

Hot zone: Combat still prevalent in Afghanistan

Story and photos by
Staff Sgt. Russell Wicke
455th EOG Public Affairs

SHKIN FIRE BASE, Afghanistan—Action here still proves to be extremely hostile as one U.S. soldier died of wounds received in combat, and two others were wounded as a result of fighting Sept. 29.

Less than a month prior two U.S. soldiers died and a third was wounded in the same area due to combat.

Iniquitous tactics, like suicide gunners and bombers dressed as civilians, are part of the reason this place is cited as the most evil place on the planet according to Lt. Gen. John Vines, Combined Joint Task Force 180 commander.

“It’s tough when we lose people in this small environment, but we have to push on with our mission every day,” said Capt. Eric Lopez, a company commander in the 10th Mountain Division at Shkin.

Although American soldiers have recently suffered losses, steady progress is being made in missions to kill, capture and



A soldier from the 10th Mountain Division posts security during a recent combat mission.

deny sanctuary to the enemy here.

“We’re out here to kill the enemy, and that is what we’re doing,” stated Lopez. The Army pulls from multiple resources to defeat the enemy, including ground combat, artillery and air support, said Lopez. Because of this and training superiority, the enemy is outmatched and the count of enemy losses are numerous.

The soldiers here stand their ground in a

small fort like structure with four mud walls affectionately compared to the Alamo by some resident soldiers. Lopez said they receive indirect fire by rockets on a weekly basis.

“It’s the real deal here,” said Maj. Mark Koloc, a 407th Civil Affairs Battalion officer. “When you’re out there knee deep in all

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PX brings smiles to soldiers’ faces in time of need

Story and photo by Spc. Wes Landrum
Coalition Joint Task Force 180

BAGRAM, Afghanistan - The line was as long as the eye could see. People waited for almost an hour and that was just to get inside to shop at the Bagram Post Exchange in its meager beginnings.

In the summer of 2002, the PX was not where the present facility is now. At that time, the PX was located by the Korean Hospital.

Tom Simonides, assistant store manager

for the Bagram PX, said the long lines were a daily occurrence back in the PX’s early days.

“The line stretched from the front door by the ROK hospital all the way to the showers by Motel 6,” he said. “We would only let in 25 at a time to shop because of the space problem.”

“We hated those lines outside the store,” said Maj. Gen. Kathryn Frost, Army and Air Force Exchange Services commander.

Maria Schizas-Price was store manager here for only a month, but she said the PX looked and operated differently back then.

“The PX at that time was an old Russian Officer’s Club,” she recalled. “It was a long hallway and it looked like a backward ‘L.’”

Schizas-Price said the soldiers would come in and go around the L and then come back to the registers to pay for their merchandise.

“It was very small,” she said. “We didn’t have nearly the items we do now because we were beginning the store and we had no space.”

Because more and more soldiers were

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World News (Compiled from CNN.com)



North Korea boosts nuclear program.

U.S. doubts over N. Korean claims

WASHINGTON — U.S. officials have expressed skepticism but deep concern over North Korea's claim that it has reprocessed 8,000 fuel rods from its Yongbyon nuclear reactor — fuel that could be used in nuclear weapons — in response to U.S. threats.

In a rare interview Wednesday, Vice Foreign Minister Choe Su Hon told *CNN* of the move, saying North Korea's nuclear deterrence is not intended to attack other countries, but as a means to safeguard the country's territory.

"We have already processed that fuel rods and also changed the purpose of those fuel rods," Choe said.

U.S. officials have estimated that plutonium obtained from the rods could be used to build between six and 12 nuclear warheads.

"This is the third time they have told us they finished reprocessing the rods," U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said Thursday, but he added, "we have no evidence to confirm that."

"I believe that this is a matter of the most serious concern for the international community, and I think North Korea's neighbors should also be delivering a message to Kim Jong Il that the solution to the problem is for them to stop moving in this direction — continue to participate in the diplomacy that is under way," Powell said.

Another U.S. official also told *CNN* that the claim should be treated with "a great deal of skepticism."

The official said the claim is regarded by the United States as a "negotiation tactic," and added, "we don't have any evidence to

suggest it's true."



U.S. Army medics carry an injured soldier after an attack in which one soldier died in Tikrit.

Three U.S. soldiers killed in separate attacks Wednesday

BAGHDAD, Iraq — Three U.S. soldiers were killed in separate attacks on Wednesday. The latest death occurred late Wednesday when a U.S. soldier was killed after his convoy was hit by a rocket-propelled grenade near Samarra, north of the Iraqi capital, according to the Coalition Press Information Center.

The convoy carrying the soldier from the 4th Infantry Division came under RPG attack around 9 p.m. (1 p.m. EDT) near Samarra, about 75 miles (120 kilometers) north of Baghdad.

The soldier was evacuated to a nearby military hospital, and died later.

Another U.S. soldier from the 1st Armored Div. was killed and another wounded by a gunman in the Al Mansour neighborhood of Baghdad, also late Wednesday.

"The soldiers were patrolling the neighborhood when they were shot with a small-caliber handgun," a spokesman for the coalition forces told *CNN*.

Earlier in the day, a U.S. soldier was killed and three were hurt when an explosion rocked their convoy in Saddam Hussein's hometown of Tikrit, a 4th Inf. Div. spokeswoman said. The convoy was carrying supplies between two drop-off points, near the 4th Inf. Div.'s main Tikrit base.

Authorities said the explosion was caused by either a mine or an improvised explosive device at the side of the road.

Two wounded soldiers with extensive shrapnel wounds were initially in a life-threatening state but later were upgraded to stable condition.

The third had a minor injury and returned to duty.



Vials containing material that could be used for biological weapons was found, Kay reported.

No weapons yet, but evidence of intent found in Iraq

WASHINGTON — As expected, the CIA's lead weapons inspector told congressional intelligence committees Thursday that his team has not yet found weapons of mass destruction in Iraq.

However, David Kay said inspectors have found evidence of a biological weapons program. He also noted more substantial activity in missile production than Iraq disclosed to the United Nations.

Kay said his inspectors need more time before conclusions can be reached, and he urged patience.

"Believe me, we're working as hard as we can. I know the importance attached to this work. There's a lot more work to do before we can declare we're at the end of this road rather than at the beginning," Kay said. "We have found a great deal, much of which was not declared to the United Nations."

Kay said inspectors have found no weapons, but said he is not ready to say that there are no weapons to be found.

He said the inspectors' task is made difficult by Iraqis still loyal to Saddam Hussein's ousted regime, but also because even the bulkiest materials they are looking for can be hidden in space not much larger than a two-car garage.

"It's a huge country and there's a lot to do," he said.

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Army Staff Sgt. Tyrone Almendarez, a field artillery chief in the 10th Mountain Division, stands ready to use his 105mm cannon here. The artillery is the first line of defense at Shkin Fire Base.

the action, or when a rocket slams into the compound, it doesn't quite seem like reality, but more like a war movie. It always hits me afterwards though."

Many here agree the action is also very unpredictable and being alert is necessary for survival.

"It's crazy here," said Air Force Airman 1st Class Justin Pilant, 20th Air Support Operations Squadron enlisted terminal attack controller. "One minute we're chillin' with a cup of [green tea], the next we're falling over each other to activate the quick response force."

The quick-reaction force is activated any time there is an enemy attack on the base.

According to Staff Sgt. Tyrone Almendarez, a field artillery chief in the 10th Mtn. Div., his 105mm cannons are the quickest responders to fire back at the enemy.

"Artillery is our right hand out here," said Almendarez. "If we get rocketed, our forward observer calls up a grid coordinate of where the fire is coming from and we counter fire with the cannons." These cannons are extremely accurate even from miles away according to Almendarez.

Despite the harsh environment officials say the soldiers in Shkin remain hopeful for victory and aggressively pursue it.

Bagram Air Base MWR presents

1530Z at the MWR Building: "Maid in Manhattan." Marisa Ventura is a single mother, who works as a maid in a first-class Manhattan hotel. By a twist of fate and mistaken identity, Marisa meets Christopher Marshall, a handsome heir to a political dynasty, who believes that she is a guest at the hotel.



Tomorrow's movie will be "Van Wilder."

Local weather

TWO-DAY REGIONAL WEATHER FORECAST:

	Today	Saturday
Bagram:	Haze H: 81F L: 52F	Haze H: 81F L: 52F
Kandahar:	Dusty H: 86F L: 50F	Dusty H: 88F L: 52F
Kabul:	Haze H: 77F L: 48F	Haze H: 79F L: 50F
Uzbekistan:	Partly cloudy H: 88F L: 52F	Partly cloudy H: 82F L: 51F

Weather forecast courtesy of the Bagram Combat Weather Team

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Severe Pneumonia cases cease in Southwest Asia

Story by Gerry J. Gilmore
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON - A spate of cases of severe pneumonia that had killed two U.S. service members deployed to Southwest Asia seems to have ended, a senior Defense Department health official said Sept. 29.

From March until late August, about 100 active duty troops came down with some form of the respiratory ailment while conducting military operations in Iraq and the U.S. Central Command theater of operations, noted Dr. Michael E. Kilpatrick, DoD's deputy director of deployment health support, in an interview with American Forces Radio and Television Service.

"That rate of pneumonia in the (numbers of) deployed people is not unusual," Kilpatrick said. In August, more than 160,000 service members were deployed in and around South-

west Asia supporting Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Coming down with pneumonia, Kilpatrick explained, isn't a rare occurrence in the service. In fact, the Army surgeon general's office noted that each year the Army experiences between 400 and 500 cases of pneumonia worldwide.

What was unusual, Kilpatrick explained, was that among the 100 troops in Southwest Asia who'd been stricken with pneumonia, 19 came down with particularly severe breathing problems that required treatment with respirators. The doctor noted that two of the 19 died. Both were soldiers who'd served in Iraq.

In early August, the Army deployed two medical teams overseas to try to understand the causes of the apparent pneumonia outbreak.

But now, "the good news ... is that we've not had any more serious (pneumonia) cases requiring mechanical ventilation since Aug. 20," Kilpatrick said.

Of the 19 virulent cases of pneumonia, the doctor said four were caused by bacterial infections. Of the other serious pneumonia cases, Kilpatrick noted, "we're just not certain (of the causes) at this point."

Military health officials, however, do rule out the likelihood that Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome, known as SARS, was the cause of the pneumonia, Kilpatrick said. Chemical and biological agents, the doctor noted, also have been ruled out.

"The investigation is continuing to try to understand what may be a cause" for the pneumonia, Kilpatrick noted.

Worth noting, he said, is that 15 of the 19 service members who'd come down with pneumonia were smokers, and eight had taken up smoking while they were deployed.

"Cigarette smoking is never good for your health, and it certainly could be a contributor to the cause of pneumonia — and perhaps of severe pneumonia — in some individuals," Kilpatrick concluded.

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deploying to Afghanistan, Schizas-Price knew a bigger store was needed.

"To get a bigger store depended on how many troops were stationed here," she said. "We already had 10,000 people here so we asked AAFES for a bigger store."

Then the Army came to the rescue. In the fall of that year, it was decided that Bagram would get a new PX to provide service to the soldiers massing at the air base here. Frost said it was a joyous day when Bagram was awarded a new PX.

"When I found out Bagram was getting a new store, I was thrilled," she said.

After securing the bid for a new store, a location had to be found. The site where the current PX is was originally used as a Russian motor pool. Renovations began on the building in early October 2002. Schizas-Price said a lot of work was needed to make the building suitable for store operations.

"We had to level the floor," she said. "Then there were the broken windows, the roofing, and the bullet holes to deal with."

One place Schizas-Price said was particularly difficult to deal with was the "Afghani room" - where magazines and Afghan collectibles are located.

"If you look, you can see where the floor is cracking," she said. "The Russians had a pit there and would do oil changes there. We had to fill that in before we could start work on the floors."

The hard work paid off on Christmas Eve 2002 when the store held its grand opening. Simonides said even before the store was officially opened, soldiers had already begun lining up to be the first one to step inside it.



Soldiers shop in the electronics section of the Bagram PX. Soldiers can find just about everything they need at the facility.

"I was driving back to the store and the line was out to Disney Drive," he said. "They waited a long time to get into that store."

Finally, at 10 a.m., the doors opened. According to store officials, the store did more than \$89,000 in sales that day.

The PX is still in use today. Coalition soldiers come from all over Afghanistan to shop at the Bagram PX. However, Frost said she hasn't forgotten the memory of the old PX. When she gives presentations about AAFES support in contingency plans, she shows slides of the Bagram PX before and after the new store opened.

"I show them a picture of the new store taken on Christmas Eve when the new store opened up with soldiers riding away in a truck with a 27" flat screen TV in the back of it," she said. "I tell them it doesn't get any better than this for the soldiers you, America, send off to fight your wars."



Coalition Sports Zone

(Compiled from ESPN.com)

A's Zito dominates Red Sox to take 2-0 series lead Thursday

OAKLAND, Calif. – Barry Zito got plenty of rest and no relaxation on the night before he dominated the Boston Red Sox.



Barry Zito struck out nine to give the A's a 2-0 lead in the series.

While his Oakland teammates worked late for a 12-inning victory in the division series opener, Zito was wide awake in bed. He turned the radio on and off, called his parents — anything to stay occupied until the Athletics were finished.

On Thursday, Zito had a spring in his step and a nasty dip in his curveball — and he put the A's in command of the best-of-five series by striking out nine over seven impressive innings. Oakland sent bleary-eyed Boston

to the brink of playoff elimination with a 5-1 victory in Game 2.

The teams took the field for batting practice slightly more than 10 hours after Eric Chavez scored the winning run in Game 1 on Ramon Hernandez's daring bases-loaded bunt.

"I think I pictured it pretty well," Zito said. "But I still came in the clubhouse and watched the tape of the last couple of guys, just to make it real and get me fired up for the game today."

Mission accomplished: The Cy Young winner's looping curve was in top form, and Boston's record-setting offense spent the afternoon flailing at his best stuff. The A's didn't score again after an

impressive second-inning rally, but Zito and relievers Chad Bradford and Keith Foulke easily made it stand up.

To close for comfort, Miami squeezes by West Virginia 22-20 Thursday

MIAMI – Freshman Jon Peattie kicked a 23-yard field goal with



Miami needed a last second field goal to hold off West Virginia 22-20 Thursday.

11 seconds remaining as No. 2 Miami staved off an upset with a 22-20 victory over West Virginia on Thursday night.

Peattie finished with a school-record five field goals, his biggest coming after Miami drove 66 yards with two minutes remaining.

Brock Berlin needed a fourth-down completion to Kellen Winslow to keep the drive alive. On fourth-and-13 from the Miami 25, Berlin hit Winslow over the middle. The tight end made a leaping catch for a 16-yard gain.

Berlin finished 37-of-54 for 352 yards with a touchdown and two interceptions. Winslow caught 10 passes for 104 yards.

The Mountaineers had one final chance with five seconds to play, but Sean Taylor intercepted Rasheed Marshall's deep pass.

Bryant's attorney's lose bid, Oct. 9 hearing open to public judge says

EAGLE, Colo. – The woman accusing Kobe Bryant of rape will not have to testify during the NBA superstar's preliminary hearing next week, a judge ruled Thursday.

Eagle County Judge Frederick Gannett also said the Oct. 9 hearing will be open to the public, a decision that could prompt Bryant's defense team to waive the hearing and head straight to trial.

But the judge also said he would meet with attorneys immediately before the hearing to determine whether parts of it should be closed to preserve Bryant's right to a fair trial. He said some of the "proffered evidence" may go beyond the desired limit of relevance.

The judge also turned down defense requests to see the woman's medical records, saying it was an issue that should be decided by a state district judge should the case go to trial.

Prosecutors, attorneys for the woman and attorneys for hospitals and clinics asked Gannett to throw out the defense subpoenas. They say such records are protected under state and federal privacy laws and the woman has not waived her confidentiality rights.

Sports on local Armed Forces Network TV

Saturday's schedule (AFN Sports)

- MLB San Francisco Giants vs. Florida Marlins 0030L
- Baseball Tonight 0330L
- NFL Matchup 0400L
- Boxing Monte Barrett vs. Eric Kirk 0430L
- College Football Oregon @ Utah 0630L
- NFL Live 0930L
- Action Sports 1000L
- SportsCenter 1030L
- PGA American Express Championship 1130L
- SportsCenter 1530L
- College GameDay 1900L
- College Football Virginia Tech @ Rutgers 2030L
- MLB Division Series TBD 2130L

Sunday's schedule (AFN Sports)

- MLB Division Series TBD 0030L
- ESPNNews 0330L
- College GameDay Scoreboard 0400L
- College Football Tennessee @ Auburn 0400L
- ESPNNews 0715L
- NASCAR Busch Series 0800L
- SportsCenter 1030L
- PGA American Express Championship 1130L
- Baseball Tonigh 1500L
- College Football Alabama @ Georgia 1530L
- SportsCenter 1930L
- NFL magazine 2030L
- NASCAR Winston Cup Series 2130L

Afghanistan Hot Topics



(Compiled by CJTF-180 Public Affairs)

UNICEF hails entry of 1 million Afghan girls to school

AFGHANISTAN (Sabawoon)—More than 1 million girls in Afghanistan have entered schools since the fall of the Taliban, which banned their attendance, in “a testament to the courage and wisdom of the Afghan people, and the generosity of the international community,” the United Nations children’s agency said today.

“To think that a million girls have returned to school, and that the parents of a million girls have encouraged them to do so is stunning,” UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy said on the eve of a three-day visit to the country. “It’s an incredible feat in a country plagued by hunger, poverty, poor health, and continuing instability.

“But on top of that, it’s now safer for a woman to give birth in Afghanistan than at any time over the previous 20 years,” Ms. Bellamy added.

Under the Taliban, not only were girls forbidden to attend school but health workers were often obstructed from reaching newborn babies and young mothers by official policies that enforced female seclusion, UNICEF said in a new release in Kabul, the Afghan capital.

“We have the first real investment in schools since 1975, when the last school was built. And millions of children are being regularly vaccinated against killer diseases such as measles and polio,” said Ms. Bellamy, who was in Almaty, Kazakhstan, prior to beginning her visit to Afghanistan, her third since 2001, on Sunday.

She is due to tour the country’s largest maternity hospital, a girls’ school, an income-generation project for women, a community water point and Afghanistan’s first cold-storage facility for vaccines, and will also address a seminar of religious leaders in Kabul.

Pakistan raid targets al Qaeda

ANGORE ADDA, Pakistan (Associated Press)—“We have intelligence that the areas of Waziristan — North and South Waziristan — are being mostly used by al Qaeda,” said Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali.

Pakistan’s army launched a large-scale offensive against al Qaeda and other militants in a rugged tribal region bordering Afghanistan on Thursday, killing at least 12 suspects and capturing 18, military officials said.

An *Associated Press* reporter at the scene saw four bodies, and Maj. Gen. Ameer Faisal, the commander of the operation, said eight others were lying in an area about 100 meters away that was too dangerous to enter.

The al Qaeda suspects, blindfolded and with their hands tied behind their backs, were led away from the area.

Faisal said most of those killed and captured appeared to be foreigners, with Central Asian features. It was not immediately clear if any top-ranking al Qaeda operatives were among them.

At least two Pakistani troops were wounded in the operation, Faisal said, and the battle was continuing.

Gunfire could be heard coming from a group of compounds where Faisal said other al Qaeda suspects had taken refuge. At least four Pakistani helicopters circled the area.

“Al Qaeda people have taken refuge in these five big compounds. We do not know how many people are hiding there,” Faisal told *AP*.

Army helicopters and soldiers were organizing the operation from a base camp at Angore Adda, just a half-mile from the fighting and the last Pakistani town before the border with Afghanistan. The army brought several journalists to the camp by helicopter to observe the operation, then took them to the fighting area.

The troops moved into South Waziristan early Thursday after receiving word that al Qaeda operatives had sneaked into the area from Afghanistan, the army said in a statement.

“The operation commenced early this morning and is progressing smoothly,” the statement said.

The areas of North and South Waziristan, both in Pakistan’s ultraconservative North West Frontier Province, have long been suspected as a possible hideout for al Qaeda fugitives, as well as remnants of the ousted Taliban regime of Afghanistan.

Osama bin Laden and his alleged number two, Ayman al-Zawahri, are believed to be hiding somewhere along the long border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

I don’t think that’s a mailable item.



kevin_kilgore@hotmail.com

By Kevin Kilgore

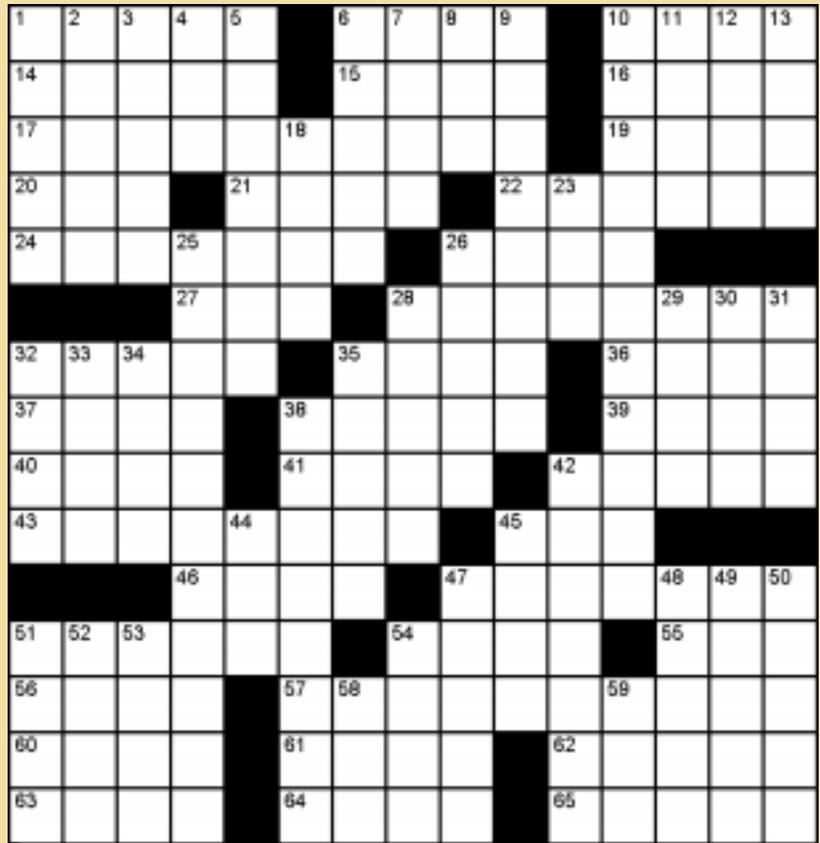
Laugh Support

Humongous crossword

(Courtesy of QUIZLAND.com)

Across

- 1. "___ Whoopee"
- 6. The terrible ___
- 10. Swabbies' implements
- 14. Coeur d'___, Idaho
- 15. Lend a hand
- 16. Aid in a scam
- 17. Black and white zoo critter
- 19. "___ Lisa"
- 20. Lavatory sign
- 21. Have a yen for
- 22. Model-maker's adhesive
- 24. Sea ___ (marine polyp)
- 26. Prefix with dynamic
- 27. Bonanza stuff
- 28. Founds, as a business
- 32. Really smelled
- 35. Walk through mud
- 36. Luau dance
- 37. Rowboat propellers
- 38. "Mule Train" singer
- 39. Highlands family
- 40. Tear carrier
- 41. Kitty starter
- 42. Speak boastfully of
- 43. Nonbelievers in God
- 45. A.L. East, e.g.
- 46. ___-Rooter
- 47. "Close, but no cigar!"
- 51. Pita dip
- 54. Ushers do it
- 55. Workout unit
- 56. Fit for active duty
- 57. Prehistoric plant-eating behemoth
- 60. Beehive State natives
- 61. Track shape
- 62. Bonn's river
- 63. ___ IRA
- 64. 60s talk show host Joe
- 65. "Bullitt" director Peter



Down

- 1. Molten rock
- 2. Sci-fi visitor
- 3. "The Family Circus" cartoonist Bil
- 4. Wayfarer's stop
- 5. ABC or CBS
- 6. Macbeth, for one
- 7. Took one's turn
- 8. Like Mother Hubbard
- 9. Period beginning with Sputnik I's launch
- 10. Kentucky tourist attraction
- 11. Double reed
- 12. Rival of Cornell or Brown, briefly
- 13. Doc's "At once!"
- 18. Glazier's unit
- 23. Pull a boner
- 25. Pop tune played around Halloween
- 26. Do penance
- 28. Gill openings
- 29. "Star Trek" helmsman
- 30. ___ Bator, Mongolia
- 31. Huff and puff
- 32. Scotch's partner
- 33. Strung tightly
- 34. St. Louis landmark
- 35. ___ Domingo (Caribbean capital)
- 38. "End of the line!"
- 42. What a two-finger "V" might stand for
- 44. Debtor's note
- 45. Primatologist Fossey
- 47. 1960 Wimbledon champ Fraser
- 48. Genetic attribute
- 49. See the old gang
- 50. Belgian city mispronounced "Wipers"
- 51. Billing unit, for some
- 52. "Do ___ others ..."
- 53. Track competition
- 54. Baseball's Musial
- 58. Campus greenery
- 59. ___ Na Na

Solutions will be posted in Saturday's Freedom Watch