

## China's Secret Cuba Base

Senior US officials believe Beijing is in talks with Cuba to establish a base roughly 100 miles off the coast of Florida, in order to collect signals intelligence in the southeastern US. It would not be the first time China has attempted to spy on the US' electronic communications, known as signals intelligence. A suspected Chinese spy balloon that transited the US in February was capable of gathering signals intelligence and is believed to have transmitted back to Beijing in near-real time, sources told CNN at the time. The revelation about the potential Chinese outpost in Cuba comes as US-China relations have reached a low point, following the spy balloon incident and several aggressive manoeuvres by Chinese aircraft and ships against US assets in the South China Sea.

Cuba has always been critical for the US because it oversees US access to the wider world as well as the Florida straits. Being less than 100 miles from Florida, controlling the Caribbean's largest Island is a geopolitical imperative for the US. If another power was to gain control over Cuba, they will have the ability to intercept US ships and project power into the southeast US.

## China Steps up Diplomacy in Middle East

China has offered to mediate between rival Palestinian factions and facilitate peace talks with 'Israel', in the latest sign of Beijing's intent to expand its diplomatic role in the Middle East. At a meeting between Chinese president Xi Jinping and the head of the Palestinian Authority (PA), Mahmoud Abbas, in Beijing on 14 June, the two leaders also said that they had signed a strategic partnership. In remarks at the start of his meeting with Abbas, Xi said Beijing supported "the just cause of the Palestinian people to restore their legitimate national rights" and that it was "willing to play an active role in helping Palestine achieve internal reconciliation and promote peace talks",

Xi reiterated China's previous support for a two-state solution to the 'Israeli'-Palestinian conflict, based on pre-1967 borders and with East Jerusalem as the capital of a sovereign Palestinian state, and also advocated for international development assistance for Palestinians. With its key ally, Russia bogged down in Ukraine China has tried to present itself as a global mediator. But whilst in Ukraine its proposals were not taken seriously, in Palestine, Beijing is calling for the American plan for the region, which has long been the two state solution.