

# The Outpost

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

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## Private industry customers utilize YPG

By Mark Schauer

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

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

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



"A lot of the time, private industry customers come to us because of our restricted airspace," said Omar Silva. One of those customers is Green Launch, who conducted testing to launch a projectile into space in 2020. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

so we have to get customers to supplement us."

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

"It keeps our skills sharp and current, because they can work with the customers and see the newest technologies coming down the

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WEALTH MANAGEMENT

# Instrumentation Chief undertakes detail with Deputy Under Secretary of the Army

By Ana Henderson

Mike Dickerson has spent his professional career at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG). He started as a test officer in the Munitions and Weapons Division and has steadily moved up the ranks in the last 13 years. Dickerson is currently the Instrumentation Division Chief and oversees all the range instrumentation at YPG which includes optics, radars, telemetry and ballistics.

With more than a decade at YPG, Dickerson was ready for a broadening experience “You can kind of fall into a rut of the same ol’ same ‘ol,” said Dickerson, “I was looking to get a different perspective on the work I am doing at YPG which would be beneficial to my career.”

In the Fall of 2020, Dickerson applied for a detail with the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for Test and Evaluation (DUSA-TE). The DUSA-TE team works as advisors

to the Secretary of the Army for all matters related to Army test and evaluation.

“I have been looking to do a detail outside of ATEC because I wanted to get an external perspective. When the DUSA one came up, it was perfect because it was T&E related but it was outside of ATEC.”

The selection process had multiple steps. First, at the YPG level, then up to The Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC)— YPG’s superior command. After that step, Dickerson competed with individuals from other Army organizations. Around Christmastime he received the notification he had been selected and would begin his detail within a few weeks.

Because of COVID, Dickerson did not have the opportunity to work from Washington D.C., which is how detail assignments like this typically work. Instead Dickerson performed his detail assignment from home –

even so, the detail assignment was completely hands on.

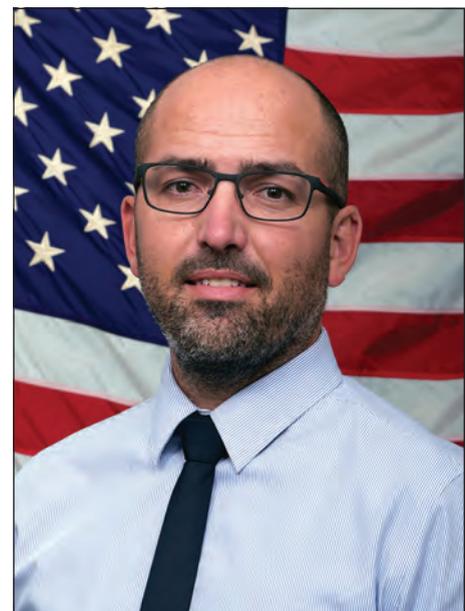
“It’s a relationship where both parties get something out of it,” explains Dickerson, “They really task people with work. It’s not just a learning experience and listening on phone calls. They give you work so you can help them get their job done.”

Dickerson worked alongside the policy adviser who oversees Army regulation for test and evaluation and helped her write several policy memos.

“I also worked with the division chief of resources and infrastructure on a few topics. Much of the work involved presenting information and advising the T&E executive so that he could make an informed decision. We would then coordinate with the groups the decision would impact.”

Dickerson believes having familiarity with test and evaluation as well as his experience with investments and budgets was helpful during this detail.

“It definitely helped me speak their language a little bit. I could identify some things we do within ATEC that they weren’t completely knowledgeable about which helped speed-up some of the tasks they were



Instrumentation Division Chief Mike Dickerson recently finished a detail with the Deputy Under Secretary of the Army for Test and Evaluation office. (U.S. Army photo)

working on.”

After finishing the four-month detail Dickerson found the perspective he was looking for.

“It was an eye-opening experience. I learned a lot of information that I could take back to my current job and become better. It was interesting to see the top-level perspective on Army T&E and understand the larger picture that we operate within at YPG.”

## The Outpost

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# Cleanup effort by Maintenance Branch gets kudos

By Jeffrey R Weisz

For many years Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) has had what is called a bone yard on the Kofa firing range.

With the help of Maintenance Branch Chief Robert Rodriguez and Maintenance Division Chief Michael Stanton's personnel, the yard was cleaned up, and is looking better than ever!

The Environmental Science Division would like to thank Rodriguez, Stanton and their personnel for their hard work, dedication and going above and beyond to assist with YPG's success.

If anyone on the YPG installation has materials they are looking to get rid of or dispose of, please contact the YPG Solid Waste Landfill (928) 328-2151 or Jeffrey Weisz with the Environmental Science Division at (928) 328-2674. They will be able to assist with the re-home or disposal of the unwanted materials.

Please help keep YPG clean and report any illegal dumping to the Environmental Science Division at (928) 920-1736.



Before and after. The Environmental Science Division would like to thank the Maintenance Branch personnel for cleaning up the "bone yard" at Yuma Proving Ground. (Photos courtesy of the Environmental Science Division)



Thank you for your hard work and can do attitude to make the cleanup effortless, you have made a huge impact on not only the quality of YPG and the mission, but the environment as well.

Ron Mathews  
 Robert Rodriguez  
 Elias Aguilar  
 John Bacon  
 Ben Edwards  
 Jason Ferguson  
 Jeremy Blanner  
 Eddie Rodriguez  
 Adrian Silva  
 Francisco Ayala  
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 Noe Ramirez  
 Joe Aguilar

## Military Spouses enjoy paint night

Yuma Proving Ground's Army Community Service team and the Military Free Fall School Family Readiness Ground joined forces to host an evening of fun for Military Spouses. The paint night was planned to give spouse an opportunity to connect with each other. (Photos courtesy of ACS)



# CUSTOMERS

FROM PAGE 1

pipeline,” said Rogers. “It’s good for the Army because a lot of the systems the Army uses are spawned out of private industry. It’s not that the Army has a big workforce that goes out and creates a whole bunch of new stuff: a lot of what is later used is adapted or adopted from private industry technologies to meet the Army’s needs.”

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

“Whenever they decide to execute a test at Yuma, my office takes care of all of the initial contracting and monitoring the contracts,” said Omar Silva, Range Operations and Training Division Chief. “We do that not only for Yuma Test Center, but also for Cold Regions Test Center and Tropic Regions Test Center: we standardize the contracting process across the YPG enterprise.”

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

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

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

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

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

There are other benefits to private industry customers conducting aviation testing as well. YPG’s unsurpassed capabilities allow for extensive testing without having to compete for runway and airspace with manned fighter jets as at other installations. Another critical bonus of testing at YPG is the presence of a wealth of other infrastructure meant for other sectors of YPG’s broad test mission that can be leveraged to support UAS evaluations. YPG is home to things like technical and tactical targets, as well as generator and combined maintenance shops, all of which are useful for UAS testing. YPG’s spectrum management office can also ensure they have the frequencies they need for their specialized testing: YPG has nearly 600 permanent radio frequencies assigned to it, and uses more than 1,000 temporary ones in a given month.

“If we can squeeze them in, it’s great for them and great for us: we get to keep our folks employed and reap the benefit of getting that



In recent years, companies from General Atomics to Facebook have conducted testing at the proving ground with the support of Yuma Proving Ground personnel. These customers pay all costs associated with their respective testing. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

workload without impacting military test and maximize the air space and range time that we have,” said Silva. “Going to a training base or some other DoD installation can be hard to get into because of training and deployment schedules. As for us, we are an MRTFB and can work them into the schedule.”

Though aviation testing constitutes the bulk of YPG’s private industry work, there are also examples on the ground combat side of the house. The world record for the highest altitude artillery shot was set at YPG in 1966. The test fire more than 50 years ago proved the concept of ballistic suborbital space access, and the idea of using artillery as a low-cost alternative to rockets to launch payloads into Earth orbit lives on. In recent years, a private industry customer called Green Launch has conducted testing here to launch a projectile into space with an innovative hydrogen and oxygen gas propellant whose only byproduct is water vapor.

“YPG is very helpful at keeping our costs under control so we can continue our testing,” said Eric Robinson, Green Launch Business Development Director. “If we went somewhere else, we could never finish the sequence and the world would be denied this technology that is really very promising.”

All three of YPG’s subordinate

test center have done testing for private industry customers, and reap the benefits in ways both similar and unique. For example, since its construction in 2004, multiple private industry customers have used the Cold Regions Test Center (CRTC) Mobility Test Complex for their testing.

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

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

# The exuberance of the ultramarathon runner

By Mark Schauer

Some people run marathons. For Ryan Ingham, electronic technician with YPG's meteorology team, a marathon is what happens between aid stations.

A devotee of endurance running, he has long pushed himself to the limit.

The Concord, Calif. native joined the Marine Corps at 17, serving eight years in uniform and deploying to Iraq and Afghanistan. Deciding to stay in Arizona after being stationed at Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma, he first worked for YPG's former National Counterterrorism / Counterinsurgency Integrated Test and Evaluation Center prior to his current position.

"I've done outdoor activities my whole life. This is about the challenge, seeing how far you can push it. I just like to do hard things--the harder, the better."

He likes camping and archery hunting, where he has stalked mountain lions and black bears.

"I haven't gotten one," he says of the bears, "but I gave two a haircut."

Running is where Ingham joins elite company. He has run to the top of Mount Whitney, the highest point in the continental United States. At the Grand Canyon, he has run from the North to South Rim and back multiple times.

"I did the Spartan races, and that snowballed into the harder ones. I did the World's Toughest Mudder, which is 24 hours, then the ultra races. Fifty milers snowballed into a few hundred milers, and this was the next one."

The Cocodona 250 held in May was actually 257.8 miles—the longest ultramarathon in the country to date—and went from Black Canyon City to Flagstaff by way of Crown King, Prescott, Jerome and Sedona. It ended up taking Ingham 112 hours to complete, and he took a week off from work to do it. The trail passes through some of Arizona's most beautiful landscapes, but was merciless from the beginning, as



Ryan Ingham, electronic technician with YPG's meteorology team recently competed in the Cocodona 250. The grueling race is 257.8 miles—the longest ultramarathon in the country to date. It ended up taking Ingham 112 hours to complete. (Photo courtesy of Ryan Ingham)

Ingham soon found out.

"The furthest stretch was on day one—it was 22 miles between aid stations and over 8,000 feet of climbing. It was rough—the trail had tons of softball-sized rocks. It took a lot of people out of the race—there were people laying all over trying to get a little shade, hiding under the smallest bush."

The sheer distance and punishing terrain were only two of the factors in the race's difficulty.

"There was just under 40,000 feet of climbing, and 35,000 feet of descent. To put that in perspective, that is like starting at sea level, climbing to the top of Mount Everest, then down the other side and partway up."

He also endured the wild temperature changes in varying altitudes in the Arizona spring—temperatures in the 90s during the day that dipped down into the 30s at night. He came down with heat exhaustion one day—he only carried three liters of water on his back, and had to pace his consumption between aid stations that were at least eight miles away at any given time, and oftentimes more than 20 miles away. His support crew, carrying a cot and sleeping bags, would be waiting for him at aid stations, but there were

many hours of intense isolation as the race's path snaked through Arizona's most extreme back country.

"There are times you go three or four hours without seeing a single other person—you're in the middle of a mountain range with nobody around and no cities nearby."

Ingham estimates he slept roughly eight hours across the nearly five-day trek.

"I only stopped to get a little bit of sleep. I was getting delirious—in these bigger races, hallucinations are very common because of the lack of sleep and how hard you are pushing it and how far you go. When it got to the point that I was seeing things, I would lay down and take a nap."

The runners had a GPS tracker in their gear in case of emergency, but Ingham knew that he would have to rely on himself even in a catastrophe.

"I like the remote part of it, but in a lot of instances if something goes wrong, you'll have to self-extract. If you really got in trouble they would send someone to get you out, but it might be three hours before they can get to you, going on foot. Some of these spots have no roads."

Days into the race, Ingham could only feel a pins and needles sensation in his blistered feet. The end came after a climb of over 2,000 feet in three miles to the top of Mount Elden, where the last aid station was set up. Mercifully, the last five miles to the finish line in downtown Flagstaff were all downhill.

"It was one last big climb so you could look down on the finish line. Anyone that has done Mount Elden knows it is a tough climb, especially when you're on 250 mile legs."

Ingham had mastered nature in a way few can boast of, but the Cocodona 250's winner had completed the grueling race more than 24 hours earlier. Aside from a cheering crowd at the finish line, an award, and bragging rights, there were no prizes for him and the 107 other individuals who endured to the end.

Ingham is already looking forward to September, when he will pit himself against the Mogollon Monster, a 100-mile endurance challenge in northeastern Arizona.

"That one is tough—there is a lot of climbing. It is really technical, a very rocky course."

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# UFO mystery at Yuma Test Station: Early 1950s sighting never explained

By Mark Schauer

From its inception as Yuma Test Station in 1951, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground has been a natural desert laboratory for testing equipment destined for use by Soldiers.

It is a place where the scientific method trumps superstition and wild speculation, where unexplained phenomenon are methodically identified and fixed.

Yet, at least once in the proving ground's distant past, personnel viewed something in the sky that was never definitively explained.

It was a bit after 3:00 in the afternoon of Thursday, April 17, 1952, and 13 Soldiers were in the midst of a field familiarization hike three miles south of Yuma Test Station, near what today is a vehicle mud course.

We can't say with certainty what the temperature was that afternoon—YPG's weather records only go back to 1956—but presumably it was warm enough for the men to enjoy resting beneath a shade tree in between a canal bank and the Colorado River. Suddenly, they saw almost directly overhead a flat-white circular object heading toward the mountain-lined southeastern horizon, emitting an intermittent vapor trail. About a quarter inch wide when judged at arm's length from the ground, the object disappeared within seven seconds.

Official records of the U.S. Air Force from the 1950s and 1960s are replete with such sightings. Often, the objects were weather balloons or extremely high altitude aircraft like the U2 reconnaissance plane. A scattering of military observers in the early 1950s speculated that such sightings could be unarmed intercontinental ballistic missiles being test fired from the Soviet Union, and duly shared their concerns with agencies like the FBI.

Yet the first flight of the U2 wasn't until August 1, 1955. Historical accounts of missile development



In two separate sightings in April 1952, Yuma Test Station Soldiers attached to the post's meteorological team observed a flat-white circular object emitting a vapor trail streak across the sky. Reports of the sighting exist in long-declassified Air Force files, but no official speculation of what the object was remains. (Loaned photo)

show neither the US nor the USSR had intercontinental missile capability until later in the 1950s. And all 13 Soldiers who saw the object at Yuma Test Station that day in 1952 were part of the post's meteorology team, men who knew full well the look and flight characteristics of weather balloons.

"I have 11 years military duty in meteorology, with a substantial portion employed on weather equipment development and upper air observations entailing the use of many sizes and types of meteorological balloons," wrote 2nd Lt. Bernard Gudenkauf in his report on the incident. "I have never observed any other object with which this object could be identified."

Standing under the shade tree looking at the horizon where the object had disappeared, Gudenkauf told the Soldiers they should attempt to take a bearing on it from at least two theodolite positions if they ever saw the object again. The following day, two of the men, both of whom had engineering degrees, had just that opportunity, and this time they had a theodolite within their reach. Yet the object's flight pattern was so fast and erratic they were unable to take a reading. It left no vapor trail

this time, and vanished across the horizon within 10 seconds.

At the time, the Yuma Test Station headquarters staff relayed information of the sighting to their superior command, the Sixth Army, who in turn forwarded it to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base. Beyond a request for a written report about the sighting from the officer who witnessed it, there is no further documentation regarding the sighting or speculation as to its origin within the long-since declassified files.

Modern day members of YPG's meteorology team doubt that the object had extraterrestrial origin. In fact, they are skeptical it originated from anywhere outside the boundaries of Yuma Test Station.

"I hope they fully understood the behavior of weather balloons," said Nick McColl, the present-day chief of YPG's meteorology team. "This thing was moving awfully fast for a weather balloon, even if it were in a low-level jet stream."

By 1952, meteorology had come a long way since the invention of the radiosonde in the 1920s and the advent of radar during World War II, but was still far less sophisticated than today. The first meteorological satellite, for example, was nearly a

decade in the future from that long-ago spring day. It is unlikely that any of the enlisted men who witnessed the object had meteorology backgrounds prior to their time in the military. Likewise, on-post communication was far less integrated in the early days of Yuma Test Station. According to Heritage Center curator Bill Heidner, when the test station was re-opened in 1951, six different test activities reported back to separate home stations across the United States. They didn't share range space, and rarely discussed aspects of their respective test missions with one another.

Intriguingly, the truck-mounted MGR-1 'Honest John', the United States' first surface-to-surface nuclear-capable missile, was developed at Redstone Arsenal in 1951, and thus could theoretically have been what the Soldiers saw. But Heidner says the system didn't come to Yuma for testing until 1958, the year after the Soviet Union proved it possessed intercontinental missile capability by launching Sputnik, the world's first artificial satellite.

"White Sands Missile Range was really busy in a post-Sputnik spasm, so some of the hiccups with Little John and Honest John were tested here," said Heidner. "It resulted in many upgrades like telemetry and cinetheodolites and a lot of range improvements. We didn't really have the instrumentation to accommodate missile testing prior to that: YPG was mainly a tube-launched projectile kind of place."

So, what did the Met team Soldiers of 1952 see in the skies all those Aprils ago? Meteorites? Artillery shells? Missiles? Airplanes? Was it a case of bored Soldiers far from the frontlines of raging combat in Korea inventing a good story? Or a sighting of a high-performance spacecraft from beyond our planet piloted by intelligent beings?

Any of these are possible, but the last is certainly the least likely.

# What you will see over the skies of YPG

By Ana Henderson

The recent request from Congress for U.S. intelligence agencies to present an unclassified report on unidentified flying objects or as Congress has labeled them Unexplained Aerial Phenomena (UAP), has incited the interest of many to know what's out there.

At Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) the question as to what is in our skies is not uncommon. The YPG Public Affairs Office receives inquires about objects seen above the installation.

Frequently when speaking to groups in the greater Yuma area, Public Affairs Officer Mark Schauer fields questions from audience members asking about objects they have seen in the sky around YPG. They even mistakenly attribute things they have seen far outside the installation's boundaries as YPG test activities.

What the public will see above our skies are; drones, weather balloons, the Aerostat blimp and illumination test rounds.

The biggest and most asked about object in the sky is the Aerostat blimp that flies at 10,000 feet near Castle Dome. The blimp is one of eight that are part of the Tethered Aerostat Radar System owned by the U.S. Customs and Border Protection. They are used for surveillance of the southern U.S. border.

Another type of hovering object passersby might see in the skies above YPG are weather balloons.

"It's a rubber balloon starting in diameter about three feet and it's filled with noble gas helium that naturally makes it float away. At the end of that balloon is has a string 50 feet long and it has a meteorological sensing package," explains YPG Chief of Meteorology Nick McColl.

That weather balloon is used to measure temperature, humidity, wind speed and direction. Wind speed and direction are variables that may affect the performance of a round fired. YPG's meteorological division launches the most weather balloons

in the United States, about 3,500 a year. Those seeing a balloon might notice it changes shapes as it slowly rises.

"It keeps getting bigger and bigger as it goes higher into the air because the air pressure is less," McColl explains, "It's shape will kind of change as the wind impacts it. If it gets any shear it might cause the balloon to get more disc like or elongated so it can make some cool shapes but for the most part its reality spherical."

Another flying object in the sky those driving down Highway 95 might see are drones of all types and sizes. YPG is the home of the counter-unmanned aerial systems (UAS) school which trains individuals from all branches and agencies and provides on-hand experience in flying drones and engage in realistic scenarios.

One the testing side, Yuma Test Center conducts drone testing.

"YPG supports many different sizes of drones from small that are hand-tossed to launch all the way up to ones that take off from runways interchangeably with manned aircraft," explains Aviation Branch Chief Robyn Tiaden.

Drones are uniquely shaped, most have a smooth exterior and some have no windows.

Some might consider the illumination rounds launched from the Munitions and Weapons (M&W) Division mysterious lights in the sky. M&W Division Chief Kermit Okamura describes the rounds that are launched day and night when tested.

"They are burning flares that slowly fall to the earth because they are tethered to a parachute."

He adds that the rounds launched during day light have an extra feature, "You will see the flare burning but you will also see a smoke trail coming down too."

The illumination rounds light up and burn, then disappear within about

a minute or two. The purpose of the illumination rounds is to light up the night sky to provide the Warfighter on the ground visual aid to identify the adversary on the battlefield.

So if you look above the skies of

YPG you will not see any UAPs but you might see one of the many pieces of data collection equipment or test items YPG tests before putting them in the hands of our Warfighters so they can protect our freedom.



Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) meteorological division launches the most weather balloons in the United States, about 3,500 a year. Chief of Meteorology Nick McColl has launched well over 10,000 during his time at YPG. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



Drones of all types and sizes are tested at Yuma Proving Ground. The Aerosonde is pictured during a flight with Castle Dome in the background. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



Illumination rounds, like the ones pictured here, are tested by the Munitions and Weapons Division at YPG. (U.S. Army photo)

# USO provides comfort room at YPG

By Ana Henderson

The United Service Organization better known as the USO serves members of the U.S. military by providing various types of moral boosting services.

At Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), the local USO organization worked with the Military Free Fall (MFF) School to provide a comfort room for their students.

The MFF school is part of the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School based out of Fort Bragg, NC and is located on the YPG installation because the dry weather in Yuma is ideal for year-round jumping. The courses run anywhere from three to four weeks. While three to four weeks might not seem like a long time, it can feel long if a student is mainly confined to their room.

“They are jumping from a perfectly good airplane, free falling at 125 miles per hour and we are asking them to go back to their barracks room that has no Wi-Fi and minimal

amenities,” explains Tech Sgt. Jessica Soto who serves as the military training leader flight chief for the MFF School.

Many students who attend the school are housed in barracks and don’t typically come with vehicles. Combine that with YPG’s remote location and it makes for some very long weeks inside their barrack room.

“When I got here I thought, “What can I do to give them a space to decompress?””

Soto enlisted the help of the local USO chapter and together they created the comfort room. The MFF School provided the space and the USO provided the amenities. The multi-room comfort area is a mix between a living room, game room, and kitchen. As students enter the space they will find a living room setup with a television (TV) and a coffee bar. The adjoining rooms have a foosball, Ping-Pong and pool table. The second living room has four play stations, flat screen TVs and Wi-Fi.

“This place gives a space for the



ABOVE: The multi-room comfort area is a mix between a living room, game room, and kitchen. RIGHT: The comfort room provides a free coffee bar for the Military Free Fall students. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



students to decompress after long jump days or for them to use on weekends.”

During the worldwide shutdown this space is where students could go to not feel isolated.

“During COVID everything was closed, the gym was closed, the pool was closed. There was nothing for the students to do outside of training.”

The comfort area is equipped with a lot of counter space and a large dining table. During the COVID

Thanksgiving this area provided some normalcy for more than 200 students.

“The Military Free Fall was able to host an entire thanksgiving meal for the students. The whole counter was full of food.”

Soto says students appreciate the room and they all appreciate the USO for their support.

“I have been lucky to have the relationship with the representatives that I have. They are phenomenal.”

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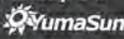
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## Chaplain's Corner

### A blessing to consider

#### Chaplain's Corner

Chaplain Maj.  
Jeffrey Crispin



Happy Independence Day! I hope you had a chance to celebrate the freedoms we enjoy as citizens of the United States. We have been blessed with so much by the sacrifices of so many.

I wanted to take this article to get us to think a bit more about our freedoms. With the political and social turmoil in the nation, there have been some interesting discussions about freedoms.

Rather than weighing in myself, I wanted to share a few thoughts of some past leaders and thinkers

regarding Freedom.

“Liberty, when it begins to take root, is a plant of rapid growth.” – George Washington

“God grants liberty only to those who love it and are always ready to guard and defend it.”

— Daniel Webster, Senator and Secretary of State

“The price of freedom is eternal vigilance.” – Thomas Jefferson

“Those who deny freedom to others deserve it not for themselves.” – Abraham Lincoln

“Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty”

– John F. Kennedy

“It is the Soldier, not the reporter,

who has given us freedom of the press. It is the Soldier, not the poet, who has given us freedom of speech. It is the Soldier, not the campus organizer, who has given us freedom to demonstrate. It is the Soldier, who salutes the flag, who serves beneath the flag, and who's coffin is draped by the flag, who allows the protester to burn the flag.” – Father Dennis Edward O'Brien, Navy Chaplain

“Liberty is the right to choose.

Freedom is the result of the right choice.” – Anonymous

These are but a few thoughts from our past leaders about freedom or liberty. My prayer for us is that we would as individuals, as families, as communities, and as a nation continually learn that freedom is a great gift, and great responsibility.

Thank you to each of you for what you do to help preserve “the blessings of liberty for ourselves and our posterity...”



## U.S. ARMY YUMA PROVING GROUND

# HERITAGE CENTER




# GRAND REOPENING



*Please join us.*

**YPG leadership is hosting a ribbon cutting ceremony to mark the official reopening of the YPG Heritage Center. The center was closed for more than a year due to the pandemic. The YPG community is invited to take part in the celebration.**

**DATE: JULY 15, 2021**  
**TIME: 8:00 - 10:00 A.M.**

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Questions? Call (928)328-3989



# YPG Summer outreach program targets kids

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Army Outreach Education Program, Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science (GEMS) summer camps brought smiles to the faces of 70 middle school students this year.

“It was awesome,” said seventh grader Emily Woods who took part in the camp because she would like to become an engineer.

The GEMS program aims to provide Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) exposure to students to peek their interest at an early age. Each camp is a weeklong and covers a variety of STEM related activities included testing remote controlled cars, launching rockets, learning about high-speed optics, dissecting frogs and testing bacteria.

YPG engineers, scientists, STEM coordinators and local educators guided students through the activities.

“It’s such a great feeling and it’s so rewarding when you hear kids say, ‘I want to do this again’ and they are so excited,” said Paula Rickleff YPG STEM Outreach Manager and GEMS Coordinator.

One of those students who would like to return to the summer camp next year is sixth grader Robert Temple, “It was really fun and educational.”

Executing the summer program took a lot of time and planning and Rickleff is appreciative of everyone who made it possible.

“I can’t thank our team enough. All the subject matter experts, staff, resource teachers, near peer mentors and everyone who has come out and supported the program.”

She also thanks the supervisors who granted their employees the time away from their day job to help. The YPG test officers and scientist were vital to the program’s success.

“They do such a great job. They have fun with the kids,” said Rickleff,



Yuma Proving Ground’s Army Outreach Education Program, Gains in the Education of Mathematics and Science summer camps wrapped up at the end of June. The program provides science, technology, engineering and mathematics exposure to students to peek their interest at an early age. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

“They have learned over the years how to best reach them. They are not teachers but they are becoming teachers and it’s really great.”

One of those test officers is Sarah Hogan with the Combat and Automotive Systems Division. She worked on the vehicle acceptance tests where kids used remote controlled cars and tanks.

“It’s fairly representative of what we do on a larger scale but just in a fun manner for the kids,” said Hogan.

Overall, the GEMS program was a success and accomplished its mission.

“We learned about some of the people who work here (YPG) and I would like to work here one day,” shared Woods.

The YPG Army Educational Outreach Program hosts the STEM theme program each summer.

More information on the program can be found at [www.usaeop.com/program/gems](http://www.usaeop.com/program/gems)

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