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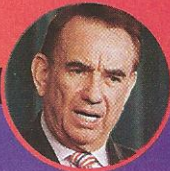
EPA/Shawn Thew/Landov

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Tom Ridge leaves his position as secretary of homeland security.



Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson resigns.



Secretary of State Colin Powell steps down.

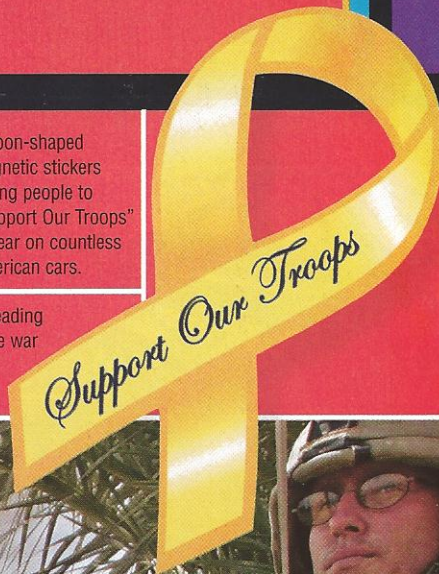


Attorney General John Ashcroft relinquishes his cabinet post.

➤ Ribbon-shaped magnetic stickers urging people to "Support Our Troops" appear on countless American cars.

➤ National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice makes history as the first black female to become secretary of state when she succeeds Colin Powell.

➤ Coalition troops face a persistent terrorist insurgency leading up to the Iraq presidential election in January 2005. The war costs the lives of over 1,400 coalition troops, as well as over 14,000 Iraqi civilians.



AP/Wide World Photos



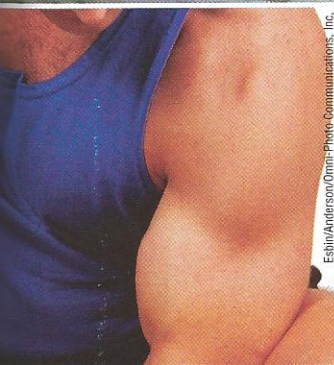
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➤ In the trial of the year, California jurors find Scott Peterson guilty of the first-degree murder of his pregnant wife, Laci, and second-degree murder of their unborn son.



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➤ More than 220,000 lives are lost after a massive earthquake in December off Indonesia's coast causes a tsunami that smashes coastlines in Southern Asia and as far away as Somalia.

➤ The Center for Disease Control's Youth Risk Behavior Survey finds 6.1 percent of teenagers surveyed have tried steroids as compared to 2.7 percent in 1991.



PROTECTING AMERICA

➤ In response to the investigation by the Bipartisan 9/11 Commission, the U.S. Senate passes the National Intelligence Reform Act.