

The Outpost

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

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YPG mourns loss of highest-ranking civilian

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Technical Director Larry Bracamonte passed away on Saturday, Aug. 17, 2024 after a battle with cancer.

Serving as YPG's highest ranking civilian since 2018, he had worked at the proving ground since 1987.

"Larry's leadership, extensive experience, and unwavering dedication to the YPG mission have been truly inspirational," said Col. John Nelson, YPG Commander. "His passion and commitment have left an indelible mark on our organization at all levels."

A Yuma native whose father worked at the proving ground, Bracamonte showed interest in mechanics at an early age.

"As a kid, I had a passion for shooting rockets and coming up with contraptions that did things," he



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Technical Director Larry Bracamonte (left) passed away on Aug. 17, 2024, after a battle with cancer. In this 2010 photo, he escorts then-Senator John McCain on a tour of YPG's Joint Experimentation Range Complex. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

said in a 2018 interview. "One of my friends' dad would buy old cars in various states of disarray, and helping him fix those cars while I was in high school taught me a lot."

After graduating from Yuma High School in 1981, he went to the University of Arizona and majored in mechanical engineering. Degree in hand, he returned home in 1987 and started at YPG testing tank ammunition.

"My plan was to make a little money, stay a year or two, and then move on somewhere else," he recalled. "But when I actually started working here, it was very exciting and challenging. I really, really liked the job, and stayed."

As the years progressed, Bracamonte was promoted numerous times. From team leader to branch chief, then division chief. He attended

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LOSS

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a prestigious course of study at Cranfield University at the United Kingdom's Royal Military College of Science, then became the director of YPG's Ground Combat Systems Directorate and finally technical director, the post's highest-ranking civilian position. Just prior to that, he worked a detail as the Associate Director of Test Management at the Army Test and Evaluation Command,



Technical Director Larry Bracamonte spoke to the workforce during a townhall in October of 2023. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

YPG's senior command.

A significant portion of his time at the proving ground was during the direst days of combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, where Soldiers and Marines saw threats first from rockets and mortars, then from devastating improvised explosive devices. The Department of Defense rapidly tested technologies to defeat these threats and rapidly fielded armored vehicles to mitigate their destructive power: YPG testers and supporting personnel routinely worked 60 and 70-hour work weeks over the course of years to meet or exceed the critically tight schedules.

As technical director, Bracamonte oversaw YPG's successful navigation of the COVID pandemic as it simultaneously hosted the capstone event of the Army Futures Command's Project Convergence in both 2020 and 2021, the latter iteration of which was the Army's largest capabilities demonstration of the preceding 15 years, drawing multiple visits from the highest-ranking military and civilian leadership of the Army and Department of Defense. The post also hosted the Future Vertical Lift Cross



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Technical Director Larry Bracamonte (center) passed away on Aug. 17, 2024, after a battle with cancer. Bracamonte served YPG's highest ranking civilian since 2018, he had worked at the proving ground since 1987. Bracamonte is pictured in 2023 receiving an award from YPG Commander Col. John Nelson (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare (left). (Photo By Ana Henderson)

Functional Team's Experimental Demonstration Gateway Event in 2023.

His leadership was also instrumental in the creation of the post's widely acclaimed Employee Modernization Effort for Relevant Growth and Enrichment (EMERGE) program, a wide-ranging and comprehensive effort to promote workforce modernization that covers everything from developing new test methodologies for advanced technologies to leadership strategies and critical thinking.

Through it all, Bracamonte said,

YPG's mission remained constant across the decades.

"Everybody at YPG strives to produce the best product we can for our Soldiers," he said. "He or she is our ultimate customer, and everyone here knows that doing their work correctly means a Soldier can perform their mission safely and successfully."

**Larry Bracamonte's
Celebration of Life
Sept. 5, 2024 at 5 p.m.
YPG's Halo Chapel**

The Outpost

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Technical Director Larry Bracamonte was known by the workforce for his friendly manner and deep knowledge of testing activities. He's seen here (center) giving Civilian Aide to the Secretary of the Army Mario Diaz a tour at a gun position. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

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Suicide Prevention Month

We are stronger together, connect to protect

Submitted by YPG Suicide Prevention Office staff

Each September the world observes Suicide Prevention Month—a time dedicated to raising awareness, fostering hope, and breaking the stigma surrounding mental health struggles.

Suicide is still a leading cause of death globally, impacting individuals across all demographics, ages, and walks of life. The Defense Suicide Prevention Office finds more than 1200 Soldiers have died by suicide since 2016. These statistics are more than numbers; they are profound, personal tragedies that ripple through units, families and communities.

This year, the Army's focus and theme is "We are stronger together, connect to protect," underscoring the importance of relationships and community in safeguarding mental health. Connection is a cornerstone of mental well-being, and strengthening our bonds with others can be a powerful preventive measure.

Suicide prevention is something everyone can do, not just mental health professionals. By connecting with our friends, family members and co-workers, we can recognize risk factors and warning signs and prevent a suicide.

Initiatives such as the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 988, which provides 24/7, free, and confidential support, have been instrumental in offering help to those in need. The hotline is a resource for individuals who may be struggling with thoughts of suicide or for those who are concerned about loved ones.

Schools, workplaces, and local organizations are increasingly adopting mental health education and support systems. The Army uses ACE which stands for Ask, Care, Escort to teach Soldiers and civilians to recognize warning signs and provide the tools needed to help those in crisis. This training is available to any unit, DA Civilian or Army family member.

Sharing experiences of overcoming mental health challenges can offer hope and inspire others who may be facing similar struggles.

Addressing mental health from a holistic perspective is gaining traction. Practices such as mindfulness, stress management, and physical exercise are recognized for their positive impact on mental well-being. Integrating these practices into daily routines can provide valuable tools for coping with life's challenges.

It's essential to remember that each person's experience with mental health is unique. While broad strategies and resources are vital, offering a listening ear, showing compassion, and being present for those around us are equally significant.

If you or someone you know is struggling, remember that help is available. Reach out to trusted friends, family members, or mental health professionals. The path to healing begins with a single step, and there are people ready to support you every step of the way.

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Army program provides framework to manage workplace safety

By Ron Van Why

The U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground Installation Safety Office (ISO) recognized that the Army was changing the way it looked at safety, and proactively implemented a safety management

system a little more than a year before the Army implemented what is now known as the Army Safety and Occupational Health Management System (ASOHMS).

ASOHMS provides a framework to Army organizations to

systematically manage safety and occupational health programs. This enhances mission capabilities, reduces safety and occupational health related mishaps and improves personnel readiness through effective risk management. Organizations use risk management

to identify the needs of their SOHMS.

Implementing ASOHMS ensures hazards and risk controls are well thought out and appropriate with the commensurate risk level, while maintaining effective controls and ultimately supporting the organization's mission readiness.

The ASOHMS framework is made up of six distinct capability objectives that include 48 measurable criteria elements:

- 1) Leadership engagement and personnel/Soldier readiness
- 2) Mishap, incident, illness reporting and investigation
- 3) Training and promotion
- 4) Conduct inspections and assessments
- 5) Conduct hazard analysis and develop countermeasures
- 6) Health protection and readiness

The stage-based approach ensures organizations manage safety and

occupational health through three stages.

Stage 1: Documented programs and written procedures

Stage 2: Implementation, training, and employee involvement

Stage 3: Continuous improvement

After completing Stage 3, organizations receive a third-party assessment; if successful, organizations are recognized as an "Army SOH Star" site.

Leveraging ASOHMS directly supports the Army's ability to deploy, fight and win decisively against any adversary, anytime and anywhere.

The transition was extremely smooth and flawless, due to the support from the Garrison leadership. They were invested from the beginning which made it easy for the ISO to modernize their approach to safety and occupational health by implementing ASOHMS.

CULTURE IS THE KEY

- PROMOTE SAFETY AS A CORE VALUE IN EVERYDAY WORK AS COMPARED TO A PRIORITY
- ESTABLISH A FRAMEWORK RATHER THAN A "TO DO LIST"



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ASOHMS Capability Objectives
Leadership Engagement/Employee Participation
Investigate & Report Mishaps
Safety and Occupational Health Training & Promotion
Inspections & Assessments
Hazard Analysis & Countermeasures
Health Protection& Readiness

Aced the test



Congratulations to James D. Price Elementary School fifth grader Capri Rippey for earning a perfect score on the 2023-2024 statewide standardized mathematics test. She is one of 23 students districtwide. School District One recognized students during the Governing Board meeting. Rippey said, "I want to thank Mrs. Findley for helping me reach my goal." James D. Price Elementary serves children of military and civilian families living and working on post. Rippey and Findley are pictured at the meeting on Aug. 14, 2024. (Photos courtesy Tiffani Rippey)

Two Airborne Test Force Soldiers return to their roots serving at YPG

By Ana Henderson

People join the military for a variety of reasons, some to earn money for college, others to continue a family tradition of serving their country and others to get out of their hometown and travel the world.

Two U.S. Army Airborne Test Force (ATF) Soldiers at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) joined for some of those reasons yet when the opportunity to serve in their hometown presented itself, they both ceased it.

"Coming home was great. I think it was the perfect time," said Staff Sgt. Jon Contreras is a test jumper and pack section supervisor at ATF. He graduated from Cibola High School, attended Centennial and Crane Middle Schools, and H.L. Suverkrup Elementary School.

He came to Yuma Test Center at YPG after serving in Italy for the last three years and had been away from home since enlisting. This July he hit his 10-year mark serving in the U.S. Army and recently re-enlisted. He expects to serve at YPG for at least three years and looks forward to getting out into the community. Contreras participated in the annual Veteran's Day parade in Yuma and said it was the first time his family, including his daughter, got to see him representing the Army.

"It's a good feeling, I haven't had that feeling, since I was away since I was 19."

Sgt. Briana Corona's family is



Staff Sgt. Jon Contreras is a test jumper and pack section supervisor at Airborne Test Force. He graduated from Cibola High School, attended Centennial and Crane Middle Schools, and H.L. Suverkrup Elementary School. Sgt. Briana Corona attended San Luis Middle School and High School. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

also beaming with pride seeing her represent the U.S. Army in her hometown. They recently visited her during the Military Appreciation event on Main Street in Yuma where she was representing her unit at the YPG booth.

"I love it. They are so proud of me," expressed Corona.

She was a San Luis resident and attended San Luis Middle School and High School.

A recruiter visited her high school and later brought her to YPG for a tour prior to her enlistment.

Now, while serving here, she hopes to motivate others interested

in the Army.

"I would love to continue volunteering," said Corona, adding,

"It would be nice to share my experience. If anyone is interested, I can help them out."

She arrived at YPG in February as a jumper and jump master and currently works at ATF in the parachute pack section alongside Contreras. She has plans, to attend the Military Freefall School here at YPG to get certified in higher altitude jumps.

As for Contreras he hopes to encourage others to explore their options.

"There are people who want to join, but just don't take the leap. If I could be a motivation or assist in any way in the community, I would definitely be available to do that and to show there's more out there. I've seen things I probably wouldn't have seen if I wouldn't have joined the military."

Adding, "It benefited me for the best."

He plans to re-enlist and serve his full 20 years.

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Employee spotlight: Eugene Walters aviation aficionado

By Ana Henderson

Aviation Test Officer Eugene Walters began his career at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground in 1987 after serving in the U.S. Army.

At the time, he was hired on as an aircraft gunner in the Aircraft Armament shop which he says it's not much different than what the Aircraft Weapons shop does today. "Our job was to load the aircraft, do basic maintenance on it for the weapon system, assist with operations downrange, put-up roadblocks to keep the test area safe and report all that to the test officer and kind of coordinate everything for them at the armament pad," explained Walters.

Walters diligently worked learning all he could from others around him. Eventually he became the supervisor of Aircraft Armaments section in 1999. Then when Aviation Systems across the street was looking for test officers Walters jump at the opportunity.

"A test officer's job is to coordinate the testing at YPG," he said. Walters goes on to explain, how test officers facilitate the test in conjunction with the industry partner — everything from finding out the needs of the test, to providing a cost estimate for testing and monitoring test funds once testing is underway. Throughout the test cycle test officers must follow multiple steps including, "starting the test scheduling, ordering ammunition, shipping and receiving — making sure all the items arrive and are shipped out at the completion of the test. Writing test plans and reports, coordinating support elements and be out on the test site. It's a lot of coordination."

Walters will be the first to tell you that teamwork is vital as a test officer. "Everybody at YPG plays a part. Every single support element on the post even people you typically don't think of, have their part to play. They are the ones who get it done. We ask for their help."



In 2015, Eugene Walters was bestowed The Order of St. Michael award which recognizes individuals who have contributed significantly to the promotion of Army Aviation through a lifetime of service to the Aviation Branch. (U.S. Army photo)

Adding, "The test support teams are really the critical part of YPG."

While being a test officer is a tremendous amount of work, perks of the job include occasionally flying on aircraft and seeing aircraft that are rare.

"I've seen a few foreign things that are kind of neat that most people don't get the opportunity to look at."

During his time at YPG he's tested a multitude of aircraft for the Army, Marine Corps and Air Force.

"Just about everything you can think of the U.S. military for a rotary wing aircraft has come through here at one time or another."

Just like a true aircraft aficionado Walters only needs to hear an aircraft to identify it, "Every once in a while one will throw me, especially if they are flying together, but for the most part I can tell what they are without looking at them."

Walters enjoys getting out of the office and working downrange constantly learning about emerging technology, specifically military aircraft.

"I am always interested at what we've done here and where it's going. I am interested in military technology and how it's evolved."

In Walters' nearly 40 years at YPG, he's learned a lot from his peers, some retired and some still working at the proving ground. He credits Flight Services Division Chief Patrick Franklin for providing him with learning experiences and says, "Every boss I've ever had in Aviation Systems has been excellent to work for."

Walters goes on to say, "That's another thing I really enjoy about this place. The willingness of everyone to assist in completing the mission."

While Walters gives a lot of praise to others, he's also highly respected

for his work ethic.

During a recent meeting Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division Chief Ross Gwynn described Walters as a "motivator for all his team."

In 2023, Walters was selected as the Yuma Test Center Command's Civilian Mission Employee for the 2nd Quarter. Walters oversaw four test programs while concurrently helping fellow test officers conducting four additional tests, which directly supported Future Vertical Lift initiatives.

He's also a recipient of the Order of Saint Michael award.

"It was an honor I never expected." He said of honor bestowed on him in 2015.

He thought he was attending a division safety meeting up until Grant Ware broke the news.

"I was quite shocked, and I really appreciated it, but one again it was everyone else at YPG that got me there. Nobody does anything by themselves out here. The entire team has allowed me to get where I am at. To achieve my position."

Listen to Eugene Walters' podcast episode by scanning the QR code with your phone's camera.



In 2023, Yuma Test Center (YTC) selected Walters as the YTC Civilian Mission Employee for the 2nd Quarter. (U.S. Army photo)

YPG at the forefront of developmental testing

By Mark Schauer

Army senior leaders say that successful deterrence against near-peer adversaries with the ability to conduct large-scale combat operations will require long-range precision fires, autonomous capability, and leveraging new technologies across all military branches.

The Army wants to reduce sensor to shooter timelines, react to threats faster, and combine all the systems and effects available at their disposal.

It is a tall and complex order, and U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is at the forefront of conducting developmental testing of the equipment that may be used by the future force.

In conjunction with the Army Test and Evaluation Command it is subordinate to, YPG is developing the local architecture and establishing data governance in advance of more practical case uses for artificial intelligence (AI) in support of the post's test mission.

"The big thing with AI is being able to introduce time efficiency, to use data and build models where it will learn from information it is provided and do some process that a human would do, but more efficiently," said Richard Hernandez, YPG's chief data and analytics officer. "It's really about identifying the pain points in your process—when you understand your data and your process and get to the point where you are doing some kind of predictive analysis, that is where AI



A recent successful example of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground using artificial intelligence involved developing a workable algorithm to help facilitate the acoustic trilateration of air to surface missiles and other helicopter rounds collected from arrays of microphones and hydrophones on the post's highly instrumented ranges. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

and machine learning really helps you out."

Data is in a very real sense YPG's chief product, and the post's Data Processing Branch is the nerve center for reducing the enormous amount of data collected during tests on the post's vast ranges: optical data, tracking radar data, ballistics data.

"We also get the occasional weird thing that only comes every five or ten years, but it isn't like a private industry business where we say we aren't going to provide that to a customer anymore because there isn't enough demand for it," said Ashley Thompson, chief of the branch. "If the Army needs

"We want to facilitate that real-time data"

that thing, we have to make sure we have the expertise and the tools to process the data. That's hard when people retire and take that knowledge out the door: we have to be sure that even if we automate it, we understand how the automation works."

The benefit that YPG has over other organizations or businesses

is troves of historical data from decades of test events. This data is extremely valuable for training AI models to automate or expedite data reduction and

analysis. These models are already resulting in increased accuracy and significant time savings in

achieving data products that support system performance assessments. A recent successful example involved developing a workable algorithm to help facilitate the acoustic trilateration of air to surface missiles and other helicopter rounds collected from arrays of microphones and hydrophones on the post's highly instrumented ranges.

"When there are six to eight submunitions going off at different times, but close together, it can be really hard to triangulate the impact of all of them," said Thompson.

With the help of longtime YPG analysts, a developer created a program that reduced processing time first from months to days, and finally to seconds.

"We should be automating the rote, redundant tasks and let the analysts do the more interesting analytical work," said Thompson. "Some of it isn't AI, it is just simple automation."

Since munitions and weapons testing has long been the post's most significant workload, the branch wants to autonomously process things like the test data generated from lot acceptance testing of mortar rounds.

"We want to facilitate that real-time data, so we are working on a statistical model and building up infrastructure to get them that information immediately in the field," said Thompson. "If there's an issue with a particular set of data looking questionable, we would post-process it here."



Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth speaks at a media round table discussion at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground in this Nov. 9, 2021 photo. Army senior leaders say that successful deterrence against near-peer adversaries with the ability to conduct large-scale combat operations will require long-range precision fires, autonomous capability, and leveraging new technologies across all military branches.

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Youngsters explore developmental test at local event



Hundreds of local youngsters were delighted by the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) display at the Colorado River State Historic Park's annual Exploration Station event the evening of Aug. 24, 2024. YPG is Yuma County's premier scientific and technical workplace and has been a presence at the park's science outreach event for kids since its inception. (Photos by Eugene Garcia)



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Yuma Proving Ground firefighter always ready

By Mark Schauer

When it comes to defending life and property, few jobs are more heroic than that of the firefighter.

At U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), the fire department is responsible for protecting hundreds of buildings and thousands of personnel and residents from flame.

Wherever a fire occurs, YPG firefighters are ready for action. As firefighter Raul Carlos has learned, the job can be grueling: YPG firefighters are typically on post for 48 consecutive hours followed by three days off.

The Somerton native and Kofa High School graduate has worked here since 2020, though never intended to make firefighting a career.

"I have another relative in the fire service, but I actually worked as an instructional aide in a school and was going to school to pursue teaching as a career," he said.

After more than five years working as an instructional aide in the local school system and taking college classes, he ended up taking a year-long fire academy as an elective in college. At first only seeing it as a fun challenge, he ended up falling in love with the profession. After graduating from the academy, he worked for Rural Metro as a firefighter for nearly four years.

"A couple of my coworkers ended up leaving to work at YPG," he recalled. "I had no idea YPG existed, and one of my coworkers reached out to encourage me to apply here."

In addition to protecting the proving ground, the YPG Fire Department also frequently responds to calls outside the post's boundaries, helping to battle nearby brush fires or



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Firefighter Raul Carlos (left) runs in full gear during the post's celebration of the Army's 249th Birthday on June 13, 2024. Carlos has donned his fire suit in multiple runs on post, in Sept. 11 memorial runs, and in his normal fitness routine, even in the intense heat of the desert summer. "No matter how much hydration you have, you are going to feel it," he said. "It's definitely challenging." (Photo by Ana Henderson)

giving assistance to local mutual aid partners at places like Martinez Lake or Senator Wash.

"One of the beauties of this career is that you never know where you're going to go or what time you are going to get a call," Carlos said.

For Carlos, firefighting is more than a job: it is a way of life. For the past three years, he has participated in on-post events such as the Army Birthday 5K run and the Patriot Day runs up the stairs at the Laguna Army Airfield tower to honor the final moments of the firefighters killed in the 2001 World Trade Center terrorist attacks in full turnout gear. Weighing more than 45 pounds, it consists of things like a firefighter's multilayer turnout coat and pants, along with a helmet and breathing apparatus, along with peripheral gear like the firefighter's flashlight.

"No matter how much hydration you have, you are going to feel it," Carlos said of racing in the gear "It's definitely challenging."

YPG Commander Col. John Nelson was so impressed with Carlos' performance at the Army

Birthday run that he intended to recognize him in front of eventgoers at the cake-cutting ceremony that followed the run. Because the run took place on Carlos' day off, so he had already left post prior to the ceremony. Nelson vowed to find him later on, and when Carlos was on duty came to YPG Fire Station #1 with Command Sgt. Maj Mark Millare and surprised him with a challenge coin. "I wasn't really expecting it," Carlos said. "I do it to participate and because I like to do it. I'm pretty shy about being in the spotlight."

Carlos' willingness to perform community engagements means he has donned on multiple occasions the Sparky the Fire Dog suit beloved by children of all ages. "If I'm on duty, I'm usually the one to put on the Sparky suit. I always volunteer myself for it."

Carlos intends to spend the rest of his career at the proving ground.

"It's the best four years I've had so far. I plan to be here for the full ride."

Chaplain's Corner

If things are too easy, we tend to take them for granted

Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain Maj.
Ryan Pearse



The word of the day is disfluency. Something that is disfluent forces the person studying it to be that much more focused on understanding it. Something that is too easy can cause people to take the knowledge for granted.

If you make the audience work hard to listen — purposely talk quieter — it causes them to switch into intellectual overdrive to understand you and thus helps them learn better. The most powerful mafia dons in the world, think Marlon Brando of “The Godfather,” were the least audible. Some of the best leaders in the Army are those who don’t need to yell and scream at the top of their lungs to be effective.

Did you know that the best horses lose when they compete with slower ones and win against better rivals? Did you know that your bones will get denser when intermittent stress is applied to them? Bones become weaker with zero gravity or if you spend a lot of time riding a bike.

What does all this mean? If we make things too easy on ourselves and others, we are not doing anyone any favors. God created the human body and human psyche to grow from low-level stressors; the absence of which can harm organisms. Let’s embrace disfluency and hard competition so we can learn, grow, and thrive. 1 Kings 19:12 tells us, “God speaks to us in a still small voice.”

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IHG Hotels celebrate serving the Army community



IHG Army Hotels including the location at U.S. Yuma Proving Ground celebrated 15 years of serving the Army community. Community members gathered Aug. 14, 2024, to enjoy appetizers, refreshments and cupcakes. (Photos by Eugene García)



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