

**UNCLASSIFIED**

ACTION SCA-00

|      |         |         |         |         |         |         |         |
|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| INFO | LOG-00  | A-00    | ACQ-00  | CA-00   | CIAE-00 | DODE-00 | DS-00   |
|      | VCI-00  | TEDE-00 | INR-00  | L-00    | CAC-00  | VCIE-00 | NSAE-00 |
|      | ISN-00  | NSCE-00 | OCS-00  | OMB-00  | PA-00   | PM-00   | PRS-00  |
|      | P-00    | SCT-00  | ISNE-00 | SP-00   | SS-00   | TRSE-00 | T-00    |
|      | ASDS-00 | IIP-00  | PMB-00  | DSCC-00 | DRL-00  | G-00    | SAS-00  |
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P 190838Z OCT 07  
 FM AMCONSUL KARACHI  
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0134  
 INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY  
 AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY  
 AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY

**RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D), B6**

**C O N F I D E N T I A L** KARACHI 000728

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/19/2017  
 TAGS: ASEC, CASC, PGOV, PINR, PREL, PTER, PK  
 SUBJECT: BLASTS KILL 138 AT BENAZIR BHUTTO PROCESSION

Classified By: CG Kay Anske, reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Approximately 138 people were killed and hundreds more wounded by two blasts during former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto,s return procession on October 19. While details surrounding the attack are unclear, officials suspect Bhutto was the target of a suicide bomber. Bhutto was unharmed. The procession consisted of hundreds of thousands of supporters and had been peaceful until the bombing. The Pakistan People,s Party (PPP) has declared three days of mourning for the victims but has given no other indication of how it will respond. After the attacks there were isolated incidents of violence scattered through the city and protests have started in PPP strongholds in Karachi.  
 END SUMMARY.

**THE BLASTS**

2. (SBU) Two blasts killed approximately 138 people and injured approximately 300 more during former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto,s procession from Karachi,s Jinnah International Airport in the early hours of October 19. The number of dead is expected to increase as more wounded succumb to their injuries. It appeared to have been carried out by a suicide bomber. Police contacts have discounted earlier reports that either of the blasts was from a car bomb. The primary explosion was near Bhutto,s vehicle but

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 REVIEW AUTHORITY: ARCHIE M BOLSTER  
 DATE/CASE ID: 15 APR 2011 200800198

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neither Bhutto nor any Pakistan People,s Party (PPP) leader on her vehicle was reported injured. Most of the casualties were supporters surrounding her and reportedly 18 police who were protecting her.

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3. (SBU) Embassy will report separately on details we are steadily acquiring regarding the attack. Responsibility is still unclear but early indications point to Islamic Militants. Interior Minister Aftab Sherpao stated publicly that the attack was a suicide bomb targeting Bhutto. On October 17, the Sindh Home Secretary warned of intelligence reports that suggested that Al Qaeda or Taliban suicide bombers were targeting her. However, Bhutto and her husband, Asif Zardari, claimed on October 19 that the attack was carried out by intelligence agencies. Before her return, Bhutto stated that she was concerned about attacks from intelligence agencies, not Islamic militants.

4. (C)

[redacted] He confirmed that no one from the PPP,s top leadership was injured. [redacted] stated that the first blast appeared to come from a police mobile van and the second from a parked car. Other [redacted] also stated that the first blast came from a police vehicle. However, subsequent reports show it is likely that the police vehicle took the brunt of a blast and was not the source.

B1  
B6

5. (SBU) After the attack, Bhutto was immediately taken to Bilawal House, her residence in Karachi's Clifton neighborhood. Her plans to address followers at Muhammad Ali Jinnah,s tomb were cancelled. In the immediate aftermath, the city faced sporadic violence including an attack on a gas station. On the morning of October 19, PPP supporters started burning tires and pelting stones at traffic in PPP strongholds like Lyari and the Golimar Area. The PPP has announced three days of mourning for the victims.

**THE PROCESSION**

[redacted]

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7. (SBU) Until the attack, the procession had been peaceful. Hundreds of thousands of supporters filled the 12 miles of streets from the airport to Jinnah,s tomb and the mood was festive. While the number of supporters was likely lower than the estimated 1.1 million who greeted her in Lahore in 1986, it was still a large turnout and a triumphant homecoming for Bhutto. Estimates have ranged from 200,000 to 2 million participants but the actual turnout was likely under 500,000. Bhutto was returning to Pakistan after eight years of self-exile.

8. (C) COMMENT: The tragic bomb blasts marred an otherwise peaceful comeback for Bhutto. The next test will be how the PPP and the people of Karachi respond in the next few days. PPP leaders have publicly given mixed comments about the government response and responsibility and called for three days of mourning. Bhutto,s reaction, though, is not yet clear but tension seems to be mounting in the city. ItQems likely that more PPP supporters will take to the streets to protest the attack.

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