



## "Freedom Calls" Connect Local Military Families

Members of the U.S. Army Reserve 706th Transportation Company based in Mansfield were not focusing on battlefield deaths and injuries Monday night.

They're more concerned with life back here at home.

A lot of those soldiers left for Iraq in January, and they haven't seen their families since. But thanks to a special video link during the hockey game at Nationwide Arena between Team USA and Team Canada, they got to connect face to face.



"You're not crying are you?" one member asked his wife over a digital video link.

"No. Not yet," Lori Hagar responded, hardly able to hold back the tears.

"I went on a convoy the other night to Anaconda," her husband, Richard told her.

He is an Army truck driver in Iraq. And the video link between him and Lori was the first she had seen him since he arrived there in January.



"I love you!"

"I love you, too, and you look great," Richard responded.

The Columbus Blue Jackets teamed up with [freedomcalls.org](http://freedomcalls.org) to offer free video phone calls to more than 100 military family members of soldiers in Iraq.

"We go live to Iraq where it is 3 o'clock in the morning," the public address announcer told the hockey crowd.

Inside Nationwide Arena during Monday night's game, the crowd showed its support for the soldiers by standing their its feet.

"USA! USA!" the crowd spontaneously chanted.



At the same time downstairs, the phone calls continued.

Families a half a world away were reconnecting. While the soldiers are in Iraq, life here goes on.

"Have you seen the baby? He's huge!" one exchange went.

"Daddy, I've got my school supplies!" went another

"Happy anniversary. Lori wave to me," Richard told his wife.

Lori Hagar was planning celebrate her anniversary with the phone call.

"It's 8 years. It's our anniversary tomorrow (August 24) here. But it's actually our anniversary over there. So that made it special. It's the best gift I could have asked for."

Through the Web site [www.freedomcalls.org](http://www.freedomcalls.org). 1500 calls a day go through to soldiers and Marines in Iraq. They operate entirely on donations and say they could use the public's help. For more information, check out our featured links.