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ACTION NEA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 T-03 OMB-01 AID-20 OPR-02 NIC-01
 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-11 INR-09 LAB-06 NSAE-00 RSC-01
 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 L-03 NSC-10 PA-03 PRS-01
 SS-14 USIA-12 RSR-01 CU-04 EUR-25 /152 W
 ----- 092584

2-16-73
Classified 1389

P R 161139Z FEB 73
 FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
 TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7964
 INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY
 AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY
 AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY
 AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
 AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

[REDACTED] ISLAMABAD 1389

SUBJECT: INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS; CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS IN BALUCHISTAN AND FRONTIER

1. SUMMARY: BHUTTO HAS SEIZED OPPORTUNITY PRESENTED BY IRAQI EMBASSY ARMS DISCOVERY TO TOPPLE OPPOSITION GOVERNMENTS IN BALUCHISTAN AND FRONTIER THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL MEANS. HIS ACTIONS MAY WELL SIGNIFY END OF HIS GOVERNMENT'S EXPERIMENT WITH DEMOCRACY. WHETHER THAT WILL ENTAIL MORE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR PAKISTAN DEPENDS ON REACTION FROM NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY OVER NEXT SEVERAL DAYS. END SUMMARY

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2. IN FAST-MOVING POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF LAST 48 HOURS, (A) BHUTTO HAS REMOVED GOVERNORS OF BALUCHISTAN AND NWFP, DISMISSED BALUCHISTAN COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND IMPOSED PRESIDENT'S RULE IN THAT PROVINCE; (B) NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY/JAMIATUL-ULEMA-I-ISLAMI (NAP-JUI) MINISTRY IN NORTH WEST FRONTIER PROVINCE HAS ANNOUNCED MASS RESIGNATIONS IN PROTEST AGAINST CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS; (C) PEOPLE'S PARTY (PPP) GOVERNOR OF SIND HAS

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RESIGNED AND BEEN REPLACED BY BEGUM LIAQUAT ALI KHAN;
 (D) GOP HAS RE-ARRESTED INDEPENDENT KARACHI ENGLISH
 DAILY DAWN EDITOR GAUHAR, ARRESTED AN ESTIMATED 46 MEMBERS OF
 NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY IN PUNJAB PLUS NAP MEMBER OF
 FRONTIER ASSEMBLY, RETIRED GENERAL JILANI.

3. IN LETTERS OF DISMISSAL TO NAP GOVERNORS IN FRONTIER
 AND BALUCHISTAN (ISLAMABAD 1308) NO REFERENCE WAS MADE
 TO IRAQI EMBASSY ARMS CACHE DISCOVERY, NOR WAS THERE
 ANY REFERENCE TO IRAQI ARMS IN PROCLAMATION IMPOSING
 PRESIDENTIAL RULE IN BALUCHISTAN. JUSTIFICATION FOR
 DISMISSAL OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WAS INSTEAD BASED
 ON LASBELA DISTURBANCES WHICH WERE DESCRIBED AS RESULTING

IN LOSS OF LIFE AND PROPERTY ON MASSIVE SCALE."
 (ACCORDING TO CONGEN KARACHI 206, CLASHES BETWEEN
 TRIBAL FACTIONS IN LASBELA HAD IN FACT DIMINISHED BY
 FEBRUARY 14. ARMY CHIEF OF STAFF GENERAL TIKKA KHAN
 STATED FEBRUARY 15 FOLLOWING QUICK VISIT TO LASBELA
 THAT ONLY 8 TO 10 PERSONS HAD DIED IN DISTURBANCES.)
 UNDER INTERIM CONSTITUTION PRESIDENT CAN ASSUME DIRECT
 CONTROL UNDER ARTICLE 134 OVER PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT
 IF PRESIDENT "IS SATISFIED THAT A SITUATION HAS ARISEN
 IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT OF A PROVINCE CANNOT BE CARRIED ON
 IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION".
 ARTICLE 136 REGARDING DISTRIBUTION PROVINCIAL AND
 FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE RIGHTS WAS CITED IN PROCLAMATION
 RATHER THAT ARTICLE 134, PROBABLY ERRONEOUSLY, SUGGESTING
 THAT PROCLAMATION WAS DRAWN UP HURRIEDLY.

4. UNDER INTERIM CONSTITUTION, EXECUTIVE AUTHORITY
 IN PROVINCE IS EXERCISED BY GOVERNOR WHO INTER ALIA
 HAS RIGHT TO PROROGUE OR DISSOLVE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY.
 NAP/JUI COALITION CONTROL, 12 OF 21 SEATS IN BALUCHISTAN
 ASSEMBLY. DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW GOVERNOR AKBAR BUGTI
 CAN FORM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT EVEN AFTER PASSAGE OF
 NEW CONSTITUTION UNLESS GOP CAN BREAK JUI AWAY FROM
 PRESENT COALITION OR INDUCE DEFECTIONS FROM NAP.
 HOWEVER, SHOULD BUGTI DISSOLVE ASSEMBLY AND CALL FOR
 FRESH ELECTIONS, PRESUMABLY GOP COULD AND WOULD RIG
 ELECTIONS TO ENSURE TAME MAJORITY.

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5. IN FRONTIER, NAP/JUI IS MORE VULNERABLE. TWO PARTIES TOGETHER CONTROL 19 OF 42 PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY SEATS WITH SWING VOTES CONTROLLED BY NEWLY APPOINTED GOVERNOR KHATTAK, WHO CLAIMS APPROXIMATELY 10 SEATS FOR HIS UNITED FRONT. WOULD APPEAR THAT KHATTAK COULD FORM PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. HOWEVER, AT LAST REPORT NAP/JUI PROVINCIAL MINISTRY WAS STILL CONSIDERING WHETHER OR NOT TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON RESIGNATIONS AFTER APPEAL BY GOVERNOR KHATTAK FOR THEM TO RETAIN THEIR PORTFOLIOS.

6. IN INITIAL REACTION TO BHUTTO'S COUP, NAP PRESIDENT WALI KHAN TOLD PUBLIC MEETING IN PESHAWAR FEB 15 THAT SINCE BHUTTO DID NOT ACCEPT "OUR CONSTITUTIONAL GOVERNMENTS THEN WE WOULD NOT ACCEPT HIS GOVERNMENT". HE ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT HE STILL PLANNED TO ATTEND NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SESSION SCHEDULED TO BEGIN IN ISLAMABAD FEBRUARY 17 TO CONSIDER CONSTITUTION. (NATIONAL ASSEMBLY SECRETARIAT INFORMS US THAT ASSEMBLY STILL SCHEDULED TO RE-CONVENE TOMORROW.) MEANWHILE PUSHTUN STUDENTS' FEDERATION HAS CALLED FOR A THREE-DAY STRIKE IN PESHAWAR TO PROTEST CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ACTIONS. INITIAL REPORTS FROM PESHAWAR FEB 16 INDICATE STRIKE SO FAR HAS FAILED.

7. SITUATION REMAINS FLUID. CONSUL PESHAWAR WILL BE REPORTING IN SEPTEL ON FEBRUARY 14-15 EVENTS IN THAT PROVINCE. CONGEN KARACHI WILL ALSO REPORT SEPTELS ON DEVELOPMENTS/REACTIONS IN SIND AND BALUCHISTAN WHILE CONGEN LAHORE WILL REPORT PUNJAB REACTION.

8. ALTHOUGH CURRENT DRAMA PROBABLY FAR FROM BEING PLAYED OUT, SOME INITIAL EMBASSY VIEWS MAY BE WORTH RECORDING. DISCOVERY OF ARMS IN IRAQI EMBASSY PROVIDED UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY TO BHUTTO TO MOVE AGAINST HIS CHIEF POLITICAL OPPOSITION. NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY POPULARLY BELIEVED TO BE PRO-RUSSIAN AND PRONE TO SECESSION. AS RESULT, WAS NOT DIFFICULT FOR GOP TO MOUNT EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN LINKING NAP WITH IRAQI ARMS AND CHARGING PARTY WITH PLOTTING SUBVERSION. BHUTTO THEN SEIZED OPPORTUNITY TO OVERTURN BOTH NAP PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. ALTHOUGH EACH ACTION TAKEN

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HAS HAD LEGAL BASIS, TOGETHER THEY SUGGEST THAT END OF DEMOCRATIC EXPERIMENT IN PAKISTAN UNDER HIS REGIME MAY BE AT HAND. BHUTTO HAS SHOWN THAT HE IS PREPARED TO TOLERATE AT MOST TOKEN OPPOSITION. HOWEVER, HE WILL PROBABLY RETAIN FACADE OF DEMOCRACY, I.E., NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURES. WHETHER THESE EVENTS PORTEND MORE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES FOR PAKISTAN'S FUTURE REMAINS UNCERTAIN. NATIONAL AWAMI PARTY'S REACTION IN BALUCHISTAN AND FRONTIER DURING NEXT SEVERAL DAYS WILL DEMONSTRATE WHETHER BHUTTO'S POLITICAL GAMBLE HAS SUCCEEDED OR NOT. GDS SANDERHOFF

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