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From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
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From: Nuland, Victoria J
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Clinton pushes Nigeria on terrorism, corruption

By MATTHEW LEE | Associated Press – 42 mins ago

ABUJA, Nigeria (AP) — U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton urged Nigerian authorities Thursday to boost their intelligence capabilities to better combat growing extremist violence.

Clinton is proposing that Nigeria create an "intelligence fusion cell" that would combine information from the military, spy services, police and other federal, state and local agencies. The cell would also coordinate counter-terrorism activities and serve as a contact for foreign intelligence services, said State Department officials.

The officials said the US was ready to assist the cell with organizational expertise, training and equipment, including computers, and would offer the aid to Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan and his new national security adviser, Mohammed Dasuki, on whom the U.S. has high hopes for expanded intelligence cooperation. The officials were speaking on condition of anonymity because Clinton had not begun her meetings with Nigerian officials yet.

The US has become increasingly concerned about the threat posed by militant groups in west Africa such as the Islamist Boko Haram in Nigeria and cells of al-Qaida linked fighters in northern Mali.

The security situation in Nigeria has deteriorated to the point where the movement of U.S. embassy workers is often restricted. Clinton will spend only about five hours on the ground and will not spend the night in Abuja, where the hotel traditionally used by visiting U.S. dignitaries has been the target of terrorist threats.

Boko Haram seeks the strict implementation of Shariah, or Islamist law, across Nigeria. The terrorist group is held responsible for more than 650 deaths this year alone according to an Associated Press count

The group's gain in strength and lethality has led some US lawmakers to demand that Boko Haram be designated a "foreign terrorist organization" and subjected to enhanced sanctions. The Obama administration has said it is reviewing the case but notes that numerous individual members are already on US financial blacklists.

American officials also worry that Boko Haram's rise might destabilize the broader region, particularly in Mali, where Islamist militants are taking advantage of a post-coup power vacuum to sow unrest in the north.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, plays a dominant leadership role in West Africa and Clinton will be urging the country to continue to support regional peacekeeping and stabilization efforts.

In addition to security matters, Clinton was discussing good governance, rule of law and corruption with Nigerian officials.

Nigeria is plagued with endemic corruption and after meeting the president, Clinton was to speak to members of an anticorruption league.

Oil-rich Nigeria is the 5th leading exporter of oil to the United States and officials said Clinton would raise the importance of approving new petroleum legislation designed to attract more foreign investment. Clinton's brief stop in Nigeria comes as she winds down an 11-day, 9-nation tour of Africa that began in Senegal and has then taken her to Uganda, South Sudan, Kenya, Malawi and South Africa. She will wrap up the Africa portion of her trip in Ghana, where she will attend the state funeral for the late President John Atta Mills who died in late July, and Benin.

After Benin, Clinton will fly to Turkey for talks on the growing crisis in Syria.

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