

Marine in Iraq holds teleconferences with newborn

By Tom Marine
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Cpl. Jeremiah Hohlfelder met his first-born child, a baby girl, Friday at Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Even though he is stationed in Iraq, Hohlfelder was able to see the new addition to his family via video conference provided by the Freedom Calls Foundation — a public charity that provides video conferencing, telephone and Internet services to keep U.S. troops in touch with their families.

Donna Hohlfelder gave birth Thursday morning to Fayth, who weighed 5 pounds, 15 ounces. She said the video conference was her first time seeing Jeremiah since he was deployed in September.

“We never could have imagined that my husband could have been here when he is 9,000 miles away fighting a war,” she said. “This means the world to me and my family.”

Donna said it has been tough going through a pregnancy while her husband was overseas, but she has been able to communicate with him regularly through e-mail. Jeremiah, she said, works as a computer analyst with the U.S. Marine Corps.

“I just want to see him,” Donna said. “I just want to see his face.”

When the corporal came on the live video feed, he talked with his wife about their newborn baby, saying she has a lot of her father's features. The video then zoomed in on the baby girl's face as she sucked on a pacifier.

“She's beautiful,” he said.

This may be the first video conference performed at PCMH for a deployed soldier and family members.

“We believe the birth of a child to be a uniquely special and significant event in the lives of parents,” PCMH President Steve Lawler said. “All of the staff and administrators of Pitt County Memorial Hospital hope this video conference helps provide these new parents with an additional boost of emotional and mental support.”

In the coming months, the foundation has arranged for the Hohlfelder family to see each other three times each month at their home via video conference. The satellite network was built because there is no Internet infrastructure in Iraq, according to the charity, and is completely funded by donations from the American people.

Kathryn D. Hudacek, director of development at the foundation, said it costs roughly \$1,000 per day to keep the satellite network up and running. She said using the network is free for deployed soldiers and their loved ones.

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