

The Argus

Fremont satellite feed lets Marine see family

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FREMONT — Kim and Destiny Graham may be part of the Internet Generation, but when it comes to talking to their daddy in Iraq, they say e-mails and instant messages just don't cut it.

So the two Alameda girls were super-excited to head south to Fremont with their mother Friday to see their dad live on a special satellite feed provided by a nonprofit that helps soldiers see their families.

Both girls, who hadn't seen their dad in five months, came with plenty of props.

Destiny, 7, brought her journal and scrapbook, while Kim, 11, brought a Hannah Montana shoebox filled with toy golf clubs, golf balls, and a miniature uniform of Indianapolis Colts football star Peyton Manning.

"It'll be like, 'Look who came to see you,'" said Kim whose favorite part about football is taunting her father about his love for the Cowboys.

Sgt. Michael Graham, a Marine since 1993, e-mails his family every day and calls them at least once a month. But Friday was the first time he could see his wife, Lizzy, and two daughters while stationed in Iraq.

"I feel nervous; it's almost like when he comes home," Lizzy Graham said about seeing her husband on the monitor set up at Logitech, a Fremont technology company.

When Graham appeared on the screen at 8:05 p.m. Baghdad time, his wife and girls were all smiles. Some technical difficulties gave them plenty to joke about.

After a few minutes, Kim and Destiny were performing a marathon dance routine to their father's delight.

The satellite feed was provided by the Freedom Calls Foundation, a nonprofit that has built a satellite network to provide free video-conferencing so that troops in Iraq and Afghanistan can see their families.



Destiny Graham, 7, and Kim Graham, 11, visit with their Dad Michael Graham, a soldier in Iraq, via a satellite video conference at Logitech Friday August 22, 2008 in Fremont, Calif. The non-profit Freedom Calls Foundation along with Logitech, who supplies equipment to the non-profit, hosted the call. (Anda Chu/The Argus)

The military's Internet system in both countries is too secure to allow for standard video-conferencing, the foundation's Kathryn Hudacek said. Logitech, which supplies Webcams to the foundation, agreed to host the Graham's video conference because the family doesn't have the requisite high-speed Internet at home.

The Grahams kept the conversation light on Thursday.

Mother and daughters chided dad for losing weight and Kim did unleash the Peyton Manning uniform. "Bring it on Cowboy," she said, holding it in front of the Webcam.

The girls had a lot of laughs, but they said it's a very different scene when they get to see their dad in the flesh, as they are scheduled to in October. "I cry," Kim said. "I just can't stop crying."

Added Destiny, "I cry sometimes because he's not here."

For more information about the Freedom Calls Foundation, or to make a donation, visit www.freedomcalls.org or call 973-290-7886.