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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Fallujah harnessing sun's energy to light streets

By Norris Jones
Gulf Region Central

FALLUJAH, Iraq – With a marked decline in insurgent activity in recent months, Fallujah is on the road to a much brighter future.

And the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is overseeing a project helping shine light in that direction.

That work involves the installation of 740 new state-of-the-art solar street lights that are illuminating Fallujah's main roadways. Currently, the city's main east-west thoroughfare has the new lights up and functioning and work in other parts of the city is continuing.

"Residents tell us how much that project means to their community," said USACE project engineer Troy Swofford. "City leaders and the police are thrilled. It's getting a lot of positive attention."

Fallujah laborers are digging the holes, anchoring the 9-meter steel poles in concrete, and bolting on the solar panels and lights. Those fixtures, manufactured by a Florida firm, contain a photo-voltaic switch that turns them on at sundown and off at sunrise. The work got under way Aug. 7 and is scheduled to be completed in October. The crew is currently installing about 20 poles per day.

"The project is bringing a ton of smiles to people in Fallujah and benefiting everyone there. It shows them things are get-



New solar street lights, painted curbs, and clean streets are giving Fallujah a new look. (USACE photo)

ting better," Swofford said. "You can see other signs of improvement as well. That main thoroughfare, where the new lights are now operating is no longer covered in dirt and garbage. The street curbs have a fresh coat of paint and in various parts of Fallujah, I see new shops opening."

USACE's Fallujah resident office is currently overseeing 57 projects valued at \$117 million. Apart from the solar lights, Swofford is overseeing the \$14 million upgrade of Fallujah's 132kV substation, construction of two new 33kV substations (that work is nearly complete), new feeder

lines connecting those substations, and supplies to rebuild portions of Fallujah's neighborhood electrical network.

Swofford, who has worked for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers for 20 years, deployed from the Charleston District. He signed up for a six-month tour but has already requested an additional year of duty. "This is very satisfying work. You get to see the direct positive impact of our efforts. We're helping people and the city leaders appreciate what we're doing," he said.

"What's great about the solar street light project is that it will provide clear evidence of how this 21st century technology works in this climate. We'll know its viability and other Iraqi cities may soon be following Fallujah's lead," he added.



Local men from Fallujah are on the crew installing solar street lights in their hometown. (USACE photo)

Note: Norris Jones is a Public Affairs Specialist with the Gulf Region Central district, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iraq. For more information, contact him at 544-665-2644 or email requests to CEGRD.PAO@tac01.usace.army.mil. For more information on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Iraq, visit www.grd.usace.army.mil.