



## Armed Conflicts Report

### Angola-Cabinda (1994 - first combat deaths)

Update: January 2007

#### Summary

#### Type of Conflict

#### Parties to the Conflict

#### Status of the Fighting

#### Number of Deaths

#### Political Developments

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#### Summary:

**2006** The Angolan government signed the Memorandum of Understanding in July 2006, a peace agreement with one faction of the rebel group FLEC (Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave). Because of this, and few reported conflict related deaths over the past two years (less than 25 per year), this armed conflict is now deemed to have ended.

**2005** Government troops and rebels clashed on several occasions and the Angolan army continued to be accused of human rights abuses in the region. Over 50,000 refugees returned to Cabinda this year.

**2004** There were few reported violent incidences this year. Following early reports of human rights abuses by both sides of the conflict, a visit by a UN representative to the region noted significant progress. Later, a human rights group monitoring the situation in Cabinda accused government security forces of human rights abuses. 50,000 refugees repatriated during the year, short of the UNHCR's goal of 90,000.

**2003** Rebel bands remained active even as the government reached a "clean up" phase of the military campaign in the Cabinda enclave that began in 2002. Both sides were accused of human rights violations and at least 50 civilians died.

#### Type of Conflict:

State formation

#### Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government, led by President Jose Eduardo dos Santos:

Ruling Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA);

2) Rebels:

The two main rebel groups, the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) and the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave Cabinda Armed Forces (FLEC FAC), announced their merger on 8 September 2004. The groups unified under the name FLEC with the leadership drawn from the leaders of the two groups. However, the organization divided once again in 2006 after the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding

with one FLEC representative, Antonio Benito Bembe. FLEC split again when N'Zita Tiago, President of FLEC claimed that Bembe did not represent his group's interests and refused to sign and endorse the peace agreement.

"Our decision to merge was based on a request from ordinary Cabindans, civil society and the church. They made it clear that it would be preferable to negotiate with the government under a single banner - Our first step is to set up a commission that will decide how to approach the government in Luanda [the Angolan capital]. The government has claimed that because of the fragmentation, there was no valid interlocutor with which it could negotiate. But now they have no excuse..." [IRIN, 8 September 2004]

"According to Jaoa Porto of the Pretoria-based Institute for Security Studies (ISS), the armed secessionist movements, with a combined estimated force of no more than 2,000 troops, are no match for the battle-hardened FAA..." [IRIN, 'Web Special on Cabinda,' 2003]

## Status of Fighting:

**2006 The Angolan government signed the Memorandum of Understanding in July, a peace agreement with one faction of the FLEC separatist organization. However, other factions refuse to recognize its legitimacy and intermittent skirmishes between these groups and the Angolan government continue to occur.**

"There is fighting going on in Cabinda right now, if they [the Angolan government] propose a ceasefire, that would mean there is a war going on." [Raul Danda, leader of an Angolan NGO and FLEC member, IRIN, 13 July 2006]

"Cabinda is home to some 400,000 people and as of 2006 now accommodates between 30,000 and 40,000 troops of the Angolan Armed forces, or 1 soldier for every 10 people." [IRIN, 13 July 2006]

"Troops from Angola are still occupying Cabinda and committing organized atrocities against Cabindans including rape, summary execution and genocide." [Republic of Cabinda Press Agency, IRIN, 10 March 2006]

**2005 Sporadic clashes between government troops and rebels took place throughout the year with the exception of a major summer offensive launched by the Angolan government.**

"Civil society groups in Angola's oil-rich Cabinda enclave have confirmed that a 'major offensive' against separatist rebels is underway in the interior of the province. Agostinho Chikaia, leader of the Mpalapanda Civic Association in Cabinda, told IRIN on Wednesday that although the clashes between government troops and the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC) have not yet 'seriously impacted' on the civilian population, insecurity in the affected areas had heightened." [IRINnews.org July 6, 2005]

"Civil society groups in Angola's oil-rich Cabinda province have again called on the government to enter serious negotiations with separatists, following reports of fresh clashes." [IRINnews.org, May 26, 2005]

**2004 Following reports of fighting early in 2004 the violence appeared to drop off towards the end of the year. There were conflicting reports regarding whether the war in Cabinda had reached an end.**

"Speaking to journalists in the United States on Friday, Dos Santos reportedly said there 'is no war in Cabinda', and that the authorities remained committed to dialogue... But Father Raul Tati, a leading cleric and civil rights activist in the province, told IRIN that sporadic clashes between government troops and the rebel FLEC FAC fighters were continuing. ... Nothing has changed. Just two weeks ago in Baca Cosse municipality, a number of civilians were caught in the fighting between the FAA (government army) and FLEC-FAC. The government cannot say the war is over when there is so much insecurity in the province," he alleged. [IRIN, May 17, 2004.]

"Human rights groups have once again called on the international community to do more to address allegations of human rights abuses in Angola's northern province of Cabinda, following reports that at least six people were killed during recent clashes between government troops and separatists." [IRIN, January 8, 2004]

**2003** A military campaign in Cabinda which began in October 2002 against various factions of the Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) was extended by the Angolan armed forces (FAA). FLEC fighters remained underground and operated as guerrillas while government troops undertook Aclean up@ operations. Although FAA forces vastly outnumbered FLEC fighters and reportedly succeeded in defeating them militarily, observers state that bands of guerrillas remained active. Both parties to the conflict were accused of committing gross violations of human rights against civilian populations; however, government soldiers were reportedly the greatest culprits.

"With the cessation of the hostilities with UNITA in April 2002, the Government intensified its military operations against separatists in Cabinda. Reports of civilians killed in the fighting in Cabinda continued during the year. There were reports that government forces shelled and burned civilian villages and were employing similar counterinsurgency tactics against FLEC-FAC as they used against UNITA... FLEC-FAC forces reportedly tortured and killed civilians in Cabinda." [US State Department, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2003*, February 25, 2004]

"The worst is that every time FLEC attacks, the army responds by attacking civilians and, in some cases, routing entire villages. These are blatant human rights violations which are largely ignored, Rafael Marques, a representative of the NGO, Open Society Angola, told IRIN." [IRIN, January 8, 2004]

"The FAA's ongoing military campaign, now more than a year old, has not achieved its stated aim of pacifying the territory. Despite the destruction of FLEC command structures and military assets, small, mobile bands of guerrillas remain active in Cabinda's densely forested areas." [Ad-Hoc Commission for Human Rights in Cabinda, *Cabinda 2003: A Year of Pain*, November 3, 2003]

"... Cabinda has, in the last ten months, seen some of its worst fighting... although the war seems to a large extent to be over, there is no official ceasefire between the government and any of the belligerents." [Institute for Security Studies, August 4, 2003]

## 2002

"... FLEC-FAC have accused the government of sabotaging peace efforts by stepping up its military offensive since the signing of the 4 April ceasefire between the government and former UNITA rebels... a FLEC-FAC spokesman said the army was closing in on the movement's headquarters. Right now, clashes are taking place on the outlying areas of FLEC-FAC's headquarters. There has been indiscriminate shelling of our positions, forcing civilians to flee the area. The number of people killed is high. We are in the midst of a catastrophic situation. More than 100 civilians, excluding children, have been killed." [IRIN, October 21, 2002]

## Number of Deaths:

**Total:** Between 1,000 and 1,500 people have died since the most recent phase of the conflict erupted in 1994. However, approximately 30,000 people were killed in earlier phases of the conflict since 1975

"Some 30,000 people have died in 25 years of fighting for independence for the enclave..." [Agence France Presse, October 9, 2003]

"Human rights activists in Angola have released details of widespread allegations of human rights abuses in the northern enclave of Cabinda... The report titled, *Terror in Cabinda*, contains 20 pages of testimonies of alleged abuses including summary executions, murders, disappearances, arbitrary detention, torture, rape and looting... Although the report covers alleged abuses both by

the Angolan security forces and by the separatist Front for the Liberation of the Cabinda Enclave (FLEC/FAC), the overwhelming number of accusations are made against government forces."  
[IRIN, December 12, 2002]

**2006 Reports of casualties remained scarce throughout 2006. However, rebels claim that atrocities and human rights abuses persist within the province of Cabinda and point to 10 assassinations which reportedly included the killing of 4 women and 2 children under the age of 1.**

"There have been reports of 10 assassinations at the hands of the Angolan government, including 4 women and 2 children under the age of 1, along with allegations of arbitrary arrest and rape."  
[IRIN, 10 March 2006]

"There is no war in Cabinda, there are only acts of banditry as fighting has been limited to rebel ambushes on the road between Cabinda and Bacu-Zau in the Northwest of the enclave." [IRIN, 15 March 2006]

"FLEC's fighters are mainly holed up in the forests of Cabinda's northeastern regions." [IRIN, 11 July 2006]

**2005** There were few reports of casualties this year. Rebels claimed 20 government troops were killed during clashes in May. There was little information reported regarding casualties following a government summer offensive. Human rights groups continued to accuse the Angolan army of human rights abuses in Cabinda.

"In a statement posted on its website, the rebel group alleged that 20 soldiers from the Angolan army had been killed after fighting which started on 18 May in the regions of Buco Zau and Necuto, north of Cabinda town. Provincial authorities have since denied the deaths." [IRINnews.org, May 26, 2005]

"The Angolan army is continuing to commit widespread abuses against civilians in the separatist enclave of Cabinda, a human rights group has said. The Mpalabanda Civic Association says since September 2003 there have been numerous instances of rape, murder and detentions in the oil-rich province." [Zoe Eisenstein, *BBC News*, February 2, 2005]

**2004** Although there were few and conflicting reports, 2004 saw a death toll in Cabinda of at least six and possibly more than 50. Early in the year there were also reports of human rights violations related to the conflict.

"A senior Angolan army official has denied claims by Cabindan separatists that they had killed 47 government soldiers in clashes over the past few weeks." [IRIN, March 5, 2004]

"in Angola's northern province of Cabinda, following reports that at least six people were killed during recent clashes between government troops and separatists." [IRIN, January 8 2004]

**2003** At least 50. Few reports detailing the intensity of the fighting or the numbers of fatalities came out of Cabinda in 2003. However, human rights violations were documented by local organizations which reported approximately 50 civilians killed by either FAA or FLEC soldiers in Cabinda in 2003. Significantly, this figure includes only confirmed civilian fatalities and does not include combatants killed throughout the year.

## **Political Developments:**

**2006** The presidential elections originally scheduled for 2006 have been postponed to next year and voter registration has begun. However, the Angolan government claims that due to logistical problems it has only successfully registered 51 of 175 municipalities. The government also signed a peace agreement in July known as the Memorandum of Understanding with one faction of FLEC, led by Antonio Benito Bembe. However, the president of FLEC, N'Zita Tiago was unaware of the negotiations and claimed that Bembe is not representative of FLEC. Furthermore, the separatist group vowed to continue its fight for independence despite government claims that they had been fully disarmed. Also, Cabinda's only human rights organization, Mpalabanda, who reports on government atrocities in Cabinda, was banned under the claim that it promoted hatred and

**violence. Mpalabanda also began the process of filing a referral and request for investigation of the Angolan government by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on allegations of war crimes, genocide and crimes against humanity.**

"Mpalabanda is the only human rights organization operating in the province of Cabinda. Amnesty International considers its members to be human rights defenders. The organization has been involved in the documentation of human rights violations committed by both the government and members of the Front for the Liberation of the Cabindan Enclave (FLEC). Its closure will leave Cabinda, an area rife with egregious violations of human rights, without a human rights organisation to monitor and record violations of human rights." [*Amnesty International*, 4 August 2006]

"Cabinda will soon be filing a referral and request for investigation of Angolan war crimes, genocide, and crimes against humanity with The Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court." [*IRIN*, 10 March 2006]

"Worry [remains] that the fractured nature of FLEC could prevent Luanda from putting a final lid on separatist ambitions. A faction led by Nzita Tiago, a leading FLEC figure, already rejected the peace agreement with the government." [*Reuters*, 8 January 2007]

"In a ceremony held on January 5, rebel leader Mauricio Amado Zulu, now a general in the Angolan army, declared the 'formal dissolution' of the Liberation of Cabinda Enclave (FLEC) as an armed movement." [*Agence France Presse*, 9 January 2007]

"The government says it has been logistically impossible to begin the registration process in more than 51 of the 157 municipalities." [*The Mail and Guardian*, 15 November 2006]

"Sections of Cabinda's splintered separatist movement, including the rebel Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), said they would not recognise the 'Memorandum of Understanding' signed in Angola's southern port city of Namibe." [*IRIN*, 1 August 2006]

**2005** President Jose Eduardo dos Santos was barred by the Supreme Court from running for re-election in September 2006 elections. The preparations for the elections have been marked by tensions between the ruling MPLA party and the opposition party and former rebel group, UNITA.

"Angola's first elections since 1992 - widely expected to be held next year - meant discussions about democratic processes were also crucial. 'Democracy is a word which many don't understand or don't even know, and when you say 'elections' they think that means war. There is a deep fear of elections after what happened in 1992, when war broke out again even stronger than before,' said Hilde Kusche-Uebber, another consultant to DW who is writing a 'Peace Manual' - a trainer's guide to promoting peace and reconciliation." [*IRINNews.org*, June 28, 2005]

"Angola's main opposition party, UNITA, on Thursday said it would continue to push for greater representation on the country's proposed National Electoral Commission (CNE). Opposition parties walked out of a parliamentary commission on Tuesday to protest the lack of consensus on the composition of the CNE, which is to oversee preparations for landmark general elections expected to take place in 2006." [*IRINNews.org*, April 14, 2005]

**2004** Following their merger, rebel Cabindan groups announced a new mandate to seek a "peaceful solution" to the conflict and the Angolan government indicated interest in mediation. Additionally, several influential separatists appeared willing to negotiate with the Angolan government. According to the UN, Angola also made significant strides towards improving the human rights situation in Cabinda. Late in the year, a human rights group monitoring Cabinda accused the government security forces of extensive human rights abuses including extra-judicial executions, arbitrary arrests, and detention, torture and other mistreatment, as well as sexual violence.

"During a mission to Cabinda in August 2004, Human Rights Watch found that although the human rights situation in Cabinda had improved since mid-2003 due to a decrease in military

operations, the FAA continued to commit violations against civilians with almost complete impunity. Human Rights Watch documented violations of human rights abuses against civilians in the past year, including extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests and detention, torture and other mistreatment, sexual violence, and the denial of civilians' freedom of movement. Human Rights Watch found little evidence of recent abuses committed by FLEC factions against civilians, probably because of FLEC's weakened capacity." [*Human Rights Watch*, December 23, 2004]

"The main rebel groups of the former Portuguese colony Cabinda and civil society groups have met in The Netherlands to create a unitary Cabindan voice in possible peace negotiations with Angola. The meeting resulted in a merger of Cabinda's rebel groups and a mandate to seek 'a peaceful solution' to the conflict with Angola." [*Afrol News*, September 7, 2004]

"The UN Secretary General special representative for Human Rights Defence, Hina Jilani, Thursday said in a press conference, in Cabinda, that human rights situation has been registering substantial improvements here. However, she said a number of complaints aired by some people during meetings held with some civil society members, including churches, are related to some military, but she recognized the Government efforts toward taking 'serious measures' for the effective observance of human rights." [*Angola Press Agency*, August 20, 2004]

"The humanitarian situation in the Angolan enclave of Cabinda is deteriorating so rapidly that some pro independence supporters are willing to put on hold their aspirations for secession, at least for now." [*IRIN*, March 22, 2004]

"The Angolan government is seeking a mediator to resolve the separatist crisis in the enclave of Cabinda, according to news reports. Interior Minister Osvaldo Serra van Dunem announced on Wednesday that the government wanted a 'real and suitable mediator to commence a transparent dialogue' about the future of the oil rich province." [*IRIN*, February 6 2004]

**2003** Efforts to reach a political agreement to the conflict were undermined by the existence of several distinct FLEC factions, each with their own leadership, and continuing FAA military operations. The Angolan government stated its willingness to cede increased autonomy, but not outright independence, to the region.

"Eighteen former officers in an Angolan separatist movement on Thursday joined the ranks of the army they have been battling for 40 years, military officials announced here... [they] had last year abandoned their guerrilla fight for independence for the oil-rich Cabinda enclave following a vast sweep by the Angolan army to root out secessionist fighters in the remote province." [*Agence France Presse*, October 9, 2003]

"The Angolan government is 'near the start of dialogue' on the status of the oil-rich Cabinda enclave, provincial governor Anibal Rocha said this week... With the success of a military offensive in undermining the rebel Cabinda Enclave Liberation Front (FLEC), Rocha said 'I think we are near the start of the dialogue that will be important and serious.' However, director of NGO Open - Society Angola, Rafael Marques, told IRIN that any meaningful talks on the future of the enclave would need to include internal civil society groups, rather than just the divided and discredited FLEC leaders in exile." [*IRIN*, August 6, 2003]

"The Angolan government recently stated its willingness to discuss autonomy as the preferred solution." [*IRIN*, July 10, 2003]

"The Angolan government is to propose a peace plan for the northern oil-rich Cabinda region to end years of fighting... the province's governor said... The peace plan would include the various factions of the Enclave of the secessionist Cabinda Liberation Front (FLEC), he said." [*Agence France Press*, February 18, 2003]

## Background:

The conflict in Cabinda is primarily one of secession. The territory is physically separated from the rest of

Angola, and was administered by Portugal as a separate colony prior to Angola's independence in 1975. At independence, Cabinda was included in the greater country of Angola. Many within Cabinda claim that it has an identity and culture distinct from Angola, and should therefore be granted independence.

"FLEC had for years used territory in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Congo-Brazzaville as rear bases from which to launch attacks into Cabinda." [IRIN, *Web Special on Cabinda*, 2003]

"The territory is cut off from the rest of the (sic) Angola by a coastal sliver of the Democratic Republic of Congo and was administered separately from the rest of Angola during Portuguese colonial times, but was handed to the Angolan government by Lisbon on independence in 1975. The separatists maintain that since Cabinda was administered separately, it should have formed a separate state." [Agence France Presse, September 24, 2003]

"The conflict in Cabinda is based on two irreconcilable positions. For the Angolan government, Cabinda is an integral part of Angola... On the other hand, Cabinda separatists claim that Cabinda has a distinct and separate identity, history and culture from the rest of Angola; accordingly, they would like recognition as an independent state." [Institute for Security Studies, August 4, 2003]

### Arms Sources:

The government reportedly signed an arms transfer agreement with Israel in 2005 worth USD 10 million per year. Past and current suppliers have been numerous including Russia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Kazakhstan, the United States, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, China, Poland, and South Africa.

[Sources: *Angola Unravels: The Rise and Fall of the Lusaka Process*, Human Rights Watch, 1999; *Update Angola*, October 17, 1999; *The Military Balance 1999/2000 to 2004/2005*, SIPRI Yearbook 2005.]

"The Israeli daily the Haaretz has reported that the African nation of Angola is to sign an arms deal with the Israeli government in order to improve its military arsenal in addition to other security assistance agreements." "According to the paper expert, 'Several Israeli companies are supporting the Angolan army with weapons and advisors. The Israeli military sales to Angola amount to about 10 million dollars annually.'" [Aljazeera.com, March 28, 2005]

### Economic Factors:

The existence of vast quantities of oil, approximately 60-70 percent of Angola's total oil deposits, has contributed to the persistence of the conflict. More recently, Angola's vast oil reserves has made the country a strategic part of the US government's plan to reduce dependence on Middle East oil leading to US support for the Angolan government in the name of "stability."

"The Angolan government, recovering from a 27-year civil war against UNITA rebels, is determined to secure Cabinda's mostly offshore oil output of 470,000 barrels per day." [Reuters, December 12, 2004]

"... observers say it is the province's oil deposits that lie at the heart of the dispute. Cabinda... produces 60 percent of Angola's oil." [IRIN, January 8, 2004]

"Observers have said the protracted struggle between the separatists and the government has been sharpened by the region's substantial oil deposits..." [IRIN, February 19, 2003]