

The Outpost

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

VOLUME 75 NO. 11 MAY 25, 2026

Equipment vs. the environment: Tropic Regions exposure site challenges equipment

By Ana Henderson

There is no better location to test the resistance, or lack of, to corrosion than at Tropic Regions Test Center (TRTC).

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), the Army's premier extreme natural environment test center, has test centers in Panamá in Central America and Suriname in South America, to test equipment to its limits in a demanding austere tropical environment.

Project Managers looking to evaluate if their test item can withstand moisture will get the full exposure experience at TRTC's environmental exposure sites.

"It's one of the most aggressive environments in the world regard-



Project Managers looking to evaluate if their test item can withstand moisture will get the full exposure experience at Tropic Regions Test Center's environmental exposure sites. U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground, the Army's premier extreme natural environment test center, has test centers in Panamá in Central America and Suriname in South America. Rolando Ayala recently showed the Arctic Regions Test Center command group around the exposure sites in Panamá. The Breakwater environmental exposure site pictured sits along Panama Canal's Atlantic approaches along the Caribbean coastline. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

ing corrosion because of the time of wetness. It rains nearly daily here on the Atlantic side of the isthmus about 2000 millimeters per year. Also, because of the spray and the amount of salt in the air," explained Rolando Ayala who recently showed the YPG and Arctic Regions Test Center (ARTC) command groups around the exposure sites in Panamá.

The moisture and salinity cause immediate degradation on equipment. The amount of salt in the air is about 1950 milligrams per square meter per year.

"When test items come here the deterioration and degradation accelerates. Because we have a lot of environmental factors that occur si-

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Yuma Test Center Employees of the 2nd Quarter

Mission

Name: Scott Oliver
Years of service: 13.5 years as a contractor, 2.5 years as a civilian
Job Title: Counter-UAS Test Officer, Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division
Recognition: “Mr. Oliver’s exceptional leadership, technical expertise and dedication to the critical national security objectives have significantly impacted the protection of Warfighters and the advancement of C-UAS capabilities within the Department of War.”



On April 29, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks presented Scott Oliver with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal and named him YTC Mission Employee of the 2nd Quarter. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Reaction: “I am incredibly grateful to be a part of this mission and be supported by a great team.”

Mission Support

Name: Michael Newbourn
Years of Service: “I’ve worked at YPG for 32 years some of the best years of my life.”
Job title: Automotive Equipment Specialist, Maintenance Division
Recognition: “Provided innovative solutions in support of several programs. His ability to adjust to the ever-changing mission was essential in supporting Yuma Test Center.” He also mentored junior technicians.



On May 12, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks presented Michael Newbourn with a Civilian Service Achievement Medal and named him YTC Mission Support Employee of the 2nd Quarter. (Photo by Ana Henderson)

Reaction: “The YPG workforce has been more like family than just people you work with.” Newbourn advises as he prepares to retire in the next few months, “To the next generation always be valiant in learning, do not be afraid to try

new ideas and new things to improve yourself and people around you. Always be invested in others lifting each other up, it always brings out the best in us all.”

The Outpost

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YTC Commander recognizes employees



ABOVE: On April 29, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks recognized several Aviation Systems and Electronic Test Division employees for their support to the mission of testing equipment for the Warfighter. (Left to right) Scott Oliver, Edgar Castillo, Kenny Deal and Jose Velazquez. LEFT: On May 12, Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks recognized Robert Valencia for exceptional support of crane operations. Valencia demonstrated superior leadership, technical expertise and unwavering dedication while supporting 53 essential crane missions for Ground and Air Combat test operations. (Photo by Ana Henderson)



YPG employee serves detail with Customs and Border Protection

By Mark Schauer

U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground personnel are widely recognized for their willingness to volunteer their time

Sean Franklin of YPG's Technology and Investments Directorate was one of 13 Department of War civilians supporting Customs and Border Protection as part of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Volunteer Force.

An Eagle Scout and nearly decade-long member of the YPG workforce, Franklin grew up in Yuma in a military family. He has performed more than 2,000 hours of community service in Yuma County and was intrigued by the solicitation of support from Department of War personnel last summer.

"As a lifelong border town resident, I really thought it would be interesting to help support the immigration issues our country is facing. I thought the convenience of my location would be very helpful to them as well: I thought maybe it could be field support operations and



Sean Franklin (center) of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Technology and Investments Directorate was recently one of 13 Department of War civilians supporting Customs and Border Protection as part of the Department of Homeland Security Volunteer Force. (Loaned photo)

networking."

As it turned out, he was instead sent to the Customs and Border Protection headquarters in Washington, DC after the 45-day government shutdown that ended last November.

"Of the civilian volunteers, only 13 were selected for CBP support

throughout the country. Of those 13, only seven of us were sent to headquarters in Washington, DC."

Franklin's primary role was helping CBP's Movement Coordination Cell compile data on apprehensions and deportations as they occurred. The work pace was frenetic and sometimes required up

to eight consecutive days.

"It was faster paced than anything I've ever worked before. It was very chaotic and fluid, but also very rewarding to see the impact that was being made."

The call for volunteers has been reiterated in recent months, and prospective volunteers can apply at <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/846915600>.

"Don't look at it so much as a developmental detail assignment where you're going to obtain a whole bunch of new skillsets and trainings to bolster your career path, look at it more as an opportunity to serve in a different aspect that you may not have had the opportunity to do before," Franklin said.

Franklin found the experience rewarding and would consider serving again.

"I'm just glad I was able to do something a little bit outside my comfort zone and norm of what I'm used to here. I could definitely see doing it again if solicited for another deployment request."

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Local media interviews DPW Director



KYMA reporter Madeline Murray was on post on May 18 to interview new Department of Public Works Director Donnett Brown. Read more about Brown's 18-years of service in prior capacities at Yuma Proving Ground by scanning the QR Code. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

Military Spouse Appreciation



The Friday before Mother's Day is set aside to recognize, celebrate and thank military spouses around the world for their support and sacrifices. Military spouses provide support and stability for their spouse in a career where there are many uncertainties. U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Library in partnership with the USO hosted a Military Spouse Appreciation event at the Post Library on May 7, where spouses received a gift on behalf of the Army Community Services Family Advocacy Program. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



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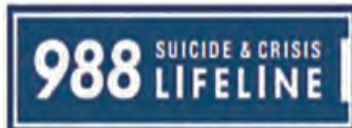
Homeschool STEM students visit YTC



Local homeschool STEM students visited Yuma Test Center on May 13 to learn about the anatomy of a test from Munitions and Weapons Division Chief Kermit Okamura, and non-destructive inspections of cannon tubes from Metrology Branch Chief Savanna Silva and Engineering Technician Andrew Hughes. The teens visited various areas of YTC to get a full understanding of the developmental and acceptance testing process. (Photos by Ana Henderson)




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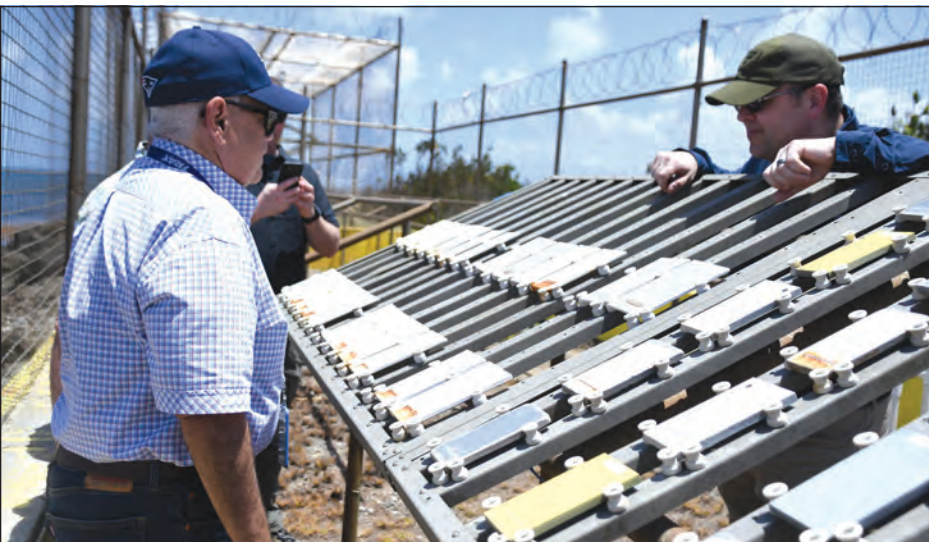
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The Breakwater environmental exposure site sits along Panama Canal's Atlantic approaches along the Caribbean coast, and the Coastal exposure site sits further inland surrounded by grass and brush. In Suriname the cages are tucked away surrounded by jungle vegetation. Rolando Ayala recently showed the Yuma Proving Ground and Arctic Regions Test Center command groups around the exposure sites in Panamá. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



EQUIPMENT

FROM PAGE 1

multaneously,” explains Mel Nickell, Tropic Test Support Services Program Manager.

One example of this extreme deterioration was an exposure test on a Humvee. The test called for one year in an exposure cage at the Atlantic side Breakwater Exposure Site in Panamá. After one month the degradation was significant. The exposure caused calcification and heavy oxidation on the hoses.

“This is when the vehicle became non-operational. After three months there were heavy leaks of fluid and

the break-pads didn't disengage,” explained Ayala.

The test intended to measure effects on a military vehicle during sea-borne transportation.

“They wanted to accelerate what would happen when they had the vehicles on the decks,” Ayala further explained.

Nickell added, “We have vehicles that break down at maybe 150 or 100 kilometers at other test centers, here it happens in 30 kilometers.”

The impact of the environment on a test item varies significantly based on factors, such as if the item is pre-treated against moisture, is placed on the ground or on concrete or panels and if it's facing the water.

“The difference between the seaside and the land side is amazing,” commented ARTC Technical Director Jeff Lipscomb of the degradation he saw on a case study.

Another example involves radios for six months. Ayala said of the test, “We did a baseline with the radios along the firing range. After six months we operated the radios. Out of the five transmitters, only one operated.”

Ayala shared that the radios were previously tested in chambers, “They were deemed to be water and humidity resistant.”

But the true austere tropical environment got to the system when chamber testing did

not. There's no replicating the exposure to humidity and microorganisms.

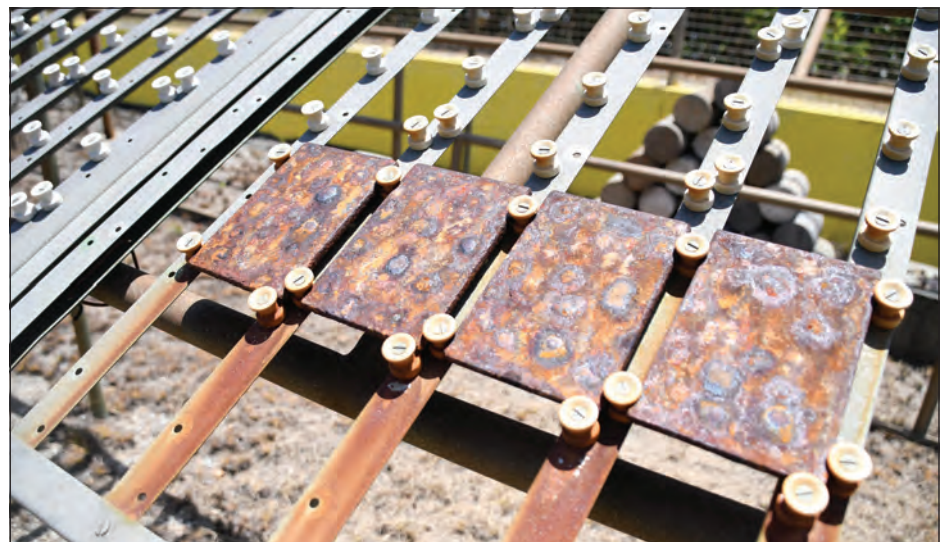
Between Panamá and Suriname, TRTC has several environmental exposure cages, climate and non-climate-controlled bunkers.

The Breakwater site sits along Panama Canal's Atlantic approaches and the Coastal exposure site is further inland surrounded by grass and brush. In Suriname the cages are tucked away surrounded by jungle vegetation.

They vary in size and can accommodate small pieces of material up to a combat vehicle. So, the question is, can your test item make it in the jungle? TRTC can definitively provide that answer.



Project Managers looking to evaluate if their test item can withstand moisture will get the full exposure experience at Tropic Regions Test Center's environmental exposure sites. Between Panamá and Suriname, TRTC has several environmental exposure cages, climate and non-climate-controlled bunkers that vary in size and can accommodate small pieces of material up to a combat vehicle. Rolando Ayala recently showed the Arctic Regions Test Center command group around the exposure sites in Panamá.



Officials break ground for new Price School building at YPG

By Mark Schauer

Since the late 1950s, Pfc. James D. Price Elementary School has educated thousands of military students in grades kindergarten through fifth grade.

Located on the Howard Cantonment Area of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), the school is full of heart but has long shown its age.

The facility lacks a production kitchen to prepare hot lunches for students and other school infrastructure considered ordinary in the modern day.

That's about to change, though, after the Department of War last September approved an \$8 million grant for Yuma Elementary School District (YESD) # 1 to partially fund construction of a new building. At the time, news of the grant was muted by recovery from a seasonal monsoon that saw the school damaged after being buffeted by more than two inches of rain and 60-mile per hour wind gusts over the course of about an hour the previous evening.

"It's been a long time coming," said Col. John Nelson, YPG Commander. "Even the previous commander was working hard with the Office of Local Defense Community

Cooperation to bring us to this point. I'm very grateful because the older building is not going to withstand monsoon seasons any longer."



On May 19, 2026, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson (center) joined other YPG and Yuma Elementary School District #1 officials to ceremonially break ground on a new building for James D. Price Elementary School. The existing school building has served kindergarten through fifth grade youngsters on post since the 1950s. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

Cooperation to bring us to this point. I'm very grateful because the older building is not going to withstand monsoon seasons any longer."

On May 19, 2026, a large crowd of students and YPG residents joined officials in a groundbreaking ceremony for the new school building. After remarks by Nelson, Yuma Elementary School District #1 Superintendent Dennis Ponder, Price

School Principal Alexandria Johnson, and Pilkington Construction President Clint Harrington, officials gathered to ceremonially break ground to applause and cheers.

The new facility will feature dedicated music and art classrooms, as well as a larger auditorium. In addition to being able to prepare hot lunches on site, the cafeteria will boast an ice machine for student use

in Yuma's extremely hot temperatures, a longtime request. Fitting for a school in Yuma's premier science and technology workplace, the new facility will also have a dedicated science lab for students.

"We have more space and it's updated," said Johnson. "They already love being at school but providing the students with a newer and fresher space is exciting. We've already had some of the kids look at the new furniture we are getting."

Among the officials on hand was YESD #1 School Board Vice President David Ibarra, who has visited Price School several times previously since taking office last year.

"I really think this school provides a great service to the community here at YPG because it is a smaller school and the teachers have smaller classrooms," he said. It's almost like being at a private school. With our new school, it is going to be great for Yuma, YPG, and for District #1.

The new facility is expected to be completed by May 2027 and will retain its name in honor of James D. Price, a Soldier killed in the line of duty at YPG in 1954.

"It's a great thing for our community and the quality of life for the folks who live here," said Nelson.



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson speaks at the ceremony. "Even the previous commander was working hard with the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation to bring us to this point. I'm very grateful because the older building is not going to withstand monsoon seasons any longer."



James D. Price Elementary School Principal Alexandria Johnson speaks at the ceremony. "They already love being at school but providing the students with a newer and fresher space is exciting. We've already had some of the kids look at the new furniture we are getting."

YPG Police Chief narrowly missed shot at baseball glory

By Mark Schauer

Growing up in rural Georgia, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Interim Police Chief Albert Wheaton was a die-hard Atlanta Braves fan.

Just as the team was on the cusp of being the dominant National League franchise, he decided to attend a Braves-sponsored try-out at the local community college in the summer of 1990.

"I was getting close to 21," he recalled. "I had been a Braves fan since I was old enough to know what baseball was and went out just to see what it was about."

Rooting for Atlanta wasn't easy at that moment. Though a long run of future glory was near, it was nowhere in sight that summer: the team was headed toward another last-place finish, their seventh consecutive season of sub-.500 ball. The wholesome multi-MVP winner Dale Murphy, face of the franchise throughout the 1980s, had declined precipitously and was about to be traded to the Philadelphia Phillies for spare parts. Aside from future star David Justice playing towards an eventual Rookie of the Year award, there wasn't much to be excited about.

Wheaton's reception at the tryout was similarly inauspicious.

"I showed up in my uniform because I worked at the Sheriff's Department and they thought I was there to apprehend somebody," he said with a laugh. "I had to change out to try out."

Having played baseball and football in high school, Wheaton was unknowingly the exact profile major league teams would flag as legitimate prospects in venues like this. At the time, though, he was thrown by the fact that he seemed to be the oldest one in the group trying out.

"You did your warm-ups and then tried out in the positions you thought you were good at, and then they put you where they wanted you. I originally played third base, so that's where I wanted to play. Then they put me in the outfield."

As what turned out to be six hours of try-outs continued, they had him pitch.

"I really didn't know much about pitching. I had messed around with a knuckleball just playing around, but nothing outside of little league."

He managed to strike out a lengthy run of batters, but he chalked it up to the age difference he had on the younger players.

"I never thought I would hear anything else from them. To me it was cool just to see a couple of the Braves coaches that I had seen on TV."

Not long after, Saddam Hussein's Iraqi Republican Guard invaded neighboring Kuwait. Wheaton was deployed to Saudi Arabia as part of Operation Desert Shield and reduced to a single phone call per week back home. As Operation Desert Storm to drive the Iraqi military out of Kuwait became inevitable, his then-wife had



Back in 1991, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Interim Police Chief Albert Wheaton received a non-roster invitee to the Atlanta Braves 1991 spring training as a pitcher. Due to his deployment supporting Operation Desert Shield he had missed the limited time they had given him to respond. (Photo by Mark Schauer)

unexpected news on their weekly call.

"She said, 'you got a letter in the mail with the Braves logo on it. Did you order something?'"

He said he hadn't and asked her to open the letter.

"It says they're inviting you to a baseball camp in Florida."

He asked her to forward the letter to him. When he finally received it, he was stunned to find he was a non-roster invitee to the team's 1991 spring training as a pitcher, and that he had missed the limited time they had given him to respond.

"I wrote them back and explained my situation. They replied with a care package and a letter that thanked me for my service, but said the invitation was a one-time offer they wouldn't be able to extend, and to contact the front office when I got back home."

Nearly 10 games out of first place at the All-Star break, the 1991 Braves heated up in the second half of the season, battling down the Los Angeles Dodgers to clinch

their division on the second-to-last day of the regular season, propelled in large part by a talented young pitching staff that was the envy of the majors. They overcame a 3-2 deficit in a seven-game National League Championship Series against the Pittsburgh Pirates, then played the Minnesota Twins in the World Series.

When Wheaton called the team after his deployment, he was told there would be free tickets for him and his family to attend a game at Atlanta's Fulton County Stadium whenever he was able. Approaching two years after his tryout, he and his family finally went, early in the season after the worst-to-first Braves had come out on the wrong side of a 1-0 10-inning Game 7 that capped what many consider the greatest World Series of all time.

At the will-call window, however, the ticket agent excused herself to make a phone call when he asked for the tickets. A front office employee came out and told the Wheatons he would be their tour guide before the game and took them through the home clubhouse and the broadcast booth. Then he invited Wheaton and his family into the dugout for the first part of the game.

Reigning National League Most Valuable Player Terry Pendleton, reigning Cy Young-winning pitcher Tom Glavine, David Justice, and Ron Gant were just a few of the Braves legends on hand.

"I was like a kid in a candy store seeing all these guys. Not many people get to live out their dream of playing ball, so just to have that opportunity was pretty good."

Atlanta has been a legitimate contender for most of the 35 years since. Among the awards and memorabilia of a long and successful law enforcement career in Chief Wheaton's office hangs an autographed photo of Chipper Jones.

"I'm still a Braves fan through and through, however the season goes."

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Shining up the static displays around YPG



The Combined Maintenance Branch crew recently spent time washing down various static displays around U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground. One member is pictured power washing the tank at the entrance of the Walker gate. They also cleaned up the tank at the Howard entrance, the weapon systems at the Kofa access control point and various other displays at the YPG Visitor Control Center. The displays are a reminder YPG and Yuma Test Center's history of testing equipment for the warfighter. (Photo courtesy of Jaysen Lockett)

BROC Atrium gets eye-catching photos



The BROC Atrium has new eye-catching photos printed by the Visual Information team and hung by the Vetpride crew. The testing photos from Yuma Test Center, Arctic Regions Test Center and Tropic Regions Test Center were personally selected by Yuma Proving Ground Command Sgt. Maj. Joshua Holthus to represent the vital work YPG does to support the Warfighter. The update is part of a larger project to modernize the esthetic of the atrium which includes hanging new signage and photos of the previous commanders and command sergeant majors. (Photos by Ana Henderson)



Summer at YPG kicks off with a pool party



Yuma Proving Ground's Kahuna Lagoon kicked off in the summer with a pool party. Over 100 members of the community came out to celebrate summer at the party sponsored in part by IHG Army Hotels and Fly Yuma. They enjoyed drinks, food, fun games and prizes. (Photos by Dani Compton)



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