

US preparing direct military intervention in Nigeria

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The Obama administration is preparing for direct military intervention in Nigeria, according to unnamed US State Department officials, the *New York Times* reported Friday.

The announcement coincided with the swearing in of Nigeria's former military dictator and newly elected president, Major General Muhammadu Buhari, who delivered his first official address Friday.

According to senior US officials, initial insertions of US military personnel into Nigeria could include deployments of military advisers as well as intelligence and logistical personnel.

The official purpose of US deployments to Nigeria is to support counterinsurgency efforts in Nigeria's northeastern provinces, where, with quiet support from Washington, the militaries of Chad, Cameroon and Niger already crossed the border and began operations earlier this year.

The alleged purpose of these military operations is to combat Islamic extremism. They are being launched in one of the continent's most strategic and resource-rich areas.

Nigeria is the largest economy and largest oil producer on the entire continent, and substantial deposits of oil, gas, uranium, timber, and diamonds are dispersed throughout the neighboring countries. The escalating US military and political moves in the area are largely directed against growing Chinese influence in West Africa.

US Secretary of State John Kerry travelled to Nigeria Friday to formally congratulate the new Nigerian president. First in line to speak with Buhari after his inaugural address, Kerry was accompanied by US Africa Command (AFRICOM) supreme commander General David Rodriguez. The three met in private to discuss the US proposals for joint US-Nigerian military operations, according to reports.

Buhari takes office under conditions of deepening crisis, with rampant unemployment, especially among youth, growing anger among Nigeria's 70 million-strong working class. Fuel shortages have ripped through the oil-rich country in recent weeks, as the value of the Nigerian currency, the naira, has rapidly eroded.

The new government, which relies on export of oil for some 90 percent of its budget, will have to contend with steeply falling tax revenues resulting from the drop in oil prices worldwide.

Under these conditions, Buhari is calling for strong measures to "stabilize the system," while claiming he will rule by strictly constitutional and democratic means.

In his public remarks Friday, the 72-year-old military ruler proclaimed that Nigeria now has "a truly democratically elected government in place." The new flowering of Nigerian democracy was owed largely to "strong support from friends abroad," Buhari said.

The US corporate media have been all too eager to burnish Buhari's democratic credentials. In its report Friday, the *New York Times* proclaimed Buhari's ascendancy "a turning point in Nigeria's democratic evolution," describing Buhari as a "born-again democrat."

Despite efforts to present the new government as having enthusiastic popular support, Buhari is bitterly remembered by many Nigerians for suspending democratic rights and violently suppressing protests and strike actions during his 1984–85 dictatorship.

Together with Buhari's gratitude to his "friends abroad," such effusive praise for the new government by the leading mouthpiece of the US corporate and financial elite only underscores that the retired military chief has been brought to power as a friend a servant of US imperialism.

The new president practically admitted as much Friday when he warned that "the international community has

high expectations” for the incoming government.

Indeed, the Chicago-based consulting firm AKPD, run by close confidant of the White House and campaign adviser to President Obama, David Axelrod, has organized political work on behalf of the Buhari-led All Progressives Congress (APC) for years.

AKPD was intimately involved in preparations for the March 2015 elections, a fact which only came to light after leaked emails between APC leadership exposed as lies claims by AKPD executives that the company ceased involvement in Nigeria in early 2014.

Buhari’s presidential run was characterized by “a well-disciplined message campaign, run on a clear and singular message of change,” an anonymous source told the *Washington Free Beacon* in February.

“It sounds very familiar to another campaign some Americans might remember from seven years ago,” the source said.

“These guys are running a Western-style, Western-directed campaign that has identified a message through polling and research,” he said.

Signaling his full alignment with US imperialism and its “Global War on Terror”—the official ideological cover for constantly expanding US military interventions throughout the African continent and worldwide—Buhari announced that the central priority of his government will be the military struggle against Boko Haram.

“The world desperately needs a victory against cultist jihadism,” Buhari said Friday.

In the name of fighting Boko Haram, the US has already launched regular drone missions over Nigeria in 2014. The US-backed a joint invasion of northern Nigeria by Cameroon, Niger and Chad earlier this year, amid US and NATO-led AFRICOM-led war games involving the same countries and other African militaries.

It is significant that Chadian forces have already crossed the border into Nigeria. Chad’s military has served increasingly as a primary regional gendarme for the US and European powers since the dissolution of the USSR. Chad’s capital city currently hosts a permanent garrison of several thousand French soldiers, and US military teams began publicly deploying to Chad last year.

Since last year’s kidnapping of the Nigerian schoolgirls, which became the centerpiece of a propaganda campaign spearheaded by First Lady Michelle Obama, Boko Haram has been brandished by the ideologists of the war on terror as the home-grown African version of Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS).

Together with Al Shabab and Al Qaeda in the Islamic

Maghreb, Boko Haram is one of the main “extremist threats” cited by the Pentagon to justify its constantly expanding military presence in Africa.

The US media has hyped the threat of Boko Haram with growing intensity over the past year, in a clear indication that Washington’s planned for military intervention were far advanced.

In its report on Buhari’s inauguration Friday, the *Washington Post* warned that the Boko Haram militants “have given the Islamic State its first foothold in sub-Saharan Africa.”

In reality, Boko Haram is a loosely affiliated federation of militant formations and ethnically based factions with ties to the political establishment in Nigeria and broader West African region.

Like the various Al Qaeda and Islamic State groups, Boko Haram represents dissident factions of the ex-colonial bourgeoisie. While they pose as ferociously anti-imperialist, in practice these forces function as instruments of the US and European imperialists, serving simultaneously as proxy forces and as convenient bogeymen.

The supposed “war against Boko Haram” is a pretext to transform growing areas of Nigeria into a staging area for military operations throughout the oil rich Lake Chad Basin and broader West African region. African militaries are being mobilized by the US and European powers in service of their drive to reimpose colonial forms of rule on the continent.

As his first act in office, Buhari announced Friday that he will establish a massive new Nigerian military headquarters in the northern city of Maiduguri.



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