



## Families to get link to relatives in Iraq

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Though not the same as in the flesh, some local military families could be virtually linked with their loved ones in Iraq this holiday season.

A video conferencing program of Capital One and The Freedom Calls Foundation, "Operation Hometown Link" will go live Thursday in McLean and Glen Allen.

On that day from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., military families in the northern Virginia and Richmond area can "hook up" with soldiers stationed at Camp Fallujah and Camp Taji, also known as Camp Cooke.

The Richmond-based banking institution is donating the use of its video-conferencing systems at its headquarters in McLean and the operations center in Glen Allen. The Freedom Calls Foundation has already established its own video conferencing connection at the two U.S. bases in Iraq.

FCF, a nonprofit organization, is dedicated to facilitating communication between military families and deployed servicemen and women engaged in Operation Iraqi Freedom.

The foundation's mission is to build a communications network independent of military networks using state-of-the-art technologies like Wi-Fi, VIOP telephony, Video Conferencing and Satcom. The hometown communication is offered to troops free of charge from their base camps by Internet telephone, instant messaging and videoconference.

Rob Sholars with Capital One said Thursday's program would be the first time his company has offered use of its video conferencing units to bring military families together.

"It's a service that not a lot of people have," he said. "We decided this was something we would be interested in doing, especially during the holiday season."

According to Sholars, the bank will take care of arrangements in Iraq, making sure that the soldiers are on site when their relatives make contact. Family members or close friends of U.S. soldiers in Iraq should call (866) 663-2649 for more information or to participate in Operation Hometown Link.

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