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THURSDAY

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Across the miles

By [Dave Munday](#)

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Thursday, May 17, 2007

From his base in Iraq, Marine Cpl. Ryan McKinney quietly gazed at his new daughter in a hospital room in Charleston.

It was 1:15 p.m. at Trident Medical Center. Rebecca McKinney was resting in bed near a Web camera. She was holding Abigail Rose, all in pink, for her father to admire.

It was 9:15 p.m. 8,000 miles away in Al Asad. McKinney, in his combat fatigues, was somewhere near the front lines.

This was the second time McKinney had seen his daughter. The first time was Monday. He watched her birth via the same Internet hookup.

Rebecca McKinney, family members, hospital staff and a crowd of reporters saw the reunion on a 20-inch flat-panel computer monitor near the bed. A little Web camera pointed toward the bed carried video of mother and daughter across the ocean.

"It's actually pretty cool," McKinney said through the video hookup. "I wasn't there for the birth of our first daughter. It was nice to be able to see this one."

The Freedom Calls Foundation maintains the satellite network for the video hookups. The system is supported by private donations, Executive Director John Harlow said in an interview from New York.



MELISSA HANELINE/STAFF Terrie Letourneau holds 2-day-old granddaughter Abigail Rose McKinney up to a video camera for her dad, Cpl. Ryan McKinney, to see Wednesday. McKinney, who is stationed in Iraq, was able to see his wife, Rebecca, give birth Monday to their second daughter with the help of the Freedom Calls Foundation satellite network.

The foundation also provides free software to let families keep in touch with loved ones in the military, Harlow said.

He's worried he will have to shut down the network unless he gets more donations.

"It costs \$1,000 a day to run this system," Harlow said. "We desperately need some help."

Back in the hospital room Wednesday, Rebecca's mother, Terrie Letourneau of Goose Creek, picked up Abigail and held her close to the camera.

"Look at her little hands," she said. "You see her?"

McKinney just smiled, his face a bit grainy but his emotions clear on the monitor.