

The Outpost

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

VOLUME 75 NO. 4 FEBRUARY 16, 2026

New CsUAS designation for U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

With eight decades of experience conducting developmental testing drones, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG)'s institutional knowledge is unmatched in the Department of War.

The U.S. military has used unmanned aircraft for decades to perform dangerous reconnaissance and attack missions that save lives, and the importance of small, unmanned aircraft systems (sUAS) grows with each passing year.

As the technology proliferates, drones' use in warfare has become significant, necessitating robust counter-sUAS (C-sUAS) defenses for use anywhere American forces may be deployed.



Since the establishment of Joint Interagency Task Force 401 by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth in August 2025, U.S. Army Yuma Test Center has been designated as the primary, dedicated interagency C-sUAS test and training range. (U.S. Army photo)

Since the establishment of Joint Interagency Task Force 401 by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth last August, U.S. Army Yuma Test Center has been designated as the primary, dedicated interagency C-sUAS test and training range. The designation means specifically that YPG will primarily focus on Class I and II small UAS, while larger Class III through V systems will continue to primarily be tested at White Sands Missile Range, YPG's larger sister installation.

"We've been working this mission since the Army Rapid-Equipping Force came here for Desert Chance in 2015 where we needed to see what industry had to

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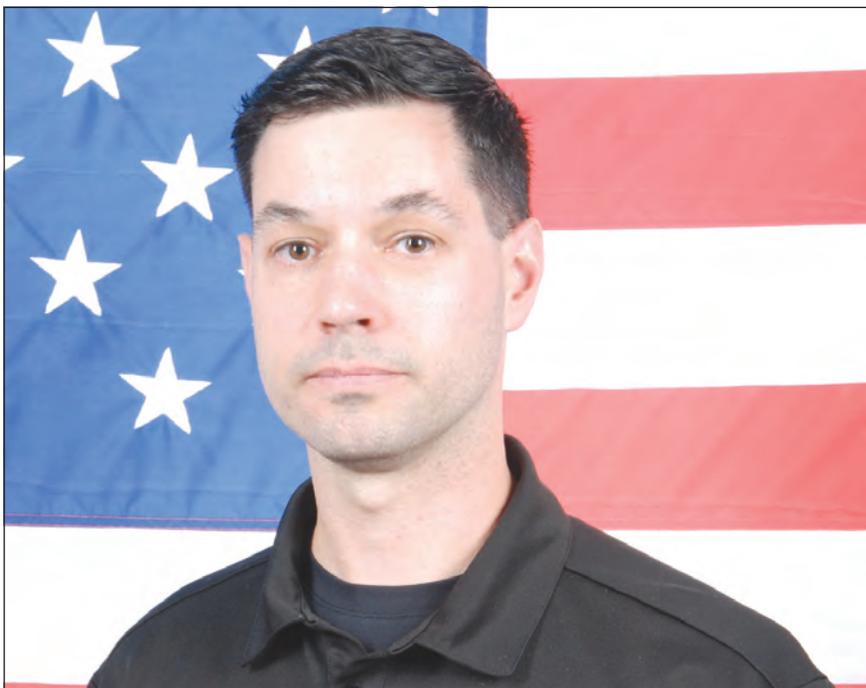
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YPG employee named ATEC Command Employee of the Quarter

Command Mission Support: Peter Lariviere



Peter Lariviere was selected as the Army Test and Evaluation Command's (ATEC) Civilian Mission Support Employee of the Quarter, 3rd Quarter, Fiscal Year 2025 from April 2025 to June 2025, while serving as an Operation Research Analysts for the Engineering Support Branch in the Instrumentation Division. ATEC's Chief of Staff Westley Williams wrote in an email to the workforce, "His efforts to improve data processing operations have been crucial to mission success." (U.S. Army photo)

The Outpost

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Congratulations, lieutenant



On Feb. 5, U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground firefighter/paramedic Brad Gray was promoted to lieutenant/paramedic. During a ceremony at the fire station on post, Gray received a certificate, his new badge, and helmet insignia showing his new title. (Loaned photos)



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Munitions and Weapons Division's Badge of Artillery

By Ana Henderson

A badge of honor is something earned and cherished.

At Yuma Test Center's Munitions and Weapons Division, the Badge of Artillery is just that.

At the division, test officers (TO) must earn either a mortar or artillery firing certification to work independently and lead a test. The process involves many milestones and can take a new TO anywhere from seven months to a year explained senior test officer Richard Bloomfield.

"There's a required number of hours for observation. It's somewhere in the neighborhood of 100 hours. There's a required number of hours for participation. Basically, somebody else watching you do the test and that's also about another 100 hours."

There's a familiarization period where TOs meet with the different instrumentation support shops to learn about their role during a test.

"We become familiar with all those areas of instrumentation so we can properly work with our customers and know what work we can supply them as far as instrumentation and data collection goes."

TOs also have misfire training with the weapon operators better known as gunners. Plus, a lot of reading from technical manuals and Standard Operating Procedures.

The requirements are lengthy, yet Bloomfield says what means more than checking off the requirements from a list is the respect from your fellow TOs.

"Doing the training is one thing. Anybody can read the SOPs and complete the number of hours. That's not necessarily the hard part. But it's gaining the trust of your peers." He goes on to explain, "You have to prove that you can safely run a test downrange, and look out for all the personnel, and at the same time manage customer expectations, data



At the Munitions and Weapons Division, test officers must earn either a mortar or artillery firing certification to work independently and lead a test. Those who earn their artillery certification also earn a Badge of Artillery memento that represents the significance of their accomplishment and gravity of their responsibility as an artillery tester. The most recent recipients are Carlos Duarte, Erik Alcala and Hector Magana, pictured with Richard Bloomfield who came up with the idea for the badge. (Loaned photos)

collection and everything else that we have to deal with."

Acting Artillery Branch Chief, Jorge Amaya told recipients, "This certification marks the beginning of a new and challenging phase in your careers. You are now entrusted with even greater responsibilities, and the safety and effectiveness of our artillery systems rest on your shoulders."

You can imagine when those milestones are met it's a momentous accomplishment. That's why Bloomfield wanted to mark the achievement and came up with the idea for the Badge of Artillery ceremony. The inspiration came from hearing about a retirement ceremony

where the person received a piece of a demilitarized gun tube.

"I thought man that would be so cool to have a piece of a gun tube."

He spoke with this branch chief, and they decided it would be an impactful way to recognize the TOs who are artillery certified.

Bloomfield got the approval to use a de-milled 155-mm gun tube, then he worked with the Metrology and Simulation and the Machine Shop to get it sectioned and inscribed.

"I came up with an inscription to put on the tube."

Each tube says "King of Battle" because artillery is king of battle.

"Across the bottom it's inscribed, mils, meters and second because

those are the three most important things to an artilleryman," explained Bloomfield. Adding, "It's a reminder of how important it is we know where the gun is pointing whenever we shoot it."

Lastly, Bloomfield selected a meaningful location to present the badge. He chose the memorial monument for Michael Tran, an artillery tester critically injured who later died after a testing accident in the 90s.

"It's a reminder that not doing our job correctly carries heavy consequences."

In the two years since the ceremony began more than 20 TOs have received the Badge of Artillery. The most recent recipients are Erik Alcala, Carlos Duarte, and Hector Magana.

Acting Artillery Branch Chief Jorge Amaya told the recent recipients, "These are not mere tokens of congratulations; they are powerful symbols of the milestone you have all accomplished. Each piece is a tangible representation of the complex systems you have now mastered and serves as a lasting tribute to the expertise and dedication this certification demands."



Each tube says "King of Battle" because artillery is king of battle explained senior test officer Richard Bloomfield. "Across the bottom it's inscribed, mils, meters and second because those are the three most important things to an artilleryman," he added.

YPG Instrumentation Division shows its stuff

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground is at the forefront of Army transformation efforts.

Conducting developmental testing of the Army's most cutting-edge systems requires a staggering array of high-tech equipment to record, quantify, and verify performance.

From radars and acoustic scoring systems to high-speed cameras and specialized weather-measuring equipment, members of the YPG workforce had the opportunity to see the apparatus that the YPG Instrumentation Division offers in a special 'showcase' on January 22.

"There are new test officers

who aren't familiar with all we can do or are familiar with some areas but not all of them: this helps them understand some of our capabilities," explained Jason Swain, Instrumentation Division Chief. "It's also good for personnel from offices like resource management and contracting that we work with to procure and maintain this instrumentation. It helps them better understand what it is when we discuss it: otherwise, it is just a piece of paper to them."

Attendees could control optical tracking mounts used to follow artillery and parachutes in flight, use a surveying instrument to

try to find a metal washer on the ground, and measure the velocity of a golf swing. They also got a look at new video editing equipment, telemetry antennas, and ballistic instrumentation.

Even long-time YPG test personnel found the opportunity to get up close and personal with the division's equipment valuable.

"There's always new stuff that I don't know about, so I like to get out here and see what they have," said Michael Diehl, Air Combat Systems Directorate Technology and Safety Advisor. "It also gives me a chance to talk to people I don't see all the time. It's all about relationships and how to make it work."



From mobile dynamometers and acoustic scoring systems to high-speed cameras and specialized weather-measuring equipment, members of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's workforce had the opportunity to see the apparatus that the post's Instrumentation Division offers in a special 'showcase' on Jan. 22, 2026. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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BROC signage highlights YPG as the Premier test center



Visitors of the Bracamonte Range Operations Center will notice new signage. The signs, designed and hung by the Visual Information team on Jan. 26, highlight Yuma Proving Ground as the Army's Premier extreme natural environment test center. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Airborne Soldiers attend student outreach event



The Yuma County Public Works and Center for the Future of Arizona invited U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground to take part in the annual Spring Career and Technical Education fair. Soldiers with the Airborne Test Force (ATF), Staff Sgt. Angel Viveros a rigger/test jumper and Sgt. James Doromal the ATF Medical NCO attended. They talked to students about their career as parachute testers along with Air Delivery Branch Chief and engineer Carlos Anaya. Organizers reported that more than 300 middle and high school students from Yuma County attended. (Photos provided by Carlos Anaya)



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Upcoming Artemis II space mission has multiple Yuma Proving Ground connections

By Mark Schauer

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) announced the first crewed mission of the Artemis II will fly around the moon after an opportune launch window sometime in March or April.

The mission will be capped by the deployment of the Orion space capsule's parachutes, rigorously evaluated at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) in multiple developmental tests between 2011 and 2018.

The Artemis mission's pilot is slated to be Victor Glover, an astronaut who witnessed multiple developmental tests of the Orion's Capsule Parachute Assembly System (CPAS) here. Glover and his fellow astronauts went into a pre-launch health stabilization, or quarantine, on January 23 in preparation for the mission.

Most people associate space travel with tremendous speed, but safe



Test personnel recover the deployed parachutes from the Orion Space Capsule's Capsule Parachute Assembly System after a test at YPG on Jan. 14, 2013. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

deceleration is just as important for the astronauts on board: Whereas a spacecraft has to travel at approximately 20,000 miles per hour to escape the Earth, to return its occupants safely to the ground the same capsule needs to be decelerated from as fast as 24,500 miles per hour to speeds slower than most people drive automobiles on residential streets.

Meanwhile, the extreme friction generated by the capsule hurtling back into Earth's atmosphere at

such a tremendous speed means its exterior heats to more than 4,000 degrees Fahrenheit.

Safely landing under these conditions is a tremendous undertaking, and large parachutes play an important role in accomplishing it. The rope that makes up the CPAS' cord is made of Kevlar, the strong synthetic fiber used in body armor: the change was made from steel as a result of testing at YPG. Each main parachute consists of 10,000 square feet of fabric: the CPAS system is designed to deploy sequentially and pass through two stages prior to being fully open: on re-entry, two drogue parachutes deploy to slow the hurtling 10-ton capsule prior to three main parachutes taking it down to a languid landing speed of 17 miles per hour.

Further, the parachute system is designed with redundancies meant to protect the safe landing of astronauts even in extreme scenarios such as two parachutes failing, or a catastrophic mishap shortly after takeoff. In many of the tests at YPG, evaluators intentionally rigged one or more of the CPAS' parachutes to not deploy to ensure that the remaining



The Capsule Parachute Assembly System undergoes testing at Yuma Proving Ground on Dec. 15, 2017. (U.S. Army photo)



Test personnel examine components of the Orion Space Capsule's Capsule Parachute Assembly System after a test at Yuma Proving Ground on March 8, 2017. (Photo by Mark Schauer)



Personnel recover the mock Orion Space Capsule following a developmental test drop of the Capsule Parachute Assembly System at Yuma Proving Ground on July 24, 2013. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

functioning chutes could withstand the additional stress of speed and mass the failure would cause.

In addition to being able to outfit the test vehicle with far more instrumentation and cameras than would be possible if it was coming from space, testing over land at YPG made recovery and examination of the parachutes easier than when the capsule lands in the ocean following a real space mission.

The years of hard work paid off. Following a launch on November 16, 2022, the uncrewed Orion took a 1.4 million mile round-trip journey that took it past the moon, reentering

the atmosphere and splashing down safely in the Pacific Ocean after the CPAS deployed without a hitch on December 11, 2022.

YPG has hosted developmental testing for NASA since the earliest days of the space program. The precursor to the lunar rover used during the last moon landings in 1971 and 1972, dubbed the 'mobility test article,' was tested at the proving ground in 1966. Astronaut Neil Armstrong, the first human to walk on the surface of the moon, visited YPG to witness developmental testing of the AH-56 Cheyenne Attack Helicopter in 1971.



The National Aeronautics and Space Administration announced the first crewed mission of the Artemis II will fly around the moon after an opportune launch window sometime between early February and the end of April. The mission's pilot is slated to be Victor Glover, an astronaut who witnessed multiple developmental tests of the Capsule Parachute Assembly System (CPAS) here. Here, Glover (center) speaks to media representatives in the moments before a test of the CPAS on Aug. 26, 2015. "A rocket with an American flag on the side of it is one of the most important things NASA is going to do in the near future in human spaceflight," he said at the time. (U.S. Army photo)



In 1966, the Mobility Test Article, an early version of the lunar rover, went through developmental testing on U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's vast ranges. The final product traversed the moon in 1971 and 1972. (U.S. Army photo)

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20 Years of Service



On Jan. 27, Yuma Test Center Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks recognized Anderson with a certificate for his 20 years of service to the U.S. government. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Jason Anderson
Range Chief, Range Operations Branch

Remembering Eddie Pierson



Longtime YPG motor pool supervisor Eddie Pierson succumbed to cancer last October during the 43-day government shutdown. Well-regarded, some of his former co-workers had the opportunity to reminisce about him when Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks presented widow Janet Pierson and daughter Jaelyn certificates of retirement and appreciation, and traditional Desert Rat. Son Jacob, a resident of the Phoenix area, could not attend. Originally hired in the ammo section working the conditioning chambers, in recent years Pierson had been an equipment specialist in the Logistics Directorate. He was also well known in Yuma as a longtime volunteer fast pitch softball coach. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

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DESIGNATION

FROM PAGE 1

offer to counter drones,” said Ross Gwynn, YPG Technical Director. “We have different instrumentation and test methodologies that we have developed in-house along with analytical processes to show how these systems are performing. This is a new designation to speed up this process and focus these test efforts in a single location to pull all of these stakeholders together across different services.”

“I expect the workload to be so great that we’ll continue to use multiple test centers to be able to accomplish that mission at the speed and scale with which the Department of War is trying to move,” added James Amato, Executive Technical Director for the Army Test and Evaluation Command.

YPG’s vast size also includes nearly 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace, with clear, stable air and an extremely dry climate where inclement weather is a rarity. These factors make the post highly coveted for aviation testing, and senior leaders are readying for higher demand.

“We anticipate a pretty significant increase in workload,” said Gwynn. “As industry is asked to demonstrate capabilities that will solve gaps for the military, we’re going to see industry partners and contactors that want to come out and get opportunities to test their systems in restricted airspace.”

“The subject matter experts and culture that YPG has will make sure that we can enable them to go faster in whatever they need to get after this counter-UAS fight,” added Omar Silva, YPG Chief of Staff. “We always make things happen, but there is an opportunity here to make sure that we can leverage this designation to get some infrastructure to provide data faster.”

In addition to its regular UAS-related test workload, YPG has hosted semiannual industry demonstrations

of the latest C-sUAS technology for most of the current decade. The methods to detect, track and identify threats differed by vendor, as did their specific defeat mechanisms. Some vendors provided kinetic weapon systems that shoot a target out of the sky, while others brought electronic warfare systems or combined aspects of other mechanisms. YPG’s expertise enabled the rigorous testing of all comers.

“They were really, really pleased with the opportunity to be able to bring their systems out to this type of environment where we’ve got the extended range and all the support required to be able to let them demonstrate what their system can do,” said Amato. “They don’t have the capability to do this anywhere else.”

“Counter-UAS efforts are so important now due to the proliferation of drones in the battle space,” added Col. John Nelson, YPG Commander. “In the Department of War, the Army is the lead agency for counter-UAS development and in the Army test community YPG is the center of excellence for testing C-sUAS. We’re turning over solutions for the warfighter every day.”

Since the days of testing technologies to defeat remote-controlled roadside bombs used by insurgents in Iraq and Afghanistan, YPG has been able to simulate the electronic ‘background noise’ present in a given location that includes everything in the electromagnetic spectrum, from radio and television signals to radiation emitted from microwave ovens. A realistic radio frequency background environment is critical when testing counter drone technology, and many feel YPG’s ability to reproduce a variety of electromagnetic environments from around the world is the best in the Department of War.

“Counter-UAS has a lot to do with electronic warfare, and the counter-improvised explosive device mission was at YPG for two decades during the War on Terror,” said

Nelson. "That really lent our range to presenting contested environments for the counter-UAS mission."

The designation is already garnering YPG additional attention from the highest levels of government. U.S. Senator Kevin Cramer, Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Subcommittee on Airland, visited in January for an in-depth look at the post's extensive C-sUAS testing capabilities.

"The committee and certainly the Department of War has taken base security especially to heart and has tried to incentivize as much private sector innovation as possible," Cramer said. "When I learned that Yuma Proving Ground was the tip of the spear on a lot of that testing, that is what prompted me to come here."

Cramer said he was impressed by the post's efforts and its personnel.

"What I have learned is very encouraging to me," Cramer said. "Our Army facilitates real innovation at the speed of our adversaries, and we're quite advanced at it."

Love is in the air at the library



There is nothing quite like a gift from the heart. The Post library hosted a Valentines Day card making event where Children from YPG's Youth Services and community members poured their thoughts onto paper and decorated with glitter and hearts. (Photos by Bea Brimmage)



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