

Briefly noted

News in the [June 29, 2004](#) issue

Los Angeles County supervisors, faced with a lawsuit to remove a tiny gold cross from the county seal, have voted to remove it, but the Roman goddess Pomona will stay. County supervisors voted June 1 to remove the cross, which was incorporated into the seal's original 1957 design to represent the Catholic missions founded by Jesuit missionaries. The American Civil Liberties Union had said the cross represented an "impermissible endorsement of Christianity" and was "unconstitutional" as a violation of the separation of church and state. "We realize this is not the most important civil liberties issue in our society," Romana Ripston, executive director of the ACLU's southern California office, told the *Los Angeles Times*. "But it does make some people feel unwelcome." The seal also features a Spanish galleon, a tuna fish, a dairy cow, the Hollywood Bowl, engineering tools, oil derricks and Pomona, the goddess of gardens and fruit trees, to represent agriculture. The city of Redlands, California, also recently removed a small cross from its seal after legal threats from the ACLU.

One of the world's top human rights organizations has accused the U.S. of "fighting injustice with injustice" in the Bush administration's war on terrorism and fueling radicals' rationales for their attacks. In releasing Amnesty International USA's annual report May 26, William Schulz, the group's executive director, said the U.S. must clean up its human rights record to avoid being perceived as an anti-Islamic country. "The false idea that the United States is engaged in a crusade against the Islamic world is a critical component of the Islamist nihilists' worldview and spreading this idea is critical to their success," Jessica Stern, a Harvard professor and author of *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill*, said at Amnesty's news conference. Stern, who has interviewed hundreds of terrorists around the world, said that terrorist incidents have doubled since 9/11 attacks and the launching of the U.S.-led war on terrorism.