



Program keeps Montana soldiers, families together

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Military personnel on lengthy deployments away from family can find conditions to be difficult as they often miss out on events like a child's first words, first steps or first birthdays.

But now some military families are able to use new technology to keep their loved ones close at hand.

Despite being thousands of miles apart, one family feels close together, as Staff Sergeant Carl Merriman and his wife Aslinn are celebrating their son's first birthday via video conference.



Staff Sergeant Merriman is a firefighter with the 120th Fighter Wing who's been stationed in Iraq since January. But despite the long deployment, he says that being able to see his son helps keep his morale high.

"Pictures are nice and all but the actual video conference you know there is nothing that beats that" says Merriman.

The family is able to share the memory with the help of "Freedom Calls Foundation Satellite Network" and Vision Net, which are helping to bring military families together from all over the country, free of charge.

The Merriman's say that sharing important memories such as a first birthday helps to make the months of being apart seem not so long at all.