

**VOLUME 74** NO. 15 AUGUST 04, 2025

# New U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Command Sgt. Maj. ready to lead

By Mark Schauer

Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus assumed the highest enlisted leadership position at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) on July 17 in a change of responsibility ceremony presided over by YPG Commander Col. John Nelson.

Hailing to YPG from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, Holthus called the opportunity to serve as the post's senior enlisted advisor a great privilege in remarks to the media minutes before assuming the responsibility.

"It is an exciting challenge,"
Holthus said. "I have a little bit of
experience on the test side of the
house doing testing as a Soldier,
but seeing behind the curtain at
everything that is available to



Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus assumed the highest enlisted leadership position at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) on July 17 in a change of responsibility ceremony presided over by YPG Commander Col. John Nelson and attended by members of the Yuma and YPG community. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

leverage to see the Army gets the data it needs is a new realm for me."

Holthus pledged to maintain the same high energy that outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare was widely praised for.

In remarks to the audience at the ceremony, Nelson noted Millare's efforts on behalf of the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program, energizing the Commander's Ready and Resiliency Council, and creating command comment boxes at various points across YPG's geographically large installation.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Millare was relentless in his time here in improving the quality of life for the

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### **YPG commander keynotes local Independence Day** celebration, Soldiers recognized

#### By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) was well-represented at the Caballeros de Yuma's 39th annual Fourth of July Flag Raising Ceremony at Armed Forces Park on July 4.

YPG commander Col. John Nelson served as keynote speaker, and during the ceremony the Yuma Military Affairs Council recognized YPG's Noncommissioned Officer of the Year, Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros of YPG's elite Airborne Test Force, and

Soldier of the Year, Spc. Hardi Patel

of the YPG Health Clinic In his remarks, he discussed at

length the sacrifices of America's men and women in uniform in defending the United States' liberty and way of life.

"Having served in the Army for three decades, I'm well aware that the stirring ideals of our nation's founders would be nothing but words on an aged parchment without the sacrifice of the millions of men and women who have worn the uniform of one of our nation's service branches," he said in his remarks.

"Every generation of American service men and women has put their life on the line in defense of our nation. It is a sacred bond that unites us active-duty personnel with veterans of all eras and wars, and one that will unite us with future generations for as long as our country stands."

Nelson also noted Yuma's extraordinary appreciation for the military and YPG's position at the forefront of Army transformation efforts in recent years. A large Army 250th Birthday celebration held at Yuma's Colorado River State Historic Park, the grounds of which were an Army quartermaster depot from 1869 to 1884, was only the most recent example he cited.

"I'm grateful that the Yuma community understands and appreciates the vital work my post is involved in," said Nelson. "I take every opportunity I can to publicly thank the citizens of Yuma County for their steadfast support of our military and for Yuma Proving Ground. This is by far the most military supportive community I have ever encountered, and I feel so humbled whenever I witness the many ways the community expresses



annual Fourth of July Flag Raising Ceremony at Armed Forces Park on July 4. This was the second time Nelson has keynoted the event during his command. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

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ABOVE LEFT: Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Noncommissioned Officer of the Year Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros of YPG's elite Airborne Test Force receives a plaque from the Yuma Military Affairs Council presented by Yuma City Councilman Mark Martinez. ABOVE RIGHT: Yuma Proving Ground Soldier of the Year Spc. Hardi Patel receives a plaque from the Yuma Military Affairs Council presented by Yuma City Councilman Mark Martinez.

LEFT: U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground commander Col. John Nelson (left) is interviewed by KYMA-TV following the Caballeros de Yuma's 39th annual Fourth of July Flag Raising Ceremony.

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# ACS celebrates 60 years of supporting Soldiers and their Families





The U.S. Army celebrated Army Community Services (ACS) for its 60 years of service. At U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground, the team hosted a party at Coyote Lanes and offered free bowling and a soft drink. ACS Director Clarissa Benavides greeted those in attendance and handed out items with ACS' contact information. Benavides said, "Our mission is to help service members, their families, DOD civilians, veterans, retirees and their family members as well." ACS programs support Soldier and their Family's readiness by coordinating and delivering comprehensive, responsive services that promote self-reliance, resiliency, and stability. To learn more about ACS visit the office at building 309 or call 928-328-2332. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

AND FAMILIES



### Operation Homefront provides backpacks and supplies to children of military







Across the country, school-aged children and their parents are preparing for the new school year. Operation Homefront and Yuma Proving Ground's Army Community Services (ACS) ensured that children of those currently serving or who have served our nation are well-equipped. Representatives and volunteers from Operation Homefront and ACS provided free backpacks and school supplies to military dependents entering kindergarten through 12th grade on July 22. Military-affiliated families filled the second floor of the ACS building, selecting from the available items. (Photos by Ana Henderson)







Clarissa Benavides, shows some of the items available. For more information visit ACS on the Howard Cantonment, Building 309 or call 928-328-2332 (Photos by Ana Henderson)

### **Lending Closet fills the gap before and after PCS moves**

#### **By Ana Henderson**

It's no secret that moving can be stressful and difficult.

Whether it's waiting on items to arrive at your new home or having all your household items on their



way, leaving you with not much until vou move.

This is where the Army Community Services (ACS) Lending Closet can help.

The closet loans out essential household items to active-duty members at U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground.

ACS Director Clarissa Benavides explains, "We do ask that when they come in, they fill out a form, which we have here, and they give us their information. Then they'll have 30

days for those items."

She adds if needed they can extend the time to up to 60 days.

In recent months the ACS staff have made improvements to the closet while also downsizing. They moved the closet to the first floor of building to make it safer for those borrowing items. They also disposed of outdated or unused items leaving only the most used.

Benavides listed the items she sees borrowed the most.

"Vacuums, the microwaves, the

dishes, the cups, silverware, Keurig. It's a big one, too. We can't live without our coffee."

For a complete list visit ACS at the Howard Cantonment building 309 or call 928-328-2332.

#### **Lending Closet**

- Utensils
- Flatware & dinnerware
- Furniture (dinning set & cots)
- Kitchen items
- Small appliances

# ACS's Family Advocacy Program hosts Christmas in July







The Family Advocacy Program (FAP) which falls under the umbrella of the Army Community Services reached out to the community during the 2nd Annual Christmas in July event. FAP Program Manager Mariah Boykin hit the streets of Yuma Proving Ground and stopped by the most popular places around post and Yuma Test Center. Boykin provided swag bags with the FAP phone number and talked with the YPG community about resources offered. (Photos provided by Mariah Boykin)

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#### READY FROM PAGE 1

YPG workforce and ensuring YPG accomplishes its mission on behalf of Army transformation," Nelson said. "He was a champion for YPG internally, with the morale of the workforce being his top priority."

Millare thanked YPG's Soldiers and workforce for their efforts on behalf of Soldiers. He marveled at YPG's position at the forefront of Army transformation efforts, crediting the workforce's excellence with making it possible and underscoring that Soldiers' lives depended on the testing conducted here.

"It's been a great two years working with some awesome folks," Millare said. "My two years here with this premier culture have been the best." Nelson highlighted Holthus's accomplished career as a noncommissioned officer, noting his multiple deployments and distinguished career in field artillery, long the largest component of YPG's comprehensive developmental test mission.

"Command Sgt. Maj. Holthus has traveled a long and successful journey to get where he is today," Nelson said. "He has served at every enlisted position and level as a field artilleryman, and that is a very fitting assignment for us as the Army's artillery testing center of excellence."

Holthus said he was enthused about the new position working alongside YPG's highly skilled personnel and thanked the community for their warm welcome.

"The overall goal is to make this place appealing and especially to take care of Soldiers and their families who are here," he said.



Yuma Proving Ground Command Col. John Nelson noted Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare's efforts on behalf of the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers program, energizing the Commander's Ready and Resiliency Council, and creating command comment boxes. Nelson welcomed Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus and highlighted his accomplished career as a noncommissioned. (Photos by Ana Henderson)





Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) outgoing Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare thanked YPG's Soldiers and workforce for their efforts on behalf of Soldiers. Millare said. "My two years here with this premier culture have been the best."

"I'm happy and excited to be part of this community. Everyone has been super friendly and helpful, on the installation and off."

Holthus has served in the Army for over 26 years and deployed to Iraq twice during the conflict's most severe early years. His awards and decorations include the Bronze Star, the Meritorious Service Medal with six Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Army Commendation Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. He holds a Bachelor of Science Liberal Arts Degree from Excelsior College. He is also a member of the Field Artillery Honorable Order of Saint Barbara. He is accompanied by his wife Tiffany and sons Connor and Jackson.

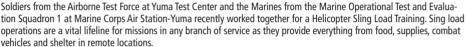


U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground hosted a change of responsibility ceremony on July 17 where Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus assumed the highest enlisted leadership position on post.













The Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1 entrusted the Airborne Test Force when it came time to certify their crew for Helicopter Sling Load training. The three days of training took place over the skies of the desert Southwest. The Marines used the MV-22B Osprey and CH-53K King Stallion which are common carriers for heavy-lift transport. (Photos by Master Sqt. Donald Bullock)

### Army and Marines: training together, making stronger ties

#### By Ana Henderson

Confidence and mutual respect are the words to describe the working relationship between the Soldiers from the Airborne Test Force (ATF) at Yuma Test Center and the Marines from the Marine Operational Test and Evaluation Squadron 1 (VMX-1) at Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma.

The two branches serving in Yuma County recently worked together for a Helicopter Sling load Training (HST).

Sing load operations are a vital lifeline for missions in any branch of service as they provide everything from food, supplies, combat vehicles and shelter in remote locations.

ATF's primary mission is parachute testing for the Department of Defense and allied nations. Whether they are strapping them on humans, combat vehicles, or sling loads, it's their forte. Some members of ATF have used the tactic outside of training like ATF Master Sgt. Donald Bullock, an Army Ranger.

"They came to us because of our experience. Some of us have experienced it in Afghanistan and Iraq and have done it live, for a real reason." VMX-1 entrusted ATF when it came time to certify their crew for HST.

"We have helped them in the past with sling loads, certifying their pilots, they reached out to us to help certify their Marines so they're able to support themselves and do sling loads on their own without us needing to be there," explained Staff Sgt. Casey Simmons who led the Army side of the training alongside Marine Capt. Martin Kern.

The three days of training took place over the skies of the desert Southwest. The Marines used the MV-22B Osprey and CH-53K King Stallion which are common carriers for heavy-lift transport.

ATF's role was to show, shadow, and standby for safety. On day one they showed the group of 15 Marines how to rig and hook a load using a bundle of tires.

"We walked them through rigging it up, having them rig it up so they knew how to do it," said Simmons. "And then we did a dry run before hooking it up, with us demonstrating how to hook it."

The next step was to split up into three groups, so the Marines work

independently, and ATF could observe and assist.

"At the very beginning, if they had questions, we would walk them through it again, helped them out, and then the aircraft would come down and then we'd go straight into the training," explained Simmons.

Simmons, Sgt. 1st Class Stephen Moss and ATF Medic Staff Sgt. Jonathan Harris served as safeties on the ground. They supervised the load configurations.

"The first day, all three of us were out there together for the first about three or four picks to make sure that they were really comfortable. We each safetied a different position. And then after those first three or four picks, we went down to just two of us. And then on the second day, it was just one of us with each group making sure that they were comfortable. We really let them do a lot of it on their own on the second day."

After three days, two different helicopters, and various types of the loads, the HST was complete.

Both the Army and Marines have extensive training in sling loads having both attended specialized

schools on the topic. This training served to certify an entire crew together.

This is not the first time the two branches have worked side-by-side, and it will not be the last, as they see the value in it.

"We are making partnerships," said Bullock. "Being able to work closely with them to, you know, vice versa, 'hey, you scratch our back, we'll scratch yours,' is a great opportunity, especially since we're just as small unit here, compared to that they're a giant, you know, Marine operation base."

As for the Marines, they can now do the heavy lifting when it comes to supporting their HST program, said Capt. Martin Kern.

"During the three-day exercise, MSG Bullock's team provided the Marines of VMX-1 with expert guidance on the conduct of helicopter external lifts as well as ensuring the safe execution of the training. This training allowed VMX-1 to establish its own self-sustaining helicopter support team program that will enhance the VMX-1 Assault Support Department's ability to conduct external lift tests of new equipment.

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### Yuma Proving Ground hosts Army recruits

#### By Mark Schauer

Most newly enlisted recruits' knowledge of the nature of Army service is secondhand.

If they're part of the lucky few, perhaps a parent or other close relative served. Others know of it entirely from television and movies.

On July 10, 12 recent recruits from the Yuma area spent an early morning at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) with members of YPG's elite Airborne Test Force (ATF) getting a dynamic look at how they conduct their mission testing all manner of cargo and personnel parachutes.

YPG frequently hosts such visits, and local Army recruiters say doing so is making a big impact.

"Some of the recruits here have an airborne contract, and they are motivated to see what the airborne community is about," said Staff Sgt. Rigoberto Montoya, recruiter. "We're giving them a taste of the real Army. Hopefully some of them can learn something out of this today and use it for the future." The visits were spearheaded by ATF's Staff Sgt. Kyle Dunwiddie, who credits retired Master Sgt. Brian Davis, the ATF Noncommissioned Officer in Charge during his first stint with the unit last decade, with inspiring him to begin organizing the opportunities.

"I grew up in the Army, so it's what I'm used to. Most people from Yuma aren't from a military family, or if they are it is because of Marine Corps Air Station-Yuma. Anybody going in on an airborne contract or parachute rigger contract can definitely benefit from the exposure of visiting here."

One of the visitors had already been here during the last opportunity in February but came back mere weeks before reporting to the Military Entrance Processing Station at the end of the month.

"I wanted to get a chance to see some of the things I didn't see last time," said Anthony Cardona, who expects to serve in an airborne unit and wants to eventually become freefall qualified. "Last time was mostly free fall jumpers, this time



Recent Army recruits from the Yuma, Ariz. area watch a static line parachute jump conducted by members of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's elite Airborne Test Force on July 10, 2025.

was static line jumpers. I wanted to see the different processes and procedures between those two systems."

Darren Langstaff will be an Electromagnetic Warfare Specialist but was still interested in what he saw during the visit.

"It looks like everyone can go to airborne school, so maybe that is in my future. Becoming a ranger is looking a little interesting. I've seen some Soldiers out here with multiple patches, so maybe I can be one of them before I get out."

Both the recruits and ATF Soldiers felt the visit was worthwhile and informative.

"It's definitely fun getting to interact with the local population, especially kids that are already signed up and waiting to ship out or who are on the fence and have questions," said Dunwiddie.



Staff Sgt. Kyle Dunwiddie (second from right) gives recent Army recruits a tour of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Air Delivery facility. "It's definitely fun getting to interact with the local population, especially kids that are already signed up and waiting to ship out or who are on the fence and have questions," he said. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



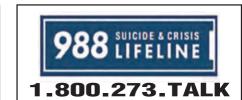
to see the different processes and procedures between those two systems.'







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#### Combat vehicle testing at YPG essential to Army continuous transformation efforts

#### By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is at the forefront of the Army's continuous transformation efforts.

One important aspect of Army transformation involves mobility, and U.S. Army Yuma Test Center's approximately 200 miles of surveyed road courses are being utilized to put the next generation of vehicles through their paces.

YTC 's rugged conditions closely simulate what a Soldier might experience in a desert combat theater, where things like dust intrusion and intense ambient temperatures in summer can stress even the most robust combat vehicles. From paved asphalt to rugged, unimproved desert washboard, YTC's mobility courses run the gamut of types of conditions a Soldier driving a vehicle is likely to encounter.

"The natural environment really puts these systems through stress that you don't see in other places," said Marco Nixen, Combat Systems Branch Chief. "Our Middle East course is a cross-country course with a lot of slope and variations with washboard conditions in places that puts a vehicle through a lot of different forces. Our hilly courses have up to about a 30% slope in places, so you are taxing transmissions and other parts of the vehicle heavily."

Like the road courses the vehicles are tested on, a test vehicle plan can vary widely.

"It depends on what the customer



The Armored Multipurpose Vehicle underwent extensive natural environment testing at all three Yuma Proving Ground test centers. No matter how much a combat system has been tested through virtual or simulated environments, unforeseen issues arise when that system is subjected to operations in the extreme climactic conditions of arctic, tropical, or hot desert environments. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

wants: is it a full vehicle up system test, or just a specific component like a new cooling system or engine?" said Nixen. "We do everything from subsystems to the whole system."

Likewise, YPG's two other constituent test centers, Arctic Regions Test Center (ARTC) and Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC), frequently test military vehicles in extreme cold and jungle environments, respectively.

"You can't choose where you're going to fight next, but you can be prepared for it," said Col. John Nelson, YPG commander. "The three natural environments we provide are opportunities for materiel developers to reduce risk in their programs, to actually identify issues early on without having to make large expenditures after procurement."

In the case of reliability, availability, and maintainability (RAM) testing, vehicles run miles of simulated

missions across road courses featuring various terrain conditions. As they traverse these road courses, test vehicle operators continually verify performance of all the platform's sophisticated electronics, as well as the vehicle's braking, acceleration, and steering performance on slopes and steep grades, even through a fording basin and on a dust course tilled for maximum sediment. Samples of the vehicles' fluids are collected and analyzed at various points throughout the tests. During performance testing, the evaluators collect dozens of channels of data, including things like the displacement and temperature of each road arm on a tracked vehicle. The testers monitor if the system deteriorates through use and try to discern a trend that will help estimate the normal rate of deterioration. As it runs, the exact location and terrain conditions of any possible anomaly can be identified. In addition to the hundreds of miles of road courses, YPG has the range space to safely conduct live function fire tests of a vehicle's weapons from

"YPG is supporting the Army's continuous transformation but also supports joint force transformation and testing for our allied partners," said Nelson. "YPG also presents an opportunity for private industry to come out and learn some things about their technology's performance, which also allows us to learn about new

both stationary and moving positions.

technology."

In recent years, this has meant hosting tests of everything from the Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) and the Armored Multipurpose Vehicle (AMPV), successor to the venerable M113 armored personnel carrier that dates back to the early 1960s, to items like the Infantry Squad Vehicle, a fast and lean four-wheel drive vehicle that carries up to a nine Soldier infantry unit and their heavy gear. As for private industry testing, virtually every American automobile company has utilized test tracks available at YTC and ARTC.

"As the Army looks at what it learned from 20 years of irregular warfare and coupled it with the previous knowledge they had when the developed the 'big five' weapons systems to see how they can create a solution that will support a fight against a near-peer adversary or an irregular warfare adversary," said Jacob Obradovich, Next Generation Combat Vehicle Cross Functional Team Integrator.

This extends to platforms such as the XM30 Mechanized Infantry Combat Vehicle, which YTC has already done testing on behalf of using surrogate vehicles to evaluate potential components of the future system.

"YPG has been testing armored vehicles since World War II," said Nelson. "Every major combat platform and every combat support platform has come through here. I expect the XM 30, and the M1E3 Abrams will come through here to at minimum prove out their reliability and maintainability."

"As we start to see more and more unmanned vehicles in the private sector, the cost is dropping drastically and the maturity is increasing," added Obradovich. "The YPG customer service and safety mentality and our flexibility are going to be an asset to the Army and DOD because they know they can come to YPG and get the support they need to make their mission successful."

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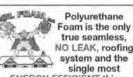


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## Vacation Bible School at YPG's Halo Chapel serves up fun and friendship

#### By Mark Schauer

Religious services are as much a source of strength and solace to Soldiers as to civilians.

The Halo Chapel at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) serves both throughout the year but had a particularly popular getaway for kids on post during the long, hot summer: Vacation Bible School (VBS).

With a campfire theme this year, most of the chapel complex spent a solid week decorated as an inviting woodland, thanks to a veritable forest of unlit artificial Christmas trees in the sanctuary punctuated by tents and a mock campfire.

The event looked like it is professionally done and lavishly funded but was in fact assembled on a shoestring budget with the dedicated labor of volunteers.

"We had more volunteers than we've ever had, which makes the week go a lot easier," said Chaplain Maj. Ryan Pearse. "It's great to see an outpouring from the community to want to help. I'm encouraged by all the kids signing up, but in some ways I'm more encouraged by the number of volunteers we had."

More than 50 YPG youngsters participated in the fun, which lasted an entire morning each day through July 25. While VBS typically takes place early in the summer at churches in the



With a campfire theme at this summer's iteration of Vacation Bible School, most of the Halo Chapel at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) spent a solid week decorated as an inviting woodland thanks to a veritable forest of unlit artificial Christmas trees in the sanctuary punctuated by tents placed by volunteers. YPG Chaplain Maj. Ryan Pearse (center) expressed gratitude for the outpouring of support from kids and adult volunteers. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

civilian world, Pearse waited until latter July to allow an opportunity for new children on post accompanying a parent on a permanent change of station (PCS) move to participate.

"There are a couple of new families that I've never seen before who just PCSed recently, and that's why we did it," said Pearse. "We like to have it a couple of weeks before school starts to accommodate the new families that come in and help integrate them into the community."

Lorlena Nelson was one of the returning VBS volunteers, helping with the music ministry component of VBS and assisting with nursery care for the youngest participants. She also helped decorate the chapel complex the week before, and said she participated because of her own experiences growing up in an Army family.

"Growing up as a military brat it is always hard to get integrated into a new community," said Nelson. "Having VBS during the summer when everyone is moving in is awesome: it's a step-in to the community where they can meet other kids and build friendships before they go back to school."

The students had fun listening to stories, singing songs, and rotating among four stations that saw them learning about the Bible, making arts and crafts, and playing games, with new activities slated for each day of the week. Snack time was also a popular station.

"We like to keep them on their toes and switch it up," Pearse said. "It is a week about having fun, but also about learning, meeting new people, and making new friends."

"It's really fun to serve the kids and see how excited they get," added Nelson. "It's fun to see them get into it and make it part of their life. We're really blessed to have enough kids and volunteers to be able to do this."



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#### **YTC Commander awards ASET team**

Yuma Test Center (YTC) Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks recognized members of the Aviation Systems and Electronic Test on July 22 for their dedication to the YTC's mission of supporting the warfighter. — Civilian Service Achievement Medal —



(Left to right) Edgar Camarillo, Scott Fromm, Jonathan Green, Riley Sinek and Scott Oliver (not pictured) received a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for their exceptional performance, dedication and support of a counter-small unmanned aerial systems test. (Photos by Darcy Broom)

#### — Years of Service —



15 Years
Justin
Croutch

10 years Walter Aims



### **YPG Commander recognizes employee for excellent work**



On July 10, Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson presented Stephen Hauser with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for his extraordinary support in getting the infrastructure repaired and upgraded at Laguna Army Airfield. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

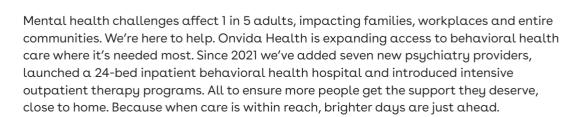


#### YPG Public Roadway Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect statistical data about roadways traveled by employees, contractors and affiliates. Collection of simple Information about specific roadways traveled to work, while working, and between work. Scan the QR code to take part.

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