

# WATER PURIFIERS KEEP ARMY MOVING

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**W**ater is a substance so basic and essential to life that it needs no introduction. Everyone knows what it is and why they need it, especially in the harsh Afghan environments. Soldiers, however, rarely care where it comes from or what it goes through before it reaches them.

"It's the mystery of water," said Sgt. Paul Kindzierski, the non-commissioned officer in charge of the 201st Brigade Support Battalion's water purification section. "It's something that's easy to learn, but very few people seem to know about."

To solve the 'mystery,' one must start at the well, where water from beneath the ground is harvested. Depending on what the water is used for, it then undergoes a specific purification process, something Kindzierski and his team did for approximately 3.7 million gallons (14 million liters) of water at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Fenty during the Afghanistan spring and summer.

### **Military RO**

Handling such a large amount of water requires some heavy-duty equipment. The Reverse Osmosis Water Purification Unit (ROWPU), with its panel full of brightly colored gauges and switches, can prepare 3,000 gallons (11,356 liters) of water per hour, freeing it of visible and microscopic impurities. Their goal is to maintain a supply of more than 190,000 gallons (719,228 liters) ready for consumption. The water purified is only used at FOB Fenty.

"We have more than 2,500 military and civilian personnel to look after and without our clean water, their medical clinic, dining facility and a Pizza Hut all close," said Kindzierski, a 10-year veteran serving his third combat tour.

"Without us, everyone is living on meals-ready-to-eat (MRE) and water bottles."

Working with heavier customer loads, however, eliminates the possibility of sustaining food service requirements with bottled water.

"We would never be able to deal with a headcount of this magnitude without having a water purification team on site," said Sgt. 1st Class James Collins, food management NCOIC at FOB Fenty. "We use the treated water for sanitation and food preparation purposes. We even make the coffee with it."

### **Force enabler**

A soldiers' water supply can affect practically everything in daily life—drinking, showers, shaving and equipment—which makes the job of providing safe water extremely important.

"We're definitely a force enabler, providing water in some of the most remote regions of the world," said Kindzierski, an Illinois native. "Without water, people can't survive."

And, of course, one should never underestimate the rejuvenating effects of a hot shower with clean water. "This job lets us affect the mission at every level, from the survivability of soldiers to the morale level," Kindzierski said.

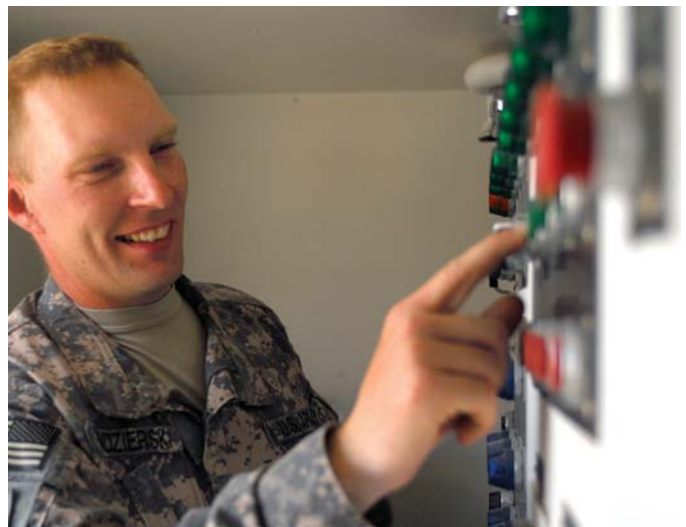
Though they might not understand how the water gets there or where it comes from, soldiers across Afghanistan are fortunate to have water that is, like Kindzierski and his Water Purification Team, "good 'til the last drop." ♦



Sgt. Paul Kindzierski, a water treatment specialist with the 201st Brigade Support Battalion, stands in front of two of the large storage tanks used to store purified, drinkable water. At any given time, more than 190,000 gallons of treated water are kept ready for use in the dining facility, medical clinic and other areas of FOB Fenty that require clean water.



Sgt. Kindzierski tests a sample of treated water to detect the amount of chlorine. Kindzierski says water is at the heart of everything that goes on during a soldier's day in Afghanistan and he is very proud to provide it in large quantities at FOB Fenty.



Sgt. Kindzierski manages the large control panel of the ROWPU, a console used to prepare raw well water for safe consumption.