

Raul Castro Kicks Off State Visit To Cuba Ally Angola

Written by Rudi Prinsloo

Friday, 06 February 2009 01:30 - Last Updated Friday, 06 February 2009 01:35



Cuban President Raul Castro on Thursday kicked off a state visit to oil-rich Angola, a longtime ally of the Communist island, where he was due to hold talks with President Jose Eduardo dos Santos.

Angola's state press agency Angop reported that Castro, 77, who replaced his ailing brother Fidel Castro as president last year, was to receive the official welcome given heads of state at the presidential palace in Luanda.

Castro, 77, was due to give a speech at the official opening of talks with dos Santos, before later addressing an extraordinary session of the National Assembly.

He was also later scheduled to visit a cemetery in Luanda, to lay a wreath at the grave of a Cuban soldier who fought alongside Angola's ruling MPLA (People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola) during the country's 27-year civil war.

Tens of thousands of Cuban troops took up arms with the MPLA after independence from Portugal in 1975 against two rebel movements that were backed by South Africa and the United States.

The war ended in 2002, after rebel leader Jonas Savimbi died in a gunbattle with government troops.

Castro is in Angola until Saturday, according to Angop. Dos Santos to host an official dinner Thursday evening in Castro's honour.

Angola is Africa's second-biggest biggest oil producer after Nigeria.

Dos Santos, one of Africa's longest-serving leaders, has been in power for thirty years.

Source : Sapa-dpa /po/th

Date : 05 Feb 2009 11:09