

public of Georgia, both countries where al-Qaeda fighters are believed to be hiding.

By keeping the pressure up, the U.S. hopes to correct its biggest mistake of all. According to this view, the U.S.'s failure to retaliate massively after past al-Qaeda attacks against U.S. military barracks, battleships and embassies tempted bin Laden to go after ever more outrageous targets—and

finally the World Trade Center. Now the U.S. has destroyed al-Qaeda's training camps and undermined bin Laden's capacity to lead. And yet the Sept. 11 hijackings were years in the making—which means bin Laden could have ordered up another, more lethal attack before his world came apart. "We were overwhelmingly defensive in our orientation before Sept. 11," Ad-

miral Dennis Blair, the head of the U.S.'s Pacific Command, told TIME. "Now we've gone on the offensive." The big question is whether we did so in time. —*With reporting by Matthew Cooper, John Dickerson, Sally Donnelly, Michael Duffy, Elaine Shannon, Mark Thompson and Douglas Waller/Washington, Bruce Crumley/Paris, Tim McGirk/Kabul and Alex Perry/Mazar-i-Sharif*

DISPATCH FROM THE BORDER



KEITH DANNEMILLER—CORBIS SABA FOR TIME

Peter Katel/Cañon de la Marrana

Slamming the Door

Stiffer border security has put the livelihoods of many Mexicans at risk

JOSE GUZMAN DID THE right thing. On a chilly night in the rock-and-sand wasteland of Cañon de la Marrana on the Mexican border, he gave up an easy run into the U.S.—the border patrol wasn't in sight—to stay with a woman who had twisted her ankle as she took off north toward California. What really angers Guzmán, as he waits for a Mexican rescue patrol to shuttle him to the nearest town, is having to make this illegal crossing in the first place. After working in a Los Angeles lumberyard for five years, he got stopped in a police check in January. He was deported a month later. Guzmán believes he

knows whom to blame. "Damn Arabs," he says. "Ever since the towers, it's 'Out of here.'"

Mexico wasn't one of Osama bin Laden's targets, but it got hit anyway. For a time, Mexicans had reason to hope their lives would get simpler, as President Vicente Fox pushed the U.S. to legalize the status of migrants like Guzmán and set up a guest-worker program for those who haven't yet crossed the border into the U.S. The topic was a high priority for President Bush in the days after his last meeting with Fox. For five days, to be precise. Their summit was Sept. 5.

Since then, the prospects for Fox's plan have dimmed.

Rather than seeing the border as a gateway for an easy flow of goods and people, the U.S. since Sept. 11 has viewed it principally as a security problem. And those who would cross illegally into the U.S. know it. Fearful of getting caught in the heightened surveillance on both sides of the border, many would-be migrants are staying put for now. The reduced traffic is reflected in the falling numbers of people picked up by the U.S. border patrol. From September 2001 to January 2002, the figure was 161,095, a 47% decline from the same period the previous year.

If the falloff is good news for the border cops, it's bad news for ordinary Mexicans. Even in the best of times, Mexico depends on the money migrants send home: remittances are the country's third largest source of dollars, after tourism and oil. But some 60,000 Mexican migrants lost their U.S. jobs

after the attacks. With workers like Guzmán stuck at home, and Mexico in a recession provoked in part by the U.S. slowdown, Mexicans are hurting. In Puebla state, the town of Chinantla lives on cash sent back by migrants. One resident, Antonio Castellanos, is watching business tank at his burger-and-pizza stand. "If things don't change," says Castellanos, who learned his trade during eight years at a New York City pizzeria, "I'll have to go back."

He's not the only one thinking that way. At midday, by a gate in the chain link fence that separates Mexicali from Calexico, Calif., a border-patrol officer ushers a group of deportees back into Mexico. They're all planning return trips. Rocío Moredia sees no other option. She's from Puebla and notes, "There is no work there."

Yet attempts to run the border are growing costlier and more dangerous. Since Sept. 11, the demand for smugglers who guide workers through remote crossings has risen, doubling the average fee to \$2,000. Tougher enforcement in border cities has pushed migrants to cross through the desert, where some die of dehydration. Francisco Pérez has made four solo attempts. Now, he says, "my family will hire someone"—meaning a smuggler to guide him through the desert. Sept. 11 has made it both tougher to cross into the U.S. and ever more urgent. ■