The New York Times

Today, sun mixing with clouds, breezy, high 64. Tonight, partly cloudy, breezy, low 46. Tomorrow, clouds, afternoon shower, high 64. Details, SportsSunday, Page 12.

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BAZ RATNER/REUTERS

Still Far Afield

American soldiers walked through a poppy field during a mission with Afghan troops in Kandahar Province on Saturday.

WELFARE LIMITS LEFT POOR ADRIFT AS RECESSION HIT

THE STRUGGLE TO GET BY

An Acclaimed Overhaul Under Clinton Meant Rolls Barely Grew

By JASON DePARLE

PHOENIX — Perhaps no law in the past generation has drawn more praise than the drive to "end welfare as we know it," which joined the late-'90s economic boom to send caseloads plunging, employment rates rising and officials of both parties hailing the virtues of tough love.

But the distress of the last four years has added a cautionary postscript: much as overlooked critics of the restrictions once warned, a program that built its reputation when times were good offered little help when jobs disappeared. Despite the worst economy in decades, the cash welfare rolls have barely budged.

Faced with flat federal financing and rising need, Arizona is one of 16 states that have cut their welfare caseloads further since the start of the recession —