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March 12, 2007 issue - **TERRORISM**

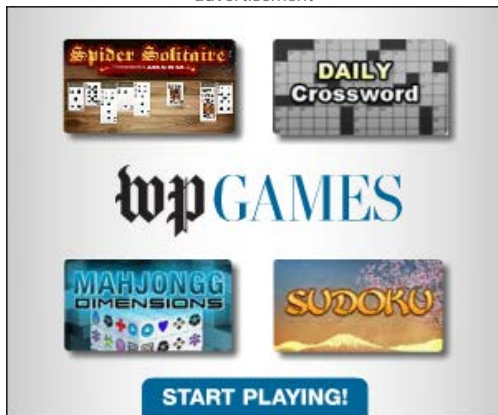
Training New Recruits to Kill

The suicide at-tack that nearly hit U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney last week may signal worse to come in Afghanistan. The Taliban announced recently that it has recruited hundreds of willing martyrs, who are now training for a spring offensive.

Whether they have the right stuff remains to be seen. The Taliban recruits mainly young, poorly educated, native Afghans, says Reuven Paz, an Israeli expert on radical Islam. But recent research shows that age and education help to make a better bomber. Efraim Benmelech of Harvard and Claude Berrebi of the RAND Corp. recently analyzed 151 Palestinian suicide attacks from 2000 to 2005. They found that a 25-year-old bomber averages five more victims than an 18-year-old, while a college-educated attacker will likely kill six more than a lesser-educated peer. The educated are also 50 percent less likely to get caught prior to detonation. And females are just as deadly as males.

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This applies in Iraq, too, where the average age of suicide bombers is between 25 and 27. Most received a university education, and some have

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come from prestigious families.

Although research on suicide bombers is more thorough than ever before, experts warn that relying on profiles could be risky. "Whether someone is successful as a suicide bomber has less to do with their age and more to do with whether they're hooked up to people that have a good plan, good intelligence," says Evan Kohlmann, a U.S.-based terrorism expert. He says the Taliban has vastly improved on this front, in part by adopting the Iraqi tactic of filming and glamorizing bombing missions as a recruiting tool. "It's amazing the impact this propaganda has," he says. "It becomes easier and easier to recruit." And that may give the Taliban its pick of martyrs for future attacks.

—Barrett Sheridan

THAILAN
Emerging Evidence

Has Thailand fallen off the investment map? The recent coup by officers with a pastoral vision of a self-reliant nation is said to be scaring off investors. Last week the Finance minister resigned in protest. But look closer.

Not all investors are running. Those from Singapore and Malaysia are cutting back, but in January the Japanese invested \$318 million, up 100 percent from last January. China's stake rose sevenfold. Thailand is now a barometer of investor moods, with big players ignoring politics, staying in for the long haul. The rub: the junta may, too.

DEMOCRACY
Big Man Walking

On a continent infamous for Big Man rule, the United Nations is trying to push power to the villages. In a trial run in Tiby, Mali, the U.N. Millennium Village Project is granting the few hundred villagers \$250,000 over five years and the help of Ph.D. -wielding experts to develop their own plan to attack poverty aid. Together, they are working out ways to encourage kids to study, fertilize barren fields, distribute mosquito nets and build a new school and health clinic. Tiby will be a test case for the government of Mali and other nations—Senegal, Nigeria and Ghana—where leaders are open to shifting power to the countryside. For states that have been top-heavy since colonial days, this is radical. But Tiby special envoy Changa Diarra is optimistic. "We'll put in a system to leave poverty behind," he says. "There's no limit for us in Tiby."

—Elizabeth Dickinson

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