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Daddy comes home, via satellite Technology allows soldier in Iraq to see newborn girl

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Nicole Barber talks to her husband Jarod via satellite while holding their one-day-old daughter Fyona at Saratoga Hospital on Wednesday afternoon. Newborn Fyona Lyn Barber was surrounded by family and media as Nicole lifted her up to the Webcam so she could be seen by her proud father stationed in Iraq. U.S. Army reservist Jarod Barber heard his daughter's first cry Wednesday over a phone line, but Thursday he got to see her up close through a satellite link through the Freedom Calls Foundation.

SARATOGA SPRINGS -- Sitting in a war zone on the other side of the world, Jarod Barber on Thursday got his first glimpse of his 1-day-old baby girl in Saratoga Hospital -- live, via satellite.

"Can you see her?" his wife, Nicole, 22, asked, holding baby Fyona Lyn up to a computer monitor beside her bed in the maternity ward. "How'd we do?"

"Holy s---" Barber replied, laughing. "I love you."

"I love you, too," Nicole said.

The electronic reunion, or e-reunion, was a first for the hospital, spokeswoman Ellen Kerness said.

The satellite-based Internet feed was coordinated through the Freedom Calls Foundation, a New York City-based not-for-profit organization that provides free network communications services to soldiers in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Josh Maines, a network analyst at the hospital, said most of the technology to receive the call was on hand. The hospital only needed to purchase a Webcam, or computer video camera.

Streaming, high-definition video of Barber, 22, an Army reservist stationed at an undisclosed location in Iraq, was projected onto a large screen in the room, which was crowded with reporters, photographers and family members.

Dressed in desert fatigues, a boyish-looking Barber smiled and joked as he watched his baby yawn, cry and suck on her mother's finger.

Fyona Lyn, the couple's first child, was born at 12:26 p.m. Wednesday, weighing 6 pounds, 15 ounces and measuring 21-1/2 inches long.

"I can't wait to get back home, so I can hold her," Barber said. "I can't wait to get a five-generation picture with her great-great-grandmother."

He also boasted of his wife's delivery.

"She was quite the trooper, no drugs, no epidural," he said. "She showed me up, that's for sure."

Barber, a 2002 graduate of Salem High School, met Nicole, an Army Reservist from Somers, Conn., during the latter half of their basic training in Virginia. They married last summer, weeks before he was activated for deployment. The last time they saw each other -- in person -- was in November, before he flew overseas.

When someone in the room asked for his reaction to what he was seeing and hearing, Barber said, "Take the best experience that you could ever possibly imagine and have it thrown right at you and, well, you got it."

While grateful for the opportunity, Barber said it was difficult to be away during such a milestone.

"I feel like I missed out on the best thing that ever happened in my life -- up to marrying Nicole," he said.

Nicole was surrounded by family, including her mother, Kathy Lloyd; older sister, Christina Davis; and mother-in-law, Lynn Barber. A table of flowers and balloons announcing "It's a Girl!" sat outside the room.

"Before she met Jarod, she didn't want any," Lloyd said of her daughter and children.

Nicole, a medical assistant at Cambridge Family Health Center, said she was excited to be able to show her husband their daughter. Barber was humbled by the technology.

"You figure 60 years ago, or even Vietnam, they didn't have anything like this," he said.

Barber hopes to use at least some of his two weeks' leave "as soon as possible."

Barber said his 578-day activation will end sometime this summer. Nicole said she could be activated in six months.