

Eye in the sky, Yuma Test Center uses drones to capture test data

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Test Center (YTC) has built its reputation as the premier test center on its ability to capture exact and reliable test data and provide it to the Department of Defense and industry partners. Engineers analyze the data and use it to improve all sorts of systems, making them better equipped for the Warfighter.

YTC has added yet another tool to its arsenal of data collection equipment — Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems or (sUAS).

While YTC has tested UASs of all class sizes they hadn't used them for data collection until now. The Instrumentation Division's (ID) Ruben Hernandez and Jaime Coronado are YTC's certified drone



The Instrumentation Division's Ruben Hernandez and Jaime Coronado (pictured) are Yuma Test Center's certified drone operators within the Engineering Support Branch. YTC is now using the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems to collect a bird's eye view of ground combat test activities. (U.S. Army photo)

operators within the Engineering Support Branch.

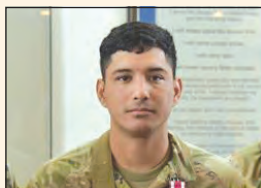
Hernandez and Coronado use intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance equipped drone with a stabilized Electro Optical/Infrared (EO/IR) payload to capture real-time and record full motion video of ground test events for data collection.

For Ground Combat this helps capture test events on the range such as wheeled and track vehicle movement, shoot-on-the-move, artillery/mortar munition impacts, airbursts and sub-munition functions.

Hernandez says, "This is essential for test events over a target area to

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YPG Airborne Soldier earns ATEC's NCO of The Year

By Ana Henderson

Airborne Test Force Soldier Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros earned the title of the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation (ATEC) Noncommissioned Officer of The Year on April 30, after a grueling three-day competition.

Viveros, who is stationed at Yuma Proving Ground and a member of Yuma Test Center's (YTC) Airborne Test Force, volunteered to represent his unit. Each of ATEC's subordinate organizations sent a Soldier to the headquarters in Maryland to compete.

"I had already heard about the competition, so it was a quick hand raise," said Viveros.

"Even if I didn't win, I feel it makes me a better Soldier, just to get the experience," he added.

The U.S. Army's Best Squad Competition aims to, "Assess each squad on their technical and tactical proficiency, as well as their ability to work as a disciplined and cohesive team, according to the Army's website.



Airborne Test Force Soldier Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros (center) earned the title of the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation (ATEC) Noncommissioned Officer of The Year on April 30, after a grueling three-day competition. He's pictured with ATEC Commander Maj. Gen. Patrick Gaydon (right) and Command Sgt. Maj. Bradford Smith. (Photo by Lindsey Monger Grubb)

Each command holds a local competition to find the Soldiers who will become a squad and move to the Army wide competition. ATEC's competition to select the Soldiers representing the organization, spanned over three days and included both physical and mentally grueling challenges.

Viveros had about a month to prepare. He had been training

to overcome an injury. So, with renewed focus, he zoned into physical training.

"I knew I had to crank up the training, so going on runs, squatting, getting ready for the ACFT (Army Combat Fitness Test)."

Viveros felt confident about the physical challenges, saying "That's my strong point."

Viveros recalls not feeling confident about the land navigation challenge where Soldiers were given points to find, with a map, compass and protractor. When put under pressure he reached back to his training and excelled during the daytime challenge.

"I used one of the techniques called terrain association and I was

able to sprint to all my points, five points within about 40 minutes. I think I was done about two hours before everyone else."

He praises his unit at YTC for helping him prepare.

"Sgt. Jonathan Harris, our medic at the shop. Sgt. Cody Lavalla, they took the initiative on helping me out with things I wasn't familiar with."

Viveros said Harris used this knowledge as an infantry man and a medic to train Viveros on the Warrior Task Lanes, Warrior Skills and Land Navigation.

"He basically me out on everything."

Lavalla, the Airdrop Operations NCO helped him run through the entire training.

"It was about a week or two before hand, where we were going over every day, on what task we were going over in the competition. That helped me out a lot."

Viveros is early in his Army career and hopes to attend the Military Freefall Jump Master's School and Ranger School. This experience of being recognized at the ATEC headquarters left a lasting impression on him.

"I felt really, really proud. I had thought about all the things I had been through before, in my life and my career and just standing in front of everybody knowing I had earned this felt really good."



Viveros had about a month to prepare. He had been training to overcome an injury. So, with renewed focus, he zoned into physical training. "I knew I had to crank up the training, so going on runs, squatting, getting ready for the ACFT (Army Combat Fitness Test)." (Photo by Lindsey Monger Grubb)



Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros, who is stationed at Yuma Proving Ground and a member of Yuma Test Center's Airborne Test Force, volunteered to represent his unit at the U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command's Best Squad Competition. He praises his unit for helping him prepare. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

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The Yuma Proving Ground and Yuma Test Center Commanders teamed up with the Physical Security Office to reinforce the message about operational security better known as OPSEC. Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks and Chief of Staff Omar Silva greeted the workforce at the Walker gate. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Col. John Nelson and Physical Security Specialist Spencer Schultz greeted the workforce at the Kofa gate and provided information on how to report a suspicious UAS and how to safeguard sensitive information. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



May is OPSEC Awareness Month

By Spencer Schultz

What exactly is Operations Security (OPSEC)? OPSEC is the systematic process that helps identify potential adversaries access to information about our capabilities and intentions by identifying, controlling, and protecting unclassified information associated with the planning and execution of sensitive activities.

There are six steps to the OPSEC cycle:

1. Identify Critical Information – During this initial step, seek to identify information valuable to an adversary which could compromise agency success and hinder its ability to complete the mission and national security objectives. YPGs Critical Information List (CIL) can be summed up with the Army developed acronym LIVES.

2. Analyze Threat – Here we identify potential adversaries and their associated capabilities and intentions to collect, analyze and exploit critical information. When conducting a threat analysis, be as objective as possible. Use reliable sources and sound judgment when determining the threat. Remember, a threat exists when an adversary has the intent, capability, and opportunity to collect critical information and observe indicators.

3. Analyze Vulnerabilities – Per Army Regulation 530-1 Chapter 1-5,

vulnerabilities are “indicators that adversary intelligence systems might obtain enabling them to interpret or piece together to derive critical information in time to use against U.S. and/or friendly missions and poses an unacceptable risk.”

4. Assess Risk – Risk is the likelihood that an adversary will collect your critical information. Here we determine the adversary’s ability to exploit vulnerabilities to access critical information, and the potential impact it would have on the agency’s mission. Once the level of risk is determined, cost, time and effort of implementing OPSEC countermeasures to mitigate risk must be considered.

5. Apply Countermeasures – This is where countermeasures are employed to degrade the ability of the adversary to exploit the indicators of critical information. Countermeasures should be applied when the level of risk is determined to be unacceptable and are implemented to mitigate risk or to reduce risk to a more acceptable level.

6. Assess Effectiveness – Not as much a “step” as a continued evaluation of the effectiveness of our OPSEC program. This is where we identify best practices and also any shortfalls in our program that could use improving through additional rounds of the OPSEC cycle. The OPSEC cycle is considered a never-ending, repetitive exercise to review

organizations’ efforts to protect information and prevent adversaries from being successful in their information collection activities.

Critical Information

Critical information varies by organization and mission. But it is the specific facts about friendly intentions, capabilities, and activities that an adversary can use against us in an effort to hinder our mission’s success. Here at YPG, we have adopted the acronym LIVES to help our workforce recall our CIL:

L – Locations

- Locations of classified and/or unclassified testing and/or training events conducted on this installation:

- Test site names or precise GPS coordinates

- Building names and/or numbers

- Pictures detailing location names or geotagging capabilities

I – Identifications

- Identifications of existing, new and/or emerging technologies or systems being tested and personnel supporting these programs:

- Combination of test names and contractor’s company name’s participating in unclassified or classified events

- Specifically naming new technology being tested on YPG
- Identification of personnel supporting classified or unclassified testing events

V – Vulnerabilities

- Vulnerabilities of weapons, systems and ammunitions being tested, our security force measures to include weaknesses:

- Disclosing specific vulnerabilities associated with a piece of military weapons, ammunition or systems being tested

- Sharing our law enforcement numbers, routes or standard operating procedures

E – Engagement

- Engagement and/or roles of foreign nationals on testing and training programs:

- Information on which programs are affiliated with certain foreign countries

- Sharing information to foreign nationals about other test programs outside their own

S – Specific

- Specific funding or budget information pertaining to test programs:

- Sharing specific details related to budgetary constraints or knowing the funding sources for a particular testing program

Continuous application of the OPSEC Cycle, while keeping LIVES in mind, will help ensure that YPG’s critical information stays out of the wrong hands and in doing so can save the lives of those out there in harm’s way protecting our great nation. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your YPG OPSEC Officer Spencer Schultz at 928-328-6365.

YPG's Fitness Center hosts The Murph: Soldiers step up to challenge




The Murph is a Memorial Day tradition within the military and fitness communities. It's a challenging hero workout created as a tribute to Navy SEAL Lt. Michael Murphy, who was killed in Afghanistan in 2005. It's typically done near or on Memorial Day. At U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground the Fitness Center hosted the challenge on May 14 and Soldiers across the post including from the Military Freefall School stepped up to the challenge to remember those who made the ultimate sacrifice. (Photos by Dani Compton)

The Murph workout:


- 1-mile run
- 100 pull-ups
- 200 push-ups
- 300 air squats
- Another 1-mile run

**While wearing a weighted vest*




YUMA PROVING GROUND 250th Army Birthday Salute

1-14
June




09

June




PREMIER of "Tested by Fire - Yuma Proving Ground"




11

June




BBQ Lunch with Birthday Cake




12

June




Army Birthday Fun Run/Walk & Cake Cutting Ceremony




14

June



U.S. Army 250th Birthday Celebration*



**No federal endorsement implied*

Location: (1100 Start) BROCC South Atrium and on Microsoft Teams


Location: Cactus Café (1100 Start)
Buffet Price: \$14.95

Location: Fitness Center
Distance: 2.50 miles
(0600 Start) After the run, cake cutting ceremony in the gym (~0645)

Location: Colorado River State Historic Park 201 N. 4th Avenue, Yuma, AZ

FREE, Family-friendly event
(0900 - 1300)

For questions, contact YPG S-5, Stefanie Jacobs at 928-328-3871



Location: Fitness Center
Who can participate:
All YPG Personnel

.....

The Army Birthday fitness challenge will consist of 8 different challenges each in the spirit of the Army's 250th Birthday, running from 1 June -14 June.

Winners will earn the title of "Army 250 Champion" and have their name engraved on a plaque displayed at the Fitness Center.

.....

- 25.0 - mile bike or run
- 250 squats
- 250 push-ups
- 250 - meter swim
- 250 lunges
- 250 - meter medicine ball carry
- 250 step ups w/ 25lb dumbbells
- 2500 - meter row

.....

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BLDG 519


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Pool hours for Meter Swim

Tuesday: 1130 - 1300

Mon & Wed: 1730 - 1900



New commander at Special Operations Aviation Command flight detachment

By Mark Schauer

The U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command (USASOC) Flight Detachment held a change of command ceremony at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) on May 8.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ryan Wells assumed command of the detachment from Chief Warrant Officer 5 David Jones, who is also retiring from active duty.

The flight detachment has supported training operations of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School's Military Freefall School (MFFS) at YPG since 2014.

The MFFS has utilized the proving ground's vast ranges to train thousands of the military's most elite paratroopers since opening in 1996.

Wells assumes the post as the detachment's fourth commander. During Jones' tenure, the detachment provided flights that accommodated thousands of military free fall students, for which he earned high praise.

"The work is not glamorous, but it is purposeful," said Maj. David MacWillie in remarks at the



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ryan Wells (right), new commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command Flight Detachment at Yuma Proving Ground, passes the guidon to Non-Commissioned Officer in Charge Sgt. 1st Class John McMichael at a change of command ceremony on May 8, 2025.

ceremony. "It is important to ground combatant commanders well away from Yuma."

Wells brings 25 years of active-



Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ryan Wells (right), new commander of the U.S. Army Special Operations Aviation Command Flight Detachment at Yuma Proving Ground, speaks at the ceremony following his assumption of command on May 8, 2025. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

duty experience to the command and said he is ready to hit the ground running.

"It's an outstanding opportunity," he said. "I'm excited to work with the YPG team and the Military Freefall School."

The USASOC flight detachment at YPG maintains and flies the C27J, formerly used as a niche cargo plane to supplement the larger C-130. The aircraft was extensively

tested at YPG prior to being fielded and is regarded by many as a high performance aircraft. It achieves altitude more quickly than the aircraft formerly used to support the MFFS prior to the creation of the flight detachment, and also accommodates two to three times as many jumpers at a time, which has contributed to a significant expansion of MFFS training opportunities in recent years.

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EYE

FROM PAGE 1

improve operational effects. The use of sUASs for observation greatly improved efficiency and improved confidence in safety during improved conventional munitions artillery tests.”

Air Combat tests use mounted cameras on the aircraft or videographers onboard to capture video inflight. However, Ground Combat tests cannot use this method because the test items typically have large safety fans.

Coronado explains, “We are developing this capability to enable our Optics TRAX counterparts to adopt and deploy it effectively. Previously, aerial views were not available for most tests, as all our cameras were positioned on the ground.”

He describes a typical gun position’s instrumentation setup.

“Our cameras at the gun and impact locations are positioned at ground level, limiting their field of



The Instrumentation Division’s Ruben Hernandez (front) and Jaime Coronado (back) are Yuma Test Center’s certified drone operators within the Engineering Support Branch. Yuma Test Center is now using the Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems to collect a bird’s eye view of ground combat test activities in real-time.

view.”

The sUAS drone is equipped with

an EO/IR/thermal payload that can detect, track, and locate objects

in both day and night conditions. Aside from that they each offer distinct capabilities. The Skydio X2D is a vertical- take-off-and landing drone.

Hernandez says the quadcopter features, “six navigation cameras for 360-degree obstacle avoidance and the dual sensor payload that includes a color camera and FLIR thermal sensor.”

The operators flew one system for a test during the scorching heat of Yuma’s summer and Hernandez said had remarkable results in operation and in the video collected. During active tests they provided networked real-time video from the drone controller straight to the test officers in the field for situational awareness and on-the-spot assessment.

“We are evaluating longer duration, larger payload free flight and tethered systems that host a variety of cameras and sensors for a variety of use case applications.”

The visibility and real-time data give testers reassured confidence during testing.



Yuma Test Center has added yet another tool to its arsenal of data collection equipment — Small Unmanned Aircraft Systems or (sUAS). The sUAS drone is equipped with an Electro Optical/Infrared /thermal payload that can detect, track, and locate objects in both day and night conditions. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Yuma Proving Ground employee awards and recognitions

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson hosted a town hall for employees of the afternoon of May 8 and presented several employees with awards for years of service and for their work execution. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

— Years of Service —

25 years



Michael Blackburn

20 years



Stefanie Jacobs

Civilian Service
Commendation Medal



David Bates

— Organization Day awards —

Civilian Service Achievement Medal



Dylan Black



Grace Connor

Certificate of Achievement



Michael Blackburn, Reginald Boler, Amanda Chavis, Danielle Compton, Stefanie Jacobs, Craig Miller, Le Roy Reed and Austin Rudolph

— Range Commander's Council Executive Committee Semi-Annual Event awards —

The Range Commanders Council (RCC) serves the technical and operational needs of U.S. test, training, and operational ranges, and earlier this year U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) hosted senior personnel from test ranges around the country for talks and overviews of the proving ground's capabilities. YPG Commander Col. John Nelson received

overwhelmingly positive feedback from attendees, noting senior visitors who were, "motivated and inspired by the culture of excitement exhibited for testing, along with the energy to innovate in-house solutions" at YPG. Nelson recently took time to award the Civilian Service Commendation Medal to those instrumental in the execution of the RCC.

Civilian Service Achievement Medal



David Bates, Esteban Flores, Melissa Rossi-Schultz, Isaac Rodriguez and Ashley Thompson (Photo by Ana Henderson)



On May 14, Col. Nelson presented a Civilian Service Commendation Medal to Protocol Officer Jim Stickney (left) and the Civilian Service Achievement Medal to Instrumentation Division Chief Jason Swain (center) and Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division Chief Justin Crouch (right), who were not present during the town hall for their participation in the execution of the RCC. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

Yuma Proving Ground employee awards and recognitions



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks presented the 2024 Employees of the Year awards on May 7, 2025. The recipients were surprised and overjoyed with the announcement. (Right to Left) Hicks, Branch Chief of the Year Ashley Thompson, Division Chief of the Year Anthony Gingras and Employee of the Year Laci Butz. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Yuma Test Center Commander recognizes employees

Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks stopped by the Instrumentation Division on May 6, to recognize several employees for their years of service and excellent work supporting the mission. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Stacey Andona



Ervin Rosales

— 40 Years of Service —



Curtis Overstreet



Dennis Winterton

A promotional graphic for the 'Outpost Outspoken' podcast. It features a QR code on the left and logos for various podcast platforms on the right: Apple Podcasts, Spotify Podcasts, Amazon Music, and Pandora. The background shows a desert landscape with a palm tree and a sunset sky.

An advertisement for Red's Bird Cage Saloon. It features a cartoon bird holding a beer. The text reads: 'Come And Join Us... Your Friends At Red's Bird Cage Saloon. Located in the heart of Historic Downtown Yuma 231 Main St. • 928-783-1050. Mon-Fri 10:00am - 2:30am • Sat & Sun 8:00am - 2:30am'.

An advertisement for the Defense Contractor Complex at Yuma International Airport. It features a large Pratt & Whitney aircraft on the tarmac. The text reads: 'BUILD IT. TEST IT. FLY IT. THE DEFENSE CONTRACTOR COMPLEX AT YUMA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT. • Support Hangars / Infrastructure • Million Air FBO with DESC fueling contract (928) 726-5882 | www.defensetesting.com'. Logos for the Defense Contractor Complex and Yuma County Airport Authority are also present.

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YPG



Having co-existed in Yuma County together for over 65 years, it stands to reason that U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) and Marine Corps Air Station Yuma (MCAS-Yuma) have historically had close relations. YPG Commander Col. John Nelson recently recognized another example of this longstanding partnership by presenting an Army Commendation Medal to Cmdr. Richard Bartol, officer in charge of the MCAS Dental Clinic, for his assistance in ensuring top dental care for the 250 Soldiers of YPG. (Loaned photos)



YPG's B-ball champions



The Yuma Proving Ground Fitness Center hosted a five versus five basketball game series during March and April. The two best teams were the Studs and the Temptations, which competed head-to-head for five weeks but only one team could be the winner, and it was the Studs who took that title with a record of 4 to 1 in the series. The basketball fun is not over; there's pickup basketball at the Fitness Center every Thursday at 5:30 p.m. (Photos and content courtesy of the Fitness Center)

Wellness Program hosts morning walks



What better way to boot your energy before work than getting some fresh air while enjoying a morning walk. The Yuma Proving Ground Wellness Program hosted a series of morning walks starting at 6 a.m. on both the Howard and Walker Cantonments. The walk on May 15 is the last before the end of the highly competitive Step Challenge which ends June 2. The Wellness Program encourages employees to act now and receive benefits later. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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