

MARTINSVILLE BULLETIN

Father sees baby for first time

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By DEBBIE HALL - Bulletin Staff Writer

Tyler Perry seemed content resting on his dad's chest and studying his face intently.

Stretching his little mouth into a wide yawn, the infant drifted in and out of sleep as his father kept a watchful eye and told about their first meeting.

"It was incredible," said Timmy Perry of holding his son for the first time a week ago. Perry, 28, is serving his second tour of duty in Iraq, working with other members of the Military Police 118 Airborne Unit to train Iraq's new police force.



Timmy Perry holds his 5-week-old son for the first time during a trip home from Iraq, where he is serving his second tour.

"We mentor those guys and basically fine-tune what they're already doing," he said. It is a dangerous job, "but you get used to it," he said.

However, there is no downtime, and even when they are off duty, troops are vulnerable. "On Sept. 9, we had a rocket hit our building," Perry said of the place where he and other members of his unit stay. One serviceman was killed and two others were injured in the attack, Perry among them.

He has "a small piece of shrapnel in my head, burns and bruises on my ribs and a laceration" on his forearm that required seven or eight stitches. "But that's pretty much it," Perry said. "I got lucky."

Because he is serving his country, Perry, a Bassett High School graduate and son of Freda Barbour and stepfather Cecil Barbour of Bassett, could not be with his wife, Tara Perry, when Tyler was born.

"It was tough," Perry said. "I'm sure there are a lot of other people over there (serving in Iraq) who go through it, but it's tough."

Tyler, who is the couple's first child, was born Aug. 11. Tara Perry spent 25 hours in labor before having an emergency Caesarean section.

"We had a cell phone and kept him updated of every little thing as it (the delivery) progressed," said Perry's sister, Penny Perry Iqbal of Bassett.

While it wasn't the same as being there, "it was very, very exciting," Timmy Perry said. Earlier this month, he finally made it home to meet his son.

"It took three days to get there," Perry said of his journey from Baghdad to the airport in Greensboro, N.C. "It was a long trip."

"He didn't even cry," Tara Perry said of Tyler as he was handed to his dad. "Tyler just looked at him," she said.

Both Tara and Timmy Perry were in the military when they met while stationed in Germany. They were married in Denmark on March 12, 2004, and continued serving until Tara Perry, a 22-year-old Malone, N.Y., native, opted out after becoming pregnant.

Timmy Perry will return to Baghdad this week for the remainder of his stint, which will end in June 2007.

But he always will cherish the first meeting with his son, he said.

"I was just excited to see him, I know that," he said.

Perry graduated Military Police School in June 2001 and was deployed to Germany in July of that year.

There, he served as an MP and also performed secret service work as a personal body guard for a four-star general.

He was deployed to Iraq from Germany in March 2004 and spent the next 12 months there before returning to Germany, where he remained through December 2005. At that time, he was sent to Iraq for the second stint.