

Angola

Response to Information Request Number:	AGO00001.ZNK
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Subject:	Angolan Civil War and NOS UNIDOS
From:	INS Resource Information Center, Washington, DC
Keywords:	Angola/Unita/NOS UNIDOS

Query:

Between May and the Fall of 1998 was there a significant and unpredictable worsening of conditions in Angola? What pressures exist in Angola for young men to register for the draft? Is international air travel possible for those the government suspects of pro-Unita sympathies? What is the NOS UNIDOS?

Response:

The Lusaka Accord of 1994 was supposed to have ended Angola's civil war, ongoing independence from Portugal in 1975. Theoretically the Accord brought the rebel insurgency Unita (União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola) into the government, with Unita leader Jonas Savimbi taking the position of Angolan Vice-President and Unita forces being demobilized or absorbed into Angola's military (UNHCR, 1999). Throughout 1998, however, Unita gradually reneged on the deal. By late 1998 it launched heavy attacks against government forces in the central Angolan highlands and in the North (Angolan Peace Monitor, 1999). By late 1999 government forces had regrouped, driving Unita from its main bases (Pereira, 1999; Mseteka, 1999). Analysts expect Unita, nevertheless, to continue waging an aggressive, well-funded guerilla campaign. Some speculate, for example, that Unita has raised as much as \$3.7 billion since 1992 through an illicit trade in diamonds, acquired from deposits in areas it controls (Global Witness, 1998).

This latest round of fighting may have taken some outside observers by surprise but it would be most unlikely, given extensive reporting within Angola, that anyone with access to a radio or a newspaper could not have known by the middle of the year, at the latest, that Angola was headed back into a civil war (Wrong, 1998).

Forced conscription has been a problem in Angola for years. Both the government and Unita rely on forced conscription, sometimes including children. According to a variety of reports conscriptions picked up markedly early last year (Business Day, 1998; Human Rights Watch, 1999; Janes, 1999).

On the one hand, those who wish to escape the draft probably can buy their way out given Angola's completely corrupt social system (Baker, 1999; Gerrard, 1999), on the other the demand for recruits probably will not lessen anytime soon. Those eligible who thus far have managed to avoid service probably will face continuing pressures from an open-ended payment schedule or, if drafted, the hazards of war.

As with conscription, those who can afford the bribes can travel internationally despite, by and large, real or alleged associations with Unita. Exceptions include more senior Unita officials who are affected by a United Nations travel ban.

A search of NEXIS, Westlaw, FBIS, the Angolan government's web site, Unita's web site, and various African newspapers' web sites yielded nothing about an organization called Nos Unidos or any variant thereof.

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RIC within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

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