



**(U) The Day the Earth Shook In Pakistan**

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*(S//SI) Major earthquake rocks the Islamabad region -- NSAers caught up in the turmoil.*

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(S//SI) Saturday 8 October, 2005 began like any other day in Pakistan for the SLO and the members of the Fusion Cell and the Combined SIGINT Operations Center (CSOC). In Islamabad we say there are really only three days - yesterday, today and tomorrow; however, we soon found out that this day and the days that followed were going to be different.

(C) At 0855 local time, a massive earthquake struck approximately 75 miles north-northeast of Islamabad. The earthquake registered between 7.6 and 7.8 on the Richter Scale but none of us knew how bad it was until later in the day. At the time all we knew is that the entire Embassy was swaying to and fro like a cruise liner in very heavy seas. The initial earthquake lasted approximately 30 seconds, with items on shelves rattling around and falling to the floor.

(C) Although the effects of the earthquake were disconcerting, nobody panicked or behaved irrationally. Several of us met in the hallway to check on everyone's health and safety, to briefly discuss what had happened, and to share our experiences. Then we immediately began the process of calling all of our people who were not at work. Despite the fact that the primary method of communicating (GSM telephones) was not working because several GSM cell towers in Islamabad were slightly damaged by the earthquake, we were able to account for all NSAW personnel in Islamabad within 15 minutes and notify the SOO\* via NSTS telephone. This is a testament to the procedures that were developed and put in to place after the bombing of the Islamabad Marriott in October 2004.

(C) After the earthquake struck and we located all of our folks, the Ambassador and COS\* decided to evacuate the building as a precautionary measure. We gathered in front of the Embassy and wondered what effects the earthquake had elsewhere, still unaware of the magnitude of the devastation. The Embassy Chancery was deemed safe after 10-15 minutes and we all filed back in and went back to work. Of course, several people checked the Internet on a regular basis and information started to filter in about how powerful the earthquake was and the destruction it caused. The cities of Muzaffarabad, Bagh, and Balakot suffered the most damage and largest numbers of fatalities. Bagh and Balakot were virtually demolished and over 20,000 people were killed in Muzaffarabad.



(S//SI) The CSOC probably suffered the most visible damage of all the US-occupied structures in Islamabad. Several cracks and fractures in the walls started to show up as more and more aftershocks hit. The CSOC OIC\* took pictures and sent them to our partner organization, Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate General, Technical ISI/DG(T) and the SLO. ISI/DG(T) sent an engineer to inspect the CSOC and he certified the safety of the structure. Throughout it all, the CSOC continued to produce intelligence in support of Pakistan Military operations in North Waziristan.

(U) Within 24 hours of the earthquake, Islamabad resembled Omaha Beach during D-Day as the US military responded in force for the relief efforts. It never ceases to amaze me how quickly our whole country rallies and responds to support disaster-stricken people throughout the world, even though virtually the entire southeastern part of our own country is still suffering major hurricane damage. Chinook helicopters immediately began flying over Islamabad as they headed up to the disaster-stricken areas. The US Air Force coordinated and worked with Iran to transport and unload mobile medical triage units and get them to the areas where they were

needed the most. Roadside kiosks collecting blankets, water and non-perishable goods sprang up all over Islamabad and Jinga truck caravans loaded to the hilt with those goods made daily runs.

(S//SI) NCR (NSA/CSS Representative) Islamabad [REDACTED] discovered several of the Locally Employed Staff at the Embassy had relatives who were affected by the earthquake. Both [REDACTED] and our [F6](#) (Special Collection Service) brethren here led an effort that collected over \$1,000 for medical costs, non-perishable food supplies and dozens of blankets and articles of clothing for our fellow Embassy employees.

(U) The day the earth shook in Pakistan and its aftermath took the personnel on duty in Islamabad through the whole gamut of emotions and experiences and changed our lives forever. The projected impact of the earthquake is estimated at 40,000 dead, 100,000 injured and over 1,000,000 left homeless, making this the worst natural disaster in Pakistan's history. We will forever be bonded together by this event and whenever our paths cross in the future, it will surely be one of the topics of conversation.

[REDACTED]  
(U) *Survivors pray in the devastated town of Balakot (Reuters)*

[REDACTED]  
(U) *US military helicopter carrying aid in Balakot (Reuters)*

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\*(U) Notes:

SOO = the Senior Operations Officer in NSOC

COS = Chief of Station

OIC = Officer-in-Charge

(U) *This article is reprinted from the Foreign Affairs Digest, November edition.*

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