



**DEADLY ATTACK:** A car bomb outside the U.S. Consulate in Karachi killed 11 and injured 45

was as uneventful as the plane ride. Once in the Jetway, Padilla was asked to accompany federal officials to the Customs and Immigration hall. Whisked away on a “material witness” warrant—which the Justice Department has repeatedly used to secretly

detain suspicious foreigners and even U.S. citizens since September 11—Padilla was transported to the Metropolitan Correctional Center in Manhattan, the high-rise federal prison a few blocks from Ground Zero. No one outside of law enforcement seemed to notice the sudden disappearance of a stocky Hispanic man who was one of thousands arriving every day in America

from overseas—not until a month later, when it was announced that Padilla had been moved to American military custody.

The story of Padilla’s quiet capture is the best evidence yet that the war against Al Qaeda has entered an entirely new phase. If the war began dramatically, with planes crashing into buildings and the Taliban fleeing Afghanistan, it is now mostly underground—waged by terrorists, spooks, paramilitaries and G-men. It is, at last, the long twilight struggle George W. Bush promised, and then some; a shadow war that is equal parts Tom Clancy and John le Carré, with a little Torquemada thrown in, as U.S. allies like Pakistan and Egypt apply their own harsh interrogation techniques. The bounds of morality are unclear—and it may not be known until decades from now, when the histories are written, just how far America was willing to go to rid itself of this scourge.

“We must take the battle to the enemy, disrupt his plans and confront the worst threats before they emerge,” Bush told West Point graduates a few weeks ago. Many commentators thought he was talking about pre-emptively striking future foes like Iraq. But Bush was also putting a new emphasis on covert operations, which has raised fresh concerns about civil liberties. How far is America veering toward police-state tactics? “We shouldn’t deceive ourselves. This is not a defensive game,” says Jack Devine, a former CIA associate deputy operations director. “If we seal our ports, they’re going to come across the Rio Grande, or from Canada. The truth is that [with new homeland security] we’ll improve defensively by maybe 7 percent or 10 percent. The best hope we have is to go after and destroy the terrorist organization.”

U.S. intelligence has no clear picture of how Padilla was recruited to Al Qaeda (story, page 34), or how many other American converts might have joined him. But as the Taliban collapsed last year and the U.S. air campaign blasted one of Al Qaeda’s last strongholds at Tora Bora, Abu Zubaydah fled across the rugged mountains, and Padilla traveled with him, along with hundreds of other terrorists, Pakistani investigators believe. Zubaydah, a thirtysomething Palestinian in charge of Al Qaeda’s network



**Egypt**

**RADICALIZATION**  
Padilla leaves his wife and travels to Egypt, where he continues his education in radical Islam. He marries again.

**Pakistan**

**QAEDA CONNECT**  
While U.S. troops are in Afghanistan, Padilla allegedly goes to Pakistan with Abu Zubaydah and studies how to make a dirty bomb.



**O'Hare**

**NABBED**  
Investigators believe Padilla meets with Zubaydah again a few months later to plan a U.S. mission. The Feds arrest him at the airport.

**Charleston**

**IN LIMBO**  
The suspected terrorist, now 32, is being held in a Navy brig in Charleston, S.C., as officials debate his fate.

