Voice-to-Voice Device Provides Successful Combat Language Translation Capability

WASHINGTON, DC – The Voice Response Translator (VRT) has provided important voice-to-voice language translation capabilities for US military personnel engaged in direct action combat operations, according to reports provided by these personnel.

“I used the VRT during 12Jan2006 air assault into Sadr Yusifiyah,” according to a Landing Zone Radio Telephone Operator with the 101st Airborne. “It worked perfectly. Every time I needed it to say something important it said it.”

The 11-ounce VRT was developed over the past 12 years with National Institute of Justice and Defense Department funding and is the only eyes-free, hands-free voice-to-voice translator in existence. This unique capability enables users to maintain weapon readiness and situational awareness while providing instructions, information and asking short questions of foreign nationals in hostile and potentially hostile situations.

Voice Response Translators “contributed immeasurably to the success of more than twenty direct action raids in Iraq in support of national level objectives,” according a February 2005 report by a Ranger Captain. “In addition to sparing precious time on the objective, they reduced collateral damage by bridging a tremendous language barrier therein resulting in the detention of more than fifteen members of the local insurgent network. The VRT proved invaluable in multiple roles as not only a tactical questioning tool but also as a force protection multiplier used both on objectives and from blocking positions.”

Users speak short commands into the VRT, and translated instructions and questions are produced by it. The system has been deployed with US Army, Special Forces, Marines, Coast Guard, and Navy personnel. An advanced version that translates limited spoken Arabic responses into English is funded by the Defense Advance Research Projects Agency (DARPA).

“We went on another air assault today and I used the VRT again, and as before when there was no interpreter around it was wonderful. It helped me establish control in an uncontrollable situation without it,” according to a later report from the 101st Airborne.

The VRT is highly miniaturized (it fits in a standard M4 single ammo pouch) and can be integrated fully with MICH tactical headsets without interfering with communications or fast roping operations.

The system is produced by IWT, Inc. and Laguna Industries, Inc. IWT, Inc., a Fremont, CA-based company, specializes in the development and production of miniaturized speech recognition devices that work in high noise environments. IWT was founded in 1992 by Silicon Valley pioneer John H. Hall, who developed the first successful electronic watch, the first computerized heart pacemaker, the first radiation-hardened computer and other civilian and defense electronics systems.