

Google invites US soldiers to Voice telephone service

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US soldiers spend their break browsing the internet at their base in Basra, 550 kms south of the capital Baghdad in June 2009. Google on Tuesday set out to recruit US soldiers as users of its Voice online telephone service, promising it would help military families stay connected.

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Google Voice employs Internet telephony technology to let users merge home, office and mobile phones into a single number.

It also allows people to make cheap international phone calls, send free SMS messages and provides transcripts of voicemail messages.

"For servicemen and women who are constantly on the move, having a single number and an easy way to retrieve messages from loved ones can be invaluable," said Army Sergeant Dale Sweetnam, who is working in Google's communications office as part of a fellowship program.

"Loved ones can call to leave messages throughout the day, and then when that service member visits an Internet trailer, all the messages are right there. It's like a care package in audio form."

Soldiers with .mil email addresses can sign up for the free service online at google.com/militaryinvite.

"I signed up for an account when I came to Google, and it's already making communications much easier here in the States," Sweetnam said in a message posted at the California-based Internet giant's website.

"I know when I return to combat, Google Voice will help make life a little more manageable."

In June, Google began expanding Voice service membership on an invitation basis. Google said soldiers that accept Voice invitations will get priority, with accounts working within 24 hours of sign-up.

The [Federal Communications Commission](#) (FCC) continues an investigation into a decision by Apple and AT&T to reject a Google Voice application developed for the iPhone.

FCC chairman Julius Genachowski said "inquiry letters" were sent on Friday to Apple, AT&T, the exclusive carrier for the iPhone in the United States, and [Google](#).

The FCC wanted to get "the facts and data necessary to make the best policy decisions on behalf of the American people," Genachowski said.

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