

The Week

9/11 COMMISSION

DR. RICE TAKES THE STAND

It was billed as a make-or-break moment for the Bush administration.

And, as an example of political theater, there were several compelling moments when White House National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice crossed swords with her Democratic critics. But in the end, Rice didn't plow much new ground last week in her long-awaited testimony before the commission investigating the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

As expected, Rice was a poised and forceful defender of President Bush as she tried to refute arguments by former counterterrorism czar Richard Clarke that the administration had failed to make counterterrorism an urgent priority before 9/11. "There was no silver bullet that could have prevented the 9/11 attacks," Rice testified. She argued that Bush "understood the threat" but that there was no credible, specific evidence of where and when a deadly strike might occur.

Bush watched her televised testimony at his Crawford, Texas, ranch and was "obviously pleased" with her performance, said a White House official.

Warning? One of many remaining items of contention, however, is the classified President's Daily Brief for Aug. 6, 2001, which called attention, at least in a vague way, to the possibility



"There was no silver bullet"

of terrorist attacks in the United States. Rice said the PDB, which Bush received while vacationing at his ranch, was not a formal warning but a "historical" analysis that contained "no new threat information." Democrats disputed this, noting that the title of the document was "Bin Laden Determined to Attack Inside the United States." Prodded by the commission, a National Security Council spokesman said the White

House had "every intention to declassify" the document.

What's next? This week, the commission will focus on the troubling lack of cooperation between the FBI and the CIA. "The criticism," says a commission insider, "is going to be pretty brutal." Commissioners want to learn whether conflicts between former FBI Director Louis Freeh and the Clinton White House hampered counterterrorism measures. Some panel members are so

concerned that they are discussing whether the United States needs to create a new internal security agency, like Britain's MI-5, located, perhaps, within the Department of Homeland Security. Before 9/11, the FBI and the CIA didn't work well together, says the commission source, "and they are still having problems." The bureau is already working Capitol Hill to defend its turf. —*Kenneth T. Walsh and Edward T. Pound*

POLITICS

KERRYNOMICS

Attempting to embrace the economic policies of the Clinton era and fashion himself a fiscal conservative, presidential hopeful John Kerry last week pledged to attack the budget deficit—and reduce it by half within four years. Kerry criticized President Bush for allowing the surpluses of the late 1990s to become a deficit that could reach a half trillion this year. In the name of reduced spending, Kerry scaled back some of his earlier campaign promises, such as expanded preschool.

Still, many experts believe long-term deficit reduction will require either broader tax increases or Medicare and Social Security cuts.

● *Kerry explicitly linked deficit reduction to economic growth. But complicating Kerry's message are new reports showing that the number of Americans applying for unemployment hit the lowest level in three years.*

BUSINESS

JUST SAY NO

There won't be any cheery Wal-Mart greeters in Inglewood, Calif. Voters there last week defeated a measure

backed by Wal-Mart that would have allowed the retailer to build a giant discount store next to the former home of the Los Angeles Lakers. "This was a supercenter the size of 17 football fields, the kind of place that puts small stores out of business," said Madeline Janis-Aparicio, director of Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy, which fought the store. But Michael Cox, chief economist of the Federal Reserve Bank of Dallas, says saving mom and pop stores costs shoppers: "Poor consumers are the ones Wal-Mart helps the most."

● *Inglewood isn't exactly without low-cost options: It already has a Target.*

INTERNATIONAL

GENOCIDE

Attacks on civilians in western Sudan may be part of a genocidal campaign, diplomats say. Arab militias have displaced 860,000 black Sudanese from the country's Darfur region. While fighting rebels, the government-supported militias have raped and killed civilians. And thousands have reportedly died after villagers were forced to flee across a desert into neighboring Chad. "Such reports leave me with a deep sense of foreboding," said U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan

Spotlight

ANOTHER MESS IN MOTOWN

In Detroit, the world of federal law enforcement has taken on an *Alice in Wonderland* quality, albeit with a nasty edge. A landmark terrorism prosecution may be collapsing amid a host of recriminations ("A Real Case of Snakebite," March 22–29), and in a separate case, *U.S. News* has learned, federal prosecutors in Detroit made plans to arrest the head of the FBI's Detroit field office without corroborating allegations made against him—allegations that turned out to be entirely false.

The latest episode began last May, when an FBI informant—convicted felon Myron "Big Man" Strong—claimed he had penetrated a drug ring with ties to the terrorist group Hezbollah. The FBI launched a probe and intercepted phone chats between Strong and two men he had fingered as traffickers. They discussed plans to import cocaine and implicated a Detroit FBI agent named "Willie," or "Hu," in the leaking of information to them. The FBI special agent in charge in Detroit, Willie Hulon, was then temporarily relocated to Washington, and the Justice Department's inspector general began investigating.

Sham. Before the IG could complete his inquiry, FBI sources say, the counterterrorism chief of the Detroit U.S. attorney's office, Robert Cares, backed by first assistant U.S. attorney Jonathan Tukel, set in motion plans to arrest Hulon. The IG quickly found that the drug ring was a sham and that the allegations against Hulon were unfounded; in fact, Hulon had cut off payments to Strong.

Strong and his two accomplices have now been charged in connection with the fraud. Strong's FBI handler, Robert Pertuso, retired. Pertuso's wife, Karen, who also worked the case, has been reassigned. A Hulon deputy, Larry Kuhl, who authorized some of the



Detroit FBI chief Willie Hulon was investigated, then cleared.

\$164,000 the bureau paid to Strong, has stepped down. And FBI Director Robert Mueller has ordered an investigation into the Detroit office's handling of informants.

A Justice official confirmed that there was "contemplation" of arresting Hulon, describing it as a natural progression in the investigation. But the official said no warrant was drafted and denied that Cares or Tukel was involved. Detroit FBI agents, meanwhile, are furious with the U.S. attorney's office there; sources say Hulon made it clear Cares was not welcome in the FBI building. FBI agents nationwide are also angry with headquarters for pulling Hulon out of Motown before the IG's investigation was completed. —Chitra Ragavan

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last week. "Whatever terms it uses to describe the situation, the international community cannot stand idle." Annan used the 10th anniversary of the Rwandan genocide to draw attention to Sudan. And President Bush also called on Sudan's government to end its complicity with the militias.

● *Following Annan's and Bush's comments, the Sudanese government signed a cease-fire with the western rebels, but officials continue to refuse to allow outside military intervention.*

SCIENCE

OLD FRIENDS

It will come as no surprise to cat fanciers: Tame felines have been curling up near the hearth for just about as long as people have had homes. In last week's *Sci-*



FINICKY. Skeletal evidence shows that the earliest tamed felines on Cyprus probably resembled African wildcats.

ence, French archaeologists working in Cyprus report digging up a cat skeleton right next to a human grave—a pet apparently buried with its owner 9,500 years ago. That's 5,000 years earlier than the first signs of pet cats among the ancient Egyptians, long thought to be the original tamers of the critters. And it's not long after people in the Middle East first settled in farming villages, hoarding grain that would have attracted mice. Farmers probably tamed wildcats to keep the mice in check, says Melinda Zeder, a Smithsonian archaeologist.

● *By the time of the Cyprus burial, people apparently cherished cats for more than practical reasons. "It was more of a unique one-on-one relationship," says Zeder. Cat lovers today know what she is talking about.*

EDUCATION

WHIP INFLATION

Given that the students admitted to the Ivy League all excel at getting good grades, it is little wonder the most common grade there is now an A. But last week Princeton officials said they will roll back grade inflation. Dean of the College Nancy Malkiel said she wants to drop the percentage of A's handed out from 47 to less than 35. "When we give all high grades we don't let students differentiate between ordinary work and outstanding work," she said. "We don't motivate kids."

● *Princeton may have its work cut out for it. Harvard's attempts to roll back grade inflation have stalled.*

By Julian E. Barnes and Tim Appenzeller

People

THE PRIME OF HELEN MIRREN

In her mid-50s, British cop Jane Tennison is being pushed to retire, but she's not ready. When a Bosnian immigrant is tortured and slain, Tennison grabs the case, shoving aside the man assigned to it. That's the MO of the tough detective, who last appeared in the Emmy-winning *Prime Suspect* series in 1997 and whose long-awaited return is April 18 on PBS. Of course, there is no Tennison without the sublime **Helen Mirren**.

I forgot how much Tennison likes bossing folks around. TV's women don't often do that. It is different when it's a woman doing it; the dynamic is different. But you know, people just gotta get used to it.

She's certainly a strong character.

People say, "Ooh, you always play these strong characters." I play flawed and vulnerable characters who may have an inner or outer strength, but the vulnerability and flaws make them interesting.

The new series takes viewers into the invisible world of immigrant workers.

I've stayed at many beautiful hotels where you walk through the door that says service and into a world of peel-



ing paint and no windows and dark little corridors.

How was *Prime Suspect 6* received in England?

It was a huge success; it just got nominated for two BAFTAs—they're the British Oscars.

But you called the Oscars "the crème de la crème of bull- - -!"

Yes, I did, and it's true. It's wonderful!

You're over 50, and you bared your breasts in your latest movie, *Calendar Girls*. How come Diane Keaton got more press for her over-50 nude scene?

They're used to Europeans taking their clothes off. It doesn't seem quite so shocking as an American taking her clothes off.

And then there's Janet Jackson's revelation . . .

I think it was kind of tasteless. But I'm not puritanical. I don't mind seeing Janet Jackson's breast. I just wish it was real, and not fake.

Editor's note: There's a knock on Mirren's door; her "handler" tells her it's time to go.

What's it like having a handler?

Actually it's very useful, because you would get absolutely confused without it. It's when you have more than one, I don't like it—when their assistant is talking to your assistant, and it goes through five people, and you say, "Just look me in the eye and tell me directly."

That's very Jane Tennison.

Yeah, it is. —Marc Silver