

The Outpost

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

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Potent anti-armor munition integrated into MQ-9 at Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

A venerable unmanned aerial system (UAS) now has a potent new arrow in its quiver thanks to testing at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG).

YPG testers recently evaluated the integration of the Switchblade 600 Block 1 into the MQ-9, often referred to as the Reaper when equipped with a munition.

The Switchblade 600 Block 1 (SB 600) is a state-of-the-art anti-armor loitering munition, featuring the potent warhead employed by the renowned Javelin anti-tank missile. The system excels in range, achieving an impressive distance of up to 175 kilometers when launched from an MQ-9 at an altitude of 30,000 feet. Traditionally



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground recently evaluated the integration of the Switchblade 600 Block 1 into the MQ-9 Reaper. The Switchblade 600 Block 1 is a state-of-the-art anti-armor loitering munition featuring the potent warhead employed by the renowned Javelin anti-tank missile. (U.S. Army photos)

recognized for its versatility as a man-portable and ground-launched asset, the Switchblade 600 further demonstrated its groundbreaking capabilities through a recent historic UAS fire test at YPG.

“While the Switchblade 600 was initially designed for air launch, it has never been deployed from an aerial platform until now,” said Sidney Mattila, test officer. “This joint test highlighted the full capabilities of the system and expands mission capabilities for our warfighters.”

In the test, the Switchblade was successfully launched twice—once with an inert warhead and once with a high-explosive round—targeting

SEE **MQ-9** page 8

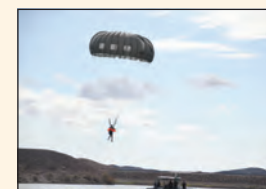
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Department of War awards \$8 million grant for new elementary school at YPG / Page 4



State and federal law enforcement agencies lend support for airborne Soldiers' air to water jump / Page 6



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Military Free Fall School's Bravo Company welcomes sergeant major

On Sept. 11, the Military Free Fall School's (MFFS) Bravo Company held a Sergeant Major Change of Responsibility ceremony to welcome Zachary Achziger.



Achziger told the crowd of students and instructors, "I am incredibly honored and incredibly lucky to be in this position now."



MFFS Commander, Maj. Matthew Morneault (front) praised outgoing Sgt. Maj. Matthew Krueger (back left) and encouraged students to soak up as much information as they could from him.



Krueger said "This job has been a blast. The last three and a half years have been amazing. It's been one of the best jobs I have had." He also praised the people he has served with saying, "There's been some amazing people here."



Krueger's wife Lorena leads the Family Readiness Group for the MFFS, and she was given a gift of gratitude for her role as well. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

The Outpost

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YPG uses push-up challenge to spark connections



Throughout September, Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) Suicide Prevention Team hosted a push-up challenge for Suicide Prevention Month. The goal was to get people to connect. They encouraged the workforce to do push-ups and if they could not, they could still cheer from the sidelines saying it's someone's presence that matters. On Sept. 8, Chief of Staff Omar Silva, kicked off the first group push-ups at the BROC atrium. The YPG Suicide Prevention Team, Bill Lloyd, Minda Federmeyer and Amanda Torres are hosting the weekly group push-up sessions until Oct. 2. (Photos by Ana Henderson and Joel Ramirez)

Outreach around post



Yuma Proving Ground's Suicide Prevention Team set up at popular areas around post to reach more Soldiers and members of the workforce. On Sept. 22, they handed out informational materials and stress relieving aids at the Exchange. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

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In honor of Suicide Prevention Month (September 2025), we're excited to launch the YPG Push-Up Challenge — and we want YOU to be part of it!

This initiative goes beyond push-ups. It's about promoting wellness, building camaraderie, and raising awareness for mental health across our community.



YPG PUSH-UP CHALLENGE

EVENT STARTS 08SEP25 AT 0000

No sign-up required! Just show up and represent your division, department, Command or group — that's your team. Whether you can do 5 push-ups or 50, you're welcome to join. Modifications are encouraged, and teamwork is what makes it powerful.

Recognition for the Top team will have their name placed on the Challenge Trophy. Top 3 individual Males and Top 3 Individual Females will be recognized.

Event Ends 02OCT25 at 1300. Winners to be announced shortly after.

QR Code for use with GOV PHONE ONLY



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QUESTIONS?

- Contact YPG's Suicide Prevention Team
- 1. Bill Lloyd928-328-2249
- 2. Minda Federmeyer928-328-6765
- 3. Amanda Torres928-328-7085



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SEPTEMBER IS SUICIDE PREVENTION MONTH

Department of War awards \$8 million grant for new elementary school at YPG

By the Department of War

The Department of Defense [War], Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, today [Sept. 5] awarded Yuma Elementary School District One a \$8,030,235 grant as the federal share of a larger \$10,037,794 project to construct a new James D. Price Elementary School at Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona.

This project will address facility capacity and condition deficiencies that placed James D. Price Elementary School as #35 on the 2019 Deputy Secretary of Defense "Public Schools on Military Installations Priority List" (Priority List). Upon completion, 125 students in kindergarten through fifth grade will be supported through this project.

Funding for this grant is provided under the Department's Public Schools on Military Installations Program. In making these funds available, the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation must give priority consideration to military installations that have schools with the most serious facility



On Sept. 5, The Department of War approved an 8-million-dollar federal grant for Yuma Elementary School District 1 to partially fund the replacement of James D. Price Elementary School which was built in 1953 at Yuma Proving Ground. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

capacity and condition deficiencies, as determined by the Priority List.

A multi-disciplined Federal Evaluation Team, with representatives from the Assistant Secretaries of the Air Force, Army, Navy, and the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation reviewed the school project to ensure the award appropriately addresses the noted facility capacity and

condition deficiencies.

In correcting the identified facility condition and capacity issues at the James D. Price Elementary School, this grant keeps faith with service members, improves the quality of education for defense-connected students, aids in the recruitment and retention of vital

skills at Yuma Proving Ground, and enhances partnerships between the community and the installation.

Local reaction

Dawn Marie with James D. Price Elementary School said in a statement, "The new, modern school will represent far more than a construction project—it will be a significant investment in the future of our students and a testament to the enduring strength of our community. The new facility will embody the resilience of our students, the dedication of our educators, and the steadfast support of our community, serving as a lasting source of pride and opportunity for generations to come."

Proposed improvements

- Kitchen to prepare hot lunches
- Larger auditorium
- Dedicated art & music rooms
- Modern layout, to improve security & overall student experience



On July 2, 2024, leading up to the decision by the Department of War, a group representing various agencies who make up a Federal Evaluation Team visited James D. Price Elementary School to assess the school's needs and deficiencies, one of which was the roof that sustained water damage.



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YPG Commander recognizes Mission Safety Office employees



On Sept. 8, Yuma Proving Ground Command Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus and the command group visited the Mission Safety Office to award Michael Scarboro a Civilian Service Achievement Medal for his exceptional work as a Health Physicist and Radiation Safety Officer. (Photos by Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus and Ana Henderson)



Nelson also recognized Safety and Occupational Health Specialist Daniel McDaniel for "his exceptional performance and swift action" when resolving an issue that impacted mission readiness according to the award citation. (Photos Ana Henderson)



YTC Commander recognizes employee's contribution to Laguna Airfield upgrades



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks recognized James Walk's extraordinary support to Laguna Army Airfield for infrastructure repair and upgrades from May 2024 to June 2025. Hicks presented Walk with a Certificate of Achievement on Sept. 22. (Photo by Jeffrey Rogers)

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State and federal law enforcement agencies lend support for airborne Soldiers' air to water jump

By Ana Henderson

The Airborne Soldiers at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) have a dangerous enough job of jumping from an aircraft onto solid ground yet they recently upped that by adding a body of water as their drop zone.

“We never know what [test mission] is going to come down,” explained Joe Castillo, Test Parachutist Program Manager for the Airborne Test Force (ATF). “So being inventive in what we are doing with the Soldiers, keeping them current and proficient and putting our heads together to ask ‘what haven’t we done’” was the why behind the idea.

ATF presented the plan for a static line deliberate water jump from two types of aircraft to Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks who “loved” the idea.

“I am an Airborne guy, so anytime our jumpers can jump in different scenarios, it’s just going to make them better and safer as they go from Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) back in the Army in other units, they can bring that experience with them.”



On the morning of Sept. 18, Soldiers from the Yuma Test Center Airborne Test Force and Military Free Fall School jumped from aircrafts into the Senator Wash Reservoir just outside of Yuma, Ariz. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

ATF Soldier Sgt. 1st Class Cody Lavalla vetted Senator Wash Reservoir, a water source just west of YPG, as the location after conducting a drop zone survey ensuring the location was safe to use for both aircraft and jumpers. The Bureau of Land Management also approved the use of the reservoir.

Yet with ATF no longer owning boats to recover the jumpers, they reached out to local law enforcement for support to mitigate some of the danger.

“It’s just been open arms,” described Castillo, when he got in contact with local law enforcement about their support.

With commitments from the Yuma County Sheriff’s Office (YCSO), Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the Yuma Sector Border Patrol (BP), ATF set the date. BP enlisted the help of BORSTAR, the elite Border Patrol, Search, Trauma, and Rescue unit and YCSO provided support at the command post for evaluators, instructors, and assistance with safety and water rescue operations.

Leading up to the jump, ATF ensured their Soldiers and those of the Military Freefall School (MFFS) were strong swimmers. They each underwent a rigorous Combat Water Survival Training modified for parachute operations. While wearing physical training gear and shoes, Soldiers had to pass a top water swim test using a side stroke, tread water and float for two minutes, 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.

“If they fail, they just can’t jump. They are a high hazard risk,” explained Lavalla.



A few weeks later on Sept. 3, the Soldiers, deputies and agents met at Senator Wash to do a dry, or rather a wet run of how to pull the Soldiers on to the rescue jet skis and boat while fully submerged with their gear.

Agents learned how to help the Soldiers quickly remove their parachutes, where it's safe to grab hold of their chute without the risk of it deploying, and how to safely recover their equipment.

On the morning of Sept. 18, anticipation was high. Each unit was focused on their mission. YCSO, CBP and BP provided support in the water from boats and jet skis manned with Soldiers, deputies, agents and members of BORSTAR.

One by one Soldiers from ATF and the MFFS glided through the air and into the water. ATF jumped from an UH-60 and MFFS from a CASA-212.

ATF Staff Sgt. Jonathan Harris was one of those jumpers.

"It was a nice easy landing compared to landing on the ground like we usually do," he said.

It took roughly 20-30 seconds for the jumpers to reach the water. In that time, jumpers are doing more than just taking in the view explained Harris.

"As you are coming down, you are adjusting to the wind. Making



The Yuma Test Center Airborne Test Force and Military Free Fall School Soldiers were supported in the water by the Yuma County Sheriff's Office, Customs and Border Protection, and the Yuma Sector Border Patrol (BP). BP enlisted the help of BORSTAR, the elite Border Patrol, Search, Trauma, and Rescue unit.

sure we are steering your canopy in the right direction to stay over the water and have a nice safe landing. We always try to face our canopies into the wind at about 200 feet to make sure that we are going to land straight down to the area that we are targeting."

Each jumper landed safely and crews standing by picked them up.

YPG Commander Col. John Nelson and Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus supported the jumpers throughout the preparation process. Nelson said he is proud of

the Soldiers and what this means for YPG's mission.

"It was great to see such a capability being brought here to Yuma Proving Ground, which hasn't existed for nearly 20 years, just based on the initiative of the Airborne Test Force reaching out to external agencies like the border patrol and sheriff's department to make sure everything is done properly and safe."

Hicks said while the initial intent was for ATF's training, he sees benefit for the other participants.

"It's not just good for our testers to be able to jump in the water and maintain that capability but to give these other agencies to work with us, to understand, what does it look like when you have someone coming out of the sky and landing, because that could easily be a skydiver, or a wingsuit jumper, or a civilian comes in and how do they help support them. So, it's great to bring awareness to the entire community."

Local law enforcement participated because they also see the value in joint training.

"We value the strong working relationship that has always existed between our organizations, and we continue to rely on one another to operate effectively as a team," said Tania Pavlak on behalf of the YCSO with Sheriff Leon Wilmot adding, "We are proud to support the warfighter ethos."

BP Assistant Chief Patrol Agent Michael Wisniewski added, "Joint training with the U.S. Army Airborne Test Force enhances our operational readiness and strengthens interagency cooperation. These exercises ensure our agents are prepared to respond swiftly and effectively in any situation while reinforcing the trusted partnership between the U.S. Border Patrol and the U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground."



MQ-9

FROM PAGE 1

a T-72 tank from YPG's target collection. These tests evaluated the system's components, from the launcher to its long-range antennas. Control of the SB600 through the MQ-9 Reaper Ground Control Station involved an advanced integration of Satellite Communications (SATCOM) and Data Link (DDL) relay, which enabled precise operation over long distances.

Following launch, the SB 600 was maneuvered by an operator using SATCOM for over-the-horizon communication, ensuring continuous command and telemetry

exchange. The MQ-9 acted as a relay station using DDL to manage real-time video feeds and enhance the munition's precision during reconnaissance and target engagement. During the test, the SB 600 was orbited around the target for confirmation before performing a high-speed attack dash, documented by a UH-60 helicopter and ground-based Kineto Tracking Mounts for comprehensive mission analysis.

"Integrating sophisticated weaponry into an aerial platform is vital to confirm the craft's continued ability to fly while accurately firing weapons," said Mattila. "YPG offers an ideal location for testing next-generation technologies like this and accelerating innovation to the frontlines."



Following launch, the SB600 was maneuvered by an operator using SATCOM for over-the-horizon communication, ensuring continuous command and telemetry exchange during reconnaissance and target engagement.



In the test, the Switchblade was successfully launched twice—once with an inert warhead and once with a high-explosive round—targeting a T-72 tank from Yuma Proving Ground's target collection. These tests evaluated the system's components, from the launcher to its long-range antennas. (U.S. Army photos)

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YPG's vast range and air space allows for the testing of long-range weapon systems without fear of hitting occupied areas. This vast size also includes nearly 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace. The proving ground seems as close to an ideal venue for UAS testing as can possibly exist: YPG's clear, stable air and extremely dry climate, along with vast institutional UAS testing knowledge, makes it an attractive location to aviation 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 subject matter experts in all facets of replicating electromagnetic environments.

YPG's unsurpassed capabilities allow for extensive testing without having to compete for runway and airspace with manned fighter jets as at other installations. Another critical bonus of testing at YPG is the presence of a wealth of other infrastructure meant for other sectors of YPG's broad test mission that can be leveraged to support UAS evaluations. YPG is home to things like technical and tactical targets, as well as generator and combined maintenance shops, all of which are also useful for UAS testing.



Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) unsurpassed capabilities allow for extensive testing without having to compete for runway and airspace with manned fighter jets as at other installations. Another critical bonus of testing at YPG is the presence of a wealth of other infrastructure meant for other sectors of YPG's broad test mission that can be leveraged to support UAS evaluations.



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Fitness Center hosts futsal tournament: Japanese visitors win



The Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) Fitness Center hosted a double-elimination indoor soccer tournament. For the tournament dubbed, Tomodachi (friends in Japanese) Futsal Tournament, Fitness Center staff invited the Japanese Ground Self Defense Force (JGSDF) who were visiting YPG at the time to join the tournament to build comradery. The action was intense and the stands full as the four teams took the court. In the end, it was the JGSDF who won the trophy. (Photos provided by the JGSDF and YPG Fitness Center)



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