

The Outpost

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

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Tropic Regions Test Center boasts decades of institutional knowledge

By Mark Schauer

Testing in extreme environments always presents difficult obstacles.

Yet personnel in U.S. Army Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC) negotiate unique challenges unknown to their counterparts at the other two test centers within U.S Army Yuma Proving Ground.

Extreme jungle humidity can rapidly corrode metals, short out electrical components and degrade plastics and other materials. Testing equipment under these inhospitable conditions provides insights that may never be discovered in an environmental chamber. Will gasses from decaying matter in a mangrove swamp provide false positive readings by detection equipment that scan for the presence of chemical



U.S. Army Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC) negotiate unique challenges unknown to their counterparts at the other two test centers within U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. TRTC also has the fewest number of personnel of the three test centers. Yet the members of TRTC's staff tend to stay for many years, even decades. (Photo by Carlos Mora)

and biological weapons? Can a night vision scope function when thick jungle canopies obscure even the faintest natural light from the night sky? Will muddy, biomass-laden jungle terrain destroy the integrity of wheels and tires on a combat vehicle? These are some of the questions that TRTC tests have been investigating for decades.

Unlike other Army test centers, TRTC owns no land, and thus relies on the goodwill of host nations to permit testing. U.S. embassies and associated U.S. military groups within each delegation assist TRTC in securing the necessary permissions to conduct testing in a variety of countries in Central and

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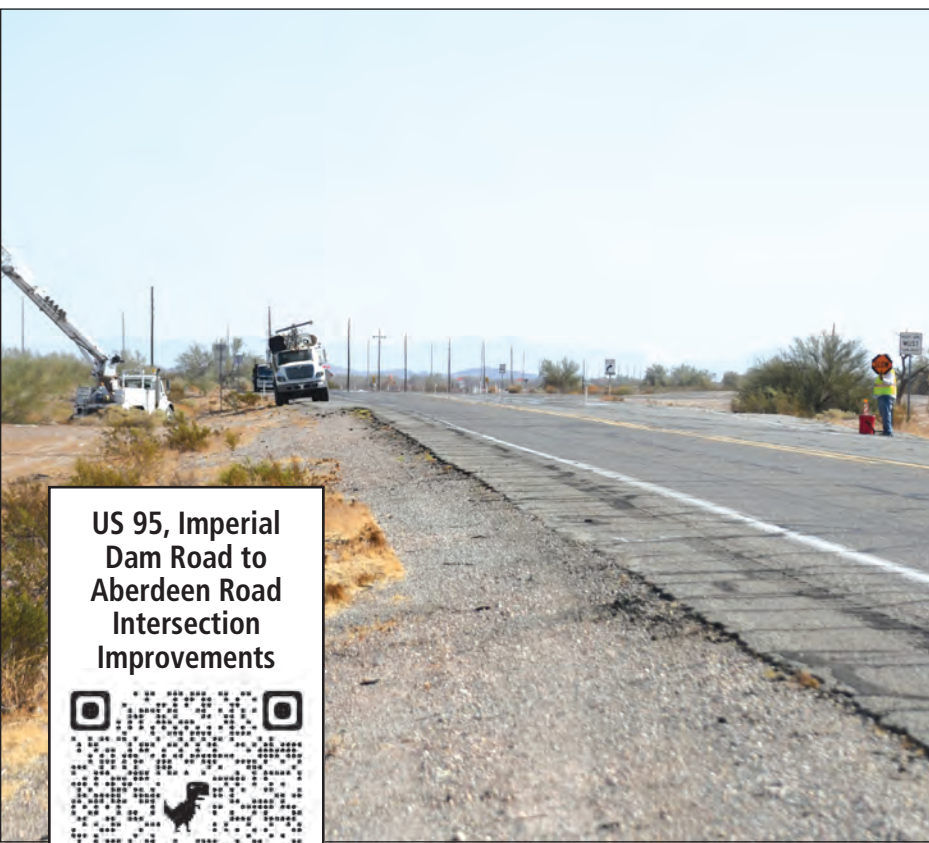
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Highway 95 being prepped for widening



US 95, Imperial Dam Road to Aberdeen Road Intersection Improvements



Motorists driving along Highway 95 in the area surrounding Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) will notice work being done to prepare the roadway for construction. Recently electrical crews were on scene near Aberdeen Road to relocate utilities further into the desert to make way for the highway widening. The same week, YPG crews removed the sign welcoming visitors to YPG that was previously located at the Laguna Dam Road turn off towards YPG's Visitor Control Center. The most noticeable change was back in April when crews relocated the Big Guns. To learn more about the upcoming road work visit ADOT's website by scanning the QR code. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



The Outpost

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 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

Commander: Col. John Nelson
Public Affairs Officer: Mark Schauer
Public Affairs Specialist/Outpost Editor: Ana Henderson
Visual Information Manager: Eugene Garcia
Cold Regions Test Center Photographer: Sebastian Saarloos



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MWR food service at your fingertips

By Ana Henderson

Are you thinking of ordering food from Yuma Proving Ground's dining facilities? You can now do it with a few clicks of your computer mouse or cell phone.

Starting in September, patrons of Roadrunner and the BROC Garden Café can order using the ChowNow online service.

Users must use the QR code provided by MWR to get the full benefits. MWR's Business Recreation Chief Ray Lichtenberg explains.

"If one of our customers goes through the ChowNow app independently they may get charged a processing fee. It's very important that we get the message out that it's our generated QR code that must be used."

Those QR codes will be posted on MWR's website, social media, in the eateries, The Outpost plus a link on MAPA.

Lichtenberg said with the use of



Waiting in line could be a thing of the past at the BROC Café and other MWR eateries with the new ChowNow mobile ordering service. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

order and then go stand in line to pick up your order. Our plan is to have a specific location for those meals that are ready to go."

The pickup location of those ready to go items will be refined over time.

This service will then expand to the Coyote Lanes and Cactus Café once its menu has been revamped. The Cactus Café also has new furniture on the way.

Lichtenberg says MWR hopes to continue getting the YPG community's support.

"The fastest way we can actually reinvest into our business is by getting the participating and getting people to use our facilities. We are really hoping that ChowNow allows our workforce to be able to put an order in, and get their food, and it increases true efficiency and increases our sales, which then allows us to take those sales and reinvest into our businesses. Because that's how MWR works."

ChowNow MWR hopes to expedite service to its customers and avoid long lines by getting a lead time in processing the orders.

"We are trying to reduce the line

and time of service."

ChowNow allow customers to tailor their meals to add and remove items, pay and set a pickup time.

"You don't want to go online and

BROC Garden Café



Kofa Roadrunner



Coyote Lanes



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Antiterrorism Awareness Month outreach

August was Army Antiterrorism Awareness Month and Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) reminded the workforce to stay vigilant. The Army Antiterrorism Program works to protect personnel, information, critical assets and facilities.



Early on Aug. 14, YPG Commander Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus, and Installation Antiterrorism Officer Charlie Johson welcomed the workforce with informational material at the Walker gate. (Photo by Ana Henderson)



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks, Chief of Staff Omar Silva along with Physical Security Manager Spencer Shultz greeted the mission workforce at the Kofa gate. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



Deputy Garrison Manager Dan Carter joined Mission Antiterrorism Officer Reginald Boler at the Howard cantonment access control point to remind the workforce if they "see something, say something." (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Law enforcement informs YPG workforce on local dangers



In support of Antiterrorism Month, local Yuma County Sheriff's Office deputies visited U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground on Aug. 20, to make the workforce aware of dangers relevant to the Yuma area. They discussed how they monitor desert areas, use of cameras to aid patrols and cooperation with other law enforcement. (Photo by Eugene Garcia)

SEPTEMBER IS NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS MONTH



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Price welcomes new principal

By Ana Henderson

PFC James D. Price Elementary School welcomes new principal, Alexandria Johnson, for the 2025/26 school year. To introduce her to the Yuma Proving Ground community she shared a bit about herself.

How many years have you worked in education and in what roles?

This is my 13th year in education. I began my career in 2012 as a school counselor and served in that role until 2019. In the 2019–2020 school year, I transitioned into administration as an assistant principal. Since moving to Yuma, I've worked as a school counselor at Yuma High School and then continued my journey at Castle Dome Middle School and now James D. Price Elementary.

Over the years, I've had the opportunity to serve in a variety of roles, including high school counselor, military liaison counselor for the district, middle school assistant principal, and now elementary school principal. These experiences across different grade levels and settings have given me a deep understanding of student needs and the importance of strong school–family partnerships at every stage of a child's educational journey.

Best advice you have received that you would like to pass along to your students?

Get involved! This is your time to explore, grow, and try it all—so why not take the chance? Join clubs, sports, activities, or anything that sparks your interest. Be an active part of your school community and leave a lasting impact. You never know what you might discover about yourself, or the friendships and memories you'll make along the way.

What's a fond memory that you have as an educator or you when you were student yourself?

Some of my best memories in education come from the relationships I've built with students



PFC James D. Price Elementary School welcomes new principal, Alexandria Johnson, for the 2025/26 school year. (Photo courtesy of Alexandria Johnson)

and their families over the years. I've had the privilege of working with many of the same families for a long time, and it's incredibly special to see younger siblings come through the school and older siblings return to visit. They'll often ask if I remember them or bring up funny moments from their time in school—it always brings a smile to my face.

What's even more meaningful is seeing former students step into new roles—some are now parents, some are working in the community, and others are traveling the world, figuring out life in their own unique way. It's such a neat and humbling experience to know that, even in a small way, I was a part of their journey.

Price has been described as charming for its small size and close-knit students and staff. What do you see as unique about the

school?

One of the most unique and special aspects of our school is its small size—from the number of students in each class to the overall staff and student population. In our area, this creates a truly rare and valuable opportunity for both staff and families.

With fewer students, our staff

is able to build meaningful relationships with students and their families more quickly—and the same is true in reverse. Students get to know one another faster, creating a close-knit, supportive school community. This environment allows for stronger communication, deeper connections, and a greater sense of belonging for everyone involved.

What do you hope to bring to Price?

As a former military brat through and through, I deeply understand the unique challenges that come with the military lifestyle—frequent moves, transitions, and deployments. I also understand this life from the perspective of a spouse, which brings its own set of experiences and insights.

Because of this, I strive to bring a level of empathy and understanding to our students and families who are navigating these changes. My hope is to create a sense of stability, support, and connection for them within our school community. Along with my passion for education, I'm committed to building strong relationships with our families and community partners. Together, we can ensure all students feel seen, supported, and valued—no matter where their journey takes them.

If parents would like to contact Ms. Johnson they are welcome to reach out by phone or email at, ajohnson2@yuma.org or 928-502-7730.

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Airborne Soldiers train for water jumps

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Test Center's (YTC) Airborne Test Force Soldiers and members of the Military Freefall School took advantage of the heat and conducted water training on the morning of Aug. 12.

The training, at Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) Kahuna Lagoon, practiced what to do in case of a water landing.

The training had Soldiers, wearing PT gear and shoes, pass a top water swim test using a side stroke, tread

water and float for two minutes each, quickly release a harness, jump into the water and swim underneath for a measured distance, and finally create a V-shaped air pocket under the canopy of the parachute.

The YPG Command Team visited elite soldiers as they practiced and refined a new set of skills.

YTC Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks participated in the drills, and YPG lifeguards, firefighters and safety office personnel all provided support.



Local Army recruits visit YPG

By Mark Schauer

New Army recruits are the future warfighters the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) developmental test mission will serve.

Most newly enlisted recruits' knowledge 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.

More than a dozen local recruits mere weeks away from shipping out to a Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) paid a visit to YPG on Aug. 14 to ask questions about basic training and Army life with the post's command team, witness military vehicle testing, and visit other facilities that support the proving ground's test mission.



On Aug. 14, Recruits from Yuma's recruiting station visited U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG). (From left center) U.S. Army Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks, YPG Commander Col. John Nelson, and Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus talk with the Army recruits. "I didn't expect to come to YPG and meet the commander," said Christian Godinez, recruit. "It was a good experience: he gave us a lot of good advice." (Photo by Mark Schauer)

The visit to the post is the second in as many months, increasing the frequency of an effort YPG has made for many years.

"It's a great opportunity for our people about to go to MEPS to see the reality of what the Army is," said Staff Sgt. Rigoberto Montoya,

recruiter. "Right now, they don't really know what Army life is like. They may have seen some videos, but once they see tanks and artillery in real life and meet the command team, they are more motivated than before."

Montoya has recently seen an increase in interest in joining the Army and feels word of mouth about the visits is part of the reason why.

"Whenever they come here and tell their family and friends they saw an Army base, we start getting their friends as referrals," said Montoya. "They encourage others to join the Army and promote the Army."

YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus served as a drill instructor earlier in his Army career and

answered multiple questions about basic training from the recruits.

"Basic training is meant to be tough," he said. "You're going to be physically exhausted no matter how fit you are, but you're also getting stronger physically while that's happening. It's also mentally challenging, but they will help you with the tools to be resilient and be successful. You will mature a lot in a short period of time."

"I found that the people that are more successful are the folks that try to help each other, who build that camaraderie and battle buddy team," added YPG Commander Col. John Nelson. "When you leave there, you'll never forget the folks you trained with and the drill sergeants that mentored and developed you from a citizen to a Soldier."

Attendee Christian Godinez was among the new recruits sworn in to the Army by Nelson at the public Army 250th Birthday celebration held at Yuma's Colorado River State Historic Park on June 14. Enlisted as a wheeled vehicle mechanic, he will soon leave for basic training at Fort Jackson, South Carolina.

"I didn't expect to come to YPG and meet the commander," he said. "It was a good experience: he gave us a lot of good advice."



On Aug. 14, More than a dozen local Army recruits pose for a group photo after witnessing vehicle testing. "It's a great opportunity for our people about to go to MEPS to see the reality of what the Army is," said Staff Sgt. Rigoberto Montoya, recruiter. (Photo by Ana Henderson)



Local Army recruits get up close and personal with an M1A2 Abrams Tank and talk with military vehicle testers during their visit on Aug. 14. At least one of the visitors has enlisted as a 91B Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic as a Military Occupational Specialty. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Telling the Yuma story



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Chief of Staff Omar Silva (right) recently appeared in "Aerospace and Defense in Greater Yuma: The Launchpad for Innovation and Security." A production of the Greater Yuma Economic Development Corporation, the video discusses at length the region's technical excellence and vital importance to national defense. "The greatest asset Yuma Proving Ground has is its people and its culture," Silva said. The video can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OFpGkrCamRc> (Photo by Mark Schauer)

YTC Commander visits Maintenance Division to recognize employees



Years of Service

40 Years
Robert Kimber

20 Years
David Short,
Jason Trepanier
and
Romeo Martinez



Commander's Coin

LEFT: Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks awarded Art Roman and Robert Valencia with a Commander's Coin on Aug. 12, for the positive feedback they received from a test officer who said, "Art and his team have jumped into action every time I have reach out for help. Their positive attitude, willingness to help and unwavering commitment to assist in our overall mission make all of them, in my opinion, invaluable asset." RIGHT: Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks awarded Andrew Pinkerton a Commander's Coin for the work he did supporting the Munitions and Weapons Division by creating six new hardstand mounts for two mortar weapon systems. Pinkerton was also recognized for 25 years of service. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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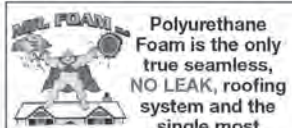
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KNOWLEDGE

FROM PAGE 1

South America. TRTC also has the fewest number of personnel of the three test centers. Yet the members of TRTC's staff tend to stay for many years, even decades.

"We're a very fair organization," said Ernest Hugh, TRTC director. "We're very commensurate with local salary bases. There's a solid mission and our personnel feel that by helping us with testing, they are part of an important effort to make the equipment functional in this extreme environment."

In addition to conducting rigorous testing in a punishing tropical environment, TRTC personnel face the additional challenge of transporting the equipment to be tested overseas from the United States. Hugh says that longtime TRTC employee Ricardo Martinez provides world-class logistics management to the organization. "Ricardo is a top-notch logistician," said Hugh. "He can move things anywhere in the world, back and forth, coming and going. He is very knowledgeable and easy to work with and has the mindset of finding a way for the mission to succeed."

A recent example involved preparing for a jungle test of the Armored Multi-Purpose Vehicle (AMPV). After months of planning, personnel from Yuma Test Center—vehicle operators, mechanics, and a data collector with experience testing the AMPV—traveled to Panama to support TRTC's efforts. They arrived anticipating that they would pick up the vehicle from port on a Saturday. Apparently fearing that his vessel would lose its reservation to pass through the Panama Canal, the ship's captain unilaterally decided to proceed to another port and return many weeks later with the cargo. Martinez used his years of personal rapport with the management of one of the largest container transshipment terminals in the world to expedite unloading the vehicle.



Luisa Wong, a computer science engineer by training who has worked for the facility for nearly 30 years, graduated first in her class at the Technological University of Panama. She was initially a technical writer but, like most Tropic Regions Test Center personnel, Wong soon found herself wearing many hats. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

"We really like what we do," said Martinez. "When you really enjoy and like what you do, you always think positively and give 110%."

Luisa Wong, a computer science engineer by training who has worked for the facility for more than 25 years, graduated first in her class at the Technological University of Panama. She was initially a technical

writer focused on reports and plan writing, but, like most TRTC personnel, Wong soon found herself wearing many hats. She began doing duty as a data collector and, eventually, as a test officer testing military equipment. In recent years she has achieved notoriety in the test world for her expertise in exposure testing. TRTC maintains 'coupons'

of wood and metal samples on exposure racks in a variety of tropical microclimates in multiple countries, carefully assessing how they fare in the extreme elements. They also can subject larger pieces of equipment to the same evaluations, from tents to military vehicles.

"Exposure testing is very interesting here because we have aggressive climates: marine sites, jungle sites," said Wong. "It is a good opportunity for customers because they can see the effects of climate on their items five to ten times faster than in other places in the world."

Whatever type of testing they are conducting, TRTC personnel must always be cognizant of the mores and political climate of the countries that host the test facilities they lease. TRTC personnel have long cultivated good relationships with American and host nation diplomatic and government officials, another vital part of their job.

"Our workforce takes pride in being out there and doing the work," said Hugh. "They are always willing to go above and beyond."

YPG's family advocate lends support to community event



Yuma Proving Ground's Family Advocacy Program Manager Mariah Boykin recently provided support during the Aug. 13 presentation hosted by the Yuma Victim's Rights Committee. The event was open to therapists, law enforcement, probation officers and survivors. Boykin, also a committee board member, set up an outreach table and was on standby in the case of a domestic abuse survivor needed someone to talk with. (Photos courtesy of Mariah Boykin)

YPG Command team recognizes employee's contributions

— Years of Service —



Alfonzo Brown,
35 years



Joel Ramirez and Jose Ramirez, 10 years
and **Scott Fricke, 15 years**



Melissa Rossi-Schultz, 5 years
and **Lena Altamirano, 15 years**

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Kenneth Wright, Maria Spolski, Sonia May
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Jacob Lopez

Army 250th Birthday Celebration
Certificate of Appreciation

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S-1 initiatives



Austin Rudolph, Travis Schneringer, Rhett Mendoza, Jessica Bailey, Grace Connor and Michael Blackburn. Not pictured, **Kasandra Bedoya, Sommer Cloinger and Patrick Franklin.**



Spenser Clark, Danielle Compton, Ana Henderson, Eugene Garcia and Mark Schauer.

(Photo by Darcy Broom)



Pauline Griffin, Shaman Moats
and **Estefania Meza (not pictured)**

Civilian Service Commendation
Medal for exceptional work in
Command Group

Commander's Coin for
ammunition test support



Julie Farmer and Joel Ramirez



Samantha Howerton

*All photos by Ana Henderson except where noted

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