Official Name: People's Republic of Angola  
Capital: Luanda  
Independence: 1975  
Area: 481,351 square miles  
Population: 9.5 million (estimated 1988)  
Adult Literacy: Males, 49% (1985), Females 19% (1983)  
Life Expectancy: 44 years (1988)  
Infant Mortality: 325-375 per 1000 (1985)  
GNP: $3.5 billion (1982)  
Per Capita Income: $480 (1985)  
Total Debt: $3.2 billion (1985)  
Major Exports: Oil (89%), Diamonds (5%), Coffee (5%)  

Angola was first invaded by the Portuguese in the 16th century but did not fully fall under colonial control until the 1930s. Colonialism devastated Angola. The Portuguese viewed the country as a source of one commodity—slaves. Over the next 300 years, more than three million Angolans were exported to the Americas.  

After many years of peaceful opposition to colonial rule, the Angolan people took up arms in the cause of freedom and self-determination in 1961. By 1966, there were three different nationalist movements: the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA), the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA). Each movement had a different base of social support, ideological orientation, and external alliances. These differences resulted from the ethnic divisions in Angolan society, the exploitation of these differences by the Portuguese, personal rivalries among the leaders, and genuine political disagreements.  

During the liberation struggle, the U.S. supported Portugal. But the CIA also gave some covert aid to the FNLA. The MPLA relied on support from the Soviet Union. UNITA, after initial contacts with China, made a secret agreement with the Portuguese military. The pressure of wars in Africa finally led Portuguese military officers to overthrow the fascist dictatorship in 1974. On January 15, 1975 the MPLA, the FNLA, and UNITA signed the Alvor Accord, calling for Portuguese-supervised elections. Independence was to follow on November 11, 1975. However, the CIA encouraged the FNLA to attack MPLA, arms shipments to both sides escalated, and the Accords fell apart. Thus, the colonial war was followed—with only a brief delay—by a second war that became increasingly one of greater foreign involvement.  

On August 9, 1975, South Africa invaded and occupied portions of southern Angola, reportedly with the full encouragement of the
U.S. Meanwhile, a joint FNLA-Zairian column was moving towards Luanda. The besieged MPLA solicited the military support of Cuba. With this support, the MPLA routed the Zairian and FNLA troops and forced the South Africans and UNITA to retreat to the South. The MPLA proclaimed the Peoples' Republic of Angola as scheduled on November 11, embarked upon the creation of a socialist state, and requested that Cuban forces remain to assure the security of the state from a renewed military assault. The United States remains the only country besides South Africa to refuse recognition.

By January 1976 the U.S. Congress learned that it had been systematically deceived by the CIA about the nature and extent of U.S. involvement in the Angolan conflict. Therefore, the Clark Amendment was passed, prohibiting funding for any rebel force in Angola.

Pretoria's support for UNITA escalated over the years, especially after P.W. Botha became Prime Minister in 1978. UNITA was resurrected by massive financial aid and military support (including South African troops and multiple invasions), and it became a key tool in South Africa's regional destabilization plan. However, South Africa officially ended support for UNITA in 1989 as a part of the Namibian independence agreements. This accord also arranged for the withdrawal of the Cubans, which has been proceeding ahead of schedule.

The United States, however, has eagerly picked up the slack from South Africa. In July 1985, Congress repealed the Clark amendment at the behest of the Reagan administration. An estimated $200 million has already been sent to UNITA through the CIA, and the Bush administration has requested a reported $60-80 million for fiscal year 1991.

The Angolan government has announced plans to implement a multi-party state and has invited UNITA to join in drafting a new constitution. The Soviet Union has agreed to end aid to the MPLA if the U.S. ends aid to UNITA. Yet UNITA refuses to agree to a cease-fire, and the U.S. continues to fund a bloody war whose once questionable rationale is now gruesomely absurd.