

The Outpost

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

VOLUME 74 NO. 7 MARCH 31, 2025



YPG renames building in honor of its late technical director

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) renamed its Range Operations Center (ROC) after late Technical Director Larry

Bracamonte in an outdoor ceremony on March 24.

Now called the Bracamonte Range Operations Center (BROC), a sign with the new name and a plaque with



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) renamed its Range Operations Center after late Technical Director Larry Bracamonte in an outdoor ceremony on March 24, 2025. (Photo by Ana Henderson)



The family of Yuma Proving Ground's late Technical Director Larry Bracamonte gathered to view a plaque hung outside the new Bracamonte Range Operations Center building in his honor. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Bracamonte's image and a narrative about his impact on YPG were unveiled at the ceremony.

Bracamonte's widow Matilda Lugo and multiple other family members joined well over 100 members of

the workforce, local dignitaries, and former commanders Robert Filbey and Ross Poppenberger at the emotional lunchtime event.

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Employees of
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events to share
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YTC Commander
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Yuma Test Center Employees of the Quarter

— Mission —



Name: Jacob Lopez
Title: Engineering Technician for Engineering Support Branch
Recognition: Civilian Service Achievement Medal for managing Yuma Proving Ground's telemetry modernization effort.



On Feb. 18, 2025, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks visited the Instrumentation Division to present Jacob Lopez with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for being selected as the Mission Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter in 2025. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

The Outpost

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— Mission Support —

Name: Ramon Morales Villegas

Title: Mechanical Engineer with Combat Automotive Systems Division

Years of Service: 7

Recognition: Civilian Service Achievement Medal while serving as Combat Automotive Systems Division Acting Team Lead.

Reaction: "I'm thankful for the opportunities that have come my way while at CASD and it's an honor to receive this award. I appreciate the team we have here at YTC, and I love what we do here. I would like to thank everyone in my division but specifically the following individuals: Mr. Erick Hurtado, has been a crucial piece to the implementation of newer test methodologies we are developing. Mr. Juan M. Elizarraras, for entrusting me as

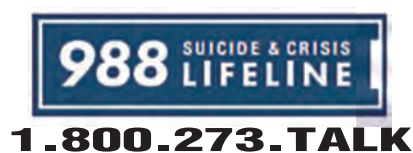


On March 10, 2025, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks present Ramon Morales Villegas with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for being selected as the Mission Support Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter in 2025. (Photo by Amanda Heatwole)

the subject matter expert for Fire Control Systems. Mr. Marco Nixen, for believing in my potential and working with me to become a better Test Officer and mentor."



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Congressional staffers wowed by YPG



On March 17 Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks (right) and Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Technical Director Ross Gwynn (center) and other senior leaders hosted staffers from the offices of multiple members of Arizona's Congressional delegation for a comprehensive briefing and tour of the post's vital test mission on behalf of the national defense. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



YPG was the delegation's first stop on visits to multiple Arizona military installations. Visitors were impressed by what they saw and heard about all three of YPG's test centers. "Yuma is America's hub for testing and demonstrating our latest defense capabilities in all operational environments - desert, arctic, and tropical - found in the other facilities," said Zach Huff, Military Legislative Advisor to Congressman Abraham J. Hamadeh. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

State transportation board members and ADOT senior officials visit YPG



On March 20 Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson and other YPG senior leaders hosted members of the Arizona State Transportation Board (ASTB) and executives from the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization for a brief range tour and discussions concerning YPG's mission and the importance of Highway 95 in achieving it. The members of the ASTB and ADOT senior leadership were in Yuma to hold the board's regular meeting open to the public at Yuma's City Hall the next day, which Nelson also spoke at. Though Highway 95's most dangerous segments between Yuma and YPG have been widened in recent years, there are still two remaining phases of the project to extend the widened portions to the intersection of the post's Aberdeen Road. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



In Memoriam: Rep. Raul Grijalva

From 2003 to 2013, all of Yuma County, Arizona was within the then-new 7th Congressional District represented by the late Raul Grijalva, who succumbed to cancer on March 13.

During the years U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) was within his district, Grijalva visited multiple times to visit test sites and learn about the post's vital mission on behalf of the national defense. In these photos, Grijalva gets up close and personal with a Kiowa helicopter and meets personnel testing the Mine Resistant Ambush Protected vehicle on June 1, 2010.

Through the years, Grijalva kept abreast of YPG's growing importance in testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal. The Outpost and all members of the YPG workforce extend their deepest condolences to the Grijalva family. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



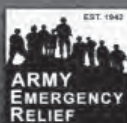
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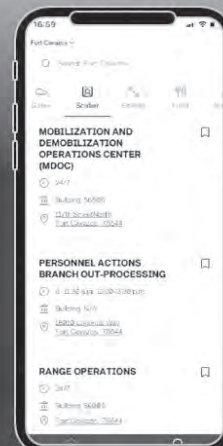
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YPG engineers teach hundreds of students about YPG's mission



Immaculate Concept School in Yuma invited U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) to present during College and Career Week. On the afternoon of March 13, YPG's Manpower & Workforce Development Division Outreach Coordinator Janett Rios presented an overview of YPG's mission as the premier extreme natural environment test center for weapons and technology. Engineers, Jake Obradovich and Johnathan Salazar talked about their careers as test officers at YPG. YPG emphasizes reaching out to local students and exposing them to the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in hopes they will choose a career in STEM and with the U.S. Army. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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From watching the heroes of the Military Freefall School jumping in the baton to open the show to getting up and close with the gear used and tested by the elite Airborne Test Force Soldiers, thousands of people enjoyed U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's participation in the MCAS Yuma Air Show. YPG's Public Affairs Office was on hand to talk about things like the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle and M119 howitzer on display, and those interested in a military career could talk with several of Yuma's Army recruiters. YPG's display area received hundreds of visitors including YPG and YTC's command team, Yuma's Mayor, veterans and families. (Photos by Ana Henderson and Mark Schauer)

YPG personnel support Yuma's Military Appreciation Day

RIGHT & BELOW: Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, and the staff of the post's public affairs office joined Yuma's Army recruiters in an Army display at the 2025 Yuma Military Appreciation Day on March 22. Nelson provided opening remarks and interacted with eventgoers interested in the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle on display and Millare chatted with veterans at a pancake breakfast in their honor. "Yuma is the most military supportive community I've encountered in my 30-year Army career," said Nelson. "The relationship between the military and community here is very special." (Photos Mark Schauer)



ABOVE & BELOW: The U.S. Army Recruiters talked about the wealth of benefits to joining the Army while the Public Affairs Office personnel Mark Schauer and Ana Henderson shared YPG's mission as the premier extreme natural environment test center for weapons and technology. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



HONOR

FROM PAGE 1

“He was basically a legend around here,” said Col. John Nelson, YPG Commander. “His 37 years of service established a legacy and culture that is still here today.”

“I think it is a very special and well-deserved tribute,” added Julio Dominguez, Bracamonte’s predecessor as YPG Technical Director. “He was all about the mission: there was nothing I ever asked of him that he couldn’t do.”

A Yuma native whose father worked at the proving ground, Bracamonte showed interest in mechanics at an early age. 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. As the years progressed, Bracamonte was promoted from team leader to branch chief, then division chief. In 2011 he was inducted into the Honorable Order of Saint Barbara, an honor society for those associated with artillery in the United States Army and Marine Corps. He attended a prestigious course of study at Cranfield University at the United Kingdom’s Royal Military College of Science, then became



Elizabeth Johnson, niece of the late U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Technical Director Larry Bracamonte, speaks at the dedication ceremony renaming YPG’s headquarters building in his honor on March 24, 2025. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson (center) presents a flag flown over the Bracamonte Range Operations Center on March 12, late technical Director Larry Bracamonte’s birthday, to Bracamonte’s widow Matilda Lugo (right) at a ceremony renaming the building on March 24, 2025. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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, YPG’s senior command.

“Larry cared deeply about the welfare of every single member of this workforce,” said Nelson. “He always placed their needs above his own, like a true leader. He was mentor to me and left an everlasting impression on anyone who encountered him.”

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.

“He believed wholeheartedly in the mission of YPG, that the work down here today could make the difference out there tomorrow,” said Elizabeth Johnson, Bracamonte’s niece, in

remarks at the ceremony. “He’d be heartened to know that the mission here continues, and I encourage all who enter here continue to strive for excellence and the legacy of hard work that he would be so proud of.”

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 Functional Team’s Experimental Demonstration Gateway Event in 2023 and 2024.

Pilkington Construction installed the BROC’s sign and plaque, whose president has a special connection to the building.

“My first job at 19 years old was here in what was formerly the ROC Building,” said Clint Harrington, president. “I love to see it rebranded and dedicated to Mr. Bracamonte.”



Larry Bracamonte’s widow Matilda Lugo and multiple other family members joined well over 100 members of the workforce, local dignitaries, and former commanders at the emotional lunch-time event. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



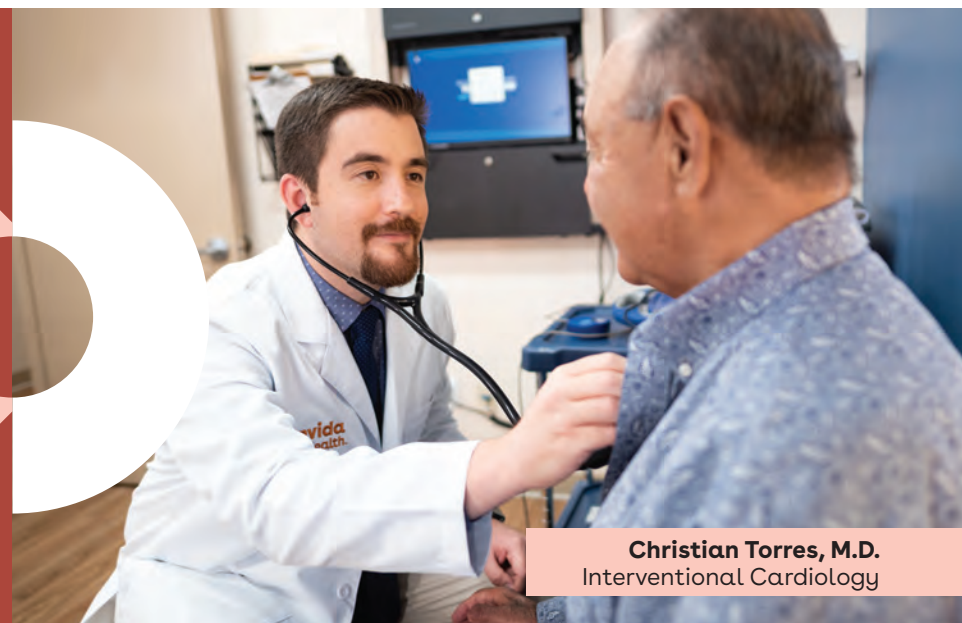
Airborne Soldier and YPG engineer visit elementary students



March 20, Tierra Del Sol Elementary School students learned about careers in the U.S. Army at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) from Airborne Test Force Soldier Sgt. 1st Class Christian Ramirez and Somerton resident Carlos Anaya. Anaya, who was recently selected as the Branch Chief for the Air Delivery Branch and his twin brother Arturo, are both engineers at YPG. Anaya on behalf of YPG emphasizes outreach in south county in hopes of getting more students interested in STEM careers and in careers with the U.S. Army. (Photos courtesy Carlos Anaya)

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Pies on Pi Day equal deliciousness



Yuma Proving Ground celebrated Pi Day in a delicious way, with a potluck smorgasbord of 10 pie flavors available to lunchtime passersby in the BROC. Pie eaters voted for their favorites. The first-place winners in the three categories of savory, Grace Connor with the Chicken Tortilla pie. Grandma's favorite, Emily Mickel with the apple caramel pie and sweet, Viviana Lopez with the Lime with fruit pie. The annual celebration of the mathematical constant "Pi" (3.14159...) is celebrated on March 14, which is 3/14 in the month/day date format. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Shamrock shuffle for St. Patty's Day



The Yuma Proving Ground community celebrated St. Patrick's Day, March 17, with a Shamrock Shuffle which was a two-mile course around Howard Cantonment that started and ended at the Cactus Café. Some runners wore traditional green, others like fire fighters with the YPG fire department ran in their full gear. The Family Advocacy Program and Army Substance Abuse Program hosted informational tables and handed out towels while cheering for the runners as they returned. For this run, everyone was a winner because the event brought the community together for some fun. (Photos courtesy of Dani Compton and Mariah Boykin)

YTC Commander thanks Combat Automotive test officers



On March 10, 2025, Yuma Test Center (YTC) Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks present four Combat Automotive Systems Division test officers with YTC Commander Coins for doing an exceptional job of supporting the mission each with a different test program. They were praised for their communication skills, technical expertise and test execution. Left to right: Oliver Ramos, Andrea Silva Ballesteros, Jose Jaramillo, and Erick Hurtado. (Photos by Amanda Heatwole)

YTC Commander shows Maintenance team appreciation for their work



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