

The Outpost

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

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APEX round for Apache tested at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Test Center at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground recently tested a new 30-mm Aviation Proximity Explosive (APEX) round primarily developed for firing from the AH-64 Apache helicopter.

Test Officer Walter McCormick who led the test explains that the APEX is designed to integrate with the existing M230 auto gun that's under the Apache.

The APEX is similar to the currently fielded M788 training round and M789 30-mm high explosive dual-purpose round.

"The APEX round was developed to be a frag round that would prox in front of the UAS [unmanned aerial system] and make a frag pattern that



Yuma Test Center at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground recently tested a new 30-mm Aviation Proximity Explosive (APEX) round primarily developed for firing from the AH-64 Apache helicopter. The APEX is similar to the currently fielded M788 training round and M789 30-mm high explosive dual-purpose round. (U.S. Army photo)

would take out a UAS."

McCormick further explains, "its form and function is similar except it explodes in front of the target instead of hitting the target then exploding."

The need for updated counter-UAS solutions is urgent. In recent years the UAS has become the weapon of choice on the battlefield as seen in Ukraine and Russia. Secretary of the Army Daniel Driscoll is pushing for the U.S. Army to focus its efforts on UAS and C-UAS technology. In fact, U.S. Army Yuma Test Center has been designated as the primary, dedicated interagency C-sUAS test and training range.

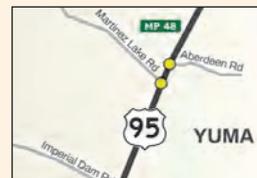
During testing, YTC performed two subtests; the first was to assess

SEE **APEX** page 6

Airborne Test Force
welcomes familiar
face as chief
/ Page 2



Highway 95
roundabout project
starts in March
/ Page 4



YPG employee and
his dog Eli, rescue
fallen neighbor
/ Page 5



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Airborne Test Force welcomes familiar face as chief

By Ana Henderson

The elite Airborne Test Force (ATF) at Yuma Test Center welcomes Chief Warrant Officer 2 Melvin Bullard as its new chief.

ATF Soldiers handle all static line, military freefall, heavy drop cargo and parachute maintenance systems at YTC.

“We are responsible for getting equipment and personnel safe and sound to the ground,” explained Bullard.

They also provide premier training support to the Army’s sister services, Department of War, the U.S. government, and international allies.

Bullard, a South Carolina native who joined the military in 2013, is no stranger to ATF’s mission; he served as the Pack Operations Noncommissioned Officer in Charge and a test parachutist for ATF from 2018 through 2022. While here he attended the Military Freefall School (MFFS), MFF jumpmaster school and the Tandem Offset Resupply Delivery System Equipment Course (TORDS-E). The TORDS-E had



The elite Airborne Test Force at Yuma Test Center (YTC) welcomes Chief Warrant Officer 2 Melvin Bullard as its new chief. Chief also served at YTC between 2018-2022 as a Pack Operations Noncommissioned Officer in Charge. He’s pictured on Feb. 14 with the ATF Soldiers during the Rodeo parade. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

him jumping out of an aircraft with a 55-gallon barrel as part of the training.

“Coming back to the ATF is a

unique opportunity,” he said of the assignment. Adding, “When the opportunity presented itself to come back to the Airborne Test Force, I

immediately said yes because I was able to come back to something I had already done before and that I was accustomed to. I am able to go into a spot and make it better than what I found—that is always the goal.”

Long before becoming a chief warrant officer, he was told by others around him he would make a great warrant officer, which put it in his sight.

“Once I understood the requirements of being a warrant officer, I just went down that rabbit hole and figured it out.”

Now as ATF’s Chief, Bullard, “conducts, analyzes, accesses, reports and manages airdrop activities for all developmental test experiments,” at YTC.

The Bullard family is happy to be back at YPG and in the warm climate after spending three years in Germany’s cold climate.

“I enjoyed every minute of it. I traveled a lot: 20 countries in three years. When I got the opportunity to come back to the ATF, it was, ‘Yes, let’s do it!’”

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Command team visits Arctic Regions



Yuma Proving Ground’s Command Team, Commander Col. John Nelson and Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus visited the rugged professionals at Arctic Regions Test Center at Fort Greely, Alaska. During their visit Nelson presented Dusty Wright with a Civilian Service Commendation award during the all-hands employee town hall. (Photo by Sebastian Saarloos)

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Officials stress safety risks of trespassing at Yuma Proving Ground

Authorized entry into any military installation is a crime, but the proving ground has a host of hazards that are as unique as its mission testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal in a natural environment.

After more than 80 years of existence and plenty of posted no trespass signs, you might think people would steer clear of these areas.

But you would be wrong. And instances of trespassing have been stubbornly persistent in recent years, necessitating a vigorous enforcement response from the YPG Police Department.

Though there is always the possibility of encountering people with harmful criminal intent, officers say many of the trespassers are only inadvertently breaking the law.

“There are a good handful of people that I run into out there that are genuinely good people,” said Sgt. Gregory Harper, YPG Conservation Law Enforcement Officer. “They are cooperative and their intent isn’t bad, but that won’t protect them from the hazards on our ranges.”

In addition to the possibility of unexploded ordnance from the proving ground’s distant history as a massive desert training facility formed by General George S. Patton during World War II, YTC’s 1,300 square mile ranges accommodate the surface danger zones for test fires of powerful long-range artillery shells and airdrops of cargo parachutes carrying multi-ton pallets of equipment or military vehicles. The testing of laser targeting technology in the area also carries the risk of causing serious eye injuries to unwitting persons traipsing in areas that they do not belong.

Beyond this, YPG’s rugged terrain and hostile temperatures are hazardous enough. Things like comprehensive cell phone signal availability that are taken for granted in populated areas are far from a given in the most remote, mountainous portions



Unauthorized entry into any military installation is a crime, but U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground has a host of hazards that are as unique as its mission testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal in a natural environment. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

of YPG, which further complicates rescue efforts.

“A lot of the desert areas are not as flat as you would think they are,” said Harper. “There are quite a few hills and washes that dive straight down, and so many different fingers off of those washes that are a lot more comprehensive than people think. There are areas that I have difficulty getting to even in my OHV, and every storm changes something.”

In recent years, the State of Arizona authorized YPG concurrent criminal jurisdiction. Until the change, YPG Police only had the authority to issue DD Form 1408s, which have no penalty or deterrence associated with them for individuals who are unaffiliated with the Department of Defense. Now, YPG Police are empowered to issue Central Violations Bureau (CVB) citations, which are adjudicated by a U.S. District Court.

“Our policy is to educate and issue a warning the first time unless there

is a more serious offense connected to the trespassing,” said Harper. “Even a verbal warning is annotated in our system.”

The dangers to life and limb are scary enough, but trespassing within YPG’s borders can also degrade the proving ground’s range conservation efforts and mission readiness.

“We want to preserve wildlife habitat, but the larger objective is supporting our test mission,” said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. “These ranges are our natural laboratory and we try to keep them as pristine as possible.”

Steward says that federal law allows for some public access to military installations, an obligation the proving ground takes seriously.

“We provide for some limited public access where it’s not interfering with our mission,” he said. “We permit hunting in very specific areas and with our range controllers notified of where it is taking place to keep people safe. If we have unau-

thorized access and range control is not aware of it, it puts people in danger and affects our test mission.”

YPG’s successful wildlife conservation efforts have enabled thriving populations of a variety of creatures that are imperiled in many other places in the American West, from bighorn sheep and Sonoran pronghorn to fringe-toed lizards and the Sonoran Desert tortoise. They have also provided ample habitat for numerous species of bats in several abandoned mines that predate the proving ground’s existence. The mines, however, also attract trespassers, which can wreak havoc on fragile roosting locations for the bats, natural predators of all manner of pesky insects.

“When there is a bat breeding colony in a mine, one entry is all it takes to wipe out an entire reproduction season for those bats,” said Steward. “A lot of bat species are very high conservation concern because of the lack of habitat availability.”

Additionally, Steward adds, isolated abandoned mines are extremely dangerous places for people to visit.

“Mines are flat-out hazardous,” Steward said. “They have bad air, unstable ground and ceilings, and deep, sometimes flooded shafts. They are real death traps. Stay out and stay alive.”

In his career at YPG Harper has responded to multiple calls to extract individuals from abandoned mines, including a harrowing incident in 2024 where personnel from multiple law enforcement and government agencies needed 12 hours overnight to extract a woman with a broken ankle stuck at the bottom of a 200-foot-deep mine shaft.

“Those mine shafts are so volatile: anything can collapse them,” said Harper. “We didn’t know the air quality where she was located. It was nerve-racking because we were trying to get things coordinated and start making decisions.”

Highway 95 roundabout project starting soon

By Ana Henderson

Motorist driving along Highway 95 near U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground will soon be encountering traffic cones and detours.

On March 4, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is slated to begin a project at the intersections of Imperial Dam, Martinez Lake, and Aberdeen Roads—two of which serve as the main entrances to the Walker and Kofa Cantonments.

The most significant change includes constructing roundabouts at the Imperial Dam and Aberdeen intersections. At the roundabouts the roadway will be widened to four lanes and transition back to two lanes afterwards. ADOT will widen the Martinez Lake Road intersection.

The roadway project also includes installing new pipe culverts, intersection lighting, erosion control, signage, fencing and other related work.

The estimated completion date for the project is July of 2027.

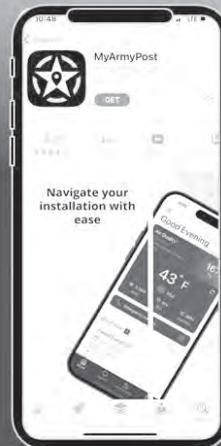
For more details on the project checkout the ADOT project website by scanning the QR code.



March 4 the Arizona Department of Transportation is slated to begin the project at the intersections of Imperial Dam, Martinez Lake and Aberdeen Roads. (Map credit ADOT)

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YPG employee and his dog Eli, rescue fallen neighbor

By Ana Henderson

What seemed like a typical walk after dinner for Mike Jonez and his poodle Eli turned into a lifesaving rescue.

Jonez, works as a Contracting Officer Representative for the Department of Public Works at U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground.

Before and after a long day of work, he takes his beloved standard poodle Eli out for a walk. On Feb. 2, though, Eli did something Jonez didn't expect.

"Eli suddenly sat down. He didn't want to move. He didn't want to stand up. I was kind of perplexed because he had never done that before. I tugged on his leash and he just sat there."

Jonez wondered if his dog was hurt or scared. They were about a quarter of a mile away from the house on a familiar street. Then Jonez thought Eli might be looking for the cat that lived there. That's when he heard a faint sound.

"It reminded me of an injured animal."

Then the 65-pound dog who at first didn't budge did something else, "He stood up, put his feet against the wall and started sniffing up in the air. Like he could smell something. That clued me in that maybe there was something on the other side of the fence that got his attention."



Mike Jonez works as a Contracting Officer Representative for the Department of Public Works at U.S. Army Garrison Yuma Proving Ground. Before and after a long day of work, he takes his beloved standard poodle Eli out for a walk. On Feb. 2, Eli alerted Jonez to an elderly neighbor who had fallen in her backyard and had been laying on the ground injured for hours before they found her. (Photo provided by Mike Jonez)

"Directly below me, there's an elderly woman laying on the ground, face down, she was coherent, but she couldn't move." Adding, "she was faintly repeating, 'help me, help me.'"

As luck would have it, Jonez didn't have his phone. He let the woman know he was going for help. He and Eli ran back home, and he returned to call 911 and walked into the yard to remain by the injured woman's side.

Jonez said the traffic from the busy street drowned out the woman's voice, who was face down, with her glasses broken and unable to move. If it wasn't for Eli, the woman would have likely not been rescued. She had been there since before lunch and Jonez and Eli found her around 7 PM. The woman and Eli have met several times while on his daily walks. In fact, she was counting on Eli to be on a walk as her hope of being found.

"She asked, 'who is this?' and I told her, 'It's the man with the brown dog.' She said, 'The brown dog Eli?' and I said 'yes.'" Jonez said that's when he could hear the emotion in her voice. She responded, "I was so hoping you guys would come by."

Jonez said their daily routine takes them by her house twice a day and that day they were her guardian angel. The woman had been pulling weeds before falling and had to be hospitalized in the intensive care unit for her injuries.

At that point Jonez looks over the fence.



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APEX

FROM PAGE 1

and compare it to the legacy M789 rounds, and the second test was to engage a UAS.

Crews fired approximately 1,200 rounds in total between the two variants, both close and long range.

“We engaged a couple different UAS and a few different ground targets,” said McCormick.

YPG has nearly 2,000 square miles of restricted airspace and year around sunshine which makes it ideal for aerial testing.

“They have done ground testing at other ranges. The problem is they [other ranges] don’t have the land or airspace to do aerial firing from a helicopter. So that’s a big benefit. Plus, all the unique instrumentation YPG offers,” McCormick explained.

During the APEX test YPG used its full arsenal of support assets to

collect data, ranging from air to ground which included chase pilots with the Blackhawks flying overhead for scoring, Kineto Tracking Mounts, telemetry, high-speed video, still photographers and data collectors.

These assets are readily available to industry partners testing at YPG.

“The Blackhawk was used primarily for overhead score, so we can assess where rounds are impacting based on firing point of the aircraft. The other benefit of surrounding ground camera angles was having a 360 view of the situation,” remarked McCormick.

The next step for the APEX is for it to undergo airworthiness release (AWR) based on the YPG test results. AWR will provide safety release for APEX to be fired from Apache helicopters by Soldiers when rounds are available. AWR is a milestone on the road toward Materiel Release and fielding.



Yuma Test Center at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground recently tested a new 30-mm Aviation Proximity Explosive (APEX) round. “The APEX round was developed to be a frag round that would prox in front of the UAS [unmanned aerial system] and make a frag pattern that would take out a UAS,” explained Test Officer Walter McCormick who led the test. (U.S. Army photo)



During testing of the Aviation Proximity Explosive, Yuma Test Center used its full arsenal of support assets to collect data, ranging from air to ground which included chase pilots with the Blackhawks flying overhead for scoring, Kineto Tracking Mounts, telemetry, high-speed video, still photographers and data collectors. After wrapping up the test, the team gathered for a group photo. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

YPG Commander serves as the grand marshal for rodeo parade



LEFT: U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson served as the Grand Marshal for the 2026 Silver Spur Rodeo Parade over the weekend. Craig Higgins drove Nelson in his 1992 Pontiac Firebird Trans Am convertible modeled after KITT from the original Knight Rider TV show. RIGHT: Longtime YPG employee Joyce Gordon served as honorary Grand Marshal and rode in the parade just behind the JLTV. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus and Soldiers from the Airborne Test Force joined Nelson in the parade followed by a Joint Light Tactical Vehicle (JLTV) and HMMWV towing a M119 howitzer. YPG proudly supports the Yuma community. One way it does this is by taking part in community events and spreading awareness about its mission as the Army's premier extreme natural environmental test center.



Yuma Test Center Commander reprises keynote role at Camp Bouse Days ceremony

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Test Center (YTC) Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks served as keynote speaker at the 30th annual Camp Bouse Commemoration Ceremony in the La Paz County town of Bouse on Saturday, Feb. 14.

Hicks returned in the role for the second consecutive year. YTC is the last active Army installation within the World War II-era Arizona Desert Maneuver Area, of which Camp Bouse was a part.

The modern-day mission of YTC has a direct lineage with the Soldiers of the World War II-era 'Greatest Generation' who in the 1940s tested the Canal Defense Light, a 13 million candlepower arc searchlight mounted in the turret of an M3 tank at Camp Bouse. The system was never fielded, but at the time the project constituted the second-most



U.S. Army Yuma Test Center (YTC) Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks served as keynote speaker at the 30th annual Camp Bouse Commemoration Ceremony in the La Paz County town of Bouse on Saturday, Feb. 14. (Photos by Mark Schauer)



secret Army program after the Manhattan Project.

Hicks mentioned that since the establishment of Joint Interagency

Task Force 401 by Secretary of War Pete Hegseth last August, YTC was tapped to serve as the effort's home base for testing and training. The

designation means specifically that YTC will primarily focus on Class I and II small unmanned aerial systems (UAS), while larger Class III through V systems will continue to primarily be tested at White Sands Missile Range, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's larger sister installation.

"I'm proud that the work done at Yuma Test Center today is at the forefront of current Army modernization efforts," he said. "The Secretary of War recently designated Yuma Test Center as the primary, dedicated interagency Counter-small Unmanned Aerial Systems test and training range. It is an effort that I feel is in keeping with the spirit of each generation of Soldiers that has served, from those of 'The Greatest Generation' who saved the world during World War II, to all that served in the following decades."

An Organization Day to remember



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's annual Organization Day took place on Feb. 19, fostering camaraderie and Esprit de Corps among a workforce that is ordinarily spread out over more than 1,200 square miles of land area. The event brought together different workers from across the proving ground to participate in a variety of fun activities meant to build unit cohesion, foster camaraderie, and promote friendly competition. The Munitions and Weapons Division came away with the coveted Commander's Cup, and a great time was had by all.

"It's very refreshing to see all of the team building going on and people taking the time to share fellowship together," said. Col. John Nelson, YPG commander. "Interacting on a social basis compliments their teaming when they're on the mission." (Photos by Mark Schauer)



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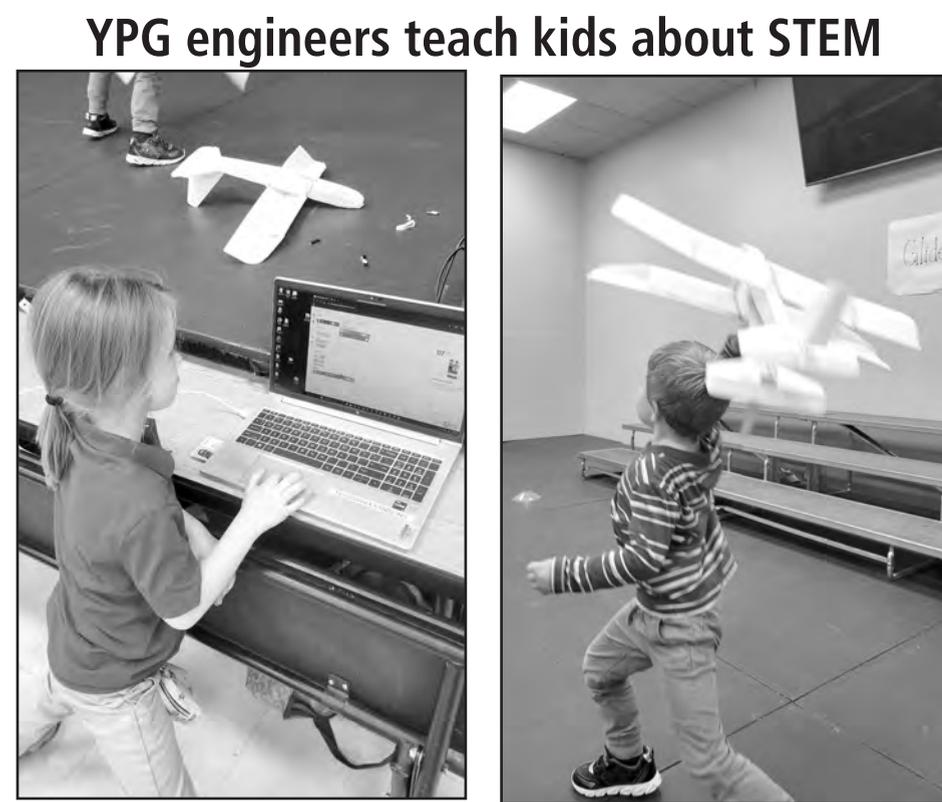
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Orange Grove Elementary School invited Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) engineers to present during its Science Fair on Feb. 4. YPG Munition and Weapons engineer Ashley Lochetto and S1's Patricia Conley brought gliders for the kids to fly. The gliders helped teach students the fundamental scientific concepts of aerodynamics, gravity, and force. They used weights to help adjust the gliders thrust and trajectory. Students also got to practice coding with a Lego dancing robot. (Photos by Ashely Lochetto)



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Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month



The Family Advocacy Program Manager hosted an outreach table at Child and Youth Services in recognition of Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. FAP Mariah Boykin said, "My goal was to provide teens with tools for self-care such as stress balls, eye ice packs, jump ropes and books that inspire teens." Boykin also hosted a teen seminar, Loving to Love Yourself, on Feb. 26, saying, "It is important for teens to learn to take care of themselves and love themselves in order to prevent them from engaging in unhealthy relationships. (Photos and content by Mariah Boykin)

Army Family Team Building



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