



Winning wars with the power of the sun

IN the summer of 2009, paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division's reconnaissance company, Charlie Troop, 5th Squadron, 73rd Cavalry, discovered 25 solar-powered water filtration machines locked up in an old hangar at Forward Operating Base Hammer, east of Baghdad.

The delivery date was from the prior year, with a thick coat of dust present as evidence of the time that had passed. Several civil affairs Soldiers had tried to revive the project over the course of the previous year, in an effort to get continuous water to the Iraqi population the Soldiers had been protecting.

Within a couple of weeks, the paratroopers had the machines up and running, a relationship established

with one of the machine manufacturers in the U.S., and command support. Most importantly, they had high-level Iraqi government buy-in for a device that could provide 30,000 gallons of purified water per day—created by the power of the sun—without a single drop of gas or oil.

Within the first month of finding those machines, Charlie Troop, under the command of one of its executive officers, delivered the first machine into the outskirts of Sadr City, one of the most dangerous regions of Iraq. The village leader said, "Saddam couldn't get us water. Bin Laden couldn't get us water. Muqtada Al-Sadr couldn't get us water. Now, the American Soldiers have finally brought us water."

The replacement unit, the 1st

Advise and Assist Brigade, 3rd Infantry Division, picked up where Charlie Troop left off. The machines are still in operation, and the villages are maintaining them on their own with minimal U.S. support, more than one year after the first delivery.

When someone asks whether the U.S. has been successful in Iraq, we can tell the story of solar-powered water filtration technology, and Soldiers working with the Iraqi people to help them survive on their own. ♦

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