

# Boston Sunday Globe

JUNE 8, 2008

## Satellite hookup lets Marine see son's birth in Maine

June 8, 2008

PORTLAND, Maine—A Marine who's serving in Iraq's Anbar province was with his wife during her 36-hour labor, thanks to a satellite video conference.

Lance Cpl. Eric Bajpai kept his wife's spirits up by cracking jokes during the long labor and then wept when he saw his son, Bradley, open his eyes for the first time, more than 5,000 miles away at Maine Medical Center in Portland.



"When they picked up the baby and the baby opened his eyes, he started to cry, shoulders heaving. He was saying, 'I really just want to come home,'" said Bajpai's mother, Cathy Robinson.

Bajpai, 20, learned after his wife Trina became pregnant that he would be deployed for the first time to Iraq. He arrived in the Anbar province in February with the Combat Logistics Battalion 6.

Bajpai's family, from Benton, worked with Freedom Calls Foundation to connect via satellite for a video conference allowing Bajpai and his 18-year-old wife to be together via video until the Marine comes home, possibly as early as August.

Freedom Calls Foundation, a New Jersey-based nonprofit that arranged for the video uplink, has the ability to serve 50,000 military personnel at the five locations in Iraq, said John Harlow, executive director.

Soldiers in other states have connected for births before, Harlow said.

However, it was a first for Maine Medical Center.

"As everything went along, he was right there," said Trina Bajpai. "He got front-row seats, probably more than he needed to see."

After Bradley's birth on Thursday, the parents reconnected via video uplink on Saturday. Trina Bajpai and Robinson held Bradley up to the camera.

"He's got my lips," Eric Bajpai said, admiring his son.

"Two short months, then you're on diaper duty," Trina said.