

[REDACTED]

SUBJECT: THIS IS IN NR:

1. PAKISTAN (PK)
2. [REDACTED]
3. VARIOUS ATTITUDES ON MLA (U)
4. NA
5. [REDACTED]
6. [REDACTED]
7. [REDACTED]
8. INITIATIVE
9. B-2
10. [REDACTED]
11. NO
12. [REDACTED]
13. [REDACTED]
14. ELICITATION FROM VARIOUS LOCAL SOURCES
15. NON-DIRC
16. (U) THIS REPORT TRANSMITS A SAMPLING OF ATTITUDES ON THE MILITARY TAKEOVER OF THE PAKISTAN GOVERNMENT. IT IS SIGNIFICANT IN REPORTING A GENERAL ACCEPTANCE OF THE NEWLY ESTABLISHED MLA.
22. DETAILS:

1. (U) IN THE WEEK SINCE THE MILITARY TAKEOVER [REDACTED] HAS SPOKEN TO SEVERAL PAKISTANIS FROM DIVERSE WALKS OF LIFE. THE GENERAL CONSENSUS IS THAT IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE MILITARY TO STEP IN IN ORDER TO PREVENT WIDESPREAD BLOODSHED WHICH WAS SEEN AS INEVITABLE IF A POLITICAL AGREEMENT COULD NOT BE REACHED. AN APOITICAL MIDDLE-LEVEL BUSINESSMAN FROM LAHORE WHO AT THE TIME OF THE COUP WAS TRAVELLING IN THE PUNJAB IN THE SARGHODA TO HARIPUR REGION TOLD [REDACTED] THAT THE TAKEOVER WAS GREETED THROUGHOUT HIS TRAVELS BY A SENSE OF RELIEF BY THE PEOPLE. HOWEVER, HE WAS QUICK TO ADD THAT IT WAS WIDELY BELIEVED THAT GENERAL ZIA WAS ACTING ON

BHUTTO'S ORDERS. HE ADDED THAT THIS WAS PRIMARILY BECAUSE MOST PEOPLE CONSIDERED ZIA "BHUTTO'S MAN" CITING THE ARMY'S FAILURE TO ACT EARLIER AS SUFFICIENT PROOF. HE SAID THAT THIS WAS ALSO HIS PERSONAL BELIEF BUT HE HIMSELF WAS VERY MUCH IMPRESSED BY GENERAL ZIA-S SPEECH TO THE NATION IN WHICH ZIA SPECIFICALLY DENIED THE ALLEGATION. SOURCE AGREED WITH ZIA-S COMMENT THAT SUCH A CONSPIRACY COULD NOT BE CONCEALED FOR LONG. THIS ARGUMENT APPEARED TO BE STRONG ENOUGH TO CONVINCHE HIM TO TAKE ZIA AT HIS WORD AT LEAST AT THE OUTSET OF HIS RULE.

2. (C) AN ARMY CAPTAIN WHO BRIEFLY VISITED [REDACTED] RESIDENCE COMMENTED THAT THE TAKEOVER WAS A BIG MISTAKE AND THAT THE ARMY WOULD REGRET IT. HE FELT THAT THE COUNTRY WAS IN FOR TROUBLED TIMES WITH THE ECONOMY IN DIRE TROUBLE AND WIDESPREAD FLOODS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY EXPECTED SOON. HE ADDED THAT THE ARMY WOULD BE BLAMED FOR THE RESULTING TURMOIL AND BHUTTO WOULD THEN BE ABLE TO RETURN AS A "SAVIOR".

3. (C) OTHERS WHO ARE WARY OF BHUTTO'S HIDDEN ROLE IN THE TAKE-OVER CITE THE FACT THAT THE COUP TOOK PLACE SO EASILY AS EVIDENCE OF GOVERNMENTAL COMPLICITY. CITING PREVIOUS MARTIAL LAW DECLARATIONS THEY ASK WHY THE ARMY WAS NOT VISIBLE. THEY SAY THERE WERE NO ARMY UNITS IN THE STREETS AND NO CURFEW WAS IMPOSED. THEY SEE THIS AS AN INDICATION THAT THE BHUTTO GOVERNMENT WAS WORKING WITH THE ARMY. HOWEVER, THESE SENTIMENTS SEEM TO BE FADING AS ZIA IS RAPIDLY ESTABLISHING FIRM CONTROL AND HE HIMSELF IS BECOMING A VERY VISIBLE LEADER.

4. (C) MILITARY OFFICERS WHO ARE ATTENDING DIPLOMATIC FUNCTIONS ARE OUTSPOKENLY IN FAVOR OF ZIA'S TAKEOVER AND APPEAR SINCERELY RELIEVED THAT THE POLITICAL TROUBLES HAVE ENDED. IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT THEY ARE SPEAKING THE OFFICIAL LINE BUT AT THE SAME TIME IT APPEARS THAT THEY DO BELIEVE IT.

5. (C) SEVERAL PAKISTANIS - BOTH CIVILIAN AND MILITARY - HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR DOUBTS THAT AN ELECTION CAN TAKE PLACE IN OCTOBER AS HOPED. THE OFFICIAL LINE IS THAT IT CAN AND WHILE MANY FEEL THAT A SINCERE EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO HOLD ELECTIONS AS STATED DOUBT IS OFTEN HEARD THAT THE POLITICAL CLIMATE AND THE TROUBLESOME POLITICIANS WILL SOMEHOW MAKE SCHEDULED ELECTIONS IMPOSSIBLE. SOME SAY ELECTIONS ARE AS LONG AS A YEAR AWAY.

COMMENT: (C) THE GENERAL CONSENSUS REMAINS THAT OF ACCEPTANCE OF THE MILITARY TAKEOVER AND RELIEF THAT THE CRISIS IS OVER. SENIOR MILITARY OFFICIALS APPEAR TO BE SUPPORTING THE TAKE-OVER BUT IT IS UNKNOWN HOW MIDDLE-LEVEL AND JUNIOR MILITARY OFFICERS VIEW THE DECISION. [REDACTED] FEELS THAT THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY THE CAPTAIN CITED ABOVE MAY NOT BE REPRESENTATIVE BUT FELT THEM WORTHY OF REPORTING SINCE FOR SOME TIME THERE HAVE BEEN REPORTS OF DISSATISFACTION AMONG JUNIOR OFFICERS WITH HIGHER MILITARY LEADERS. THE FEELING THAT ZIA COULD BE ACTING ON BHUTTO'S ORDERS IS NOT SURPRISING IN THE CONTEXT OF PAKISTANI PUBLIC OPINION WHICH USUALLY VIEWS POLITICAL ACTIONS AS COMPLEX AND FULL OF CONSPIRACIES AND COUNTER-CONSPIRACIES. 605-310603

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