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in the United States," the plea agreement said

"Ali al-Marri was an al Qaeda 'sleeper' operative working on U.S. soil and directed by the chief planner of the 9/11 attacks," said Arthur Cummings, executive assistant director of the FBI's National Security Branch, in a Department of Justice statement.

"Without a doubt, this case is a grim reminder of the seriousness of the threat we, as a nation, still face," said Attorney General Eric Holder in the statement. "But it also reflects what we can achieve when we have faith in our criminal justice system and are unwavering in our commitment to the values upon which this nation was founded and the rule of law."

Al-Marri had been held in the Navy brig near Charleston, South Carolina, for more than five years as an "enemy combatant" by the Bush administration.

Under the plea agreement, al-Marri waives his right to "oppose his removal from the United States to Qatar or Saudi Arabia, by prisoner transfer, deportation or otherwise," the documents state.

He initially was arrested on credit card fraud charges in December 2001. But his continued confinement without charges mushroomed into a major legal case before federal prosecutors filed charges in February.

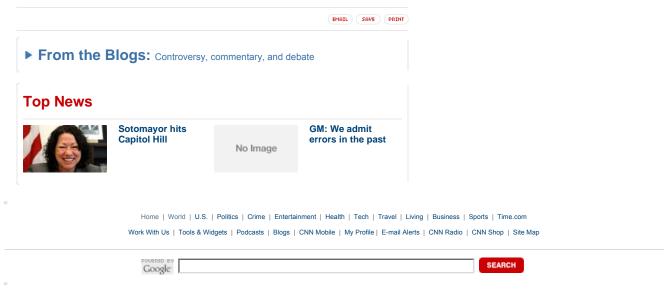
The Supreme Court ruled on March 6 that al-Marri's case was rendered moot by a decision to indict him on federal conspiracy charges, and granted the Obama administration's request to dismiss his challenge of the president's unilateral authority to detain him indefinitely without charges. He was transferred to civilian custody and taken to Illinois in March.

The court's ruling, however, meant that the larger constitutional issue of the president's power to detain accused terrorists and other criminals in the United States remains unresolved.
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