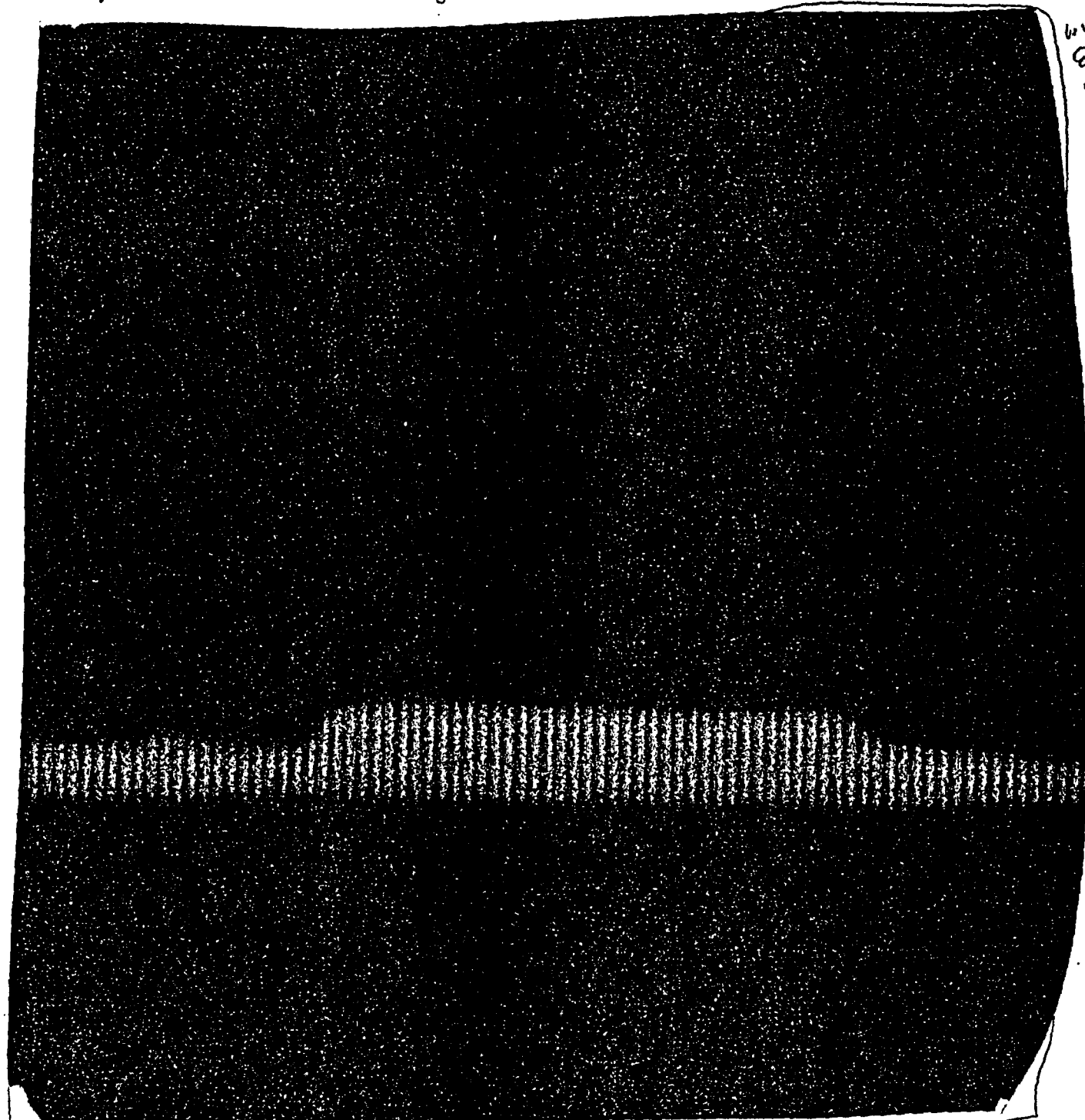


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From: Eliot Brenner *PA*
To: PA Staff; TNT
Date: Fri, Jul 30, 2004 5:22 PM
Subject: Tomorrow's News Tonight

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The Ridge story: *release*
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July 30, 2004 3:20 a.m. EDT

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Homeland Secy Ridge Mulls Resigning After Election
DOW JONES NEWSWIRES
July 30, 2004 3:20 a.m.

WASHINGTON (AP)--Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is considering stepping down after the November election, telling colleagues he is worn out from the massive reorganization of government and needs to earn money in the private sector to put his teenage children through college, officials said.

Ridge will not make a final decision until he talks to President Bush later this year and is focused on thwarting the terror attacks that officials fear al-Qaida will attempt before November, Assistant Homeland Secretary Susan Neely said.

"Secretary Ridge is focused entirely on the job the president has asked him to do," Neely said Wednesday.

Several senior Homeland Security officials told The Associated Press that Ridge has indicated in recent weeks he probably will resign after the election, even if Bush wins. They spoke only on condition of anonymity, citing the delicate nature of describing private conversations with their boss.

Ridge, 58, has explained to colleagues that he needs to earn money to comfortably put his two children, Tommy Jr. and Lesley, through college, officials said. Both are now teenagers. Ridge earns \$175,700 a year as a Cabinet secretary.

The former Pennsylvania governor, who agreed to serve as the department's inaugural secretary, also has expressed to colleagues frustration over the continuing challenges of reorganizing the 22 disparate agencies that formed the Homeland Security Department, officials said.

One senior official said Ridge has cautioned that his plans, while leaning toward resignation, could be changed by coming events, such as another terror attack or a discussion with the president.

On a plane flight from Boston this month after viewing security preparations for the Democratic National Convention, Ridge addressed his future carefully. "The job is going great -personally," he said. "When the president is re-elected, he'll have conversations to determine what he wants and what his Cabinet members want."

When asked if he was worn out, Ridge said: "I am not authorized to be stressed."

Congress and the independent commission that investigated the 2001 terror attacks have criticized elements of the fight against terror -from intelligence cooperation and the color-coded warning system to the delayed deployment of a more advanced airline screening system for passengers.

Ridge has personally faced criticism over frequent but vague public warnings about possible terrorist activity, and he was widely ridiculed last year for urging homeowners to stock up on duct tape and plastic sheeting to seal themselves inside during a chemical or biological attack.

Republicans are quick to note that the administration also has not suffered another terror attack on U.S. soil in the three years since Sept. 11, 2001, while undertaking the largest reorganization of government in a half century.

Ridge has spent decades in public service and has relatively little savings from his lengthy career in government. When Ridge left Pennsylvania as governor, where he served from 1995 to 2001, he was earning \$138,316 each year.

Ridge owns an \$873,000 home in Bethesda, Md., with his wife, Michele, which they bought last year with a \$784,800 mortgage, according to property and banking records. Ridge's most recent financial disclosure reports, filed in early 2003, showed that he owned between \$122,000 and \$787,000 in stocks and funds,

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including modest ownership in The Walt Disney Co., General Electric, Nike, Oracle Corp. and Microsoft Corp.

By contrast, government officials at Ridge's level can easily earn millions of dollars each year in the private sector.

The Homeland Security Department, formed in March 2003, is composed of organizations from agencies that included the Immigration and Naturalization Service, Customs Service, Coast Guard, Secret Service and the Transportation Security Administration. It has a budget of \$36.2 billion and more than 180,000 employees

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