

President asks Rice to replace Powell as Secretary of State

By SCOTT LINDLAW
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — President Bush on Tuesday picked National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice, who once tutored him on global affairs, to be his top diplomat, saying her foreign-policy experience and struggle against racism uniquely qualified her to be America's "face to the world" as secretary of state.

"In Dr. Rice, the world will see the strength, the grace and the decency of our country," Bush said.

Rice will face major challenges across the foreign policy spectrum, trying to advance peace between Israel and the Palestinians, foster democracy in Iraq and persuade North Korea and Iran to step back from suspected nuclear

weapons programs. She is considered more of a hard-liner than Secretary of State Colin Powell, who was out of step with more hawkish members of Bush's national security team.

In a Roosevelt Room announcement, Bush made plain that terrorism and the Middle East conflict topped his list of foreign-policy priorities. Rice's eyes welled with tears as the president cited her "deep, abiding belief in the value and power of liberty, because she has seen freedom denied and freedom reborn."

Rice, who would be the first black woman to serve as secretary of state, was somewhat sheltered as a youngster in Alabama from the racial conflicts and segregation of the South. Her schoolteacher parents guided her into ballet, piano and French studies; her

mother bought all her Girl Scout cookies so she wouldn't have to go door-to-door. But when she was 9, a bomb exploded at a Baptist church a few miles away, killing four black girls, one of them a schoolmate.

"As a girl in the segregated South, Dr. Rice saw the promise of America violated by racial discrimination and by the violence that comes from hate," Bush said. "But she was taught by her mother, Angelina, and her father, the Rev. John Rice, that human dignity is the gift of God and that the ideals of America would overcome oppression."

Rice was careful to say nothing about how she would oversee the State Department, its nearly 30,000 employees and its 265 posts around the world.

In a statement read from a prepared text, she confined her remarks to heaping praise on Bush and Powell.

"It is humbling to imagine succeeding my dear friend and mentor, Colin Powell. He is one of the finest public servants our nation has ever produced," Rice said.

Her cautious remarks reflected the potential minefield she faces in Senate confirmation hearings, likely to come the second week of December.

"I think she'll get hard questioning. That's inevitable," said Sen. Mitch McConnell of Kentucky, the majority whip. But McConnell and newly elected Senate Democratic leader Harry Reid of Nevada predicted Rice would win approval.

Rice should "be confirmed fairly easily unless there's something I don't know," Reid said.

Sitting silently in the first row at Bush's announcement was the president's pick to succeed Rice as national security adviser, Stephen Hadley, who served with Rice for four years.

Asked whether his family knew long hours were in store for him, Hadley quipped: "What's different?"

But Bush elicited a smile from Hadley when he said: "Steve is a man of wisdom and good judgment."

"He has earned my trust, and I look forward to his continued vital service on my national security team," Bush said.

National Security Council officials said they expected no change in the organization's direction, but a lower profile for Hadley.

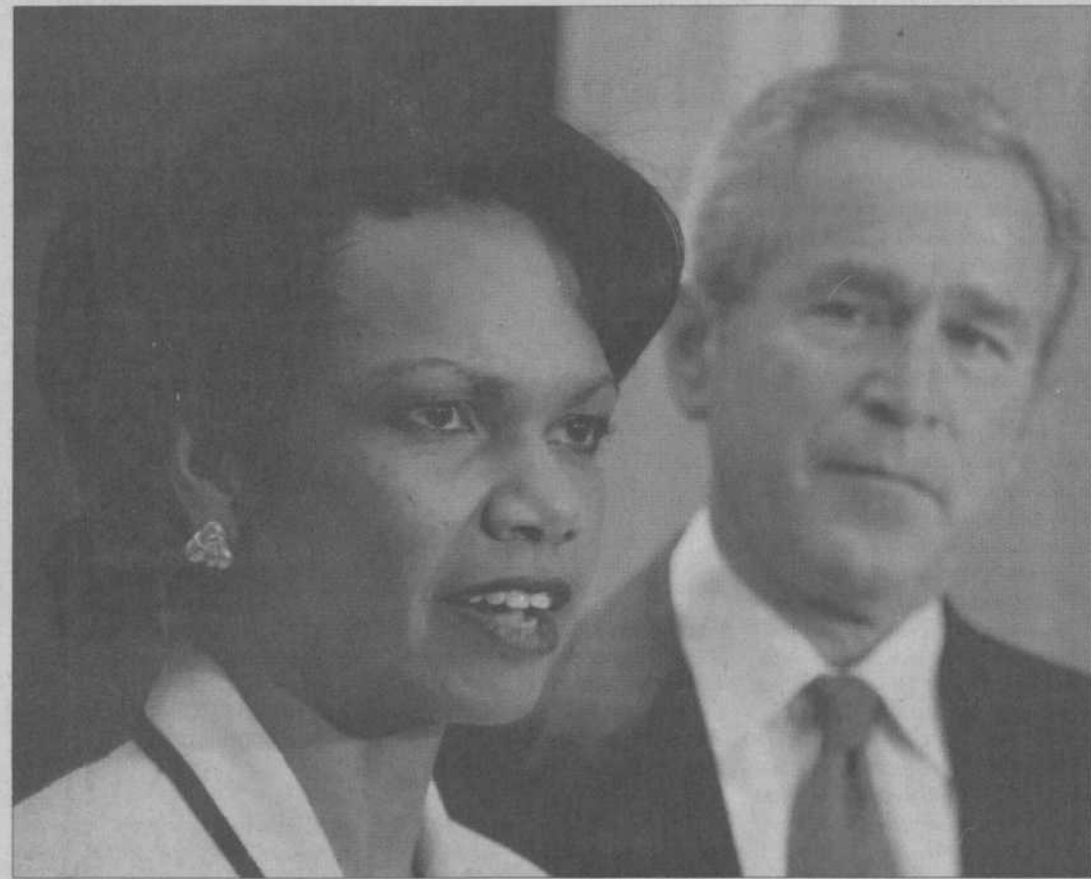
Whereas Rice has granted regular interviews to promote the administration's foreign policy, Hadley is more media-shy.

Aides describe Hadley as a multitasker and seasoned Washington insider with a good sense of humor, even when the news is bad.

Bush's Cabinet has been exceptionally stable, with only four departures in the nearly four years before the election.

But Powell's resignation put Bush on a course to have roughly the average turnover after re-election.

In all, six Cabinet officers have announced their departures, and more are expected.



PABLO MARTINEZ MONSIVAIS/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

President Bush looks on as National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice speaks to the press, after Bush announced that Rice was his choice as Secretary of State, in the Roosevelt Room of the White House, Tuesday in Washington. Bush turned to his most trusted foreign policy adviser, Rice, to lead U.S. diplomacy during his second term, replacing Secretary of State Colin Powell.

■ BLOOD

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FDA section of criteria that deals with possible HIV infection, officials say.

"The FDA is a panel of experts that are extremely thorough, but I don't think you should blanket one demographic of people," said Scott, who has rare, type-O blood. "My blood can go to any person, but they won't take it because I am gay."

Scott said that in high school, he was also the student government president and was going to give blood, while being filmed by a news crew, and when rejected because of his sexual preference, he walked out and told the crew that he couldn't give because of a medication he was taking.

"The questions we ask on the Blood Donation Record Form are there to protect people," said Rhonda O'Banion, the public relations manager of the local Red Cross chapter. "This is a health issue not a social issue, we can't change it because of that."

The FDA regulates the American Red Cross, so such policy decisions are not subject to scrutiny by the Red Cross.

"Our purpose is to provide safe blood and we will do everything we can to maintain that safety," Austin said.

Scott said he feels such criteria for donation are only passing generalizations on the gay community, but he said he doesn't feel the Red Cross is "homophobic."

Attention, Scott says, should not be devoted to the issue of whether homosexuals should donate blood for the political aspect, but for the health ramifications it entails.

"I don't think this should be a political issue, if a scientist tells me something I am going to believe it," Scott said. "Social stigmas in the medical community will change, I think it will diminish as techniques of testing for blood get better."

Short of sexuality and the habits therein, Austin says that there are a number of other criteria that are keeping 40 percent of the national population from donating blood.

"If they have had a tattoo in the last 12 months or maybe they don't weigh enough are some of the criteria less noticed," Austin said.

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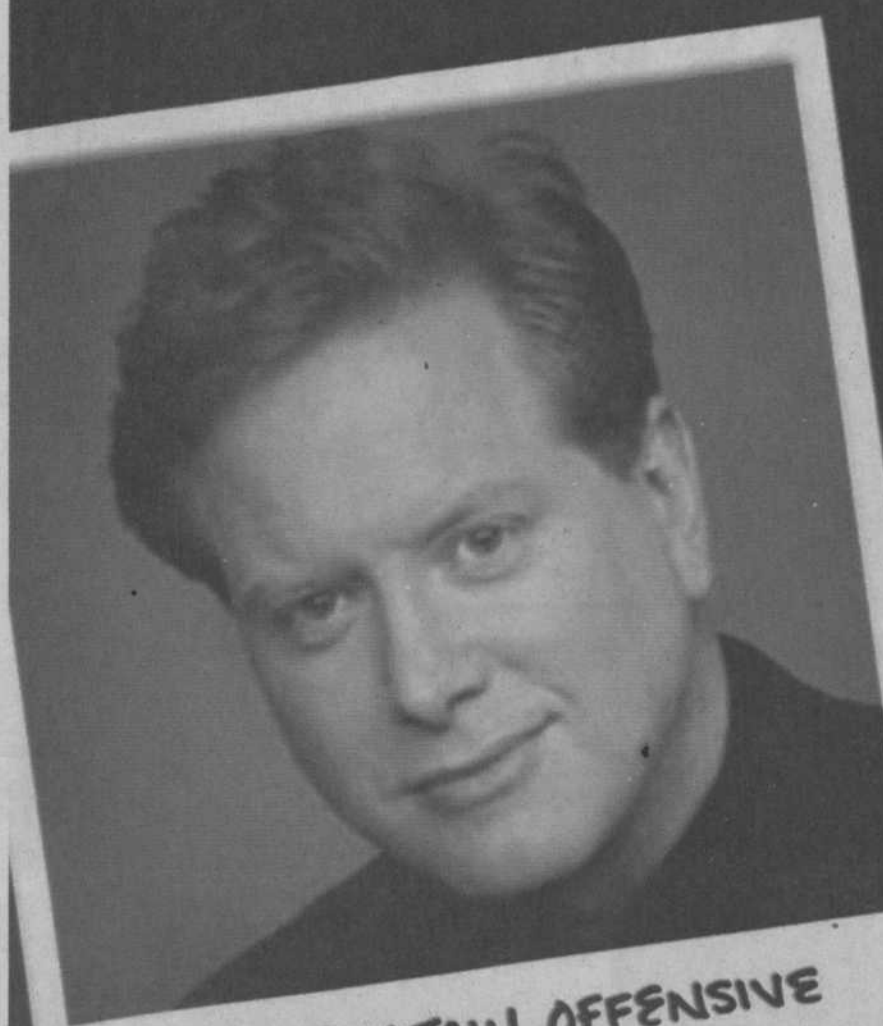
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