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Satellite links soldier, new son

'BEAUTIFUL' | Video feed erases distance between Chicago, Iraq

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Esmeralda McGee holds her two day-old son, Aidrian, while talking with her husband, U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Jason McGee in Iraq, during a satellite video conference at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center.

(John J. Kim/Sun-Times)

It wasn't the typical way a father and son meet.

There, on the big screen, little Aidrian Antonio McGee locked eyes with his beaming daddy for the first time as mommy held him closer to the camera.

A few seconds later, a doctor pulled off one of the infant's booties, revealing five chubby toes.

"Beautiful," gasped U.S. Navy Hospital Corpsman Jason McGee Thursday, staring at his wife and the 8-pound, 2-ounce boy via a satellite video conference from Iraq. "Everybody's looking good and healthy."

'Next best thing'

Esmeralda McGee, 24, had wished her husband was at her side when she delivered Aidrian by Caesarean section Tuesday at Advocate Illinois Masonic Medical Center.

But the Chicago native said the video conference, arranged by the New Jersey-based charity Freedom Calls Foundation, was the "next best thing."

Plus, the high-tech father and son introduction wasn't too unusual for the McGees, given that the couple initially met online a few years back.

"I know it's what he has to do," Esmeralda said of her husband serving in Iraq. "It's his job, I understand."

Reporters, photographers and staff watched at the hospital as the family bonded despite the thousands of miles between them.

Jason, 26, was grateful the live feed allowed him to catch a glimpse of his "smiling" son and wife.

He could see so clearly that he could tell Aidrian most resembled Carlos, one of Esmeralda's two children from a previous relationship.

"Did he eat?" Jason asked.

Snip, snip

"Diapers shouldn't be a problem," he said, adding that he couldn't wait to come home in August to hold Aidrian.

Before reporters were escorted out of the room to give the family privacy, Jason McGee was told his son would be circumcised in a few hours.

He nervously giggled, giving the 2-day-old an assuring look:

"He won't remember it."