

Christmas Eve Message of hope

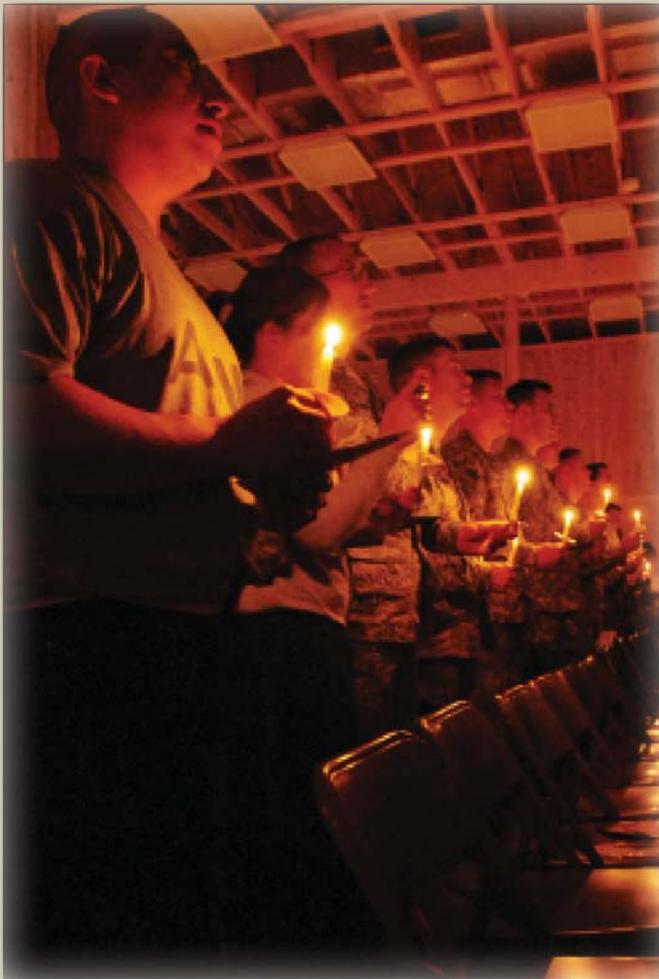


Photo by Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey

In a ceremony usually associated with the act between individuals passing on the light of love, one person lights the candle of another, who will in turn light another candle.

By Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey
367th MPAD



COB BASRA – The expansive new chapel at Contingency Operating Base Basra saw its first service Christmas Eve with a crowd that filled the 300 seats and saw more than a few standing to hear the message of hope and vigilance delivered by Chaplain (Lt. Col.) John Morris.

Not traditional in every aspect, the service began with a quick note on procedures should an indirect fire warning sound. It was a reminder to those present that, as Morris, 34th Infantry Division chaplain, had previously noted, those gathered to celebrate their faith and their love for fellow human beings should be the biggest objective.

Still, the realities of a war zone were not lost on the congregation.

In fact, the language of Soldiers made its way into the Meditation by Morris in a way that brought new life to the Christmas story for many present.

“That’s just a style of communication I developed over the years as an Army chaplain,” Morris said of his presentation of Herod as a commanding general and of the Magi seeking Jesus’ “grid” [map coordinates].

“I try to take the Biblical text and apply it to contemporary reality,” he said.

Choir leader Capt. Christen Dixon, Moncks Corner, S.C., 14th Brigade Border Transition Team, said he felt the chaplain’s message was “very appropriate.”



Gift giving brings smiles as Soldiers make time for 'Tots'



Kindergarteners attending school at The Chaldean Catholic Church headed by Bishop Imad Al Banna, in downtown Basrah, received a pleasant surprise Dec. 14, as Soldiers from 1st Battalion (Air Assault), 377th Field Artillery Regiment, 17th Fires Brigade and 1314 Civil Affairs Company, brought gifts of stuffed animals and toys during a Women's Initiative mission sponsored by Basrah's Provincial Reconstruction Team. The gifts were donated by Operation Iraqi Children and 1314th Civil Affairs Company.

Spc. Jacob J. Friday, 1st Bn., 17th FB, carries gifts donated by Operation Iraqi Children and 1314th CA Co. to students at Basrah's Chaldean Catholic Church.

Photos by Spc. Maurice A. Galloway, 17th Fires Brigade



THE RED BULL REPORT

34th Red Bull Infantry Division
Public Affairs Office



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Photo by Master Sgt. Rich Kemp

Col. Michael Rath, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Surgeon, left, Don Shelby, Minnesota broadcaster and Lt. Col. John Kuzma, 34th Inf. Div. Psychiatrist, speak to the faculty of the Basrah Medical College Nov. 1.

Partnership program between U of M, Iraq to begin

By Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence
34th Red Bull Inf. Div. PAO



COB BASRA – Calling all doctors: soon, doctors from southern Iraq may be able to travel to study with their counterparts at the University of Minnesota.

Col. Michael Rath, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Surgeon, said he has been in talks to create a partnership program between the University of Minnesota Academic Health Centers and the Basra Medical and Nursing Schools.

A visit to the campus in Minneapolis Dec. 4 was followed by invitations for faculty visitation to address curriculum and instruction, in addition to faculty devel-

“I think what the University of Minnesota schools will appreciate about this relationship is a growing awareness of the challenges of delivering healthcare in a war-torn country, which, after 30 years of strife and war and dictatorship, is trying to emerge.”

— Col. Michael Rath
34th Red Bull Inf. Div. Surgeon

opment in Basrah. A reply from the dean of the Basrah Medical School is expected to frame the relationships for years to come.

The partnership program would allow doctors from Basrah to travel to U of M facilities for one or two weeks at a time to “scrub in and

learn the latest advances in surgical technique,” Rath said.

The proposed partnership program began with a meal. Rath was attending a July 4 dinner when he was summoned to the commanding general’s table.

Maj. Gen. Rick Nash,

head of Multi-National Division South, wanted him to meet the cleric, Imam Al-Moosawi, an important Basrah cleric and businessman. What followed was an invitation to meet his brother-in-law, a physician and director of the Al-Moosawi Hospital in Basrah. At issue was the need to provide updates to surgical training for Dr Al-Moosawi and his associates.

Rath and personnel of the Basrah Provincial Reconstruction Team visited the hospital and local schools, which Rath said are the future of Iraq. “This province depends on these schools to produce the doctors and

Iraq to Everest

Red Bull medic aims for Earth's highest peak

By Pfc. J. Princeville Lawrence
34th Red Bull Inf. Div. PAO



COB BASRA – There comes a time in the twilight of every Soldier's deployment when it becomes time to begin dreaming about post-deployment plans.

Staff Sgt. Meghan Markson, a force protection manager with the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division, plans to remodel the St. Paul home she and her husband share.

First Lt. Jessica Westendorf, a Little Falls, Minn. native, and a sustainment operations officer with the 34th Inf. Div., plans to take a Caribbean vacation in St. Lucia.

Staff Sgt. Daniel Bari plans to climb mountains.

Of course, Bari intends to start small and work his way up: first a lowly hill, say Pike's Peak in Colorado, then a little knoll, like Mount McKinley in Alaska, and then finally, his ultimate goal: Mount Everest in Nepal.

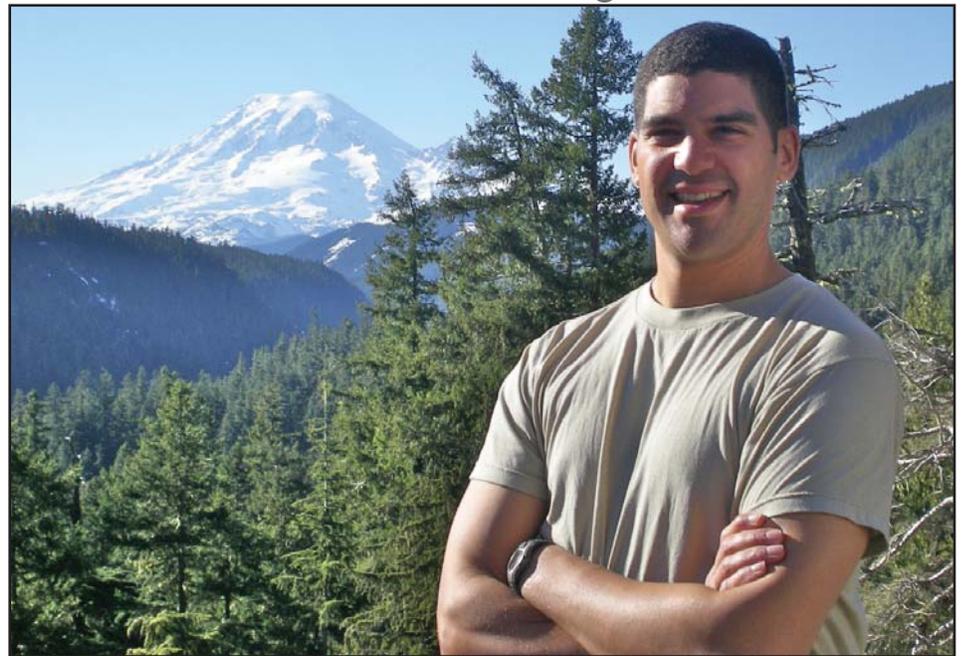
Bari, who has "always enjoyed doing stuff outdoors," said he found this calling in the woods of northern Minnesota last fall.

"I started rock climbing up in Duluth in the summer and fall of 2008," said the St. Louis Park, Minn., native, "and really, I instantly fell in love with rock climbing."

Trips across the Appalachian Trail followed, and Bari, a medic with the 34th Inf. Div., found himself falling in love with the art of the trudge.

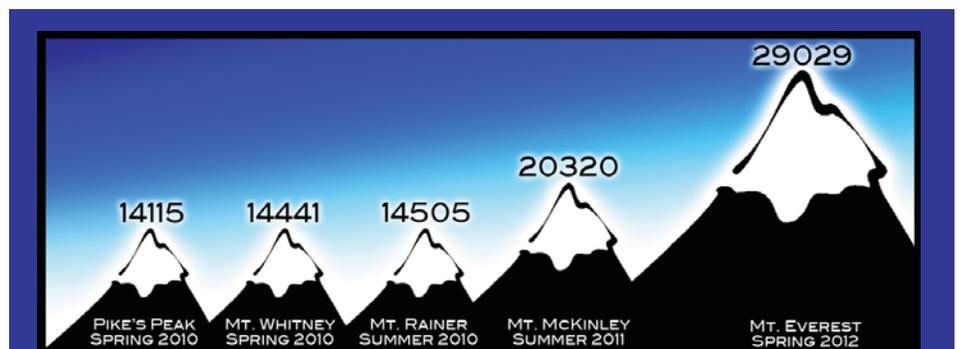
"I really enjoyed the terrain, the angles that you take going up and down hills, especially wearing a pack," said Bari, who wondered if it was an Army thing. "It was a lot of enjoyment, just getting outside, kind of free out there."

Bari and his friends began to talk about taking a rock-climbing trip, but a different kind of challenge interrupted



Courtesy Photo

Staff Sgt. Daniel Bari, shown here in front of Mount Rainier, said he plans to climb Mount Everest in 2012. Bari, a St. Louis Park, Minn., native and a medic with the 34th Red Bull Infantry Division, climbed a portion of Mount Rainier while preparing for his deployment to southern Iraq.



Staff Sgt. Bari plan includes several shorter mountains to prepare for the 29,029-foot Mount Everest, the tallest in the world.

HOMETOWN HIGHLIGHT



It is the birthplace or childhood home of author and music historian Stacy Harris, movie directors Joel and Ethan Coen, musician Peter Himmelman, New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, Senator Al Franken, songwriter Dan Israel, guitarist Sharon Isbin, writer Pete Hautman, football coach Marc Trestman and baseball announcer Halsey Hall.



To my fellow Red Bull Soldiers,

As we enter the Christmas season, I cannot express my appreciation and gratitude for your devotion to duty, loyalty to unit and commitment to a job well done – all attributes that continue to define and shape the Red Bulls' legacy.

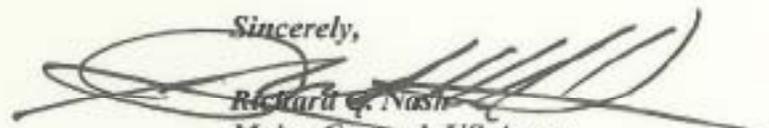
Though thousands of miles separate us from family and loved one during the holiday, be proud of the job that you have accomplished here and the successes we, together, have achieved.

Your deeds have, in fact, filled a page of history. Each of you should take heart in the contributions you continue to make. Although our tasks in MND-S are far from complete and hard tasks remain, you have helped bring about noteworthy progress for the Iraqi people.

As we celebrate this most joyous time of the year, let us remember the comrades we have lost and not forget that we remain strong and diligent in looking after each other, until at last, we are all home again.

On behalf of a grateful nation, let me be the first to wish you a Merry Christmas. Please relay my appreciation and wishes for a warm and safe holiday to your Families.

Sincerely,



Richard G. Nash
Major General, US Army
Commanding



Sgt. Brenda Bushera, Wisconsin National Guard, a classically-trained opera singer from Chicago and a vocalist with the 34th Inf. Div. Band sings a rendition of Ave Maria that brought total silence to the chapel. She is accompanied by Sgt. Chris Campbell.



Sgt. Chris Campbell, team leader for "The M-Sax-Teens," a detachment of the 34th Inf. Div. band, warms up before the Christmas Eve service at COB Basra. "When you go out to a place, and you see a smile on someone's face who maybe hasn't had something to smile about in a while, it's really rewarding," said the Waukesha, Wis. native.



Spc. Samuel M. G. Taylor, a chaplain's assistant from Stanly County, N.C., 1st Company, 130th Air Reconnaissance Battalion, welcomes Lt. Col. Chuck Roede, from Olympia Washington, executive officer for 17th Fires Brigade, to the COB Basra Christmas Eve service.

From Page 1
HOPE

"Using references to what we're doing now, he made it simple for us to understand in military terms," said Dixon. "But he also made it simple for us to understand in spiritual terms."

Focusing on stories of "staying awake," Morris had a combined message for the congregation.

"It's easy for us to let our guard down, and then we don't pay attention to each other, we don't pay attention to our spiritual welfare," he said. "We don't pay attention to what we're doing here and the danger of what we're doing."

"Sometimes people get discouraged. They're on their third tour here; they see conditions sometimes that are pretty appalling," Morris said. "Americans are pretty sensitive, and it's easy to despair."

So, one goal of Morris' message was to remind those in attendance of the promise of Christmas.

"The Christmas message is, 'Yeah, the world's a bad place; there's a reason why it is, but God hasn't forsaken us,'" he said.

For more of Sgt. Kibbey's stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Kibbey



Photos by Sgt. Benjamin R. Kibbey



The COB Basra Gospel Service Choir inspires the audience to sway in time with several songs during the Christmas Eve service.

From Page 4**EVEREST**

Bari's plans: a deployment to Iraq.

Bari's pre-deployment training brought him to Fort Lewis, Wash., where the looming, white specter of Mount Rainier sat teasingly on the horizon.

"The first time I saw Mount Rainier, I had that instant when I was like, 'wow, I'd really like to see what it's like on top of that thing,'" Bari said.

While at Fort Lewis, Bari immersed himself in books on mountaineering and its myriad dangers: frigid cold, glaciers, crevasses, high altitude sickness and falling. It wasn't until Bari's four-day pass that he was able to actually climb the mountain – and because of inclement weather, he was only able to reach 8,000 feet. Nevertheless, his will was undeterred.

"There was some times during the two months we were at Fort Lewis when I thought, 'well, I wonder if I start getting up there - it'll be cold and the oxygen is a little bit less and maybe I have no idea what I'm getting myself into, and I'll hate it - and I'll change my mind,'" Bari said. "But that didn't happen. I knew that the more I was climbing the more I enjoyed it."

His appetite whetted, Bari continued training in Iraq, where he compensated for southern Iraq's relative flatness by running voraciously, sometimes eclipsing 35-45 miles a week.

"Your leg strength: that's the power that's going to get you up the mountain," he said.

Once his deployment ends, Bari said he plans to take his legs and shimmy up Pike's Peak, which tops off near 14,115 feet. The route to the top of Pike's Peak is a simple path, a well-trod trail that requires maybe a day's hike. The peak mostly serves as a way to acclimatize to high altitudes, in addition to its role as a warm-up for Mount Whitney in California.

After Mount Whitney, Bari said he plans to finish off Mount McKinley, where he can gain experience working with ropes and ice and glaciers. After Mount McKinley in the summer of 2010, it's up to Alaska in the summer of 2011.

"After Rainier, the next big step is going to Denali National Park and climbing Mount McKinley," said Bari. "It's about 20,000 feet and it's in Alaska, so it's significantly colder and it's significantly higher. So that will be the last major training piece before making an attempt at Everest."

Mount Everest, the highest peak in the world at 29,029 feet, has long allured the brave and bold. Ever since Sir Edmund Hillary first scaled its craggy summit in 1953, over 2700 adventurers have crawled their way up the peak locals call "Chomolungma," or saint mother. The mountain is so high, and the trail is so long, that to climb it straight through is both foolhardy and dangerous.

"You don't start right at the base camp and go straight to the top," Bari explained. "You go up a little bit, set up a camp and get used to that elevation, and every so often, you actually go back down, basically to recover a little bit, and

you then do that progressively up [the mountain].

"I think it's worth noting the highest point in the lower 48 is well under 15,000 feet. The base camp for Mount Everest is over 17,000 feet. So the highest point that I could do any training, without going to Alaska, in the United States, is in California, and even at the very highest point, I'm still well short of even the base camp of Everest," he said. "So that really gets me some perspective: What is all my training for? Getting me below the bottom."

While Bari has "absolutely zero experience mountain climbing," he didn't really have any serious running experience before his first marathon, either. In fact, Bari originally hated running, but as he trained, he grew to love running, and "it kinda grew from there," said Bari.

Since then, Bari has "kinda lost track" of how many marathons he has run, although he estimates the total to be somewhere close to 20.

Bari hopes that his mountain climbing plans blossom similarly. He has already contacted several companies, and he said that as a staff sergeant in the U.S. Army, it's simply a matter of saving money, staying fit and hoping for good weather.

And while there are many things Bari cannot control over the next two years, his plan, at least, appears to be rock-solid: start at the bottom, and through hard work and effort and sweat, climb your way to the top.

For more of Pfc. Lawrence's stories, visit: www.TheRedBulls.org/Lawrence

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From Page 3
PARTNERSHIP

following their training, will provide primary care and go off to obtain specialty training," said Rath

After some planning and outreach, Rath visited the Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany for a meeting with the hospital commander there.

An existing civilian surgeon program offered the training Al-Moosawi sought, and similar contacts with the University of Minnesota should make similar access for surgical training available as details are worked out.

"The citizens of Minnesota have a long tradition of philanthropy not only in the state and in the country but in the world," said Rath, who has supplied his successors with follow-on plans to support the partnership program long after the Red Bulls leave.

"I think what the University of Minnesota schools will appreciate about this relationship is a growing awareness of the challenges of delivering healthcare in a war-torn country, which, after 30 years of strife and war and dictatorship, is trying to emerge."



Photo by Master Sgt. Rich Kemp
A student at the Basrah Medical College stands up to ask a question during a visit by Col. Michael Rath, 34th Red Bull Infantry Division Surgeon,

For more of Pfc. Lawrence's stories, visit:
www.TheRedBulls.org/Lawrence

ARABIC WORD OF THE DAY

Akhi al aziz-
my dear brother
(friend) 



بيك عزيزي اخي



Red Bull Radio PODCAST
Independent Iraqi Media 

www.TheRedBulls.org/podcast

Corn on the Cob

By Capt. Daniel Cape

Thanks for all the care packages!!!

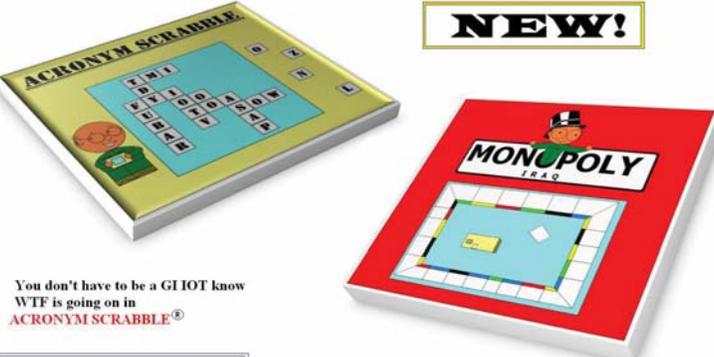


Merry Christmas
CORN ON THE COB

cornontheob54.blogspot.com

MERRY CHRISTMAS FROM THE COB

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FROM THE RED BULL CHAPEL *CHRISTMAS FROM A Christian Perspective*

RED BULL CHAPEL

During my three deployments in the Middle East many of my Muslim friends have expressed confusion over how Americans celebrate the holiday of Christmas. "What do reindeer have to do with Mary and the baby Jesus?" one interpreter asked me. I chuckled and responded, "Sometimes Americans are just as confused as you are about the meaning of Christmas."

With that confusion in mind I'd like to clarify 'Christmas' from a Christian perspective. Perhaps this story can help; a man observed a beautiful cardinal fly into the window of his home. He ran outside to see if the bird needed help. He found the bird lying stunned on the ground. When he went to pick the bird up, it wobbled away and resisted his efforts to help it. Moved by compassion the man redoubled his efforts to assist the bird, and the bird doubled its efforts to resist. Frustrated the man realized the bird was frightened and distrusted him. "I would have to become a cardinal for this bird to realize I am not here to hurt, but only to help." the man thought

to himself.

So it is with Christmas, from a Christian perspective, God became a human, in the person of Jesus, in order to help a hurting and alienated human race. God took on human form to close the distance between us and Him. He came to us, to invite us to Himself.

In short, that is the Christmas message. All the rest of the trappings of the American holiday; gifts, trees, lights, reindeer, elves and Santa ... we'll they are just that ... trappings. Like tinsel and gift wrap they are nice to have ... but the real holiday is much simpler; a child born for us that we might come to God and know true peace.

Merry Christmas to our Christian Personnel. Happy Chanukah to our Jewish Personnel. Happy New Year to our Muslim Personnel and friends. Peace on earth to all.

~ CH Morris

34th INF DIV Command Chaplain

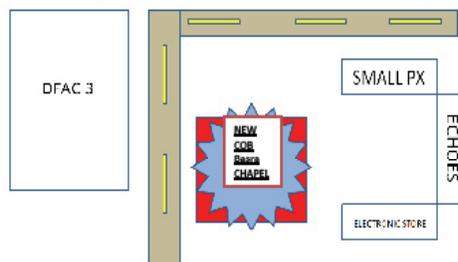


LAST SUNDAY @ the Interim Chapel Tent



Map to the new **COB BASRA CHAPEL**

Join us @ the
NEW
COB Basra Chapel!!



COB BASRA
2009 Holiday Service Schedule

25 Dec., 0900
Christmas Mass

25 Dec., 1030
COB Basra Christmas Service

All services held at the new
COB Basra Chapel

All Chapel Services, beginning with the 24 December Christmas Eve services @ 2200, will be @ the NEW COB Basra Chapel. See map above for directions.

Questions? Call or email SGT Jonathan Groeneweg @ 858-4596 or jonathan.groeneweg@iraq.centcom.mil, thanks!



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Two ways to make a free phone call home:

- SPAWAR at Red Bull LSA

Calls to the U.S. on Christmas and New Year's Day will be paid for by the VFW's Operation Uplink. From 0001 to 2359 Dec. 25 and Jan. 1, when you call using a normal prepaid PIN, you will hear a sponsor announcement noting that your call is free. Cafe managers have PINs for non-account holders to use.

- DSN

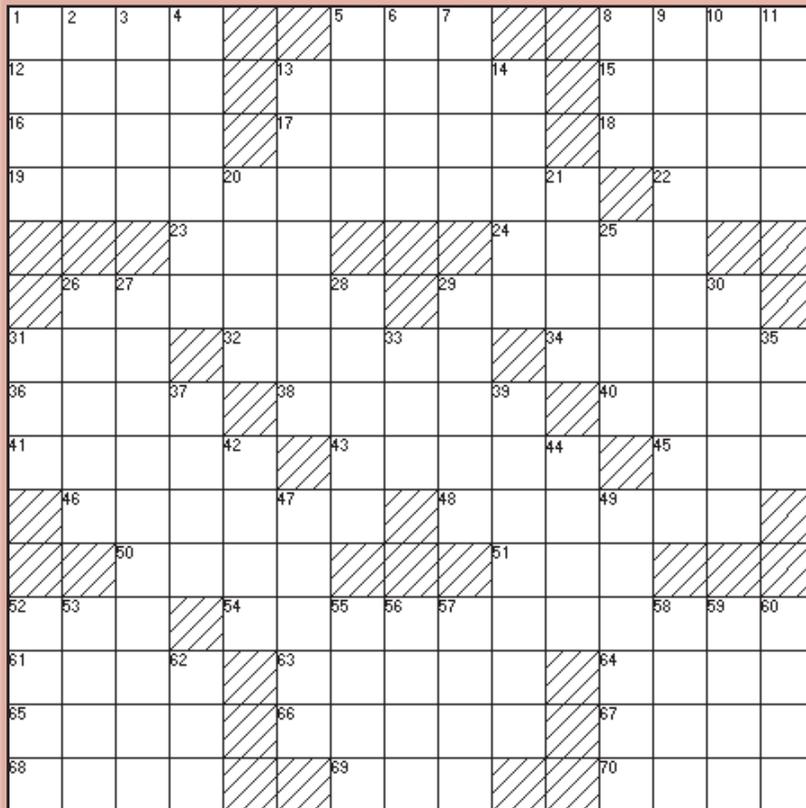
Dial (809) 463-3376 from any DSN phone. At the dialtone, dial 1-(800)-270-6109 and use PIN 0495049241. This number and PIN will work Christmas and New Year's Day for calling any U.S. number.



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Crossword



Across

- 1. Doorpost
- 5. Muck
- 8. Purposes
- 12. Chocolate cookie
- 13. Ordered by the pope
- 15. Quite
- 16. Make melodious sounds
- 17. Ancient Greek marketplace
- 18. A river in Spain
- 19. Overbearing pride
- 22. Egyptian boy king
- 23. Deception
- 24. Economize
- 26. Pin
- 29. Givers
- 31. Minimum (abbrev.)
- 32. Young eel
- 34. Presents
- 36. They come from hens
- 38. He told fables
- 40. Monthly union fees
- 41. Pulse
- 43. Not at any time
- 45. G
- 46. A bathroom necessity
- 48. Found on a pencil
- 50. Shantytown
- 51. 7 in Roman numerals
- 52. Is, formerly
- 54. Rascal
- 61. Colored part of an eye
- 63. Homeric epic
- 64. Cocoyam
- 65. A coniferous tree
- 66. Big
- 67. A "light" gas
- 68. Border
- 69. Born
- 70. Container weight

Down

- 1. Kid
- 2. Operatic solo
- 3. List of choices
- 4. Overcome with amazement
- 5. **Wise men**
- 6. Once ___ a time
- 7. Have the nerve
- 8. Anagram of "Sue"
- 9. Deception
- 10. Almond
- 11. Fired a weapon
- 13. Kneecap
- 14. Lariat 20.
- Conceal
- 21. Caroled
- 25. Empty
- 26. Not day
- 27. Fascinating
- 28. Happening
- 29. Piloted a car
- 30. Drive
- 31. Encountered
- 33. East southeast
- 35. South southeast
- 37. Potting need
- 39. Permeate
- 42. Smudge
- 44. Train track
- 47. Electronic messages
- 49. Quiet
- 52. Squeegee
- 53. Dry
- 55. Scheme
- 56. King
- 57. For a bird or a hamster
- 58. Inspiration
- 59. Smell
- 60. Not a single one
- 62. Behold



Around the world in 34 seconds



PESHAWAR, Pakistan – A suicide bomber detonated his explosives in a busy commercial area full of government buildings in Pakistan’s main northwest city Thursday, killing four people and wounding 14, authorities said. The attack was the second in three days in Peshawar, and the latest in wave of violence that has killed more than 500 people in Pakistan since October. Insurgents are suspected of avenging a U.S.-supported Pakistani army offensive against the Taliban in a northwest tribal region along the Afghan border. The attackers have struck a range of targets, from markets popular with women to security checkpoints. Thursday’s attack occurred in a busy sector of Peshawar where buildings housing the state-run airline, a public school and a government insurance company were located.



WASHINGTON – U.S. authorities arrested and charged a woman in Hawaii last week for allegedly threatening to kill President Barack Obama’s wife, Michelle, days before the Obamas were due to arrive in the state for the Christmas holiday. Kristy Lee Roshia was arrested on December 19 in Kaneohe, Hawaii, by the U.S. Secret Service after determining she had made the threat and had information about where the Obama family would be staying during their visit, according to court documents filed this week. She was charged with making the threat against the first lady and assaulting a Secret Service agent after she was arrested. A federal judge on Wednesday postponed a detention hearing for Roshia until a mental competency exam is conducted and she will remain in custody until then, according to court records.



EDEN PRAIRIE, Minn. – Brad Childress and Brett Favre talked twice this week about moving forward from their animated disagreement on the Minnesota sideline last week over the coach’s suggestion his grizzled quarterback should come out of the game. Conflict over? That’s what they insisted on Wednesday, blaming the high-profile nature of national television and one of the most famous players in football history for what they declared a blown-out-of-proportion issue. “I think it’s all resolved, first of all,” Favre said, adding: “The fact that we’ve lost two of the last three — the frustration is going to show. It should.” The Vikings (11-3) are trying to get back on track before the playoffs, but the Favre-led offense has found trouble for the first time this season. Minnesota has lost two of the last three games, and Favre has thrown for only three touchdowns with four interceptions this month. The offense clearly needed a spark against the Panthers last Sunday night, and Childress was justifiably concerned for Favre’s health while taking several hard hits from Julius Peppers and a fierce defense.



STOCKHOLM – A giant straw goat was burned down yet again early Wednesday in a Swedish city where torching it has become a Christmas tradition, to the dismay of local leaders. Gavle city spokeswoman Anna Ostman said someone set fire to the 43-foot-high (13-meter-high) creature around 3 a.m. local time. Only a charred wooden skeleton of the traditional Swedish Christmas symbol remained on Wednesday morning. “It feels very sad,” Ostman said. “We had really hoped that he would survive Christmas and New Year’s. Vandals have burned down the goat 24 times since it was first set up in Gavle in 1966 to mark the holiday season. It has also been smashed several times, run over by a car and had its legs cut off.