



## **VTC brings service members closer to home**

*Cpl. Thomas J. Griffith, 2nd Marine Logistics Group, Marine Corps News*

2007-06-29

CAMP FALLUJAH, Iraq (June 28, 2007) -- Deployments can put a lot of stress on service members and their families. Sure, they could use the phone, write letters and send e-mails to stay in touch, but nothing can substitute for real-life interaction with their families.

The chaplain's office here has just the cure for that ailment: their video teleconferencing program sponsored by the Freedom Calls Foundation, a nonprofit organization that helps orchestrate the program and donated the materials.

The Chapel of Hope annex here houses a computer screen used to see and speak with friends and families in the states and is available to service members and Department of Defense civilian employees alike.

"We just set up the times and dates based on where they're calling and they're all set to take advantage of the opportunity to speak with loved ones and friends," said Petty Officer 2nd Class Eric M. Peak, a religious program specialist with Headquarters Company, Combat Logistics Battalion 6, 2nd Marine Logistics Group (Forward).

The annex gets busy, especially on weekends when it's easiest to get in touch with stateside family members. However, they offer 24-hour services during the week as well.

"We get 25-30 hours of VTC per week," said Lt. Cmdr. Michael D. Williams, chaplain of Headquarters Battalion, 2nd Marine Division and a Kodiak, Alaska, native.

A Marine with 2nd Battalion, 10th Marine Regiment, Regimental Combat Team 6, was able to use the program with his unit June 18. With very little delay in his conversation, he said he was surprised by the convenience of the VTC.

"It was better than I thought it would be. It was 150 percent better than talking over the phone," said Lance Cpl. Michael E. Denbow, a motor transportation operator. "The best part was just getting to see my family. It motivated the hell out of me."

Denbow, a Harford County, Md., native, was able to speak with his wife of six months and three-year old son. Denbow watched his son strut into the room wearing a digital woodland camouflage uniform.

His wife, who learned of the program from another Marine spouse, drove nine and a half hours from the couple's hometown to the Key Volunteer Network Center on Camp Lejeune, N.C., just to speak with her husband for half an hour. Denbow said his wife thought it was well worth it.

"I'm going to hold onto that one," he said with a smile. "Not going to let her go."

Williams, who has already used the program twice himself, said the program enhances mission readiness among the service members who have used it.

"Very simply put, it boosts morale," he said. "It takes a lot of labor and coordination, but it's well worth it. A lot of happiness comes from it and