

The Outpost

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

VOLUME 75 NO. 1 JANUARY 05, 2026

Low-cost combat attack system tested at YPG

By Mark Schauer

The Army is rapidly integrating layered unmanned aerial systems (UAS) and launched effects in a combined arms fight with fires and maneuver to penetrate, exploit, and defeat near-peer adversaries in a complex environment.

With decades of experience testing new UAS, the proving ground is currently hosting evaluations of the Low-Cost Uncrewed Combat Attack System (LUCAS), a one-way attack aircraft sponsored by the Marine Corps.

Harkening back to the Liberty Ship production model that rapidly produced thousands of cargo ships during World War II, testers hope that the LUCAS will eventually serve a similar function in the new era of warfare.



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Yuma Test Center Mission Employee of the Quarter

Name: Michael Stoltenberg
Years of Service: 17
Job title: Radio Frequency Support Lead – Electronic Warfare Branch
Recognition: Civilian Mission Employee of the Quarter, fourth quarter for fiscal year 2025
Reaction: “I was surprised but I have also been busy. I was caught off guard. I just did my job.”



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks awarded Michael Stoltenberg with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal on Dec. 3, 2025, as his peers watched during an award ceremony. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Read more about Michael Stoltenberg by scanning the QR code.



Yuma Test Center Mission Support Employee of the Quarter

Name: Krista Hughes
Years of Service: 5
Job title: Program Analyst – Maintenance Division
Recognition: Civilian Mission Support Employee of the Quarter, fourth quarter for fiscal year 2025
Reaction: “I’ve got the kind of division and leadership that don’t just back me up, they cheer louder than anyone in the stands. Their support lets me stretch, stumble, and soar, always learning and becoming bolder.”



Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks awarded Krista Hughes with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal on Dec. 10, 2025, during an award ceremony surrounded by her peers. (Photo by Laci Butz)

YTC Commander recognizes Maintenance employees

On the morning of Dec. 10, Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks thanked three Maintenance Division employees for their recent work: Engineering Technician Andrew Hughes, Equipment Specialist William Sanchez and Industrial Engineering Technician at the Metal Working Shop Andy Pinkerton. (Photos by Laci Butz)

Andrew Hughes
 Robert Pinkerton
 William Sanchez



The Outpost

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Top civilian official visits YPG



U.S. Army Test and Evaluation Command (ATEC) Executive Technical Director James Amato spent two days at Yuma Proving Ground in December for comprehensive briefings and site visits related to the proving ground's developmental test mission. "You guys are doing great things, especially with the digitization initiatives and counter-UAS work," he said. "Everywhere I go in ATEC, it's the people that really make the enterprise so great: we don't build things, we turn data into information, and to do that takes intellectual capital. I'm convinced we have some of the brightest folks in the Department of War." (Photos by Mark Schauer)

Exemplary employees recognized for work during the furlough



During his visit, ATEC Executive Technical Director James Amato presented Civilian Service Commendation Medals to a handful of employees who worked during the furlough to complete essential tasks. Left to right: Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus, Col. John Nelson, David Bates, Jonathan Bazua, Nick Carlson, Rosa Meza, Jonathan Olbert, and Amato. Not pictured: Jonathan Green. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

Aviation employees thanked for unwavering test support



Aviation Systems & Electronic Test Division employees Test Officer Walter McCormick and Reports Team Chief Elizabeth Romero received a Certificate of Appreciation from Col. Steven Power of Project Manager Maneuver Ammunition Systems on the afternoon of Dec. 10. The citation called out their "exceptional dedication and unwavering supporting" during the Aviation Proximity Explosive test program. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Employees recognized for prompt and innovative work after storm damage



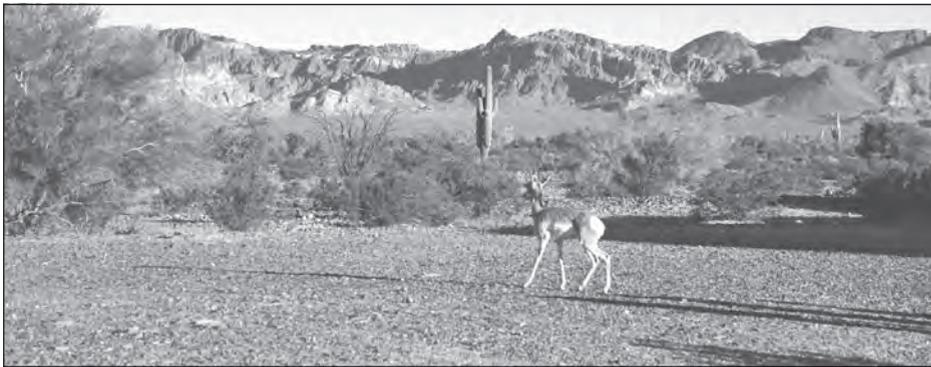
Dec. 3, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks thanked a group of employees for supporting the Flight Services Division after a storm in September caused damage. The individuals' efforts were prompt and innovative, allowing Flight Services to continue operating. Left to right: Hicks, Damian Dowd, Tyler Pitts, Frank Timke, Josh Calvert, Jaysen Lockett, Patrick Franklin. Not pictured, CW5 Ryan Wells. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

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LEFT: At one time the Sonoran pronghorn population was on the brink of extinction with about only 25 left in 2002. Today, about 247 pronghorns live on the Cabeza Prieta National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and nearby lands. At least 232 pronghorns live on the Kofa NWR and Yuma Proving Ground. RIGHT: Pronghorns are known as the fastest land animal in North America so the capture crew must run in with a net to slow them down and the "muggers" grab and subdue them. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Pronghorn capture aims to continue species recovery

By Ana Henderson

At one time the Sonoran pronghorn population was on the brink of extinction. The dry summer of 2002 wiped out 75% of the pronghorn population leaving only about 25. With no measurable rainfall for 13 months the —populations could not survive.

Since then, the efforts to revive the pronghorn population on the Kofa National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) and Cabeza Prieta NWR are bringing them back to their historic range.

Today, about 247 pronghorns live on the Cabeza Prieta NWR and nearby lands. At least 232 pronghorn live on the Kofa NWR and Yuma Proving Ground (YPG). This keeps the population at the recovery goal of 150 pronghorns for the Kofa NWR/ YPG area.

"We are supposed to maintain that number five to seven years and show a trend of stable and increasing populations," explains Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist.

Many federal agencies in southwest Arizona have played a role in bringing back the species yet Steward credits The Arizona Game and Fish Department and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for being the technical experts and the leaders.

Several agencies manage semi-captive breeding pens on Kofa and Cabeza Prieta NWRs. These pens are approximately 300 acres in size and allow pronghorns to live in their natural environment with supplemental food water and predator exclusion to maximize fawn survival. The agencies then capture animals from the pen annually for release into the wild. The recent capture released four males into another breeding pen on KWR to promote breeding.

Members from the agencies and volunteers camped on-site to start the day early for the recent capture in mid-December. YPG's Veterinary Clinic provided staff as did the Environmental Sciences Division

and a few other hands from YPG were there to help. Marine Corps Air Station Yuma Commander Col. Jared Stone and his son also lent a hand during the capture.

Leading up to the capture, a multi-chambered boma, was constructed inside the massive breeding pens. The pronghorns were conditioned over a period of weeks to enter a boma for food and water.

The boma has three circular pins so the pronghorn can gently be herded between chambers leaving only two or three in the capture chamber at a time.

Pronghorns are known as the fastest land animal in North America so the capture crew must run in with a net to slow them down and the "muggers" grab and subdue them.

"The muggers have a special skill set because safety is paramount for both the crew and the animals," explained Steward.

During this capture the does and fawns were released from the

boma and back into the pen and the bucks were taken by stretcher to the veterinarian tents. Veterinarians administer vitamins, antibiotics and oxygen to the pronghorn, to reduce stress and check for injuries before transportation to another pen also on KWR.

At release, the bucks stuck together and ran around their new home, at least for the next few weeks. Only time will tell if the effort produces fawns.

Steward explains that the ultimate the goal of this effort is to build a strong and self-sustaining pronghorn population.

"It's not just about putting more pronghorn out there...the trick is to promote the habitat and reduce the threats. To let pronghorn survive without our intervention," adding, "Our role as a federal agency under the Endangered Species Act is to promote ecosystems where endangered animals can recover and thrive."



A multi-chambered boma, is constructed inside massive breeding pens. The pronghorns are conditioned over a period of weeks to enter a boma for food and water. The boma has three circular pins so the pronghorn can gently be herded between chambers leaving only two or three in the capture chamber at a time.



During this capture the does and fawns were released from the boma and back into the pen. The bucks were taken by stretcher to the veterinarian tents for examination. The four bucks were then transported to another pen on the Kofa Wildlife Refuge. The bucks stuck together and ran around their new home. Only time will tell if the effort produces fawns.

YPG command team honors World War II-era Bushmasters



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson and Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus participated in annual memorial ceremony honoring the Bushmasters on Dec. 6. The event at Yuma's Desert Lawn Cemetery honors the Soldiers of the 158th Regimental Combat Team who earned international acclaim for their tenacity in jungle combat in the Pacific Theater of World War II. Following the ceremony, Nelson and Holthus participated in the customary Company L honorary roll call. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

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Congratulations on your retirement

YPG Fire Chief Hangs Up Helmet

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Fire Chief Gerald Ball hung up his helmet after 36 years with the department on Dec.18.



During his retirement ceremony, Ball was praised for his calm professionalism and unwavering commitment to his mission and firefighters, Ball heard accolades from YPG Garrison Manager Kenneth Musselwhite and Assistant Fire Chiefs Matthew Kelly and Daniel Goodwin among others. "It's not been a job, it's been an honor and a privilege," Ball said of his career. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



Congratulations on your retirement

YTC's Franklin hangs up his wings

Yuma Test Center Flight Services Division Chief Patrick Franklin hung up his wings after more than 40 years in Army aviation logging nearly 2,500 flight hours in 11 airframes.



Hundreds showed up to Laguna Airfield to celebrate his career on Dec. 15. Mike Diehl served as master of ceremonies and told several anecdotes of their decades working together. Yuma Proving Ground Command Col. John Nelson, Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks, Jeff Rogers, Jason Swain, Glen Pinnell, Walter Aims, Jim Walk and Eddy Patchet also made remarks and presented Franklin with parting gifts. (Photos by Ana Henderson)

On the morning of Dec. 17, Franklin received a water salute while taxiing from his final flight. The Yuma Proving Ground Fire Department created the ceremonial tunnel of water by spraying Franklin and the crew, as they made their way down the taxi. A huge round of applause greeted Franklin as he stepped off the aircraft and his flight team on the ground continued the "Fini Flight" tradition of spraying him down. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground commander keynotes event honoring veterans

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson served as keynote speaker at Yuma's local Wreaths Across America ceremony at Sunset Vista Cemetery on Dec. 13.

The annual ceremony holds a seasonal significance by remembering the fallen, honoring those who have served, and teaching the next generation the cost of freedom.

Nelson noted that in decades past most Americans either served in uniform themselves or had at least one immediate family member who did, which changed after the adoption of an all-volunteer force in the early 1970s.

"Although there are many benefits to having an entirely professional fighting force, there is one great risk: namely, that the American people will grow detached from the military and Soldiers who sacrifice so much on their behalf," said Nelson in his remarks. "That would be a



As the only local cemetery participating in the event this year, a larger-than-usual audience heard Nelson's keynote remarks. The annual ceremony holds a seasonal significance by remembering the fallen, honoring those who have served, and teaching the next generation the cost of freedom.

terrible tragedy, and I'm grateful that events like this exist to help ensure that doesn't ever happen."

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Nelson and wife Gina joined attendees in laying wreaths

on veterans' graves, being sure to say the deceased's name and thank them for their service.



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson speaks at the annual Wreaths Across America ceremony at Yuma's Sunset Vista Cemetery on Dec. 13, 2025.



Following his remarks, Nelson (left) and wife Gina (right) lay wreaths on veterans' graves. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

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SYSTEM

FROM PAGE 1

“There is a price point that we want to produce a lot of these in a rapid fashion,” said Col. Nicholas Law, Director of Experimentation in the Office of the Under Secretary of War for Research & Engineering. “It’s not a single manufacturer: it’s designed to go to multiple manufacturers to be built in mass quantities.”

The warhead that will eventually be integrated into LUCAS isn’t constructed yet, but it will also be low-cost and mass produced by multiple manufacturers. Evaluators are currently testing LUCAS with inert payloads.

YPG’s vast range and air space is best known for the testing of long-range weapon systems without fear of hitting occupied areas. Yet 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 unsurpassed capabilities allow for extensive testing without having to

compete for runway and airspace with manned fighter jets as at other installations.

“The facility itself gives us the flexibility to do what we need, and at the same time will allow for full-fledged testing when it is ready,” said Law. “We’re getting our baby steps in before we conduct safety certification testing.”

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.

“It really comes down to the flexibility of the airspace: If the system is weaponized, I have the ability to test that here,” said Law. “If it’s not weaponized, I have another large area that is free to maneuver within restricted airspace. It gives us multiple pathways to flight.”

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 a wide array of technical and tactical targets, vitally important for UAS testing.

“Once we start weaponization and automated target recognition, we can have a target that is a representation of a real target,” said

Law.

The testers are also impressed by the institutional knowledge and dedication to the mission displayed by YPG’s aviation personnel.

“I think it is one of the easier ranges to work with, because of the professionalism of the workforce,” said Law. “As a customer coming in, it is easy to understand the rules and how YPG operates. The capacity and capabilities available here are very impressive.”



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Fun over the holidays

ACS spreads holiday cheer with toys from Operation Homefront



The upper level of Army Community Services looked like Santa's workshop on Dec. 4 when the directorate provided stocking stuffers for Active-Duty Families. The toys came from the Operation Homefront Program, which is made up of customer donations to Dollar Tree. Dollar Tree uses those donations to provide toys from its stores. More than 1,500 toys were donated to Yuma Proving Ground. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Sweet and creative competition



Yuma Proving Ground's Plans Division hosted a luncheon Gingerbread House and Cookie Competition on Dec. 18. Employees filled the BROC Atrium for their chance to taste and vote for the most delicious cookie and choose the most creative Gingerbread houses. To wash down the sweets the Army Substance Abuse Program served up refreshing mocktails for National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month. (Photos by Elisa Reitman)

Annual Community Tree Lighting at YPG incredible



An overwhelming turnout came out to celebrate the season at the Annual Community Tree Lighting at Yuma Proving Ground's Cox Field on Dec. 11. YPG Commander Col. John Nelson greeted the crowd in the opening remarks. Entertainment included the students of James D. Price Elementary singing. Santa then parachuted from the sky and arrived for the tree lighting and to mingle with the children who were eager to share their wishes. The unforgettable night was made possible with the support of IHG Hotels & Resorts, ALLO Fiber Arizona, Yuma International Airport, Yuma & Imperial Valley Wealth Management. MWR also thanks the valued community partners for their continued support including USO Arizona, Exchange, Military Free Fall School, YPG Police Department and Fire Department. (Photos courtesy of MWR)



Cookie - Santa's Secret Snack
Reindeer Droppings – Stefanie Jacobs

Cookie- Holiday Remix
Strawberry Cheesecake Crunch – Grace Connor

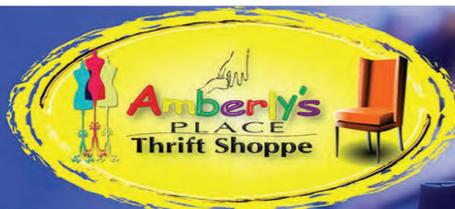
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Gingerbread - Deck the Walls

Evergreen Cottage – Grace Connor

Gingerbread - Sleigh It Ain't So

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