

# Opinion / Editorial

## OPERATION EPIC FURY APPEAR HEADING TO THE NEXT PHASE

By Bill Connor

With Operation Epic Fury passing the two-week mark, progress has been well ahead of schedule. Within days the top Iranian leadership was eliminated, the Iranian Air Force was destroyed, and the Iranian Navy was sunk. Iranian missile attacks went down over 90% the majority of Iranian missile launchers have been destroyed. Though Iranian UAV attacks persist, that capability is severely degraded. Despite all this, the U D Q L D Q choosing the late Ayatollah's son as successor Ayatollah against our warnings. With the air campaign successes, the US and Israel are now considering the next potential phase on the ground. First, President Trump's

statements and prior actions make clear he will not send American ground forces for regime change. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth has repeated the same many times. Beyond transferring a relatively modest Marine ground contingent of a couple thousand to the region, nothing to indicate the Administration is massing forces for a ground invasion. A limited seizure of the small Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf and special operations missions are likely all. President Trump knows he has the support of the American people for an air campaign of limited duration, not a lengthy ground war. Trump will not publicly take a ground invasion off the table due to messaging to Iran's leadership, but it isn't happening.

As America and Israel will not invade Iran, that leaves the 80% of the Iranian people who



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hate the regime. The problem right now, though, is that the Iranian people are disarmed and suffered the deaths of tens of thousands protesting the regime. Despite the damage done to the regime from the air, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) leadership has made it clear civilians leaving their houses to protest will die. They have sent their brutal paramilitary "Basij" units into Iranian cities and towns to scare the people from attempting anything against the regime. Despite the encouragement from Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in encouraging the people to take back their country, that appears unlikely right now.

The other ground forces that could overthrow the regime is the Iranian Kurds in the mountainous northwestern region of Iran. These are the same Kurdish ethnic group we dealt with in Northern Iraq Around Mosul and in Syria. According to the Kurdish Institute of Paris, Kurds are the fourth largest ethnic group in the Middle East, with between 36-45 million Kurds <https://www.institutkurde.org/en/info/who-is-the-kurdish-institute-s-1232550990> Within Iran, Kurds number between 7-15 million or 8-17% of the population (according to London's Think Tank Chatham House).

USA TODAY recently L Q W H U Y L base north of the capital of Iraq's Kurdistan Region about a ground invasion: "When we cross the border, the United States should secure the skies for us and protect X V I U R P commander with the Kurdistan Freedom Party (PAK), one of several Iranian Kurdish separatist groups based in northern Iraq, in an interview on March 11. "We do not need, nor do we expect, people to take to the streets," he said, referring to comments made by Trump on Feb. 28 when he urged Iranians as the bombing operation began to "take over your government. It will be yours to take." Israel's leader has made similar comments." <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2026/03/15/kurdish-fighters-iran-war-trump/89133073007/>

A Kurdish ground invasion to topple the regime would be challenging. The Kurds are made up of many different factions living throughout Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Syria and beyond. Some factions are opposed to an invasion into Iran. The focus of a Kurdish invasion force would likely be on carving out of Iran what Kurds believe to be Kurdistan. Kurds would require logistics and air support from Israel and the US to succeed (likely would also have to involve US advisers/coordinators). Iran's majority Persian population would probably appreciate any ground force attacking IRGC and Basij forces. The Persians, however, would not want to come underneath the political control of the Kurds, nor lose part of Iran to a Kurdistan. These complicated dynamics explain why on March 5 Trump supported a Kurdish invasion,

# Family & Marriage

## Let Go

"Doing nothing is sometimes one of the highest of the duties of man." - G.K. Chesterton

Donald McCullough has written a book entitled "The Consolations of Imperfection." McCullough shares how he was a very successful church leader and pastor. He had the respect of all. And then he fell. He sinned against God, his fellow man, and his wife. He went from the top to the bottom. For him, who had been at the top for so long, it was devastating.

Quoting McCullough, "During the darkest days of my life, when my past seemed ruined by failure and my future seemed nonexistent, when I could neither go backward to memories nor go forward to expectations, I rediscovered a story from the New Testament - the account of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead in the eleventh chapter of the Gospel of John. I had read this story many, many times, even preached sermons on it. But my G L I F X O me to hear it afresh, and whereas I had always considered it a story about resurrection, I began to understand that it was as much about death."

Bill and Mary's friends all respected him and his many abilities. Whenever he started a new project, whether it was on his job or in the church, they were right there with him. One unspoken concern lurked in the background of the minds of many who knew him and followed him, however. Bill was almost too perfect. His perfection persona was enhanced by his constant admission that he wasn't perfect. He gave the impression, although he wouldn't admit

and maybe didn't even recognize, that he was "perfect" in the acknowledgement of his imperfections.

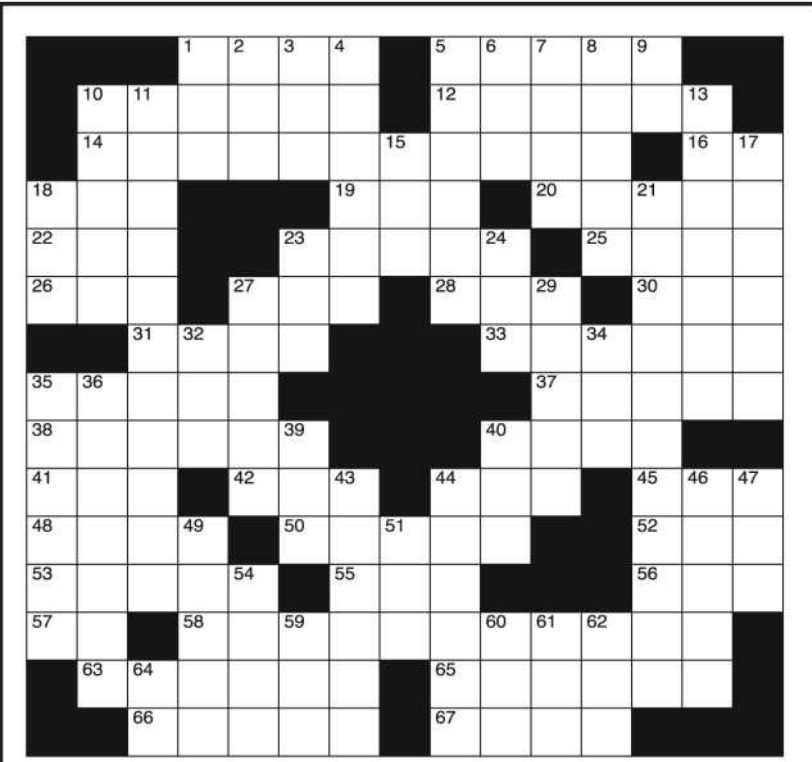
McCullough then goes on to say that he now felt he was dead. "My life was over. That may sound overly dramatic; in retrospect, it was an exaggeration, but at the time, it seemed as though I had died, been buried, and was lying in a cold tomb....I realized that I had nothing left to do. The only "work" left required of me was the anti-work of surrender.....Lazarus would be my model,

but he wasn't much help because he just seemed to lie there in silence. Then it occurred to me that that was precisely the point. A dead man does nothing." McCullough tried self-help books and seminars, and disciplines to adopt, but nothing helped. So he "let go, gave up, accepted that I was nothing but Lazarus. .... If resurrection would ever happen for him, it would only happen to him.....Resurrection is not self-renewal, not the glorious conclusion of a program of self-improvement. It is a gift that comes from the outside. It is the grace of new creation. With nothing left to do but trust this grace, peace comes."

As I read these words, I thought about the many times I tried self-trust God as we walk through life, but it's the only way. Family and Marriage Coalition of Aiken (FAMCO), was created to provide resources for you to succeed in your marriage and families. Roger Rollins, Executive Director, FAMCO, 803-640-4689. Let us know how we can help.



**Roger Rollins,**  
Family and Marriage Coalition



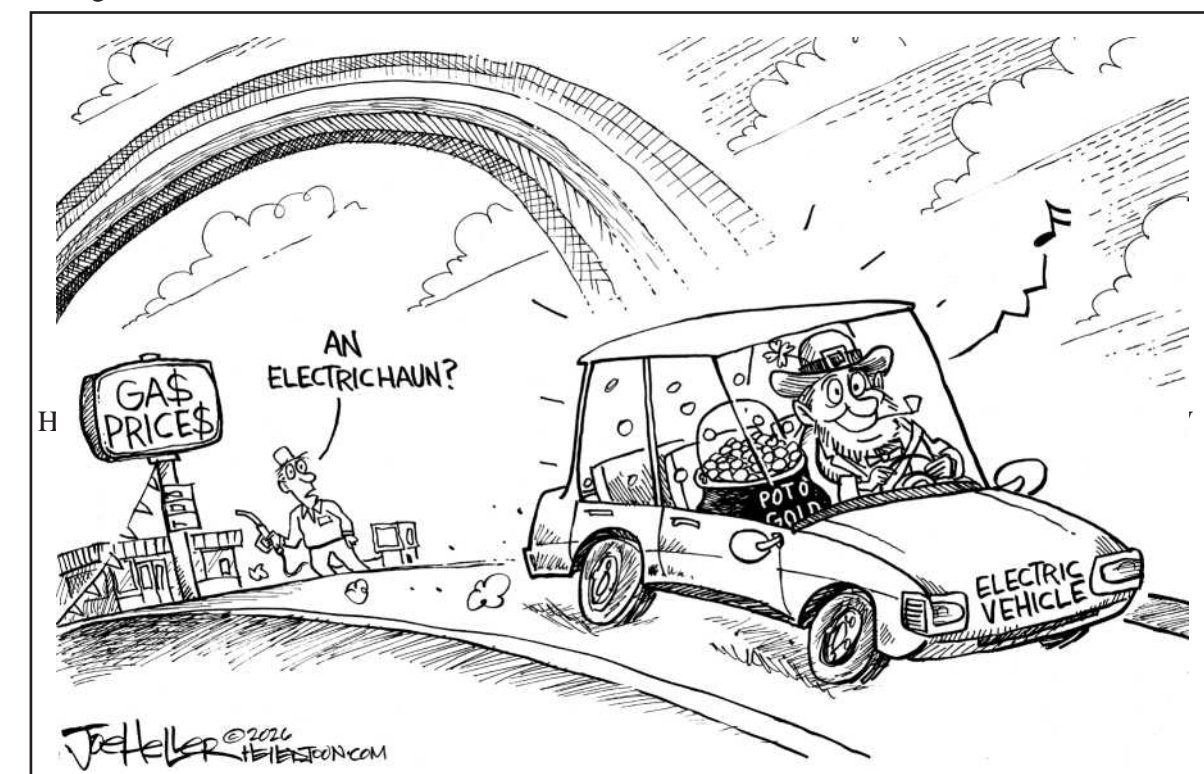
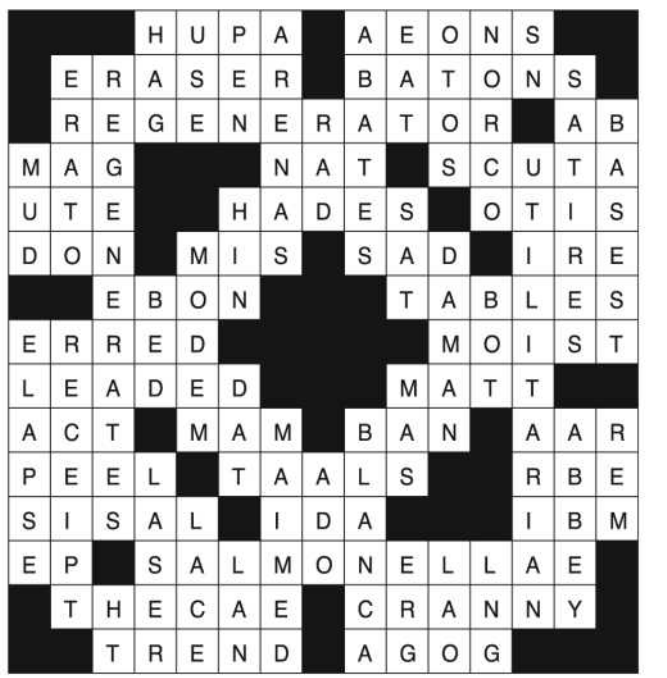
### CLUES ACROSS

- 1. Native American group of N. California
- 5. Geological times (Brit. sp.)
- 10. Tool to remove
- 12. Rods
- 14. One who renews
- 16. They precede C
- 18. Chatter incessantly
- 19. King Cole, musician
- 20. Insect parts
- 22. One from Utah
- 23. The world of the dead
- 25. Singer Redding
- 26. NBA legend Nelson
- 27. Indicates wrongly
- 28. Unhappy
- 30. Anger
- 31. Dark brown
- 33. Some are in kitchens
- 35. Made a mistake
- 37. Damp
- 38. Type of fuel
- 40. Actor Damon
- 41. What thespians do
- 42. One's mother
- 44. Disallow
- 45. Swiss river
- 48. A banana has one
- 50. Philippines lake and volcano are two
- 52. Relative biological effectiveness (abbr.)
- 53. Agave
- 55. Journalist Tarbell
- 56. One-time tech giant
- 57. Indicates upon
- 58. Intestinal bacteria
- 63. Loose sheaths around the spinal cord
- 65. It goes with nook
- 66. A fashion
- 67. Very eager to hear or see

### CLUES DOWN

- 1. Witch
- 2. Utilize
- 3. Writing utensil
- 4. Where rockers go to work
- 5. Subsides
- 6. Consume
- 7. Greek mythological figures
- 8. California mountain town
- 9. Tin
- 10. Muse of lyric and love poetry
- 11. Animates anew
- 13. Humorous criticisms
- 15. Cool!
- 17. Worst
- 18. Wet dirt
- 21. Designed to be useful
- 23. Hebrew unit of liquid capacity
- 24. High schoolers' test
- 27. Computer device
- 29. Indian territory \_\_\_ and Diu
- 32. A place to sleep
- 34. AI tool
- 35. Pass or go by
- 36. Indicates a purchase
- 39. A digital tape recording of sound
- 40. More (Spanish)
- 43. Disfigured
- 44. White (Spanish)
- 46. Church building
- 47. Georgia rockers
- 49. Type of surgery
- 51. Much \_\_\_ about nothing
- 54. Make by braiding
- 59. Local area network
- 60. Unit of work or energy
- 61. Member of indigenous people of Thailand
- 62. Liquefied natural gas
- 64. Distance to top

### PUZZLE SOLUTION



## SUDOKU

		9	3	4	6		2	
					1			7
					7	9		
4	6				5	7		8
	7							
3								
	3				9	8		
2								1
			8	1			3	

Fun By The Numbers

Like puzzles? Then you'll love sudoku. This mind-bending puzzle will have you hooked from the moment you square off, so sharpen your pencil and put your sudoku savvy to the test!

Level: Intermediate

**Here's How It Works:**  
Sudoku puzzles are formatted as a 9x9 grid, broken down into nine 3x3 boxes. To solve a sudoku, the numbers 1 through 9 must fill each row, column and box. Each number can appear only once in each row, column and box. You can figure out the order in which the numbers will appear by using the numeric clues already provided in the boxes. The more numbers you name, the easier it gets to solve the puzzle!

ANSWER:

4	3	9	6	2	8	7	5	1
1	5	8	7	3	6	4	2	9
2	7	4	5	9	8	6	3	1
6	8	2	1	7	3	5	4	9
9	5	3	4	2	6	7	1	8
8	7	1	2	4	9	3	6	5
7	1	8	5	3	6	9	4	2
5	4	2	8	7	6	9	3	1
6	2	3	5	9	1	4	8	7
7	8	9	3	4	6	1	2	5