

C-sUAS demo innovates at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

The U.S. military has used unmanned aircraft for decades to perform dangerous reconnaissance and attack missions that save lives, and the importance of small, unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) grows with each passing year.

As the technology proliferates, drones' use in warfare has become significant, necessitating robust counter-sUAS (C-sUAS) defenses for use anywhere American forces may be deployed.

The Joint C-sUAS Office (JCO), established in 2020 to tackle this threat, has hosted industry demonstrations of the latest C-sUAS technology at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) for the past four years. Their most recent event, the sixth held here, took place over three weeks in April, focusing on close-range threats in a contested



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electromagnetic environment (EME). "We needed to take a closer look at short range defeat capabilities"

at short range defeat capabilities," said Maj. Matthew Mellor, JCO Technology Demonstrations Branch Chief. "That really guided the weapon system types which we were interested in seeking to get away from what we did in previous demonstrations. That was informed by activities in current contingency operations overseas."

The EME is the 'background noise' present in a location and includes everything in the electromagnetic spectrum, from radio and television signals to radiation emitted from microwave ovens. A realistic radio frequency background environment is critical when testing counter drone technology, and many feel YPG's ability to reproduce a variety of EME from around the world is the best in

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News may be submitted to: The Editor, Outpost, Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, AZ, 85365 Phone: (928) 328–6149 or DSN 899 Visit our website at: www.yuma.army.mil or email to: ana.c.henderson.civ@army.mil



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Arctic Regions Test Center (ARTC) in Alaska welcomed the Secretary of the Army, Honorable Daniel Driscoll on April 24, 2025. ARTC leaders Lt. Col. Brian Karhoff and Technical Director Jeffrey Lipscomb briefed Driscoll on the mission of the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command to provide Soldiers with the tried and tested capabilities needed to fight and win our nation's wars. During his visit, Driscoll experienced -57 °F weather and saw the effects cold has on various essential war fighting materials. (Photos and content provided by Sebastian Saarloos)



On April 22, U.S. Army Yuma

Foreign partners learn about YPG's capabilities





U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks, and other YPG senior leaders hosted visits from U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Foreign Liaison Officers on April 29, and from the Defense MOU Attachés Group on April 30. The latter group is made up of defense cooperation officials from friendly foreign nations with longstanding defense agreements with the United States. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

YPG hosts neighboring government agencies





Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson and other senior leaders hosted visitors from neighboring government agencies including the Arizona Game and Fish Department, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge. The visitors got a comprehensive briefing about YPG's developmental test mission on behalf of warfighters and saw a test in progress at one of the post's gun positions. "In my 30-year career, this is the most support I've ever seen from a community," said Nelson. "It's all about the relationships, and I'm looking forward to continuing them." "All of the agencies work really good together: law enforcement, the county, the city, the state," added Darren Simmons, Yuma County Supervisor. "That's the nice thing about this part of the country: we all work closely together, and whatever works best for the community is what we support." (Photos by Mark Schauer)

YPG veterinary facility collaborates with community to combat rabies



Members of the Yuma Proving Ground Veterinary Treatment Facility (VTF) lent their support during a drive-thru rabies vaccine clinic on the Quechan reservation. Spc. Christa Weber and Becky Hamilton of the VTF worked with Quechan representatives to provide vaccines. The team vaccinated a total of 108 canines and felines in one day. The Quechan Indian Tribe, Indian Health Services, and the YPG VTF sponsored the event. The VTF's Capt. Lauren Johnston says the uptick in rabies cases across the state, "highlights the need for collaboration between stakeholders in the local community to raise public health awareness of the importance of vaccinating pets against rabies." (Photos and content provided by Capt. Lauren Johnston)

S.A.F.E. event shares resources available to Soldiers and their Families







U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's helping agencies hosted the annual S.A.F.E. Coffee Drive-thru event. Five years ago, the Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response Prevention Office, Army Substance Abuse Program, Family Advocacy Program, and Employee Assistance Program hosted the first resource event and used the program names as an acronym for the event. Since then, more resources have joined, giving the YPG community a one stop shop to learn about the resources available and putting an emphasis on the well-being of Soldiers and their Families. The always supportive, Sparky the Fire Dog and McGruff the Crime Dog were on hand to provide their seal of approval. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Denim Day: Sexual assault awareness and prevention



As a sign of solidarity and support for victims of sexual assault the U.S Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) workforce wore denim on April 30, National Denim Day. YPG's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Coordinator, Arlene Moraga set up a table in the BROC with resource information and gave away items with the SHARP number and items to use during an emergency like whistles. The Army's SHARP program exists to prevent sexual harassment and sexual assaults before they occur. (Photos by Ana Henderson)





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In addition to things like shoot houses that allow for live fire, visiting units at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground have access to dry fire rehearsal houses— some complete structures, some with half-height walls that give realistic constraint to maneuver while allowing others to observe and learn from the movements.



"Traditionally, shoot house rehearsals are done by scratching lines on the ground or putting engineer tape on the ground, but that doesn't give you any constraints of how the walls and corners are," said Luis Arroyo, Chief of Yuma Proving Ground's Training and Exercise Management Office.



Roughly 300 Marines of Camp Pendleton's 2nd Battlation-5th Infantry spent ward Operating Base Laguna, serving as the ground combat element in several training exercises for Marine Corps aviators during the most recent Weapons and Tactics Instructor course. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

YPG supports large Marine Corps training

By Mark Schauer

Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is the Army's premier developmental tester yet for years has supported the twice-annual Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) course in Yuma for Marine Corps aviators, ground combat planners, and support personnel.

Roughly 300 Marines of Camp Pendleton's 2nd Battlation-5th Infantry spent just over a month living in YPG's Forward Operating Base (FOB) Laguna, serving as the ground combat element in several training exercises for Marine Corps aviators.

"I think the biggest payoff for an infantry unit coming to YPG is that the conditions we give them mean they don't have to start from scratch, but they're also not in a luxury hotel," said Luis Arroyo, Training and Exercise Management Office Chief. "They get to exercise some of the nuances of sustaining their own in an expeditionary environment. Here it is really structured to not just be thrown in a camp: they have to build their own camp and operate their own security for access control."

YPG's major mission is testing equipment for troops, but in recent years well over 100 units have the installation for training purposes, including multi-week stays in the proving ground's elaborate FOB. Training under real-world conditions, these troops usually spend their days at YPG's firing ranges and taking part in WTI's broader simulated missions. There are other benefits to the training that are less visible.

"An infantry unit getting to shoot is great, but the people that actually get a workout here are the command and the staff," said Arroyo.

"They have to coordinate with adjacent WTI units and their higher headquarters. It is a doctrinal-type evolution without being formally evaluated."

The firing ranges visiting training units utilize are isolated and removed from the post's testing activities, and even from different echelons of the same training units.

"We have to treat the surface danger zone as a flat map, but the reality is we have hills and can cubby the range into pockets that gives you a lot more confinement," said Arroyo. "We continue to improve things. If we can give them conditions as close as possible to what they are actually going to do during live fires, that reduces the risk not only to the warfighter, but to their commander and our commander."

In addition to things like shoot houses that allow for live fire, visiting units have access to dry fire rehearsal houses— some complete structures, some with half-height walls that give realistic constraint to maneuver while allowing others to observe and learn from the movements.

"Traditionally, shoot house rehearsals are done by scratching lines on the ground or putting engineer tape on the ground, but that doesn't give you any constraints of how the walls and corners are," said Arroyo.

YPG's standardized ranges can accommodate training with all the weapon systems used in support of a combat arms unit, including howitzers and Tube-launched, Optically guided, Wire-guided missiles.





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YPG engineer takes part in immersive Army leadership program

By Ana Henderson

The U.S. Army creates leaders. One growth opportunity offered to civilians and those in uniform is the Army's Executive Leadership Development Program which takes participants around the world to learn what it takes to be a leader.

After seven years in his position as a propulsion team leader at the Munitions and Weapons Division, engineer Jorge Amaya was ready for a challenge. He applied and was accepted into the rigorous and highly competitive 10-month leadership program offered by the Army Civilian Career Management.

The program is immersive, with students taking part in military readiness activities that offer the Warfighter's prospective. The 64 participants engage with senior leaders, Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Guardians. There's a mix of civilians and active-duty members of all sorts of career fields.

"Their careers range from finance, lawyers, engineers, from different areas that support the DOD," said



After the first orientation in Virginia in September of 2024, the cohort traveled to Oklahoma for a two-week bootcamp like experience as part of the Army's Executive Leadership Development Program. Jorge Amaya is pictured training. (Photos courtesy of Jorge Amaya)

Amaya.

The informational pamphlets warn participants that they must be, "willing and ready to step into a learning environment that may be uncomfortable, unfamiliar, and challenging—physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially."

Amaya said the statement was not an exaggeration. After the first orientation in Virginia in September of 2024, the cohort traveled to Oklahoma for a two-week bootcamp like experience the following month.

"That's where the intensity kicksup. We woke up at 5 a.m. to do our physical training activities. Then we start our class at 7:30 a.m. We don't get out of class probably until 6 or 7 p.m."

While grueling Amaya said it helped the team learn about each other.

"It's a good core development because we get to know about each individual. It's not about where you work, what you do, where you are from. It's about who you are, what you want to share and what you are bringing to this program."

They were split into groups of eight and assigned a group project. Each month they visited a different military site for about a week. Their next stop took them to South Korea, then to the Indo-Pacific Command in Hawaii. In January of 2025, the group traveled to Colorado to learn about the Space Force. Most recently Amaya's itinerary kept him closer to home: The students traveled to San Diego to see where and how the Navy and Marines train. The program also made stops in Fort Moore, Georgia and Eglin Force Base.

"We got to see the mission they had going on. We got to go into a couple fighter jets—C1-30, C-17, so that was a new experience for me."

The next stop is Mississippi to





learn about the National Guard, and then the program concludes at Arlington, Va. in June. With graduation nearing, Amaya reflects on the experience.

"The exposure you get to be at all these different places with different agencies. We get to do things and be at places that not everyone will get to do. It's a pretty unique experience."

He also encourages others to go for it.

"If you have the opportunity, it is worth it. I know this takes a lot of sacrifices but if you have a supportive team and a supportive family, definitely, do it." The Army's Executive Leadership Development Program accepted 64 people from across the military, both active duty and civilians, from all sorts of career fields. The students committed 10 months to the program that took them to military facilities across the world to learn about leadership and the Warfighter's prospective.



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the Department of Defense.

"We were able to obtain information from intelligence surveys to understand what the spectrum looks like in active contingency operations and ported that over to the electromagnetic environment at YPG to have a realistic threat environment for these systems to go up against," said Mellor. "YPG has special hardware emitters that are able to replicate that type of environment, which is critical for us to get after our objectives."

The most recent demo looked at a wider spectrum of C-sUAS technology than previous iterations. The Department of Defense separates UAS into five groups based on their size, operating altitude, and speed, with larger numbers signifying larger and more capable crafts. Group 1 UAS, for example, weigh no more than 20 pounds, while Group 3 UAS weigh as much as 1,320 pounds.

"In this demo, the two focus areas are systems that can defeat larger Group 3 targets and dismounted systems that a Soldier can wear or carry that can defeat smaller Group 1 and 2 targets," said Hi-Sing Silen, the test integration manager for the JCO. "Even though the ranges we are looking to have effects at are the same for both, the threat and how you approach them are different."

The methods to detect, track and identify threats differed by vendor, as did defeat mechanisms. Some vendors provided kinetic weapon systems that shoot a target out of the sky, while others brought electronic warfare systems or combined aspects of other mechanisms.

"From a dismounted perspective, we were interested in anything and everything they could bring," said Silen. "Most of the systems that were ready for the demonstration were electronic systems for detection, tracking, and defeat. For the larger Group 3 targets we were looking for



A realistic radio frequency background is critical when testing counter drone technology, and many feel Yuma Proving Ground's ability to reproduce a variety of electromagnetic environments from around the world is the best in the Department of Defense. (U.S. Army photo)

kinetic effectors."

The testers watched for any anomalies and took extensive notes on each of the individual systems being demonstrated. Though the ranges under investigation were shorter than in some of the previous demonstrations, the testers still utilized YPG's ample range space to make the demonstration a success.

"The range we are engaging the effects at is shorter, but we still need to have the airspace to launch and recover the threats," said Silen. "There is also the range we need to allow the systems under demonstration to detect, identify, and track the threat systems prior to engaging. We are trying to inject some operational flavor into developmental testing profiles to make it relevant."

YPG's clear, stable air and extremely dry climate, along with vast institutional UAS testing knowledge, makes it an attractive location for testers, as does the ability to control a large swath of the radio frequency spectrum. YPG has more than 500 permanent radio frequencies and uses several thousand temporary ones in the typical month, and EME subject matter experts on post are well known to the visiting testers from their previous events here. "Having that past relationship helps because you are not trying to reinvent the wheel," said Silen. "You have key points of contact with the expertise that you need at your fingertips."

The demonstrations facilitate a 'buy-try-decide' process that rapidly equips the warfighter with anti-drone technology.

"Once we are finished with the demonstration, we identify the systems that performed in a superior manner and solicit a request for prototype proposal to those vendors and eventually move into facilitating a contract to buy a few of the systems that performed well," said Mellor. "Once we have the data from both the demonstration and subsequent operational assessments, we have the opportunity to decide whether we want to continue to invest in these systems or procure them at scale."



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Flowers laid on memorial site for Israeli soldiers at YPG





Though decades have passed the friends of two Israeli Defense Force soldiers killed in a Paladin testing accident in 1989 still pay their respects. On May 1, Israel's annual Remembrance Day, David Rocca laid flowers on the memorial marker at Yuma Proving Ground honoring Mark Eilon and Nachum Golan. They were killed in a Paladin testing accident in 1989. Ninette La Rose joined Rocca. La Rose worked as a data collector during the test and knew both Soldiers. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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Chaplain's Corner Chaplain Maj. Ryan Pearse

The word of the day is priming. Two researchers did a study in which they had groups of students answer 42 demanding questions from a board game. Researchers asked half of the students to take five minutes beforehand to think about what it would mean to be a professor and write down everything that came to mind. Those students got over 55% of the questions right. Researchers asked the other half of the students to first sit and think about soccer hooligans. They ended up getting less than 43% of the questions right.

The professor group didn't know more than the soccer hooligan group. They were simply in a smart frame of mind, and, clearly, associating themselves with the idea of something smart, like a professor, made it a lot easier to produce the right answer. This is priming. It's a technique whereby exposure to one stimulus influences a response to a later stimulus, without conscious guidance or intention.

This experiment shows us that, like it or not, we are a lot more susceptible to outside influences than we are aware of. Realizing this fact should cause us to be careful of the influences we are voluntarily exposed to, as well as, to acknowledge situations that may negatively sway our behavior. Ultimately, we must take responsibility for our actions and strive to only be primed by positive stimuli. Proverbs 13:20 tells us, "Whoever walks with the wise becomes wise, but the companion of fools will suffer harm."

— Chaplain's Corner — Strive to be primed by positivity

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YPG hosts Bring Your Child to Work Day

The U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) workforce spoke, and leadership listened. On April 23, YPG hosted its first Bring Your Child to Work Day in almost a decade.

Parents and grandparents showed

the children around their work areas. The Metrology and Simulation Division hosted a tour of several of its shops and had fun activities for families including getting their hands dirty with science projects. All the families gathered on Cox Field for some food and fun.

YPG Commander, Col. John Nelson, told the families, "It's a really good opportunity to bring the whole installation together for some camaraderie and to show our families what we do." In all, over 100 employees brought their children to work, adding up to more than 200 kids who learned about their parent/grandparent's role in YPG's mission of testing items for the Warfighter.

(Photos by Krista Hughes and Ana Henderson)



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