

## Bhutto Knew the Risks and Faced Them Head On

Nearly everyone who knew Benazir Bhutto, acknowledged her bravery and courage in standing down the threats against her life and her loved ones.

Reuters compiled a series of quotes by Bhutto in the run-up to her assassination on Thursday in the Pakistan city of Rawalpindi.

These are just two of the more recent quotes acknowledging the threats against her life and her determination to face them head on in the name of building a better future for the Pakistani people.

\* Last October, shortly after escaping a suicide attack on her return to Pakistan after eight years in exile: "We have to modify our campaign to some extent because of the suicide bombings. We will continue to meet the public. We will not be deterred."

\* At a rally in Rawalpindi on Thursday, she said: "I put my life in danger and came here because I feel this country is in danger. People are worried. We will bring the country out of this crisis."

Bhutto remained a prime target for Islamic extremist groups operating in the region, including al-Qaeda and Taliban. The AP has assembled this report on the groups who sought to kill Bhutto and her supporters.

The former prime minister blamed al-Qaida, the Taliban and homegrown militants for an Oct. 18 suicide bombing that tore through a procession welcoming her back from exile to lead her opposition party in parliamentary elections. But she accused militant "sympathizers" in Musharraf's administration of backing the attempt on her life. Bhutto's supporters chanted "Killer, Killer, Musharraf!" outside the hospital where she was pronounced dead Thursday.

candidates in the Jan. 8 elections. And according to Bhutto, several Pakistanis arrested in an assassination attempt during her second term in the mid-1990s said they were following Osama bin Laden's orders.

The U.S.-backed, British-educated leader who pledged to redouble Pakistan's fight against Islamic militancy was also despised by Taliban-style radicals backed by tribes along the border with Afghanistan, where American forces are battling rising militant violence.

Baitullah Mehsud, a tribal warlord in the Waziristan region, was quoted in a Pakistani newspaper as saying that he would welcome Bhutto's return with suicide bombers. He later denied that in statements to local television and newspaper reporters.

Khalid Khwaja, a former Pakistani intelligence officer and self-declared friend of bin Laden, said Bhutto "was very openly threatening these tribal people."

"Naturally some of them could have done it," he said. "She was certainly hated to that degree by those elements who are victims of the American terror."

Bhutto also was labeled an infidel by groups such as Jaish-ul Mohammed, Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Hezb-ul Mujahedeen, which were spawned by Pakistan's military and intelligence services to take on neighboring India in the disputed Kashmir region.

The groups later aligned themselves with al-Qaida and have vowed to battle foreign troops in Afghanistan, and wage war against the Pakistani military for its support of the U.S.-led anti-terror campaign. Some of their leaders said Bhutto deserved to die for her threats to crush militants.

"I think by far the most likely (suspect) is the al-Qaida organization, which has been trying to kill Bhutto for the better part of the decade," said Bruce Riedel, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and former senior director for South Asia on the National Security Council.

Calling for peace and the full restoration of democratic rule in Pakistan, Gus released the following statement shortly after Bhutto's death on Thursday . . .

"Today we mourn the loss of a courageous woman who returned to her country to fight for the restoration of democratic rule.

"As Pakistan is gripped with a growing struggle against Islamic extremism and today's senseless murder of such a historic figure as Benazir Bhutto, this nation is now confronted with an even greater challenge to consolidate democracy and restore peace.

"The Pakistani people must not bend to the will of terrorism, and upcoming parliamentary elections must go forward unimpeded by the government or the military."

"The United States and the international community must also continue to do its best to work with the Pakistani government and moderate political forces within the country to support positive democratic change and curb the onslaught of Islamic extremists seeking to undermine the country."

"My sincere and heartfelt condolences to Benazir Bhutto's family and the Pakistani people for this great loss."