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Clean Water Coming to Wassit

By John Connor
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GRS Commander Col. Hill.jpg: GRS Commander Col. Steve Hill attracts a crowd of Iraqi children while visiting a water compact unit project at Al Takadoom village in Wassit province. The children will have access to clean water once the project is completed in 2008. (USACE photo by John Connor)

FOB DELTA, Iraq –Work is underway on two compact water unit projects that will bring clean water to Wassit province.

These projects are ideal for serving Iraqis living in rural areas, which abound in Wassit province, said Maj. Clay Morgan, resident engineer of the Wassit Resident Office of the U.S. Army Corps of Engi-

neers.

Morgan recently visited the projects with Col. Steve Hill, commander of the Corps' Gulf Region South District, of which the Wassit office is part.

One water project is in Al Bender, a small village south of Al Kut, and it will replace a 30-year old system. More than



Concrete Columns.jpg: Forms of concrete columns at a water compact unit under construction in the village of Al Bender in Wassit province. The area's water supply has high salt content and other impurities that the compact units will filter out. (USACE photo by John Connor)

20% complete, the project includes the design and construction of a new 50 cubic meter per hour compact water plant; an above-ground storage reservoir; about 200 linear meters of perimeter fence; and a pipe network of about 5,000 linear meters for distribution and about 2,500 for house connections.

The second project is down the road at Al Takadoom village. This project will provide clean drinking water to about 1,000 people and is scheduled to be completed in February 2008.

Each project cost more than \$600,000 and is being handled by the Wassit Resident Office located on Forward Operating Base Delta.

Clean water is at a premium in the south of Iraq, where there's a high salt content and a history of neglect by the former regime. Water projects are an important piece of the reconstruction effort being undertaken across the nine southern Iraq provinces served by GRS.

Right now, "We have 18 water compact units being installed across GRS with a contract value of \$10.6 million," said Tom Eidson, head of Engineering and Construction for GRS.

Clayton Waller, an Engineering and Construction staff member, said water compact units take raw water from a source and "settle out" most of the suspended solids and sediment through a flocculation chamber, settling tanks and clarifying tanks using chemicals that make the solids and sediments heavier than water and thus lead them to settle at the bottom of the tanks. The units then pump the water through the filters to reduce even more the solids and sediments, Waller continued. The water is collected at the filters and a disinfectant agent is added while it is being pumped to the treated water tanks or network, he said.

Kelly Brown, until recently the head of the Program and Project Management Division at GRS, predicted that the law of rising expectations will help to keep these and similar projects operating over time. He said that as the Iraqi people become accustomed to a reliable supply of clean water, they will exert pressure on local leaders to keep facilities working.

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