to going into a three chambered circular livestock enclosure called a boma. Just before the capture day, the pen crew waited for the animals to enter the boma to feed, then shut the pen's doors, trapping 28 inside.

On the actual day the operation was held, the

pronghorns were sorted through the three chambers of the boma so there were three or less in the capture chamber. The walls of the last pen were padded as a precaution.

“Pronghorns are very fragile animals so we must be very careful how we handle them and prevent them from panicking,” Steward said. “There has been a huge learning curve about how we handle them.”

Once a group of three was in the final chamber, dozens of people quickly scurried inside through a

sliding gate. Some lined the walls of the chamber to prevent the animal from accidentally injuring itself while others used long nets to capture them.

“The goal is to run into the boma and keep the pronghorn away from the edges of the chamber because if they hit the sides of the pen they can get hurt,” Steward said.

While working in virtual silence to reduce stress to the animal, the pronghorn's heads were covered and they were held so blood could be drawn, and their temperature and scat samples taken.

Chris Lohrengel, the Deputy Complex Manager for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Southwest Arizona Refuge Complex, was one of the people who went inside the boma, saying it was both exciting and dangerous.

“It gets pretty chaotic in there. I have seen people get concussions and cuts before. It is fun though,” said Lohrengel, adding, “This is one of the rare success stories. What we have done here is pretty significant.”

After being caught, the pronghorns were then carried on stretchers with leg holes to veterinary stations set up under pop up tents just outside the boma, where they were vaccinated,

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A Sonoran pronghorn is being released back into a 340-plus acre semi-captive breeding pen in the King Valley area of the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge after being tagged in one ear, vaccinated, and receiving a medical examination on Dec. 19, 2023.



Yuma Proving Ground veterinarian Capt. Jessica Martinoff, (back left) performs a medical examination on a Sonoran pronghorn at a veterinary station set up under pop up tents just outside the boma.



# RE-QUALIFY

FROM PAGE 1

inspecting the A-22 for sling load, which is also used for aerial delivery loads, and arranging for the use of range space, the ATF Soldiers/NCOs also provided all the ground support for the helicopter landing zone.

That ground support consisted of hooking up the assembly to the Osprey, making sure it was secure, and using a radio to relay information from the site to the Marines piloting the Osprey.

"We were their eyes, letting them know if a load was fouled or if something got hung up while it was being picked up and wasn't going to fly right," said Lavalla. "We had to use a sling leg extension to get up to the aircraft. You want the extra height and distance because the bird never sits still while it is hovering for the pickup."

While there is no school

requirement to conduct sling load operations in the Army, a Soldier must be a graduate of either the Sling Load Inspector Course, Air Assault, or Pathfinder school to properly inspect and sign the Sling Load Inspection Form. The form verifies that the load is properly rigged and ready for a sling load for that particular type of helicopter.

"In those courses they teach how to inspect various types of sling load capable items, which can be vehicles, trailers or bundles, and prepare the loads for various helicopters as the preparation and equipment requirements change depending on the airframe that is doing the sling load," Lavalla said. "We have quite a few guys in the shop who are already qualified."

The purpose of a sling load is to quickly transport equipment or supplies by helicopter, using sling sets, cargo nets and other specially designed equipment, to remote or hostile locations that are generally

a short distance away and not easily reached by vehicles.

"Army and Marine Corps units either use convoys or whatever rotary-wing asset that is available, whether it is Ospreys, CH-47s, CH-53s or UH-60s, to move equipment and supplies that are needed in different locations," Lavalla said. "There is no right or wrong method unless there is a weight restriction, and you need a bigger helicopter for a heavier load."

Participating in the joint training not only helped the ATF Soldiers stay tactically and technically sharp on sling load operations, but it also helps them maintain their readiness when called upon.

Lavalla noted that YPG has terrain that is so rugged in places that they are inaccessible to vehicles, so being able to conduct sling load operations is at times a logistical necessity.

"Having the capability allows us to insert and exert equipment that we normally couldn't do," said Lavalla.

"We have had to go do a sling load recovery operation out on the range to recover test equipment that landed where it shouldn't have, like the side of a mountain."



The joint training, which took place downrange at a site named Cherokee Flats, consisted of one V-22 Osprey with three crews taking turns picking up an A-22 cargo bag assembly dummy load weighing 1,600 pounds and dropping it back off at the same spot after a short flight. (Loaned photos)



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Both Resource Teachers and Near-Peer Mentors receive a stipend for their work while giving back to their local community and working alongside U.S. Army scientists and engineers.

Applications for Resource Teachers and Near-peer Mentors are from  
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# RECOVERY

FROM PAGE 11

given medical examinations, outfitted with a tracking collar, and tagged on one ear. YPG veterinarian Capt. Jessica Martinoff said while one of the animals she tended to had a minor leg injury, the rest seemed to be in overall good health.

"It is amazing to be part of something like this, helping an endangered species survive," Martinoff said. "It is an opportunity you don't often get. I thought they all looked fantastic."

Game Specialist David Kuhn, who is based out of the Arizona Game and Fish Office in Yuma, said that once all the pronghorns had been processed, the ones that were chosen to be taken to the YPG holding pen were given a sedative so they could sleep during the trip. The others were released back into the semi-captive breeding pen.

Data from the tracking collars will be used to monitor the pronghorn's



A Sonoran pronghorn, which has been fitted with a GPS or radio collar, is being carried away from a veterinary station on a stretcher with holes for its legs. (Photo by James Gilbert)

location and to see how they are using the new landscape.

"When you are moving an animal from one area to another you want to keep an eye on them to see how they are doing," Kuhn said. "If they are hanging out in a certain area it will also help us determine if we need to supplement their feeding or build a watch catchment there."

Civilian employees from YPG, the U.S. Air Force, the U.S. Border Patrol, the U.S. Navy, and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma also took part in the effort.

According to Stewart, the initial plan had been to monitor the 14 pronghorns for a couple of weeks from the safety of the holding pen before letting them go in early

January, but Mother Nature chose not to cooperate. He went on to say that a storm in late December that passed through the area washed out a section of the fence of the holding pen, which allowed the pronghorn to escape.

"From what we saw before the storm, this is a healthy-looking bunch of pronghorns and there were no apparent injuries during transport" Stewart said.

Having all wandered off from the holding pen in different directions, the hope now is that the animals will eventually join up with a pronghorn herd that has been established on the Palomas Plains, which covers part of the YPG East Arm and Bureau of Land Management lands to the east.

"We are proud to see Sonoran pronghorn flourishing on our ranges," Stewart said.

As a natural laboratory for testing virtually every piece of equipment in the Army's ground combat arsenal, YPG also has a vested interest in responsible stewardship of the land and the wildlife that reside on it.

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