

# ENVIRONMENT SCAN – 28 SEP 2015

**CHINA Col C Madhwal, VSM**

President XI Jinping's US Visit. So as President Obama and President Xi performed the rituals of the visit, complete with 21-gun salute and state dinner, what both sides can agree on is the urgency of avoiding the Thucydides trap (where a rising power causes fear in an established power which escalates toward war as happened with ancient Greece and Sparta). Sustaining the US welcome for a rising China requires them to find and strengthen areas of co-operation. Hence announcements on climate change, with President Obama welcoming President Xi's commitment to a carbon trading programme. They also celebrated co-operation on Iran's nuclear programme and said they would continue to work together to tackle the North Korean nuclear problem. China signed off on a multi-billion dollar deal to buy Boeing aircraft, making the point that there are concrete benefits in American jobs and profit from good relations with China.

Beneath the feel-good flattery, the unspoken message was one of inexorable Chinese power. President Obama did manage to extract an agreement that both governments would refrain from cyber-theft of intellectual property for commercial gain, and that they would work on "international rules of the road for appropriate conduct in cyberspace".

But he also wondered aloud whether words would be followed by actions, and warned that he might still impose sanctions if Chinese hacking persisted. President Xi denies that China has perpetrated any hacking, insisting instead that it is the victim of cyber hacking. On tensions in the South China Sea, they made no progress.

Hardnosed diplomacy

Obama is seven years into his presidency with just a year to go, while Xi is three years in with seven still ahead. President Xi's foreign policy is more confident, articulate and focused than that of any of his predecessors. His assertiveness has caught the Obama administration off guard, whether it's the ambitious island building in the South China Sea, a new development bank to challenge US dominance of global financial institutions, or the push to reshape the physical and diplomatic architecture of Asia through China's "One Belt One Road" strategy.

The inescapable conclusion is that President Xi has made a hardnosed calculation that his counterpart is too preoccupied with American problems in the Middle East and Russia to push back against his own muscular version of the way China should rise.

Xi denies China turning artificial islands into military bases

U.S. President Barack Obama expressed concerns about Chinese militarization of artificial islands in the South China Sea to China's President Xi Jinping, but Xi denied any plan to establish military strongholds there.

Obama said their summit talks included a "candid" discussion on Asia-Pacific disputes, focusing on growing tensions in the South China Sea where China has competing territorial claims with several Southeast Asian countries.

"I conveyed to President Xi our significant concerns over land reclamation, construction and the militarization of disputed areas, which makes it harder for countries in the region to resolve disagreements peacefully," Obama said.

Admiral Harry Harris, commander of U.S. forces in the Pacific, told the Aspen Security Forum in July that China was building hangers on one of the reefs - Fiery Cross - that appeared to be for tactical fighter aircraft.

Xi, however, denied that militarization was taking place.

"Relevant construction activity that China is undertaking in the Nansha Islands does not target or impact any country and there is no intention to militarize," Xi said, using the Chinese name for the disputed Spratly archipelago.

"Islands in the South China Sea since ancient times are Chinese territory," Xi said. "We have the right to uphold our own territorial sovereignty and lawful legitimate maritime rights and interests."

Xi also reiterated that China is committed to freedom of navigation in the sea and to resolving disputes through dialogue. He said Beijing and Washington had a shared interest in this regard.

Washington analysts and U.S. officials say the militarization of the islands has already begun and the only question is how much military hardware China will install.

U.S. experts say satellite photos from early this month also show China was carrying out dredging work around the artificial islands, a month after saying it had stopped.

Harris said last week that China's runway building and further militarization of the artificial islands was of "great concern" and posed a threat to all countries in the region.

Jane's Defense Weekly published new satellite images of Fiery Cross taken on Sept. 20 that it said showed China had completed the runway on the reef and was moving closer to making it operational.

Jane's said completion of the runway could allow China to accelerate construction of infrastructure and to start air patrols over the disputed islands.

U.S., China Agree on Rules for Air-to-Air Military Encounters. The United States on Friday announced agreements with China on a military hotline and rules of behavior to govern air-to-air encounters, just days after the Pentagon criticized China over an unsafe intercept of a U.S. spy plane.

The agreements were unveiled following talks in Washington between Chinese President Xi Jinping and President Barack Obama and seek to lessen the chance of an accidental flare-up between the two militaries, despite tensions in the South China Sea.

The new agreement on rules of behavior for air-to-air encounters was broad in scope, addressing everything from the correct radio frequencies to use during distress calls to the wrong physical behaviors to use during crises.

"Military aircrew should refrain from the use of uncivil language or unfriendly physical gestures," read one provision of the agreement. Another agreement created formal rules to govern use of a military crisis hotline, a move that aims to speed top-level communication.

The Pentagon says two Chinese JH-7 fighter jets intercepted an American RC-135 reconnaissance plane, with one passing within just 500 feet of the U.S. aircraft. The intercept took place on Sept. 15, about 80 miles (130 km) east of the Shandong peninsula in the Yellow Sea.

The Pentagon reported a far more dangerous intercept last year, when, in August 2014, a Chinese warplane flew as close as 20 to 30 feet (7 to 10 meters) to a U.S. Navy patrol jet and conducted a barrel roll over the plane.

One U.S. defense official said, the United States will expect "full compliance" with the agreement. The intercepts are examples of moves seen as an assertion of the expanding reach of China's military. This month, five Chinese Navy ships sailed in the Bering Sea off Alaska.

But Obama said he had a "candid" discussion with Xi. "I indicated that the United States will continue to sail, fly and operate anywhere that international law allows," Obama said as Xi stood beside him.

## RUSSIA

Col Anadi Dhaundiyal

Pak- Russia Relations. Close on the heels of a deal to supply four Mi-35 attack helicopters, Pakistan has discussed the purchase of Su-35 combat jets from Russia. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) has discussed buying Su-35 'Flanker-E' fighter aircraft from Russia in "potentially the largest defence deal between the two countries", leading defence publication Jane's reported on its website. A Pakistan official was responding to Russian media reports that deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov had said talks were underway for the sale of an unspecified number of Su-35s. The official said "it's too early to say if a deal will conclude and the terms", but the discussions reflected "Russia's willingness to sell advanced hardware to Pakistan despite Moscow's longstanding ties with India", the report said. Russia also signed a military cooperation agreement with Pakistan during defence minister Sergei Shoigu's visit to Islamabad in November last year.

Comments. India will not be too surprised as it has itself gone in for \$2.5bn (£1.7bn) deal to buy 37 Boeing military helicopters from the US incl 22 AH-64 Apaches.

Russia- Syria. Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moualem said on 17 Sep that Russia had provided new weapons and trained Syrian troops how to use them, without saying when or naming any specific systems. He denied reports that Russian combat troops were fighting in Syria but said Syria would not hesitate to ask for Russia's help if needed.

Russian President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, on 18 Sep, said that Russia would consider sending troops to fight in Syria if Damascus were to ask for it. Dmitry Peskov said if such a request is made, it will be "discussed and considered," but he insisted the question is purely hypothetical at this stage. Russia urged the United States and its allies to engage Assad as a "partner" in the fight against the Islamic State group.

The US, along with Saudi Arabia and Turkey, have supported insurgents battling to unseat Assad, whose foreign military backing has so far come mostly from Iran and its Lebanese ally Hezbollah. In a possible sign of a newly assertive posture by Assad, the Syrian air force launched heavy air strikes on the Islamic State-held city of Raqqa, an important IS base of operations in Syria often targeted by the U.S.-led coalition. The US administration said it was considering how to respond to a Russian proposal for military talks over Syria, which may be about "deconfliction" - ensuring that U.S. and Russian aircraft do not come into conflict in Syria. On 17 Sep, White House spokesman Josh Earnest said: "The United States "remains open to tactical, practical discussions" with Russia over the fight against Islamic State in Syria.

Lloyd Austin, commander of U.S. Central Command, went through humiliating testimony in early Sep, in front of the Senate Armed Services Committee in which he had to admit that the number of Syrian rebels trained under a \$500m US programme who had actually made it into the field could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and that plans for a safe area in northern Syria to protect civilians would be meaningless without ground troops, He however could not recommend the commitment of US soldiers on such a mission.

Comments.

- (a) The speed and scale of Russia's deployment was unexpected.
- (b) Western strategists admire Mr Putin's tactical sense, willingness to embrace risk, and desire to show up the emptiness of western political rhetoric.
- (c) Western mil thinkers also feel that he has no bigger plan, and Putin's actions has cost thousands of Ukrainian lives as well as Russian economic ruin.
- (d) Mr Putin, sitting next to Mr Netanyahu said, "our main goal is to protect the Syrian state". Scoffing at Israeli fears that Syria intended to sponsor militant attacks across the Golan Heights, Mr Putin told his visitor that the Syrian army was in no state to open a second front.
- (e) Mr Putin's objective has been to prevent an implosion of the Syrian state - or what's left of it. He had said that he intended to prevent a complete implosion of government authority of the kind that happened in Libya, following NATO's 2011 intervention thereby taping US guilt over its actions.

(f) As per recent western thoughts President Assad could remain in power for the time being, making his removal subsidiary to the aim of crushing IS.

(g) Mr Putin had effectively opened a second front through which he can challenge Western dominance.

Meeting at UN. In case anyone had doubt, the White House wanted it known on 24 Sep that it was President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia who asked to meet with President Obama, not the other way around. Mr. Putin was not just eager for a meeting, said Josh Earnest, the White House press secretary, but in fact “desperate” for one. The emphasis on who wanted to meet more underscored the sensitivities and risks of the meeting, which the US officially announced on 24 Sep. Mr. Obama has not seen Mr. Putin in nearly a year, and the two have not had a formal sit-down meeting in more than two years.

“It is fair for you to say that based on the repeated requests we’ve seen from the Russians, that they are quite interested in having a conversation with President Obama,” Mr. Earnest said. Ultimately, Mr. Obama decided “that it was worth it at this point to engage with President Putin in a face-to-face meeting to see if the interests of the United States could be advanced.”

Mr. Earnest noted Mr. Putin’s habit of slouching while meeting with counterparts, pointing to a recent photo of him with Israel’s prime minister. “President Putin was striking a now-familiar pose of less-than-perfect posture and unbuttoned jacket and, you know, knees spread far apart to convey a particular image,” he said.

Comments. The meeting, to be held in New York on Monday, where both will be attending the annual session of the United Nations General Assembly, presents a challenge to Mr. Obama.

(a) Mr. Obama would press Mr. Putin to live up to a cease-fire in Ukraine.

(b) US will test Putin’s intentions in Syria, including supply of mil aid. US hoped to explore a settlement of Syria’s four-year-old civil war without leaving in power President Bashar al-Assad, a longtime Russian ally.

(c) It would allow Mr. Obama to assess whether the two sides could collaborate against the Islamic State terrorist group in Syria, also known as ISIS or ISIL.

(d) Mr. Putin's deployment to Syria seemed to be an effort to make himself a player again on the international stage and change the subject from his encroachment in Ukraine. Any future talks would have only featured Ukraine, whereas now, Syria is an equal, if not more, attention grabbing issue. The EU refugee crisis highlights the urgency of the resolution of Syrian crisis.

(e) He has to meet with him given the circumstances. But it's not very clear what US is going to get out of it. The Russians have made their position crystal clear: They want to have a central say about what happens."

## AFGHANISTAN

Capt Ranjit Seth

Islamic State gaining ground in Afghanistan: UN. Intelligence agencies assess that up to 70 IS fighters from Iraq and Syria now form the core of jihadist's branch in Afghanistan. The Islamic State group is making inroads in Afghanistan, winning over a growing number of sympathizers and recruiting followers in 25 of the country's 34 provinces. The group, which controls large areas of Syria and Iraq, has been trying to establish itself in Afghanistan, challenging the Taliban on their own turf.

The IS-backed groups "regularly engage" Afghan military forces, but fighting with other parts of the insurgency are rare, except in Nangarhar province where they are battling the Taliban for control of the drug trade.

Among the prominent IS fighters are Abdul Rauf Khadem, a former Taliban adviser to Mullah Omar, who visited Iraq in October 2014 and has since formed his own group in Helmand and Farah provinces. Khadem allegedly has been recruiting followers by paying out large sums of money. Foreign fighters from Pakistan and Uzbekistan, some of whom have close ties to al-Qaida, are reported to have come under the IS banner after fleeing their country.

The Taliban, who have themselves often been accused of savagery during their 14-year insurgency, are seeking to appear as a bulwark against IS's brutality and as a legitimate group waging an Islamic war. Earlier this month the Taliban condemned a "horrific" video that apparently showed IS fighters blowing up bound and blindfolded Afghan prisoners with explosives.

## IRAN

Capt Ranjit Seth

India Iran Afghanistan International Transit Corridor. India is looking to fast track its ambitious Chabahar port project in Iran by signing an international transit corridor agreement with Iran and Afghanistan. The port project is important for India as it will facilitate access to Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan. Last week officials from the 3 countries met to finalize agreement for a Chabahar transit corridor.

While India and Iran are developing the Chabahar port jointly, Afghan businesses are investing in the attached free trade zone where Iran has allotted land for Afghan investors. The port was welcomed by all regional partners of Afghanistan at the VI RECCA (Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan) conference held in Kabul on September 4.

The transit corridor will be significant for Afghanistan as President Ashraf Ghani has declared that his country wants to revitalize the Silk Road and act as a regional hub for connecting South Asia with Central Asia.

Iran officials said that along with other international corridors -- the North-South ITC, the Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Afghanistan-Iran road corridor, and the so-called Ashgabat agreement on international transportation signed by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Oman -- the construction of the Iran-India-Afghanistan international transit corridor will not only promote the development of regional trade, but also will be an important historical event.

The Chabahar port it is likely to become operational by the end of next year. The talks for trilateral transit corridor had started in 2013. India and Iran want to increase the Chabahar port capacity from the current 2.5 million tonnes per year to 12.5 million tonnes per year.

Afghanistan is looking at the Chabahar port and the trilateral transit corridor to reduce its dependence on Pakistan.

MIDDLE EAST

Brig Ranjit Singh

IRAQ

Iraqi Soldiers Flee Fighting ISIS for European Life. Some Iraqi soldiers are abandoning their posts and joining wave of migrants heading to Europe, raising doubts about cohesion of security

forces backed by US led coalition against ISIS. Interviews with migrants & social media show scores of soldiers from National Army, police, special forces as well as Shia militia & Kurdish Peshmerga forces have left in the recent months. They have joined more than 50,000 civilians exodus from Iraq in last three months exceeding even Syria.

40 ISIS Elements Killed in Iraqi Airstrikes in Anbar. Iraqi airstrikes in Anbar Province killed 40 ISIS elements & destroyed 11 vehicles .In a separate airstrike Iraqi Air Force killed 5 ISIS elements in Anbar Province.

15 ISIS Elements Killed East of Ramadi. International coalition warplanes killed 15 ISIS militants & destroyed 2 hideouts East of Ramadi.

12 ISIS Elements Killed in Airstrikes in West Anbar. International coalition airstrikes killed 12 ISIS militants in Haditha Distt in West Anbar.

17 Terrorists Killed in Airstrikes in Ramadi. Iraqi airstrikes killed 17 ISIS terrorists, mostly Arab suicide bombers in Ramadi.

17 ISIS Elements Killed in South West Kirkuk. International coalition air strikes against arms depots in South West Kirkuk killed 17 ISIS elements.

25 ISIS Elements Killed in Baiji. Iraqi security forces killed 25 ISIS elements in Baiji.

Comments. Iraqi forces are focusing their operations to retake Anbar Province but the progress is slow. Siege around the city of Ramadi continues.

International coalition and Iraqi Air Force air strikes have been able to inflict substantial casualties to ISIS elements but casualties due to ground operations are comparatively small.

Some Iraqi soldiers have been abandoning posts and joining migrants heading to Europe, the numbers are a cause of concern for Peshmerga forces. The morale of Peshmerga forces appears to be declining due to non payment of salaries, obsolete weapons & inadequate equipment.

## SYRIA

Putin Pledges to Continue Support to Assad. Putin has pledged to continue support to Assad after US sounded alert over an alleged military build up by Russia in Syria. He stated that we support Govt of Syria in fight against terrorist aggression. It is learnt that Russia has started flying

drone surveillance missions in Syria. It is reported that Russia is developing two military facilities in Syria's Mediterranean Coast. Activities have been noted in weapon storage facility and military base north of Latakia. It appears Russia is preparing to deploy troops, position fighter aircraft, helicopters & tanks.

Australia & France Begin Airstrikes in Syria. Australia & France carried out their first airstrike in Syria against ISIS, thus enlarging the coalition.

Warplanes Kill Dozens of ISIS Fighters in Central Syria. Govt forces airstrikes killed dozens of ISIS fighters in Palmyra & two towns in Homs province. The Syrian Air Force has increased airstrikes after backing from Russia in the form of arms & more efficient planes.

Syria Launch Strikes on ISIS Held Raqqa. Syrian Air Force launched a wave of 11 air strikes on ISIS held Raqqa. This is unusual as Syrian air restricted airstrikes to rebel held areas & US led coalition carried out attacks in these areas.

Al Qaida Rebels Execute 56 Syrian Troops. Al Nusra, affiliate of Al Qaida has executed at least 56 Syrian troops after capture of Abu-al-Duhur military airbase in Idlib Province.

US Trained Syria Rebels Giving Ammunition & Equipment to Qaida Affiliate. The Pentagon accepted that a group of US trained Syrian rebels had handed over ammunition & equipment to Al Nusra, an affiliate of Al Qaida, supposedly for safe passage.

Thousands of Foreign Jihadis Pouring into Syria to Join ISIS. An American analysis has brought out that approx 30,000 foreign recruits have poured into Syria since 2011, the numbers have doubled in last 12 months. These recruits have come to Syria & Iraq from more than 100 countries; the numbers from US have increased from 100 to 250.

Comments. Russia has openly declared its support to Assad. Russia is supplying weapons, warplanes, helicopters to Syria. It appears to be developing two facilities in Syria along the Mediterranean Coast in Latakia Province, the stronghold of Govt forces. Activities indicate Russia is preparing to deploy troops, position warplanes, helicopters & tanks. Russia has commenced its drone surveillance missions in Syria. It is indicative of Russia playing a pro-active role in Syria conflict.

US led coalition in Syria has expanded in which France & Australia have joined airstrikes against ISIS.

Syrian forces have increased the intensity of airstrikes after getting Russian support. Syrian air carried out strikes on Raqqa ISIS stronghold after long time, probably to reassert its power in the area.

US trained Syrian rebels handing over ammunition & equipment to Al Nusra has created great embarrassment to US and raised concerns on policy to train & equip in Syria.

Thousands of foreign jihadis pouring into Syria is indicative that US coalition fight against ISIS has not been successful, thus the overall strategy needs a review.

## YEMEN

Coalition Pounds Houthi Positions in Marib. Saudi led coalition forces pounded Houthi rebel positions on outskirts of city of Marib in its push to retake Sana'a.

Push Toward Yemen Capital Slow but Sure. Saudi led coalition is making slow but steady progress since launch of offensive on 13 Sep, to retake Sana'a. Taking Marib would allow coalition forces to move to Sana'a. The battle will not enter decisive phase yet as coalition seeks to minimize casualties. Coalition forces are targeting supply lines and houthi strongholds.

Coalition Hits Sana'a on Occupation Anniversary. Saudi led coalition warplanes pounded Houthi positions in Sana'a, as rebels call mass rally to celebrate first anniversary of occupation, targeting ammunition depots & rebel strongholds.

Hadi has Arrived in Yemen. President Hadi has arrived in Aden. He is accompanied by his son who heads president's special guards.

Growing Influence of Daesh in Yemen. Taking advantage of the intense conflict, ISIS has been taking advantage to carry out attacks on Shia mosques frequented by Houthi rebels & their supporters. They have employed suicide bombers who are using shoe & belt bombs to evade security checks.

Comments. Saudi led coalition forces have launched offensive to retake Sana'a but the progress is slow as coalition wants to minimize casualties. The coalition forces are first fighting to capture Marib before launching decisive phase to retake Sana'a.

President Hadi has returned to Yemen along with his son, who heads president's special guards.

ISIS is taking advantage of intense conflict to increase its influence and carrying out suicide attacks in Shia mosques using shoe & belt bombs.

## AFRICA

Col Ajay Ramdev

Burkina Faso: The Failed Coup

Country Profile.

Burkina Faso is a landlocked country in West Africa, around 2,74,200 square kilometres in size. It is surrounded by six countries: Mali to the north; Niger to the east; Benin to the southeast; Togo and Ghana to the south; and Ivory Coast to the southwest. Its capital is Ouagadougou. As of 2014, its population was estimated at just over 17.3 million.

Formerly called the Republic of Upper Volta, the country was renamed "Burkina Faso" on 4 August 1984 by then-President Thomas Sankara. French is an official language of government and business.

Burkina Faso has significant reserves of gold, but cotton is the economic mainstay.

## India & Burkina Faso

Political Relations: Bilateral relations between India and Burkina Faso have been cordial. Bilateral activities began in March 1976 when an official delegation led by Burkina Faso's Commerce & Industry Minister visited India and signed a Protocol on Economic and Technical Cooperation.

Bilateral relations got a boost in May-June 1993, when President Blaise Compaore visited India. During this visit, India and Burkina Faso decided to establish the Joint Commission to foster cooperation between the two countries.

Prime Minister Shri Narasimha Rao paid a State Visit to Ouagadougou during November 1995. The visit paved the way for a more intensive interaction in several fields. The Prime Minister inaugurated the new Indian Embassy with a resident C'dA. The Indian Mission was closed in July 2002.

The Embassy of Burkina Faso was opened in New Delhi in 1996 and elevated to the level of Ambassador in 2011.

Commercial Relations: In 2013- 14, bilateral trade between the two countries stood at US\$ 119.63 with export from India at US\$ 103.08 million and import from Burkina Faso at US\$ 16.55 million.

India's major exports to Burkina Faso are pharmaceutical products, vehicles and parts thereof, iron and steel and articles thereof, machinery and mechanical appliances, rubber and articles thereof.

Imports from Burkina Faso include cotton, iron & steel, wood and articles of wood, raw hides and skins, and leather.

Indian Community. The Indian community in Burkina Faso is around 200-300. Some of them are engaged in manufacturing and trading business and restaurants while the rest are their employees. Some are also doing business in cotton and gold.

The Coup: Sep 2015

Background: A poor country even by West African standards, landlocked Burkina Faso has suffered from recurring droughts and military coups. A popular uprising forced long-term leader, Blaise Compaore, in power for 27 years, from office in October 2014. An interim administration was put in place for a year, after which elections were to be held.

The Coup. Presidential guard members linked to ex-leader Compaore had burst into a cabinet meeting on Wednesday and seized acting president Michel Kafando, prime Minister Isaac Zida and two ministers.

Members of the Regiment of Presidential Security (RSP) detained Michel Kafando and his Prime Minister Isaac Zida for more than two days, naming General Gilbert Diendéré, longtime aide to Compaoré, as the new leader of the country.

The coup also threatened to pull the country further into political crisis, with leading ministers detained, violent clashes on the streets of the capital, and a wide-eyed general installed overnight as head of state.

But a swift intervention from West African countries including Senegal, Benin, and headed by Nigerian president Muhammadu Buhari, has restored the country to order in an unprecedented – and peaceful – turnaround.

Comments.

When the head of the presidential guard arrested the interim leadership and declared himself in charge just three weeks before planned elections, few thought that General Gilbert Diendéré would be forced out within the week.

The major reason for the coup's defeat was that it was instantly unpopular. When the military takeover was announced on 18 September, there were spontaneous demonstrations in the capital Ouagadougou.

The second major factor was the resistance from the regular army, who made it clear that they were unwilling to participate in the coup.

The third reason was that Diendéré and his were surprised by the vehemence of the continental response. The coup was instantly condemned in the strongest possible terms by the African Union (AU), while regional body the Economic Community for West African States (Ecowas) scrambled together a high-level mediation team.

Ecowas played a more direct role. It was only after talks with the Ecowas mediation team that interim President Michel Kafando was returned to office, with the mediators instrumental in persuading Diendéré to accept the deal.

South Sudan Sanctions.

16 Sep 15: Russia and Angola have opposed moves at the UN Security Council to impose sanctions on a South Sudan general and a rebel commander. The US had proposed a travel ban and asset freeze on army chief Paul Malong and rebel general Johnson Olony for continuing to fuel conflict.

The Russian ambassador to the UN said sanctions might aggravate the situation. Russia's UN ambassador Vitaly Churkin said he felt sanctions were not the solution after his country's talks with the foreign ministers of South Sudan and Sudan. Angola wanted to give the parties more time to implement the peace deal.

Fighting has continued in South Sudan despite last month's peace deal. Both sides had signed the agreement to end the 20 months of conflict under intense regional and international pressure.

At least seven ceasefires have been agreed and then shattered - and US diplomats want to maintain the pressure to ensure the most recent deal succeeds.

#### US: Cuba Trade Relations

17 Sep 15. The US has announced eased restrictions on business and travel with Cuba, the latest move by President Barack Obama to improve relations with the country. The rules, which go into effect on Monday, relates to travel, telecom, internet-based services, business operations, banking and remittances. US businesses will now be allowed to open up locations in Cuba.

Cuban President Raul Castro and US President Barack Obama discussed the move in a phone conversation on Friday. The changes come as the US and Cuba normalise relations after 53 years.

Ahead of Pope Francis' visit to Cuba, and before Cuban President Raul Castro is set to address the United Nations, Cuba announced on Friday the appointment of a US ambassador, the first since 1961. Veteran diplomat Jose Cabanas will be Cuba's ambassador to the US.