

Hello and welcome back to the program that is designed to help you learn and improve your American English. Today we have two very interesting stories to tell you. The first involves violence in Nigeria, as the government announces new non-military ways to control terrorism.

Then we will take you to the United States Capitol building where some lawmakers say the CIA has been spying on them! Have I gotten your attention? I hope so. As It Is ...is on the air, from VOA.

Nigeria's national security adviser recently announced plans for a non-military campaign against Islamist extremists. His goal is to end a four-and-half-year-old rebellion that has killed thousands of people. The new campaign would be in addition to, but not replace, military efforts to fight the Islamist group Boko Haram.

About 10 months ago, Nigeria launched its biggest military operation ever against Boko Haram and its supporters. The military declared emergency rule in three northeastern states. Nigerian forces quickly gained control of large population centers.

But the violence continued in rural areas. Recently, northern cities have again come under attack. The non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch says 700 people have been killed in this year alone.

Sambo Dasuki is Nigeria's National Security Advisor. He says the government has decided to use new ways to fight Boko Haram.

"My approach has been to understand the problem in order to apply the appropriate solutions. What we have learned is that there is not one particular path that leads to terrorism. Rather, there are many, often complicated, paths that lead to terrorism."

There are many causes of the Islamist rebellion. Mr. Dasuki says they include poverty, social injustice, and the failure of Islamists to mix with other Nigerians. He says the solutions include prison reform, economic development, peace talks and education.

Under the plan, two prisons will become what the government calls "de-radicalization" centers. The national security advisor says the next step is to train people working at the prisons.

“The initiative will require substantial capacity-building of prison staff in areas such as psychology, sport and art therapy, faith-based instructors and vocational training experts that would engage beneficiaries.”

He says another way to fight the growth of Boko Haram is through reforming the economy in northeastern Nigeria. Many people who live there are very poor. This poverty adds strength to the rebels.

Genro Olajuyigbe is a human security manager at Action Aid, a poverty-fighting group. He says better security is needed if the government plans to use non-military methods against Boko Haram.

He says the people are in an insecure environment -- economics has collapsed, rights have collapsed, there is an intrusion of fear. And he says he thinks the best thing to do is to stabilize the country a bit.

The United Nations has called the Boko Haram insurgency “increasingly monstrous.” UN officials say almost 500,000 people have fled their homes, and tens of thousands have fled to neighboring countries. Farmers have left their fields. The lack of crops has threatened food security in many areas.

Who Have the Spies Been Spying On?

The sparks on flying on Capitol Hill. That means there is a dispute going on. That’s nothing new, but this time it’s between the Central Intelligence Agency, the CIA, and a committee of the United States Senate. The question is ...will this dispute affect US intelligence operations overseas? Mario Ritter explains a puzzling situation.

Senate Intelligence Committee Chairman Dianne Feinstein made news last week. She said the CIA had watched aides to committee members who were investigating the agency’s methods.

“I have grave concerns that the CIA’s search may well have violated the separation of powers principles embodied in the United States Constitution.”

In 2009, the Central Intelligence Agency let committee staff members use its computers to study secret documents. These records told about the CIA’s questioning and detention of terrorism suspects during the presidency of George W. Bush. The agency said the staff members had taken documents they were not meant to have. Senator Feinstein said the agency then blocked the use of those documents.

CIA Director John Brennan has denied that any break-in to computer files, or hacking, took place.

“I think a lot of people who are claiming that there has been this tremendous sort of spying, monitoring and hacking, will be proved wrong.”

President Barack Obama has called for the public release of the committee's secret report on the CIA detention and interrogation program. Some lawmakers say the report describes the use of waterboarding, a method of questioning detainees, during the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Professor Henry Farrell of George Washington University says the report could damage the CIA's public image around the world.

"But I think, at the very least, we're going to see some embarrassment for the United States, when some of the stuff that the CIA was, in fact, doing in the first years after September 11th are revealed publicly, and that's going to, I think, be quite controversial in other countries."

But Professor Farrell says world leaders are not likely to be concerned about the dispute between the Senate and the CIA. Mark Lowenthal agrees. He is president of the Intelligence and Security Academy. He says all countries that work with the United States know there is a system of congressional oversight.

“All the countries with whom we work know that we have a congressional oversight system, and that certain materials are given to the House and Senate as part of their oversight. So the fact that this is going on is probably not going to be news to anybody, and so I don’t think it will affect those relationships.”

He also says the dispute may show the value of the American system of government.

“This is how you run a secret intelligence community in a democracy, that there are rules, and there’s a give-and-take, and that the intelligence community is not just doing things on their own.”

2014 is an election year in the United States. The Republican Party could claim a majority in the Senate in November. A Republican Senator would lead the Intelligence Committee if that happens. And Republicans have not shown that they want the report on CIA interrogation methods made public. I’m Mario Ritter.

Thank you, Mario. Now won't it be interesting to see who wins that one? It's almost time for us to move aside for some more Learning English programs, and world news at the beginning of the hour. But before we do, here are some things going on in the United States.

Even though there is still snow on the ground, the National Cherry Blossom Festival begins. Millions of people from around the world come to Washington, D.C. to welcome spring and see the beautiful trees near the Lincoln and Jefferson Memorials.

Up in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, folks will be reading poetry aloud, drinking special drinks, and even burning a snowman to say "goodbye" to winter and "hello" spring.

It's time for me to run, so let's agree to get together again tomorrow right here at the same time. I'm Jim Tedder in Washington, and this is VOA.

