

Soldier, family enjoy video reunion

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AUBURN -- A soldier from Lanett may be in Iraq and an ocean away from his newborn daughter, but thanks to video technology, he saw her for the first time Monday.

"Wake up," Sgt. John Davidson told baby Janecia as his wife, Tunitha, held the infant up for him to view on screen.

"She's been awake all night," Tunitha Davidson said.

"Oh, man," John Davidson said.

"Who does she look like?" Tunitha Davidson asked.



Tunitha Davidson introduces her 1-month-old daughter, Janecia, to her father, Sgt. John Davidson, stationed in Iraq, via video conference Monday at the Alabama Cooperative Extension System office at Auburn University.

-- Photos by Julie Bennett

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When John Davidson replied that he believed Janecia resembled him the most, the mother exclaimed, "You!"

"No, she looks like me," the mother added.

The family exchange was made possible through the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service and a nonprofit organization, the Freedom Calls Foundation, which connected the Davidsons at Auburn University.

The couple, along with 10-year-old daughter Reneshia and another family member spoke together from late in the morning until well into the afternoon.

Rusty Presley is an information technology specialist with the extension service, which is based at Auburn University.

Presley said the service was fortunate to have the technology to bring the Davidson family together.

"And since the extension's job is to help the people of Alabama, we were more than happy to host this," he said.

Presley said bringing military relatives closer together is touching.

"It's a sense of patriotism, a sense of family," he said.

Tunitha Davidson, 31, said the connection with her husband was an exciting experience.

"We were so happy, and we miss him so much," she said.

Reneshia Davidson expressed similar sentiments.

John Davidson, 30, has been in the military for a decade and is a mechanic in a transportation unit based in Fort Hood, Texas.

He has been in the Middle East nearly two years.

Though he had tried to arrange for a recent vacation trip home to be timed with his wife giving birth to Janecia, he said he missed the arrival by about a week.

Janecia was born Sept. 3.

John Davidson, asked what he had to say to those in Lanett and throughout the rest of Alabama, said, "I wish I was there."