

Obama to focus on security in Jamaica

President Barack Obama arrived in Kingston, Jamaica, Wednesday night on the first leg of a journey that will take him from an historic meeting with 48 leaders of Caribbean nations in this teeming capital city to the Summit of the Americas in Panama and a likely encounter with Cuba's Raul Castro.

Top administration officials say security — along with energy — is at the top of the agenda as Obama prepares for the first visit of a sitting U.S. President since Ronald Reagan came here in 1982. Much has changed here since the days when the main and pressing security concern between the U.S. and Jamaica was drug smuggling and the use of the island country's open borders as a waypoint between cocaine producers in South America and places to sell the drug in the U.S. Now there are growing concerns, at least in Washington, that Caribbean countries could be producing radical Islamists who go to fight in the Middle East. The furor has been so great that the Jamaica Constabulary Force has launched an investigation to determine whether people in this country are traveling to the Middle East to fight for radical Islamist groups. In an interview with CNN, Jamaica's U.S.-educated Police Commissioner Carl Williams confirmed "the (Jamaican) intelligence community has been all over that since it came out." Williams also said that the Jamaican force has formed a new police intelligence unit in February whose responsibilities will include data collection on potential terrorists such as seeking out evidence of sleeper cells. He said the inquiry into the presence of any terrorist activity is ongoing but at this stage he views the concerns as unsubstantiated. "That is a theory that is sound but we have no such experience here in Jamaica. We haven't been able to identify anyone," Williams said. Nonetheless, the commissioner did admit "we do have one individual here that is of concern to law enforcement and international law enforcement ... and we have eyes on that individual." Williams would only confirm that the individual was well known, had been identified publicly and is living in the western part of the country. CNN reported as far back as September 2010 on Jamaican radical sheik Abdullah El-Faisal who at that time was living near of Montego Bay. The sheik, who had once told Muslims to take up jihad, told CNN's Drew Griffin that he had reformed his ways. Jamaica is not the only Caribbean country with potential security concerns involving radical Islamists. Gen. John Kelly, the commander of U.S. a Southern Command, recently said at a Defense Department briefing that Muslim recruits from other countries, including Trinidad and Tobago and Suriname, might be able to operate freely because the governments did not have the resources to track them. Source: CNN