

Red, white and solar: 160,000 military homes to get rooftop arrays

September 12 2011, By Matt Hickman

The last time I checked in with SolarCity was back in June when underwater hockey enthusiast Lyndon Rive's San Mateo, Calif.-based photovoltaic powerhouse had just received a whopping \$280 million investment from that tiny-teeny, obscure search engine company known as Google. That investment, the largest residential solar fund created in the U.S., was to aid SolarCity in continuing to offer attractive, innovative financing alternatives to homeowners who are interested in solar but are put off by the daunting up-front installation costs.

Now here's this: Wednesday, SolarCity (solarcity.com) - which also expanded to the East Coast just this year - announced the launch of SolarStrong, an audacious, \$1 billion project that aims to double the number of residential photovoltaic systems across the U.S. through the installation of rooftop solar arrays on 160,000 homes and other buildings like community centers and administrative buildings on the country's [military](#) bases.

In total, 124 different military housing developments in 33 states would partake in the program which is expected to create as many as 6,000 jobs over the next five years, many of them earmarked for U.S. veterans and military families. Right now, SolarStrong is already underway at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam in Hawaii where, when all is said and done, 2,000 military homes will boast rooftop [solar arrays](#).

Given the magnitude of the project, it's no surprise the federal government has stepped in to help - the Department of Energy has

extended a conditional commitment for a partial guarantee of a \$344 million loan that will support SolarStrong. The government's financial involvement in the project has raised a few eyebrows considering that another solar company, Solyndra, declared bankruptcy just last week after receiving a \$535 million loan guarantee through the Department of Energy's Loan Guarantee Program. SolarCity insists the government is not at risk this time around particularly because the loans will kick in after the military installations are up and running; there's also the fact that SolarCity, unlike Solyndra, is an established, 5-year-old company.

The U.S. Department of Defense is America's largest consumer of electricity (something that I always forget) and the project, which will add 371 megawatts of solar generation capacity, will certainly more than help the D.O.D. reach its goal of harnessing 25 percent of its energy needs from renewable sources by 2025.

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