

## Lending a helping hand...



Photo by Staff. Sgt. Richard K. Thompson

*Spc. William Grau, Combined Joint Civil Military Operations Task Force, unloads a box of school supplies for the school at Deh Kwaja Monday. The school supplies were donated by friends and family of Grau's from his home state of Minnesota. Grau delivered the supplies to the school in conjunction with an assesment visit to the village by the Parwan Provincial Reconstruction Team.*

## A note from the editor...

We will be filming Holiday Greetings for soldiers from the greater New York City viewing area (WABC-TV) today from 1100L to 1300L behind Motel 6, Bldg. 815.

We will be filming holiday greetings for soldiers from the Fort Drum area on Friday as well from 1300L to 1500L in the same location. Fort Drum units are welcome to shoot unit greetings.

We are only able to film greetings for these areas at this time as special arrangements have been made with the media in those two locations.

The Hometown News team has already been here and will not be returning.

## New tax relief act aids service members, families

Story by K.L. Vantran  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** – Legislation signed by President Bush on Veterans Day increases the death gratuity payment to \$12,000 and provides that the full payment is tax-free.

That portion of the Military Family Tax Relief Act of 2003 is retroactive to Sept. 10, 2001, to provide for service members who died in the terrorist attacks the following day and in the ongoing global war on terror, said Army Lt. Col. Janet Fenton, director, Armed Forces Tax Council.

“If you are killed on active duty, regardless of whether you’re in theater, or in a training accident or die from disease, your family receives \$12,000 death gratuity that is not taxed,” she added. “And that’s a big change. In addition any future increases to the death gratuity will re-

main tax free.”

The death gratuity has been \$6,000 since 1991, with half of it being taxed, said the director. “It just didn’t seem to be fair for the military family who was left grieving for their service member to get hit with a tax bill,” she added.

Capital gain exclusion for home sales is one of the most common areas people were looking for tax relief in, said Fenton. “This act will allow members to suspend the period of time which they have to sell their home and take the tax exclusion so they won’t have to pay that capital gains,” said Fenton. “It’s retroactive to 1997 so military members who have sold their homes since 1997 have one year from Nov. 11, 2003, to request a refund for any tax they did pay.”

Since 1997, when the law was previously changed, if service members who owned a home got reassigned more than 50 miles from that home or was ordered to move on post, they were no longer able to roll

# World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



*An injured woman is carried away from the British Consulate blast site.*

## Blasts kill at least 27 in Istanbul

**ISTANBUL, Turkey**—Powerful explosions ripped through the British Consulate and a London-based bank near a popular shopping area Thursday in Istanbul, killing at least 27 people and wounding more than 450 others, Turkish officials said.

Seventeen people were killed at the consulate and 10 in the shopping area in the neighborhood of Levent, the Turkish Interior Ministry said.

Consul General Roger Short was among those killed, said Ian Sherwood, chaplain of the British Consulate. One of the main buildings was “completely demolished,” he said.

It was the second coordinated attack in Istanbul in the last week. On Saturday, suicide car bombers killed 23 people at two synagogues.

Video from the scene of Thursday’s attacks showed shattered windows along the narrow streets near the consulate and some areas reduced rubble.

People could be seen trying to remove debris by hand from around buried cars as rescuers with search dogs searched for survivors.

Another blast, outside an HBSC bank, ripped the facade off the tall building. Video of a nearby shopping mall showed chaos with people streaming out of the area, some with bloody faces and blood-soaked clothes. Shattered glass and burned vehicles littered the street.

## U.S. soldier killed, two wounded in Ramadi convoy bombing

**BAGHDAD, Iraq**—A U.S. soldier was killed and two others wounded Thursday when a homemade bomb struck their convoy east of the central Iraqi city of Ramadi, U.S.-led coalition officials said.

Ramadi, about 50 miles (80 kilometers) west of Baghdad, also was the scene of a bombing late Wednesday in which at least two people died. It was one of two insurgent attacks apparently targeting Iraqi leaders.

A second blast killed five bystanders Thursday outside a Kurdish party’s office in the northern city of Kirkuk.

The strikes came amid a U.S. military campaign against anti-coalition targets. On Wednesday, troops killed 10 people who ambushed a coalition civilian convoy south of Samarra, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Baghdad.

Brig. Gen. Martin E. Dempsey of the 1st Armored Division said that Operation Iron Hammer, one of several offensives against insurgent targets, is making progress.

“I’d say that [from] the period prior to Operation Iron Hammer to now, the attacks are down about 70 percent, and we are working as hard as we can now to drive it to zero,” Dempsey said.

In the soldier’s death, a five-vehicle convoy was traveling near Ramadi when the bombing occurred, the Coalition Press Information Center said.



*Al Qaeda tapes obtained in Afghanistan by CNN show how to fire a SA-7 missile.*

## U.N. details al Qaeda threat

**UNITED NATIONS**—Some members of al Qaeda most likely possess portable surface-to-air missiles and may use them to target military transport planes, a U.N. report says.

The threat was among several findings detailed in the report by the United Nations’ al Qaeda and Taliban Sanctions Committee which also cited a shifting of the terror network’s strategy, a move towards “softer” targets and a warning the group was working towards a biological or chemical attack.

In regards to the missile threat, al Qaeda may now move away from targeting commercial air transport because of heightened security at facilities, said Heraldo Munoz, the Chilean ambassador to the U.N. and head of the sanctions committee.

The terror network may try to target sea routes, “ports, sea ports” and may be “looking for targets of opportunity,” Munoz said.

“The panel of experts that work with our committee have insinuated that the possession of the surface-to-air missiles, these portable shoulder missiles, is a very clear danger,” Munoz added.

The report, which has not yet been made public, was compiled by a five-member expert panel from the committee charged with monitoring the implementation of sanctions against people and groups linked to al Qaeda or the former Taliban regime in Afghanistan.

## Bush wraps up visit to UK

**LONDON**—President George Bush welcomed Queen Elizabeth II to the residence of the U.S. ambassador for dinner Thursday evening, concluding his state visit to Britain.

A few hours earlier, antiwar demonstrators protesting Bush’s trip to London toppled an effigy of him in Trafalgar Square, mocking the toppling of a statue of Saddam Hussein by U.S. troops after they marched into Baghdad back in April.

“Our message is quite simply, ‘Go home, Bush,’” said one speaker at the protest, which police said drew between 100,000 and 110,000 people.

Earlier Thursday, Bush’s visit to Prime Minister Tony Blair’s official residence, No. 10 Downing Street, took on a somber tone with the news that terrorist bombs had ripped through a British consulate and bank building in Istanbul, Turkey, killing at least 27 people, including Britain’s consul general.

At a joint news conference, both leaders said the attacks demonstrated the need to remain resolute in standing up to terrorists.

“Once again, we’re reminded of the evil these terrorists pose to innocent people everywhere and to our way of life,” Blair said. “Once again, we must affirm that in the face of this terrorism, there must be no holding back, no compromise, no hesitation in confronting this menace.”

## Project tells veterans' stories

Story by Sgt. 1st Class Doug Sample  
American Forces Press Service

**WASHINGTON** – Veterans of Operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, as well as any other combat operations, can share accounts of their experiences for posterity through the Veterans History Project <http://www.loc.gov/folklife/vets/>, an effort begun by Congress two years ago to preserve the stories and memories of America's war veterans.

Ellen McCulloch-Lovell, project director, said the project's letters, memoirs, audiotapes and photographs speak of combat and what war was like, or of pranks and funny misfortunes that occurred while veterans were on leave. But most stories, she said, speak of the closeness and camaraderie within the military — “my buddies, my unit, and loyalty” — adding, “Loyalty is a very big theme.” Another theme often written about is love and “longing for the folks back home,” she said.

McCulloch-Lovell said the project is stepping up efforts to ensure the words of thousands of veterans are told to an even greater audience. She said this month the Veterans History Project began airing a radio series called “Coming Home,” which features the oral biographies of 18 war veterans who tell of their war experiences and life in the military. It's being aired via Public Radio International, which develops and supplies noncommercial programming to affiliate stations throughout the country.

“Nobody on the show is famous,” McCulloch-Lovell said. “It's all the individual stories of people who served.”

The Veterans History Project also has expanded features on its Web site, to include more digitized letters, photos and individual stories, she said. Site visitors can now “see and listen” to the stories of 23 veterans, she said. And there is no shortage of stories to tell. In the two years since the project began, McCulloch-Lovell said, interest by veterans wanting to share their stories has increased immensely. For the past year, her staff of about 15 has been receiving as many as 200 submissions each week at the project's office inside the Library of Congress Folklife Center <http://www.loc.gov/folklife> here.

## Bagram Air Base MWR presents

### “Young Guns”

1530Z at the MWR Building:  
1878 in New Mexico: John Tunstall picks  
up young gun men from the road to have them  
work on his ranch...



Tomorrow's movie: “The Stickup”

## Local weather

### TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Saturday
<b>Bagram:</b>	Partly Cloudy H: 54F L: 32F	Partly Cloudy H: 54F L: 30F
<b>Kandahar:</b>	Clear H: 68F L: 41F	Clear H: 70F L: 39F
<b>Kabul:</b>	Partly Cloudy H: 55F L: 32F	Partly Cloudy H: 55F L: 32F
<b>Uzbekistan:</b>	Mostly Cloudy H: 70F L: 35F	Rain H: 56F L: 35F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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## RELIEF, from Page 1

over the gain from that sale to the next home they purchased.

Also since 1997 individuals could exclude up to \$250,000 (\$500,000 for married couples) of gain from the sale of a home if they resided in the home for two of the five years preceding the sale. Under this act military and Foreign Service personnel can suspend (for up to 10 years) the time transferred away from home on official extended duty for purposes of applying the five-year portion of the two-out- of-five-year rule.

The 2003 act also includes above-the-line deduction for overnight travel expenses of military reservists and National Guardsmen who have to travel more than 100 miles to attend drills or meetings.

“The act allows for an above-the-line, which means you don’t have to itemize your taxes to take advantage of this deduction,” said Fenton. She added that service members will “be able to deduct unreimbursed travel expenses such as lodging, 50 percent of meals and any transportation costs.” This part of the act is retroactive to Jan. 1, 2003.

When the tax code changed in 1986, it said any military benefit

existing in September 1986 would remain tax-free, said Fenton. However, it was always unclear whether military child care was included in that, she added. “This act merely makes it clear that those provisions of child care were intended to be tax-free to military members.”

The tax act also provides for extra tax-filing time for troops serving in contingency operations. The internal revenue code allows service members who are serving in combat zones or hazardous duty areas to have an extension of time - usually 180 days from the time the person leaves the combat zone — to file taxes.

“A lot of military operations don’t rise to the level of being declared by the president as ‘combat,’” said Fenton. “But there are several contingency operations where service members are outside the continental United States.”

The act also includes modifying eligibility criteria of tax-exempt veterans organizations; tax-free treatment of homeowners’ assistance program payments; suspension of tax- exempt status for designated terrorist organizations; and extension of victims’ tax relief to astronauts who die on space missions.

# REF gives Soldiers the technical edge

Story by Spc. Zia Ul Haq  
211<sup>th</sup> Mobile Public Affairs Detachment

**KANDAHAR, Afghanistan** – In the war on terrorism, the U.S. Army fights in an environment it has never before experienced. With so many changes, the soldiers must also adjust and adapt their fighting techniques.

This calls for a high demand of new and innovative equipment. The solution to these in-field needs of the Army is the Rapid Equipping Force, or REF.

An Army Vice Chief of Staff directive, REF was established to get new and innovative equipment and technical support people in the theater, stated Ken D. Zemach, Ph. D., REF engineer. Since February 2003, three personnel have been on the ground here to assess the needs of different units. This small unit provides support across Afghanistan.

REF rapidly equips soldiers in the field with items they can not get through the normal Army supply channels. The fast and intense war that is being fought here, requires REF to offer quick responses to technical problems that crop up along the way.

When a problem arises with everyday equipment or a solution is needed on how to accomplish a task and the units don’t have an answer, REF is called to the scene.

With the help of Exponent Inc., a technical

consulting firm headquartered in Menlo Park, Calif., REF has given the soldiers more efficient ways to do their jobs.

“Is there something that almost meets the needs? But, damn it, it just needs a little tweak, a little twist, it needs some modification, then we will be there,” said Zemach.

The first place REF looks for the answer is with commercial off the shelf (COTS) products that already exist in the civilian market.

“We look at COTS and government off the shelf (GOTS) to see if there is something available to meet the need,” said David A. O’Halloran, REF engineer.

With many different needs and requirements the team must sometimes turn to GOTS products, which often are more suited for military application since they have been developed for rugged environments.

If COTS and GOTS have been thoroughly exhausted and there’s still a need, REF then turns to the research and development of the product.

Product research and development may take awhile, especially if research is done here and a solution is sought in America. But, with REF in theater and on the battlefields, soldiers can be confident that they’ll get the proper equipment, modifications, and prototypes that are badly needed to do the work.

“REF does not take on long term research



*David A. O’halloran checks the connection on the conversion to run a MBITR radio directly from a 5590 battery.*

projects if a solution can be put together and fielded in under 90 days. Then it’s the type of short term research and development that REF is well suited for,” said Zemach.

“Only by being on the battlefield and living and working directly with soldiers, can we understand and address the true needs of the soldiers in a quick and effective manner,” said the REF team members.

By moving available technology and solutions to soldiers today instead of years in the future, the United States will remain the world leaders in technological and combat effectiveness.



# Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from *SI.com*)



*Nick Price and Mike Weir rejoice over a 1-up victory over Phil Mickelson and David Toms.*

## World team rallies to take one-point lead

**GEORGE**, South Africa – Tiger Woods, Davis Love III and the rest of the Americans could not have asked for a better start Thursday in the Presidents Cup.

It was the finish that left them dazed, disappointed and facing another deficit.

“They all want to go kick themselves in the rear end,” U.S. captain Jack Nicklaus said after the International team rallied over the final three holes in the final three matches to take a 3 1/2-2 1/2 lead.

Determined not to fizzle the way they did in Australia five years ago, the Americans were poised to take a commanding lead in the opening session of alternate-shot matches.

Woods and Charles Howell III needed only 15 holes to get their partnership off to a great start. Love and Kenny Perry hit spectacu-

lar shots and won easily. The United States led 2-1, and it was 2-up on the back nine in the other matches.

“It could have been quite ugly,” Peter Lonard of Australia said. “Knowing we could be 5-1 down and looking down the barrel of the gun, and we can still pull it out somehow ... that’s probably the most important thing.”

For the Americans, it all fell apart quickly.

First came the gutsy 6-iron from Masters champion Mike Weir, winning yet another battle of the lefties.

He and Nick Price were 1-down with two holes to play against Phil Mickelson and David Toms, the top American tandem from last year’s Ryder Cup.

“We needed something,” Weir said.

Facing the par-3 17th with bunkers and rough to the right and a 6-foot trench protecting the left — a difficult shot for left-handers — Mickelson turned away in disgust as his ball sailed well right of the green.

Weir took aim at the flag and Price walked off the tee clapping and shaking his fists. Price converted the birdie, then hit a nice chip to 5 feet that Weir finished off for birdie on the 18th and a 1-up victory.

## Marshall University outruns UCF 21-7

**ORLANDO**, Fla. – Marshall University and the University of Central Florida have built reputations as wide-open, pass happy football programs.

So what do the two Mid-American Conference teams do for a national television audience Wednesday night? Run the ball. And run and run.

Marshall outran UCF, winning the conservative game 21-7 before 18,141 fans at the Florida Citrus Bowl and a national television audience watching on ESPN.

“That’s not the way we usually win, but we challenged our guys to run it and they were successful,” said Marshall coach Bob Pruett, whose team improved to 7-4 overall and 5-2 in the MAC. “We just came out here and gutted this thing out.”

UCF was playing its first game under interim coach Alan Gooch and barely resembled the program he inherited from Mike Kruczek, who was fired last week.

Knights freshman quarterback Steve Moffett, playing only the second game of his college career, threw 13 passes for just 59 yards. That’s a far cry from the 300-yard passing nights that were common during Kruczek’s six years as head coach.

“Obviously we were conservative for a reason,” said Gooch, whose team dropped to 3-8 overall and 2-5 in the MAC. “We had a true freshman at quarterback and you don’t want him to make any mistakes. We had to play this game close to the vest so we could have a chance at the end.”

### Sports on local Armed Forces Network TV

#### Saturday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ NBA Pregame: Shootaround (live) 0030Z, 0500L
- ❖ Timberwolves @ Cavaliers (live) 0100Z, 0530L
- ❖ Rockets @ Trail Blazers (live) 0330Z, 0800L
- ❖ Air Force Football with Fisher DeBerry (taped) 0630Z, 1100L
- ❖ COLL BB: Mass. @ Texas Tech (live) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ Rockets @ Trail Blazers (taped) 1300Z, 1730L
- ❖ COLL FB Pregame by Home Depot (live) 1530Z, 2000L
- ❖ Penn State @ Michigan State (live) 1700Z, 2130L

#### Sunday’s schedule (AFN Sports)

- ❖ COLL FB: UCLA @ USC (live) 2030Z, 0100L
- ❖ COLL FB: Missouri @ Kansas State (live) 0000Z, 0430L
- ❖ COLL FB Scoreboard (live) 0300Z, 0730L
- ❖ COLL FB Scoreboard (live) 0500Z, 0930L
- ❖ Golf: The President’s Cup 2003 (tape) 0800Z, 1230L
- ❖ NFL Pregame: Countdown presented by Old Spice (live) 1600Z, 2030L
- ❖ NFL: New Orleans Saints @ Philadelphia Eagles (live) 1800Z, 2230L

# Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

## NATO on trial as conditions in Afghanistan spin out of control

**KABUL, Afghanistan (Reuters)**—Here's an astonishing fact: the 5,700-strong multinational force keeping the peace in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, has just three helicopters.

Belgium offered more choppers and then got cold feet once it realized the cost. Greece declined to send any because it was too stretched by preparations for the 2004 Athens Olympics and Turkey is now sitting on a last-ditch request to fill the gap.

So much for NATO's plans to expand its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) into lawless hinterlands of the country, where Taliban militia are back on the offensive and warlords are thriving on a resurgent opium drug trade. "If the alliance does not step up to the plate, in five years we will be back here fighting again because this place will go to hell," says Lt. Gen. John Tibbetts, chief planner at the 24-nation force's headquarters in Kabul.

NATO's takeover of the Afghan operation in August was a morale-booster for an organization which had been sidelined by Washington after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on America, plunged into self-doubt and torn by a row over the U.S.-led war in Iraq.

Its first deployment of troops outside Europe or North America, the ISAF mission vindicated two years of painstaking effort by NATO Secretary-General George Robertson to transform the Cold War alliance to face new and global security threats.

And that is why he is now frantically signaling that NATO's new-found credibility will stand or fall in Afghanistan.

"If we fail, we will find Afghanistan on all of our doorsteps. Worse still, NATO's credibility will be shattered, along with that of every NATO government," he told lawmakers from alliance nations in Orlando last week.

"I therefore urge you to challenge your governments on the excuses they make for not doing more."

## U.S. ambassador aims to accelerate reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan

(*Afghanistan News.net*) – The new U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, says he wants to accelerate reconstruction in the country. The ambassador also says he wants Pakistan to no longer be a "sanctuary" for Taliban and al Qaeda fighters who launch attacks on aid workers and U.S. soldiers inside Afghanistan.

Ambassador Khalilzad told reporters his mission in Afghanistan is to speed up reconstruction efforts, improve security and assist moves toward a democratic government.

The ambassador will arrive in Kabul next week, about two years after the Taliban was ousted from the Afghan capital, and during a time when there has been a resurgence of attacks against coalition forces and aid workers.

Mr. Khalilzad says the United States will continue to work toward a

stable and secure Afghanistan until those goals are accomplished.

"We are committed to success in Afghanistan," he said. "We will see this thing through. We will be there for as long as it takes to do the job. There is no alternative."

Ambassador Khalilzad says he also wants Pakistan to do more to prevent militants from crossing its border to attack military and civilian targets in Afghanistan.

He says while Islamabad has been very cooperative in fighting the war on terror, it needs to better police its porous border with Afghanistan.

"We want everyone, including Pakistan, to do more against al Qaeda, the remains of al Qaeda in Pakistan," he said. "With regard to the Taliban they do pose a threat to the stability of Afghanistan and to the success of the effort in terms of the speed with which we want things to develop in Afghanistan and to the stability of Afghanistan. We want to work with Pakistan to end Pakistan's use as a sanctuary by the Taliban."

Pakistan has denied its territory is being used as a base for attacks in Afghanistan. A foreign ministry spokesman told reporters Wednesday that his country has made Pakistan inhospitable territory for Taliban remnants and their allies, including the al Qaeda terror network.

The United States and its allies have about 11,000 troops carrying out military operations in Afghanistan, while NATO has about 5,000 peacekeepers in the country.

The U.S. Congress recently approved \$1.7 billion in aid for Afghanistan. Ambassador Khalilzad, who was born in Afghanistan, will also retain his title as special presidential envoy to the country.



pvtmurphy.com

By Mark Baker

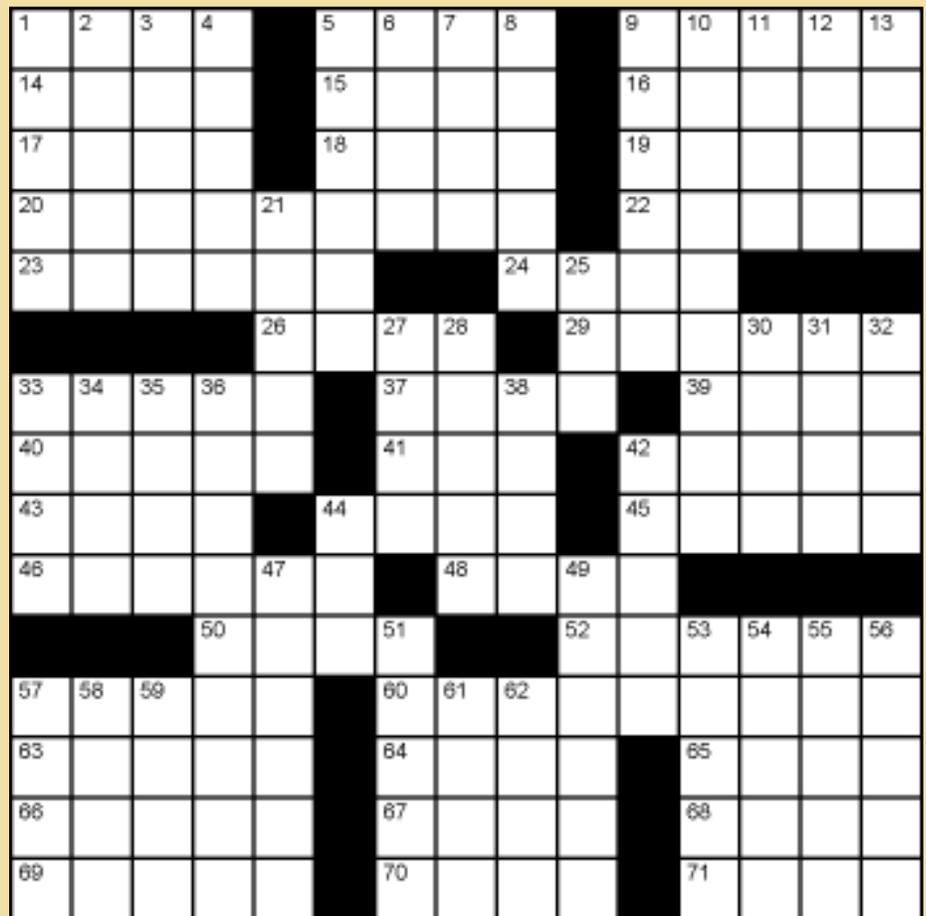
## Pvt. Murphy's Law

# Slippery crossword

(Courtesy of QUIZLAND.com)

## ACROSS

- 1 Door-closing sound  
 5 \_\_\_Alto, California  
 9 Friars Club official  
 14 Led Zeppelin's Jimmy  
 15 "Amores" poet  
 16 Massey of film  
 17 Grace ender  
 18 Prom wheels  
 19 12-inch stick  
 20 Beachgoing oater horse?  
 22 "\_\_\_ not amused"  
 23 Fancy home  
 24 Wild guess  
 26 A Ponderosa son  
 29 Slap the cuffs on  
 33 Prophetess of myth  
 37 Glacier breakaway  
 39 Stackable cookie  
 40 "Nonsense!"  
 41 Chinese philosopher \_\_\_-tzu  
 42 Drinks from a flask  
 43 List-ending abbr.  
 44 Lady's partner  
 45 Cuzco builders  
 46 Reggae legend Bob  
 48 "Kon-Tiki" author Heyerdahl  
 50 Treater's phrase  
 52 Snoopy, for one  
 57 Diner sides  
 60 Inexperienced Civil War soldier?  
 63 Pacific nation since 1968  
 64 Sound from Simba  
 65 Pew area  
 66 Fall bloomer  
 67 Old U.S. gas brand  
 68 Partner of anon  
 69 Crystal-lined rock  
 70 MTV viewer, most likely  
 71 Takes the plunge



## DOWN

- 1 Sudden rush  
 2 Tibetan monks  
 3 Mulder or Scully  
 4 Brainy group  
 5 Solicited opinions from  
 6 Tel \_\_\_  
 7 Fruit for a twist  
 8 What your nose knows  
 9 Operation Desert Storm's beginning  
 10 Bummed-out footballer?  
 11 Gaucho's cattle catcher  
 12 Humdinger  
 13 Wrapper weight  
 21 Bologna is here  
 25 Put out on the basepaths  
 27 Up to the job  
 28 Had in mind  
 30 Actor Bogosian  
 31 Dreamcast maker  
 32 Prepare the salad  
 33 Son of Noah  
 34 I, as in Ithaca  
 35 Sow's mate  
 36 Cowardly baseballer?  
 38 Portnoy's creator  
 42 Paddy wagon sounder  
 44 Stairmaster site  
 47 Make certain  
 49 Merle of "Wuthering Heights"  
 51 White-plumed bird  
 53 Nixon's first veep  
 54 Like some accents  
 55 Washed up  
 56 Lookers  
 57 Negotiations glitch  
 58 Emit coherent light  
 59 La Salle or DeSoto  
 61 Valentine bouquet item  
 62 Let up

*Solutions will be posted in Saturday's Freedom Watch*