



A New Way For Deployed Soldiers To Feel Closer To Home

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By Keith Eldridge

FORT LEWIS - American military men and women on the other side of the world are feeling closer to home thanks to technology that is finding its way to the front lines. It's an effort to bring a technological morale boost to all the troops.

Army wife Rachel Bretthorst shows off her little baby via a video phone: "Yeah, let's get a shot of Hannah girl." Rachel gave birth three weeks after her husband deployed to Iraq. All he has seen are photos.



"Seeing the picture of your baby is wonderful, but seeing her wiggling around in front of the camera and do what little babies do and make those little baby sounds, it's so much more exciting," Rachel said.

Capt. John Bretthorst appears on a computer video screen live from north of Baghdad. The grin is from his first real look at his baby girl.

Rachel asks, "What do you think of your little girl, Darling? She's all dressed up for you today in her pink dress." John says, "Ah I see her. She's beautiful."

It's also the Captain's chance to see his little son Jacob. Rachel holding their son says, "Show daddy your Scooby Doo ball." John says, "Oh you have a ball? Look at that."

And it gives Rachel a chance to see how her husband is really doing instead of just voice on a phone call. "And not just him telling me 'I'm doing OK' but letting me look at him and really see for myself that he's doing OK." She looks at the screen and says, "You're looking tired, Hon, but you look good."

This is all made possible by the military and private industry program known as "Freedom Calls Foundation." It is putting technology on the front lines to keep families close.

The longer U.S. troops are deployed in the region, the longer the Freedom Calls Foundation has a chance to deploy its new technology. Right now, 8,000 soldiers have access to the six video conferencing stations free of charge. They hope to bring on line 200 new camps.

On the video conference Rachel asks her son, "You see daddy? You see daddy? Give him a thumbs up." John responds from Iraq. For this family it's a program that's getting two thumbs up.

For More Information:

www.freedomcalls.org