

THE MISSION FIRST

A FLIGHT PATH TO IRAQ...AND HOME AGAIN

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 2006

Freedom Calls

Freedom Calls Foundation is a non-profit group that connects military personnel with their loved ones at no charge. They conduct more than 1,000 satellite conferences per month. In Iraq, Freedom Calls has transmission facilities at three military bases (Al-Asad, Taji and Fallujah). In my case...they were able to bridge a 6,600-mile separation from my girls.



It started with a family friend who heard that my daughter was upset when she realized her Daddy would not be in attendance for a lead role performance in the school play...an annual production of the Moses story. A request was submitted to Freedom Calls, which sparked an amazing chain of events to try and make my attendance at the play a reality.

Although the event coordinators realized the potential pitfalls were numerous, they inquired if I could be in Al Asad, over 100 miles away from my base, on the day of the play. The volunteers were never deterred...weather, threat, and maintenance were just issues to be overcome. Prior to the performance date, site surveys were conducted, hardware acquired, approvals obtained, media contacted and trial satellite link-ups performed. The attitude of the event coordinators mirrored the theme of the school play---God is in control.



As you can see, everything came together as planned and the kids put on a wonderful play. The opportunity to participate in a family event while stationed in Iraq, was truly an awesome experience. I am profoundly grateful to the numerous people for their contributions on behalf of my family...Thank You's go out to Shannon H.,

for contacting the Freedom Calls Foundation and spearheading the effort; to Freedom Calls for sponsoring the videoconference; to DCA for hosting the event; to DCI for stateside technical support; to Specialist John for his hospitality and technical expertise in Iraq; to the Commander of D Company, 126th Aviation for granting me the time off; to the flight crew that ensured I arrived in Al Asad; and finally, to the 2nd Graders for their hard work and spirited performance...a truly memorable experience!

