

THE OUTPOST

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YPG testing vital to Army's modernization priorities

By Mark Schauer

YPG is hot in more ways than one. The proving ground actively supports six of the Army Futures Command's Cross Functional Teams (CFTs) building the Army's future force, which seeks to retain overmatch with near-peer adversaries in a high intensity conflict while maintaining the competency in waging irregular warfare that has been achieved since the 9/11 attacks. "It's a unique perspective that we have here to have visibility on virtually all future Army programs," said Col. Ross Poppenberger, YPG Commander. "All of the Army's future initiatives are coming through YPG in one form or another. We have the technical capability and the capacity to support their needs."

"Over the past 15 years, we've been fighting on two fronts: Iraq and Afghanistan," said Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Crosby of the Army Futures Command. "Our current and potential near-peer adversaries have been modernizing their forces. We have to take the lead on modernization with concepts and capabilities so we can put the best equipment in the Soldiers' hands to deploy, fight, and win our nation's

wars, wherever they may be."

Heavily interested in supporting multi-domain operations in support of other service branches, Secretary of the Army Dr. Mark Esper described the effort as part of the "Army Renaissance" that is currently in progress in comments during a recent visit to the proving ground.

"Yuma is essential to that because we will need to test all of that equipment and make sure that it meets the needs of our Warfighters and ensure we are successful on the future battlefield," Esper said.

Esper also stressed that YPG's role as independent arbiters of new materiel's performance ensures that the Army gets value for its money.

"Yuma is also providing an important role in terms of being good stewards of the taxpayer's dollars," said Esper. "We invest a lot of money into modernizing our force and want to be sure we get what we pay for."

Long range precision fires

The highest profile test project in support of the CFTs relates to the Army's top modernization priority: long range precision fires. The Army aspires to field systems capable of accurately firing at targets 100 kilometers away in the next four

A glimpse of the Army's future



Escorted by YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Jamathon Nelson, Army Futures Command Command Sgt. Maj. Michael Crosby visited the proving ground on February 14, seeing a variety of YPG assets that support six of the Army Futures Command's Cross Functional Teams building the Army's future force. "Army Futures Command has taken the lead on modernization concepts and capabilities to provide the warfighter to deter or prepare for any near-peer adversary we may engage in the crucible of ground combat," Crosby said. "YPG fits into the modernization concept very easily when it comes to testing those concepts and capabilities, putting rigor in the system, and validating that this force modernization is actually working. YPG has a lot to offer." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

years, a dramatic increase over the 30 kilometers a currently-fielded 155mm howitzer shell is capable of when fired at top zone with rocket assistance. YPG testing has already achieved significantly increased distances in test fires conducted at both the proving ground and the nearby Barry M. Goldwater Range.

The effort is called Extended Range Cannon Artillery (ERCA), and YPG conducts developmental testing of

multiple facets of it, from the artillery shells to the longer cannon tube and larger firing chamber the improved howitzer will need to accommodate them. YPG's ammunition plant has been instrumental in building multiple experimental formulations, shapes, and configurations for new propelling charges to accommodate the improved projectiles. Upon completion, the new systems will be

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A hero in and out of uniform: YPG employee saves lives at work, and at play

By Mark Schauer

Soldier. Electrical engineer.

Both positions require mastery that is rare in most individuals: of the self, of the rules of electronics and electromagnetism, of the control of fear itself.

Even for a veteran and engineer as accomplished as David Bates, however, there are no illusions about mastery of nature.

“You’re not the master of the ocean. The ocean will make a fool out of you real quick.”

It was a typical day at the beach so common to those fortunate enough to live within striking distance of San Diego, possibly the most temperate community in all of North America. It was November, off-season, but unseasonably warm, so Bates, his girlfriend, and her stepmother Doreen spent the day frolicking in the ocean at Coronado Island. Time and awareness slipped away: the previously gentle surf grew treacherous, surfers in the area suddenly retreated from the

water, and the next thing Bates knew a riptide had washed Doreen a full 200 meters from her previous position. With no lifeguards on duty, Bates sprang into action.

“Luckily I had grown up around the beach and knew what to do in that situation. If your feet can’t touch the ground, at some point you stop fighting the tide and kind of go with it a bit and hope someone will come in after you if you can’t get back on your own.”

He reached Doreen’s position, but she was clearly exhausted from the unrelenting battering of the ever-larger waves.

“You can see in someone’s face when they’re about to kind of give it up. She started going under. It’s kind of hard to explain the look in someone’s face and their demeanor when they are at that point.”

Doreen gasped that she was too tired to fight anymore and told Bates to save himself. He reassured her, told her to conserve her strength, and grabbed her elbow



Engineering Support Branch employee David Bates, seen here briefing Maj. Gen. Joel Tyler, ATEC Commanding General, has earned high plaudits. “He’s an individual who isn’t afraid of a challenge and will jump right in with both feet to solve any problem you give him,” said Jeff Rogers, aviation directorate director. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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with a vice-like grip. Despite his encouraging words, he had no illusions about the peril they both faced.

“The waves had gotten significantly larger. We were tumbling around and it wasn’t a good situation, but there was no point where I was going to give up on either one of us. That just wasn’t an option.”

In near desperation he tried waving frantically at the shore, but with no lifeguards on duty the only response he got was from other beachgoers who assumed he was giving them a jaunty wave. Finally reaching a spot where his feet could touch ground, the waterlogged Bates pulled Doreen in, in shock but alive. Bates gives his Army training full credit for his heroism.

"I want to thank the Army for giving me the whole motivation of never leaving a man behind, that if you have to drag him out of there, you drag him out of there. That's exactly what happened here."

Doreen was so impressed that she wrote letters to Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Timothy Matthews and the Yuma chapter of the American Red Cross, who gave Bates a commendation for heroism. The ceremony was attended by Matthews and more than a dozen of his other YPG colleagues.

Born in Turkey to a Turkish Air Force officer father and an American mother who worked as a Department of Defense contractor and was descended from a prominent military family, Bates grew up in Santa Monica, Calif. and joined the Army in 2006, at the height of the surge in Iraq.

"The Army really changed my life in a lot of different ways. It was definitely the best decision I ever made. I was a good fit, but I also had a lot of growing up to do and I think the Army was what I needed to mold me into that."

After his enlistment, he earned a degree in electrical engineering from California State University—Northridge and sought employment outside of the Los Angeles area. It was then that he first heard of an Army proving ground that needed engineers.

"I never heard of YPG while I was in uniform, but I definitely

utilized some of the equipment. A lot of the equipment that has come through here I've seen downrange and have experienced some of the upgrades that came about from YPG testing."

He had other offers, but YPG was an easy choice.

"I was right back in the desert and serving the Department of the Army. I wanted to be on the helping end of it, helping to improve things."

His work in the Instrumentation Division of the Engineering Support Branch has earned high plaudits.

"He's an individual who isn't afraid of a challenge and will jump right in with both feet to solve any problem you give him," said Jeff Rogers, aviation directorate director. "Sometimes even when he isn't delegated a responsibility he'll try to find a solution to a problem. Those are the kinds of people we need."

He enjoys designing electrical circuits and fishing for recreation, but recently the graduate degree in engineering management that he is pursuing from the University of Arizona has monopolized a good deal of his free time. He has no plans to leave YPG.

"I could do without the heat, but I certainly do enjoy the mission here. There are some very knowledgeable, driven individuals here that I can learn from and grow with. I love my country and what I do."

YPG Fire Department has busy Presidents Day Weekend



A 1,300 acre brush fire on Bureau of Land Management land in the vicinity of Mitty Lake that spread to within several miles south of YPG's boundary menaced populated areas of the proving ground over Presidents Day Weekend. Dubbed the 'Bermuda Fire' and fanned by persistent 20-25 mile per hour winds, the fast-moving conflagration prompted the YPG Fire Department to stand ready at the YPG Travel Camp in the early morning hours of February 17. Despite some tense moments, a canal and Imperial Dam Road both served as firebreaks, and YPG sustained no injuries or damage from the blaze. The day before, YPG firefighters responded to and completely extinguished another brush fire near Martinez Lake. (US Army photo)

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Chaplain's Corner

Look before you leap

By Maj. Ronald Beltz

Once a fox was roaming around in the dark. Unfortunately, he fell into a well. He tried his level best to come out, but all in vain. So, he had no other alternative but to remain there until the next morning.

The next day, a goat came that way. She peeped into the well and saw the fox there. The goat asked, "what are you doing there, Mr. Fox?"

The sly fox replied, "I came here to drink water. It is the best I have ever tasted. Come and see for yourself."

Without thinking even for a while, the goat jumped into the well, quenched her thirst and looked for a way to get out. But just like the fox, she also found herself



helpless to come out.

Then the fox said, "I have an idea. You stand on your hind legs.

I'll climb on your head and get out. Then I shall help you come out too."




The goat was innocent enough not to understand the shrewdness of the fox and did as the fox said and helped him get out of the well.

While walking away, the fox said, "Had you been intelligent

enough, you would never have gotten in without seeing how to get out."

That's why we say, "Look before you leap."


Proverbs 13:16 reminds us: Wise people think before they act; fools don't—and even brag about their foolishness.

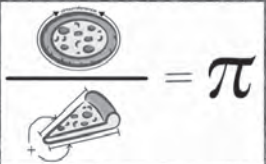
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Senate staffers visit YPG



Staffers Nick Rawls, Dan Winkler, and Jeremy Thompson from the office of recently-elected United States Senator Kyrsten Sinema made a morning-long visit to YPG on February 21 to witness firsthand the importance of YPG's impact on national security and the Arizona economy. YPG actively supports six of the Army Futures Command's Cross Functional Teams building the Army's future force, which seeks to retain overmatch with near-peer adversaries in a high intensity conflict while maintaining the competency in waging irregular warfare that has been achieved since the 9/11 attacks. (Photo by Casey Garcia)

YPG to attend Yuma Air Show on March 9



Kids of all ages enjoy trying on gear used by YPG's Airborne Test Force Soldiers at public events, and the annual Yuma Air Show is no different. This year's YPG display will also include a M-ATV, a M119 howitzer, a Stryker Combat Vehicle, and, for the first time ever, a Joint Light tactical Vehicle, as well as other table displays of vintage Army gear. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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integrated into both towed and self-propelled howitzers.

“It’s not a baby step, it is a big leap,” said Steve Flores, Artillery and Mines Branch chief. “It’s a soup-to-nuts redesign of the artillery system. You’ll end up with a new cannon, a new platform, new ammunition, a new rocket motor, and a new breach.”

In addition to multiple test fires at the proving ground, YPG personnel have conducted three test fires at the Barry M. Goldwater Range, a larger facility south of the proving ground that is shared by the Marine Corps and Air Force and primarily used for operational training with high-performance aircraft. The fires were carried off flawlessly, but setting up the temporary gun position was challenging. The test personnel had to transport and emplace numerous pieces of large, specialized, and expensive test-support equipment to the site, then quickly take it down and return it to the proving ground, a multi-day effort. YPG leaders are confident, however, that the Goldwater Range can accommodate the long range munitions’ safety



YPG conducts developmental testing of multiple facets of the Extended Range Cannon Artillery project, from artillery shells to the longer cannon tube and larger firing chamber the improved howitzer will need to accommodate them. YPG’s ammunition plant has been instrumental in building multiple experimental formulations, shapes, and configurations for new propelling charges to accommodate the improved projectiles. (US Army photo)

fan requirements in the few test shots annually that require firing the munitions to achieve their maximum range.

Army combat vehicles

YPG has distinguished itself with vehicle testing for decades. From evaluations of generations of the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank to rapid fielding initiatives of the multiple variants of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle during the worst days of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, literally thousands of American Soldiers are alive today thanks to developmental testing at YPG. The Stryker and Bradley Combat Vehicles are other venerable platforms that have been tested repeatedly at YPG over the years, and the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, the successor to the High Mobility Multipurpose Vehicle, was fielded to its first two Army and Marine Corps posts in January after years of developmental testing at YPG.

The Armored Multipurpose Vehicle, successor to the Vietnam-era M113, is currently undergoing testing at YPG, and other CFT programs like the next generation main battle tank will likely



The Stryker and Bradley Combat Vehicles are venerable platforms that have been tested repeatedly at YPG over the years, and the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle, the successor to the High Mobility Multipurpose Vehicle, was fielded to its first two Army and Marine Corps posts in January after years of developmental testing at YPG. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



From evaluations of generations of the M1 Abrams Main Battle Tank to rapid fielding initiatives of the multiple variants of the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle during the worst days of conflict in Iraq and Afghanistan, literally thousands of American Soldiers are alive today thanks to developmental testing at YPG. The Armored Multipurpose Vehicle, successor to the Vietnam-era M113, is currently undergoing testing at YPG, and other CFT programs like the next generation main battle tank will likely make appearances here in the next several years. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

make appearances here in the next several years.

Aviation systems and electronic testing

By the time an airframe comes to YPG, it has proven it can fly. Once here, it needs to prove its airworthiness once weapons systems and sensors are integrated into the platform. As such, YPG’s aviation testers are already preparing for the appearance of the Future Vertical Lift unmanned aircraft.

“It will have longer duration flight, higher altitudes, and more weapons capacity or payload capability,” said Ross Gwynn, Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division chief. “One way or another, we will see a lot of work because of that initiative.”

Like all systems that could someday operate in warfare against near-peer adversaries, YPG’s engineers are considering ways to create new robust and accurate means of navigation in a battle zone where the Global Positioning Satellite system has been tampered with. YPG’s institutional expertise in geodetics and ability to simulate various electromagnetic environments means it has the infrastructure to rapidly and seamlessly support this sort of testing.

“All of the CFTs will have to be

able to operate in that environment,” said Gwynn. “If there’s degraded navigation, our systems can’t be reliant on traditional ways of understanding where we are at in space. At YPG, we will always be able to test it, coordinate it, get the authorizations to test it, and provide the environment for any system to be tested. We have a huge history in the development of GPS, so it makes sense that we will be involved in the work.”

For their part, the high-level visitors visiting the proving ground have been impressed by YPG’s efforts.

“The work that is happening here at Yuma by our military and a large cadre of civilians is critical to our nation’s security,” Esper said. “It is important because we want to make sure we deploy weapons that work as we expect them to, that deliver to the Soldiers what they need and when they need it.”

“YPG has a lot to offer,” added Crosby. “The engineers are phenomenal: they understand the modernization process and where we are trying to go as a command nested with the six modernization priorities. It was very refreshing to see the energy and enthusiasm they bring to testing.”

Wild burros, horses are longstanding denizens of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

For most of its 76 year history, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) has seen itself as a natural laboratory, desiring to test equipment Soldiers use in the most realistic natural environment possible to ensure it works as it should wherever in the world they are called upon to serve.

As such, YPG has a deeply vested interest in being good stewards of the environment, and the proving ground's record in this area shines.

The proving ground is home to one of the largest and most genetically diverse populations of bighorn sheep in Arizona. The Sonoran Pronghorn, virtually extinct in the early 2000s, is now regenerating thanks in part to Arizona Game and Fish officials intentionally introducing the creature into YPG as a safe haven to help it regenerate. A fringe-toed lizard that is threatened in most of the American West thrives at YPG, as does the Sonoran tortoise.

"We try to do proactive things to help the environment," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "That way, the range is always ready to be used for military testing."

Among the multiple species found within YPG's over 1,300 square miles of range space are wild horses

and burros, well known to all YPG personnel who spend their days in the field testing equipment.

"There are a lot more burros than there are horses. We track where they're at for our safety."

Though the burros are generally popular with the YPG workforce, the creatures occasionally cause mischief. For example, several years ago at least one enterprising burro managed to turn on a water spigot—he drank his fill, then departed with the tap still running.

"Food, water, and shelter are what draw wildlife into our area. When it gets really dry, horses and burros are looking for water. Landscaping and sprinkler systems provide water—we really try to watch out for pooling water that would attract burros."

This past winter was relatively rainy by desert standards, which means range conditions are such that the creatures are far less likely to approach human-populated areas.

"All of the wildlife right now is disbursing. When there are really good range conditions, animals start spreading out—they're going to areas where they didn't have food before and now they do."

Though some YPG personnel miss seeing the creatures as they traverse the range en route to far-flung gun

positions, their relative reclusiveness has been a boon for motorists. Slow moving and with binocular vision, burros are incapable of moving out of the way of a vehicle moving at highway speeds in time to avoid a costly—and deadly—accident.

"In the past few months, we're not seeing as many burros as before because they are staying away from the roads. As things dry out, they are going to come back-- they'll be looking for forage and water and we'll have to continue being vigilant when driving on Highway 95."

Mitigating the burro threat from the length of two-lane road with a higher traffic density than any other in Arizona is no easy task, but Steward and other wildlife officials have done the best they can.

"We've eliminated water sources near the roads to try to keep horses and burros as far away from Highway 95 as possible. It's not healthy for the horses and burros to be exposed to high levels of traffic, for the animals or for the people."

Officials also attempt to relocate burros by organizing gathers with the Bureau of Land Management.

"If people let me know when they have specific damage they are receiving from burros, whether it is broken water lines or some

other infrastructure damage, I can communicate that with BLM."

Aside from favorable weather and plenty to eat and drink, the creatures tend to live long lives due to their sheer size and wary pack mentality that deters desert predators.

"Horses and burros are big, strong, and have a herd to protect each other. A lot of times they are too dangerous for a predator to take down—it happens, but it is rare. Mountain lions are typically associated with sheep, not horses or burros."

The burros are probably helped by the goodwill of their human neighbors, too.

"They've got a lot of personality. Burros are less likely to shy away from people than a deer. They're entertaining -- people truly do enjoy seeing these animals around."

Nonetheless, Steward cautions that burros are still wild animals that should be treated as such. In particular, feeding a wild burro should be strictly avoided.

"When people start feeding the burros, they become a real nuisance. These are wild animals—one begging for food can be ornery. You want to keep a respectful distance from any wild animal."



Mitigating the burro threat from Highway 95, the two-lane road with a higher traffic density than any other in Arizona is no easy task, but wildlife officials have done the best they can. Aside from favorable weather and plenty to eat and drink, the creatures tend to live long lives due to their sheer size and wary pack mentality that deters desert predators. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



YPG has a deeply vested interest in being good stewards of the environment, and the proving ground's record in this area shines. Among the multiple species found within YPG's over 1,300 square miles of range space are wild horses, well known to all YPG personnel who spend their days in the field testing military equipment.

Trespassing on YPG is dangerous, illegal

By Mark Schauer

It's not a jungle out there, but trespassing on YPG's vast desert ranges is dangerous enough.

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.

After 76 years of existence and plenty of posted no trespass signs, you might think people would steer clear of these areas.

But you would be wrong. And instances of trespassing, even vandalism, have increased in recent years, necessitating a vigorous enforcement response from the YPG Police Department.

"The off highway vehicle (OHV) population is pretty prevalent," said Sgt. David Nieto, range conservation officer for the YPG Police Department. "They've been using one of the BLM roads, driving around our restricted area signs, and establishing a new road across our boundary."

In addition to the possibility of unexploded ordnance from the proving ground's distant history as a World War II training facility, YPG'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.

"I try to stress to them that there are so many dangers to trespassing within our boundaries, especially not knowing what is being dropped or shot," said Nieto. "The people I encounter are mostly harmless



Two years ago, trespassers built and used for several months a makeshift clubhouse several miles inside of YPG's boundary. The responsible individuals were cited for multiple offenses and their creation was demolished at their expense. Unauthorized entry into any military installation is illegal, but YPG 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. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

and have no malicious intent, but that won't protect them from these hazards."

A citation for a first offense carries a \$280 fine, and fines for repeat or particularly egregious violations can run into the thousands of dollars. Two years ago, trespassers built and used for several months a makeshift clubhouse several miles inside of YPG's boundary. YPG Police identified the culprits easily, for they had scrawled their names and a unique internet hashtag onto a picnic bench they brought to the site. The responsible individuals were cited for multiple offenses and their creation was demolished at their expense.

"They had shade structures and lights, even a skeet shooting range," said Nieto.

The dangers to life and limb are 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," Steward 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 YPG that allows significant public access to people who apply for and obtain a permit. 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."

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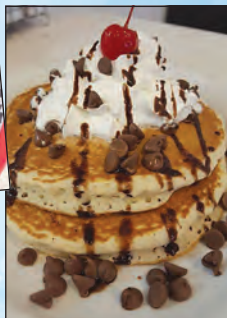
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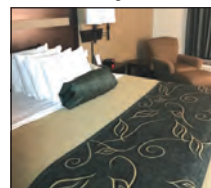


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