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II

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DECL: 25X1-human

December 27, 2007

INFORMATION MEMO FOR THE SECRETARY

FROM: INR – John Dinger, Acting

SUBJECT: Pakistan—Bhutto Assassination Aftermath (C)

(U) Question examined: Who murdered Benazir Bhutto and what are likely to be the immediate political consequences?

(C) Key judgments:

- Benazir Bhutto's assassination on December 27 creates an enormous gap in her party that will be difficult to fill.
- Regardless of where the evidence points, public anger will focus on the Musharraf government for supposed acts of commission or omission.
- Available evidence supports a possible al-Qaida claim that it assassinated Bhutto because she was a strong opponent of extremism in Pakistan.
- Public unrest and broadened boycotts are likely to lead to a new state of emergency and postponed elections.

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Reason for Classification: E.O. 12958 1.4 (c) and (d)

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1.4(C)
1.4(D)



INR

United States Department of State
Bureau of Intelligence and Research

(C) Pakistan: Bhutto Assassination Aftermath

(S) Benazir Bhutto's assassination on December 27 creates an enormous gap in her party, which is the strongest force for secularism and democratic opposition in Pakistan. The dynastic character of party leadership and the party's strongly ethnic identity will make replacing Bhutto very difficult. Suspicion of the Musharraf government is so widespread that violence will be directed across the country against the government's supposed acts of commission or omission.

[redacted] suggests al-Qaida is the primary suspect, because it saw Bhutto as a sworn opponent of extremism in Pakistan. Public unrest and broadened boycotts of the elections probably will lead to the imposition of a new state of emergency and the postponement of elections.

B1

Who will be blamed?

(C) [redacted]

B1

[redacted] Hundreds of riot police were deployed to her rally today, and participants were forced to pass through metal detectors and undergo body searches

(C) The public's conspiracy reflex and distrust of the Musharraf government are so strong that Bhutto's killing will leave a permanent residue of suspicion that she was a victim of Musharraf supporters. Many Pakistanis believe the suicide bombing that killed more than 140 people in a parade celebrating Bhutto's return from exile in October was orchestrated by Pakistani intelligence services. After that attack Bhutto made public statements in which she warned that, if she were killed, the principal suspects should be leaders of the pro-Musharraf party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q).

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2

(C) In addition to accusing her principal rival for the prime ministership, and erstwhile chief minister of Punjab, Pervaiz Elahi, Bhutto pointed the finger of suspicion at PML-Q leader Chaudhury Shujaat and at Ijaz Shah, a Musharraf confidant and director of the Intelligence Bureau. After explosions occurred during Bhutto's December 26 visit to Peshawar in the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), Bhutto complained publicly that electronic jammers provided by the government were faulty, and security arrangements generally inadequate. Survivors of today's attack reportedly began shouting anti-Musharraf slogans within minutes of the announcement of Bhutto's death.

■ Who did it?

(S//NF) A news agency not previously used by al-Qaida for official statements reported that al-Qaida claimed responsibility for the assassination. Al-Qaida, however, has yet to claim responsibility on its official website.

(S//NF) There is abundant evidence that Pakistan's numerous Islamist extremists saw Bhutto as a serious threat. [REDACTED]

B1

[REDACTED] al-Qaida viewed Bhutto as a direct threat to the group's presence in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, and believed that her statements calling for tougher action against militants in the tribal areas reflect a pro-U.S. stance. Just hours before her death, for example, Bhutto issued a public declaration that Pakistan and Afghanistan must work together to eliminate extremism and terrorism.

B1

■ Whither the PPP?

(C) The dynastic character of Bhutto's leadership of the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and the party's strong roots in Sindh Province will make replacing her difficult. Though she styled herself as a champion of democracy, Bhutto ruled the party autocratically as a family fiefdom, even from exile. She accepted the title, without a hint of irony, of Chairperson for Life. Her death creates a huge gap in the party which threatens its integrity and future existence as the most powerful organization for democratic opposition and secularism in the country. Two scenarios for the future of the party are the following:

- Earlier this year, during her negotiations with Musharraf over a power-sharing deal that would enable her to return to Pakistan without facing prosecution, dissidents in the party began to talk about supporting

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UNCLASSIFIED

December 27, 2007

UNCLASSIFIED

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Aitzaz Ahsan as an alternative leader. Ahsan has an impressive record as a leading opposition politician, former federal minister, human rights activist, and lawyer. Currently the president of the Supreme Court Bar Association, he served as senior legal adviser to Iftikar Chaudhry, the chief justice of the Supreme Court whom Musharraf sacked. Pakistani commentators point out, however, that many rank and file members of the PPP would oppose the accession of a Punjabi to the party's top leadership.

- With no succession mechanism in place, Benazir's family and inner circle may try to preserve Bhutto family control over the party.

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

B1

■ Public anger

(S//NF)

[Redacted]

[Redacted]

B1

[Redacted] Musharraf in an address to the nation conveyed his condolences, declared three days of official mourning, and appealed for public calm. This will not assuage public outrage, especially in Sindh.

(S//NF) Within an hour of Bhutto's death, crowds reportedly were gathering on the streets of Lahore and Rawalpindi in Punjab and Peshawar in the NWFP to express their grief and rage. Rioters reportedly have carried out shootings, attacks on police, and arson. The largest cities in Sindh are dominated politically by the Muhajir Quami Movement (MQM), a party of immigrants allied to the former ruling party, but MQM has been unable to prevent thousands of rioters from setting fire to banks and public buildings. Violence is certain to escalate around the country.

■ Whither the elections?

(C) The murder of a candidate while campaigning for an election is not unusual in Pakistan and would not normally be a reason to postpone polls. Since nomination papers already have been filed and approved, Bhutto's home constituency in Sindh simply would not be represented in a new parliament. Musharraf's first impulse is likely to be to continue with the elections on January 8 "come hell or high water," but he may not have that option. The parties that were willing, under protest, to contest elections that certainly will be distorted by rigging are unlikely to continue campaigning for elections in which a leading contender has been

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December 27, 2007

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murdered. Nawaz Sharif, the leader of the right-of-center PML-N party, already announced that his party will boycott the elections.

(C) Bhutto's murder and such a boycott will so undermine the credibility of the elections that the government is likely to find it expedient to declare another state of emergency and postpone them.

B1



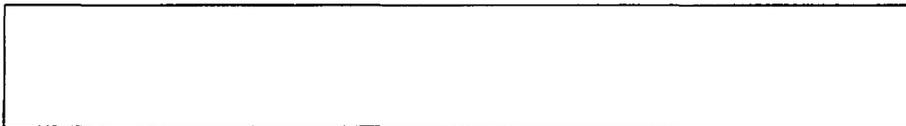
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December 27, 2007

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Source listing



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