

# The Outpost

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

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## Arctic Regions Test Center personnel support major joint expedition

By Mark Schauer

It is vital that military equipment work wherever in the world American Soldiers need it, and extreme cold is a weather condition troops have had to contend with frequently over the years.

From Korea to Afghanistan, the lives of American Soldiers have depended on functioning equipment in inhospitably cold environments across decades of American history.

The rugged personnel of U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Arctic Regions Test Center (ARTC), the Army's extreme cold weather test center, are recognized as world class experts of developmental test of military equipment in these challenging conditions.



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's Arctic Regions Test Center's reputation as world class experts of developmental test of military equipment in extreme cold was recently underscored by their participation in Operation Nanook-Nunavut, a multi-week, multi-national science, technology, and experimentation-oriented expedition. (US Army photo)

Their reputation was recently underscored by their participation in Operation Nanook-Nunavut, a multi-week, multi-national science, technology, and experimentation-oriented expedition conducted by the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research and the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

Conducted in the furthest northern areas of Canada's Northwest Territories, the expedition included Soldiers from the United States, Canada, and Finland, including the U.S. Army's 11th Airborne Division. All told, the expedition covered nearly 500 miles across wintery arctic tundra and frozen sea ice,

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# Groundbreaking ceremony for freefall school Ready Building at Yuma Proving Ground

By Mark Schauer

Testing virtually every piece of equipment in the ground combat arsenal is U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground's (YPG) primary mission.

Yet for 30 years the Military Freefall School (MFFS), part of the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School, has utilized the proving ground to train thousands of the military's most elite paratroopers.

Since the opening of one of the world's largest vertical wind tunnels here in 2014, the MFFS's mission has increased significantly. In recent years, an effort has been made to consolidate the school's activities into a single campus on post. On the afternoon of March 26, ground was broken for the construction of a Ready Building for MFFS students.

YPG Commander Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, Garrison Manager Ken Musselwhite, and Deputy Garrison Manager Dan Carter joined officials



On March 26, 2025, Maj. Matthew Morneault, Military Freefall School Commander, Yuma Proving Ground Commander Col. John Nelson, Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare, Garrison Manager Ken Musselwhite, and Deputy Garrison Manager Dan Carter joined officials from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and personnel affiliated with the construction contractors to break ground for a new Ready Building for MFFS students. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and personnel affiliated with the construction contractors for the ceremony.

The new building will house student team rooms, a multi-purpose room, latrines, locker rooms

and showers, and is expected to enhance the nation's Special Forces capabilities.

"One of the methods we use to clandestinely infiltrate a denied area is under canopy of a military parachute," said Maj. Matthew Morneault, Military Freefall School Commander. "This project helps build the strategic capability that will continue to hold our adversaries' assets at risk."

Morneault cited the increased safety and efficiency that the new building will provide for the school's

mission by locating student facilities closer to where the MFFS trains.

"We are taking untrained individuals and teaching them to do military freefall: It's not as easy as you may see on TV and a lot of things can go wrong," said Morneault. "The fatigue on a jumper going out six times a day increases risk. This building will reduce risk so our operators can perform the last jump of the day the same as they did the first jump of the day."

The structure, built by Pilkington Construction, is scheduled for completion in 2026.



Military Freefall School Commander Maj. Matthew Morneault speaks at a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Ready Building for the school on March 26, 2025.



"We are taking untrained individuals and teaching them to do military freefall: It's not as easy as you may see on TV and a lot of things can go wrong," said Morneault. "The fatigue on a jumper going out six times a day increases risk. This building will reduce risk so our operators can perform the last jump of the day the same as they did the first jump of the day."

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## YPG Commander speaks at local recognition ceremony



U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) Commander Col. John Nelson gave a presentation about the post and its vital mission on behalf of the national defense at a recognition breakfast held by Arizona Western College's Entrepreneurial College the morning of March 27. "My favorite thing to do is to tell the story of YPG and what we do out there," he said in his remarks at the event. "One of my other favorite things to do is to help recognize folks, so I'm glad to be part of that as well." (Photos by Mark Schauer)

## YPG presents science demo to students



Hundreds of students at Somerton High School learned how the chemistry topics they are studying in class correlate to the work done by test professionals at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG). Engineer Dillon Mann and physical scientist Larry Nelson presented chemical science demonstrations to 10 separate chemistry classes. Janett Rios and Patricia Conley with the S1 Manpower & Workforce Development Division provided an overview of YPG's mission to each class prior to the demonstrations. In total YPG presented to nearly 300 sophomore students. YPG emphasizes introducing students to the world of science, technology, engineering and mathematics in hopes they will choose a career in STEM and with the U.S. Army. (Photos by Patricia Conley)

## Liaison for FEMA Region IX visits YPG to talk civil support



Yuma Proving Ground's Office of Emergency Management (OEM) hosted the Arizona Defense Support to Civil Authorities, Emergency Preparedness Liaison Officer from FEMA Region 9 on April 1, to explain their role of support during a large-scale emergency. Both YPG and the Joint Force have new leadership, so the trip served as a relationship building opportunity as well as an opportunity to educate each command on the other's support capabilities and resources. YPG's Technical Director Ross Gwynn presented a brief on YPG, followed by an installation tour with the OEM's Installation Emergency Manager Aleks Villasenor. (Photos by Ana Henderson)





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## Child Development Center observes Month of the Military Child



The Month of the Military Child, April, is celebrated throughout the military to emphasize the importance of our young people. U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) got a head start the morning of March 27 with a superhero costume parade featuring students from the Child Development Center and Price Elementary School on the march as proud parents marched alongside. YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare was on hand for the fun, as was Deputy Garrison Manager Dan Carter and MWR Director Chris Reitman. (Photos by Mark Schauer)

## YPG leaders bring awareness for monthly observances



LEFT: Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) employees entering all three cantonment areas on April 3, 2025, were greeted with information and resources about the Sexual Harassment/ Assault Response and Prevention Program, Child Abuse Prevention Month and Alcohol Awareness Month all observed in April. YPG Command Sgt. Maj. Mark Millare is pictured greeting employees at the Walker gate (Photo by Gene Garcia) BELOW: Technical Director Ross Gwynn and Sexual Assault Response Coordinator Arlene Moraga greeted the workforce entering the Kofa gate while Family Advocacy Program Manager Mariah Boykin and Drug Test Coordinator Christine Kelly provided information to employees entering the Howard gate. Together leaders and program managers handed out more than 600 items. If you or anyone you know has been a victim of Sexual Assault, you can call the DoD Safe Helpline at 877-995-5247 or the 24/7 YPG Helpline at (928) 920-3104. (Photos by Arlene Moraga)



## MWR's inaugural golf tournament on par



The Desert Breeze Travel Camp and Fitness Center both under the umbrella of the Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Program at Yuma Proving Ground hosted an inaugural golf tournament on Saturday, April 3. Twenty-five teams of four hit the green at the Mesa Del Sol Golf Course. The Kofa JROTC Color Guard presented the colors during the opening ceremonies and Army Community Services and the Better Opportunities for Single Soldiers programs provided support. Team Molina placed first during the tournament. (Loaned photos)



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# YPG Support Services Chief and daughter, Miss East Valley 2025, are committed to helping

By Ana Henderson

Yuma Proving Ground's Support Services Division Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Chief Shauna Wells credits her daughter's personal growth on taking part in pageants.

Eliana Wells competed in her first pageant last year and won the title of Miss Yuma County Teen 2024 and placed first runner up in Miss Arizona Teen. This year she was crowned Miss East Valley 2025.

"The biggest thing for me was watching her blossom. I can look at a picture from when she won, Miss Yuma Teen, to seven months later for Miss Arizona Teen. I was like, 'who am I even looking at' because she had transformed so much. Learning how to publicly speak. Learning how to carry herself. How to be an advocate for herself and others," said Shauna Wells.

The last year has been a year of growth for Eliana Wells. She graduated a year early from high school and was dually enrolled at Arizona Western College. Shauna Wells encouraged Eliana to finish her associates locally even though she had already been accepted into the University of Alabama.

"I just saw she was not mature enough yet, mentally and emotionally. I just didn't see that initiative of taking on things as a young adult," said Shauna Wells.



Yuma Proving Ground's Support Services Division Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) Chief Shauna Wells credits her daughter Eliana Wells personal growth on taking part in pageants. Eliana Wells won the title of Miss Yuma County Teen 2024 and placed first runner up in Miss Arizona Teen. This year she was crowned Miss East Valley 2025. (Photo credit The Miss Yuma County Pageant)

That has changed since her experience in the pageant world.

"She used to be too scared to even ask where the bathroom was in a grocery store. To see her now—it's incredible. I would encourage all young women to participate in pageants because that has made all the difference for my own daughter. It was instrumental in helping her blossom into someone who can thrive and hold her own in the professional world."

Shauna and Eliana have bonded and enjoyed working together on her

inclusion service initiative which focuses on the inclusion of individuals with special needs. In fact, she's hosting the first special needs pageant in Yuma on June 6. The initiative has a sentimental meaning to the family.

"Myself and her dad both have special needs brothers, so that is very special to our hearts," remarked Shauna Wells.

Shauna Wells has worked for 15 years with MWR and started her career in Youth Sports. She's using that experience to help her daughter.

"She volunteered a lot and put

events together to work with the Special Olympics." Adding, "We were able to do a lot of events together."

Eliana Wells' future looks bright. She is pursuing a Bachelor's in Sports Business at Arizona State University, which is possible because of the full scholarship she received at the State competition.

In June she dazzles on stage again competing in The Miss Arizona pageant.

Shauna says, "It's exciting to see how she balances her education, community service, and pageant ambitions." She's certainly someone to watch!"



Shauna and Eliana Wells enjoyed working together on Eliana's inclusion service initiative which focuses on the inclusion of individuals with special needs. The initiative has a sentimental meaning to the family. "Myself and her dad both have special needs brothers, so that is very special to our hearts," remarked Shauna Wells. (Photo courtesy of Shauna Wells)

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# YPG's training village provides a realistic environment for training

By Ana Henderson

When you step onto Yuma Test Center's (YTC) K-9 Village at Yuma Proving Ground (YPG), it's like stepping into another country.

The village has temples, bridges, a shopping alley, cars, and a speaker playing background ambient sounds that would be heard in a village.

None of the buildings are aligned which was designed intentionally. YPG's Training Exercise Management Office (TEMO) maintains the location.

"We started building it in 2005 specifically to support military working dog training," said Luis Arroyo, TEMO Chief. "It is one of six facilities built throughout the range for multiple working dog programs prior to 2020. Since then, we've had sporadic dog training at YPG, the majority of which have been for multi-purpose canines (MPC)."

The K-9 Village provides the infrastructure for diverse types of training and can accommodate anything from dismounted patrolling and military operations in urban terrain, convoy operations, explosive detection and testing by YTC.

One return customer is the U.S. Marines. The Marines use the village yearly, during the Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI)



U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter, assigned to Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One, flies overhead during a battle drill exercise, part of Weapons and Tactics Instructor course 23-2, at the K-9 Village at Yuma Proving Ground in April of 2023. (U.S. Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Jaye Townsend)

course which provides standardized advanced tactical training and readiness and assists in developing and employing aviation weapons and tactics. During WTI it's common to see helicopters hovering over the village with Marines performing battle drill exercises.

Maj. Matthew "Pit Stop" Piotrowicz, UH-1Y Instructor Pilot at Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One, said, "The K-9 village provides a unique opportunity for the UH-1Y to conduct a diverse range of landing profiles in a single location.

Execution of rapid insert and extract tactics are rarely performed in the fleet due to range limitations but in a single range we can conduct roof top landings, hoist, fast rope inserts, rappel inserts, reduced visibility landings, urban confined area landings, and casualty evacuations."

The village found north of YPG peaks out of the horizon. While the village is not extremely remotely located, its backdrop of the hot desert, mountainous region and real-life desert dangers provides a training space like no other.

A Special Operations industry partner, whose team trained with several Military Working Dogs remarked to TEMO's Kevin Hunt that, "The depth of the training area when it comes to working our K9's is well thought out and allows for numerous scenarios. The realism as well is excellent and not your standard conex box range that you find quite frequently. I was not aware that this location was here and available. We will be adding this to future planning evolutions."

The buildings are more than Hollywood props, they are actual structures with rooms that can be staged with real-life scenarios found in a warzone. There are rooftops for snipers, hidden compartments for enemies, and doors to bust through. All these variables place the warfighter in situations where they can test their physical abilities and test decision-making skills.

With the WTI training presently underway the village is once again serving its purpose of providing a training ground to strengthen the skills and lethality of America's Warfighters.



A U.S. Marine with 3rd Battalion, 7th Marines, 1st Marine Division, fast ropes off a UH-1Y Venom helicopter during a battle drill exercise, part of Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) course 23-2 at K-9 Village, Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, April 1, 2023.



U.S. Marine Corps UH-1Y Venom helicopter assigned to Marine Aviation Weapons and Tactics Squadron One (MAWTS-1), takes part in a battle drill exercise during Weapons and Tactics Instructor (WTI) course 23-2 at K-9 Village, Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona, April 1, 2023. WTI is a seven-week training event hosted by MAWTS-1, providing standardized advanced tactical training and readiness, and assists in developing and employing aviation weapons and tactics.



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YPG personnel joined up with the Arizona Department of Game and Fish and a team of volunteers to build a new water catchment in one of the most remote locales in the far eastern part of YPG's vast ranges. Dubbed the Red Raven Tank, it was constructed with the labor of individuals from both organizations and volunteers from the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club.



The Red Raven Tank is filled by water runoff from the desert's rare rain events, situated with care near washes that will run with as little as one quarter of an inch of rain. The officials chose secondary or tertiary washes, not large ones that will run so violently that the tank fills with sediment instead of water.



The wildlife drinker associated with the Red Raven Tank is meant specifically to help the Sonoran pronghorn continue its remarkable recovery efforts. "The shallow 26-inch trough will allow pronghorn to step in for a drink while still scanning the horizon for danger," said Daniel Steward, YPG Wildlife Biologist. (Loaned photos)

## New wildlife water catchment means cost savings

By Mark Schauer

With more than 1,200 square miles of land area, U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) is the fourth-largest installation in the Department of Defense in terms of land area.

Testers see the proving ground as a natural laboratory and thus have a vested interest in good environmental stewardship.

Home to a wide variety of animals, including the Sonoran pronghorn and one of the largest and most genetically diverse populations of bighorn sheep in Arizona, YPG helps sustain the creatures with 25 wildlife water drinkers situated across its mountains and desert range.

"These waters are some of the most phenomenal things we have for wildlife," said Daniel Steward, YPG wildlife biologist. "It allows animals to spread across the range and get full use of the habitat."

The drinkers are a stabilizing presence in one of the nation's driest desert regions, with mechanical apparatus to keep a steady supply of water available for wildlife. Sonoran pronghorn, mule deer, bobcats, coyotes, multiple bird species, even bees benefit from their presence.

"We have captured eagles on camera using those waters, lots of migratory birds, even quail," said Steward. "Any kind of wildlife out there will use them."

Wildlife officials are meticulous

about keeping the drinkers a viable and perennial presence on the range. This past winter, YPG personnel joined up with the Arizona Department of Game and Fish and a team of volunteers to build a new water catchment in one of the most remote locales in the far eastern part of YPG's vast ranges. Dubbed the Red Raven Tank, it was constructed with the labor of individuals from both organizations and volunteers from the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club.

Most of the similar wildlife water catchment systems located across YPG's ranges were likewise constructed with the assistance of volunteer labor.

"A lot of our volunteers come from groups like the Yuma Valley Rod and Gun Club and the Arizona Desert Bighorn Sheep Society," said Steward. "In the past we have had various folks affiliated with other outdoor groups and a group of students from the Cibola High School Future Farmers of America. We have had volunteers from a lot of different walks of life."

Located in an extremely remote and isolated areas of the range, the Red Raven Tank is filled by water runoff from the desert's rare rain events, situated with care near washes that will run with as little as one quarter of an inch of rain. The officials choose so-called secondary

or tertiary washes, not large ones that will run so violently that the tank fills with sediment instead of water. Smaller washes don't mean a smaller amount of water: 10,000 gallons of water are routinely captured in the Yuma desert's rare rain events. In this exceptionally dry year, Arizona Game and Fish has had to haul 200,00 gallons of water to remote locations on the ranges by truck or helicopter.

"These tanks are a huge cost-saver for Arizona Game and Fish," said Steward. "The more catchments we have, the fewer water hauls are necessary. One tank construction project pays for itself eliminating one helicopter haul."

It also means fewer labor hours and more efficiency for YPG's range scheduling staff, who need to coordinate the safe ingress and egress of the helicopters or trucks bringing a water haul across YPG's remote, but active ranges. Experience has also shown that rainwater has a lower saline level than water from local wells, which means less sediment buildup to foul the water apparatus' moving surfaces.

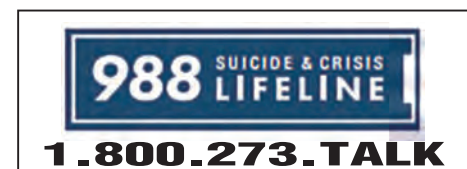
The wildlife drinker associated with the Red Raven Tank is meant specifically to help the Sonoran pronghorn continue its remarkable recovery efforts.

"The shallow 26-inch trough will allow pronghorn to step in for a drink

while still scanning the horizon for danger," said Steward.

Dubbed the desert ghost, the squat, reddish brown creature with white patches and dramatic horns is the fastest land creature in the United States, capable of bursts of about 60 miles per hour at full trot across its favored desert flats. Profoundly endangered in the early 2000s before rain and supplemental feedings stabilized their numbers, for nearly 15 years the creature has been intentionally transferred into historic habitat within the borders of the Kofa Wildlife Refuge and YPG to assist its remarkable recovery.

"During January, surveys by Arizona Game and Fish and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service resulted in observations of over 232 pronghorn in the Kofa and YPG population," said Steward. "That's pretty amazing considering that in 2001 there were only 21 Sonoran pronghorn in the entire United States."





# EXPEDITION

FROM PAGE 1

conducting operations in and between remote patrol bases. The expedition also conducted a community day for the residents of Tuktoyaktuk, a hamlet of around 1,000 people at terminus of the Inuvik–Tuktoyaktuk Highway, followed by a school visit to local middle and high school students several days later.

ARTC Technical Director Jeff Lipscomb and Heavy Vehicle Mechanic Jonathan Saatkamp brought their considerable arctic weather expertise and two Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicles (CATV) to bear on behalf of the expedition.

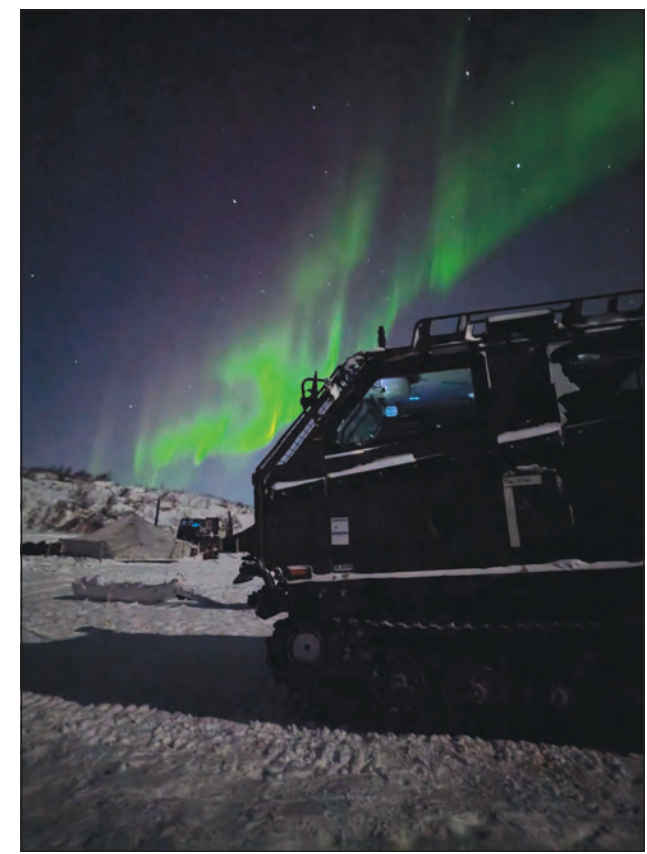


Conducted in the furthest northern areas of Canada's Northwest Territories, Operation Nanook-Nunavut included soldiers from the United States, Canada, and Finland, including the U.S. Army's 11th Airborne Division. (US Army photos)

The CATV underwent punishing developmental testing at ARTC in recent years, and the expedition served as an additional real-world

test of the vehicles' capabilities.

“ARTC’s membership and involvement in ICE-PPR and the associated international security cooperation events such as this expedition ensure that the organization continues to be tied into and included in the ranks of the extremely small cadre of Arctic and Polar subject matter experts from throughout the world,” said Lt. Col. Brian Karhoff, ARTC Commander. “The Arctic experience and expertise of the ARTC personnel, as well as the CATV support, was an indispensable resource for the expedition.”



Operation Nanook-Nunavut was conducted by the International Cooperative Engagement Program for Polar Research and the United States Army Corps of Engineers with participation from ARTC. “ARTC’s membership and involvement in ICE-PPR and the associated international security cooperation events such as this expedition ensure that the organization continues to be tied into and included in the ranks of the extremely small cadre of Arctic and Polar subject matter experts from throughout the world,” said Lt. Col. Brian Karhoff, ARTC Commander.



ARTC Technical Director Jeff Lipscomb and Heavy Vehicle Mechanic Jonathan Saatkamp brought their considerable arctic weather expertise and two Cold Weather All-Terrain Vehicles (CATV) to bear on behalf of the multi-week expedition the furthest northern areas of Canada's Northwest Territories.

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# YPG tests modification to venerable personnel parachute

By Mark Schauer

Useful for seizing isolated airfields deep behind enemy lines which can then be used to receive and deploy more troops and armaments, the tactic of mass parachute jumps has a long history with American forces.

The T-11 personnel parachute offers jumpers a slow and stable descent, especially in high winds, and can support more weight than previous parachutes, a crucial advantage for warfighters who carry robust, heavy gear.

Since the T-11's canopy deploys slowly and further away from the aircraft than preceding parachutes, the Army was able to increase the gross cargo weight of a C-17 aircraft by 15,000 pounds, which allows the aircraft to safely carry more fuel or cargo.

During developmental testing at U.S. Army Yuma Proving Ground (YPG) in the early 2000s, the T-11 proved to be a remarkably robust system, able to compensate for multiple kinds of malfunctions that testers intentionally rigged into it: When they tied the hem shut, the T-11 still inflated through corner vents. Even when testers put different reefing lines throughout the canopy and tried to restrict airflow inside, it still inflated.

Now long-fielded, the T-11 is still returning to YPG for further refinements and improvements. Testers recently evaluated modifications to the T-11's corner vents.

"It isn't that big a change, but it is enough to make a difference," said Joseph Shoun, test officer. "They removed the slider and added T-shaped



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slits to the bottom band. The idea was to make it open faster, lower the altitude jumpers can drop from, and reduce the possibility of malfunctions."

The first phase of the testing didn't utilize live jumpers, instead using torso mannequins with stubs for arms to simulate jumpers. The mannequins were ballasted with different amounts of weight to simulate a wide range of Soldier body types and gear loads, then hung onto an aluminum deployment rack specially designed and constructed by YPG engineers. Once loaded into the cargo bay of a C-130, the deployment rack allows the air crew to move the mannequins to the cargo plane's door by means of a large crank, ensuring a safe and uniform drop from the aircraft. Later phases of the test saw jumpers from YPG's elite Airborne Test Force put the modified T-11s through their paces.

Since there is no physical instrumentation on the

parachutes themselves during these tests, evaluators depend on Go Pro cameras in the aircraft and ground-based tracking instruments for video and data of each parachute's deployment, particularly the critically important first seconds of flight.

"Normally we have Go Pros on top looking up at the canopies," said Shoun. "We might time and space positioning for the first few to make sure it isn't doing anything weird with the live jumpers."

Once each airdrop is complete, testers recovered the landed parachutes, after which they undergo a meticulous inspection of the parachute systems for rips and tears that could occur on the drop zone.

YPG is home to all manners of parachute testing, with spacious and instrumented ranges large enough to accommodate even the world's largest cargo parachutes.

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## Halo Chapel thanks volunteers



The Halo Chapel hosted its annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on the evening of March 15. Chaplain Maj. Ryan Pearse told the volunteers, "The chapel could not make it without all the great work of volunteers." Yuma Test Center Commander Lt. Col. Kevin Hicks served as a guest speaker and enjoyed dinner at the Cactus Cafe along with the rest of the volunteers. (Photos courtesy of The Halo Chapel)

### *Halo Chapel Volunteers*

Emily and Malachi Evan  
Ashley and Elaina Hicks  
Jon and Allison Riggs  
Mallory and Chris  
Saltzsieder  
Cullen and Faith Wilkins  
Tianna Ellis  
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