ANGOLA CHRONOLOGY

MPLA  Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola; Agostinho Neto, President

FNLA  National Front for the Liberation of Angola—formed from UPA, Union of the Populations of Angola, (originally UPNA, Union of the Populations of Northern Angola) and PDA, Democratic Party of Angola; Holden Roberto, President.

UNITA  National Union for the Total Independence of Angola; Jonas Savimbi, President

1956  MPLA is founded in December


1959-60  Portuguese begin new campaign of repression, arrest political leaders. Agostinho Neto imprisoned in Luanda, 8 June 1960. 30 killed, 200 wounded in village of his birth, protesting the arrest.

1961  January  Holden Roberto takes over leadership of UPA, ends brief alliance with MPLA negotiated in his absence. Capture by anti-Salazar Portuguese leader Henrique Galvao of ship off coast South America, to protest fascist rule in Portugal. Galvao announces sailing to Luanda; international attention focuses on Angola.

Feb. 4  MPLA leads attack on Luanda prisons to free political prisoners; beginning of armed struggle.

March 15  Uprising in north initiated by UPA. MPLA-led resistance in north-west Dambos region grows. Portuguese intensify repression, thousands killed; military build up begins.

October  UPA hostility towards MPLA leads to capture and execution of MPLA units attempting to enter northern Angola from the Congo (Zaire).

1962  March  UPA and PDA form a front—the FNLA.

April  FNLA sets up a Government in Exile (GRAE), with headquarters in Leopoldville (Kinshasa).

December  First National Conference of MPLA held in Leopoldville (Kinshasa). Agostinho Neto elected President. Policy decisions to concentrate on organizing peasants, emphasize military actions inside Angola. Roberto begins to receive secret CIA funds this year—paid until 1972

1963  May  OAU established—in October recognizes FNLA and GRAE.

November  MPLA expelled from Zaire.

1964  Midyear  MPLA re-opens Cabinda front.

July  Savimbi resigns from FNLA, denouncing its tribalism and US backing.

1965  March  OAU recognizes MPLA.

1966  March  UNITA formed inside Angola; Jonas Savimbi President

May  MPLA opens Eastern front.

December  UNITA attacks Teixeira de Sousa and Benguela Railroad (25th)

1967  February  MPLA opens front in north east (Lunda Province).

June  UNITA expelled from Zambia after attacks on Benguela railroad.
1968
July Liberation Committee of the OAU withdraws recognition of GRAE, recognizes FNLA and MPLA on equal footing.

August MPLA holds first Regional Conference, in Moxico Province.

1970
May Portuguese launch offensive using defoliants in 3 African colonies.

1971
January MPLA opens Bie (central-south) front.


1972
March Portugal, South Africa announce Cunene dam project in southern Angola.

December Under pressure for unity from OAU Neto and Roberto sign agreement establishing Supreme Council for the Liberation of Angola. MPLA soldiers sent to Zaire arrested; agreement never becomes a reality.

1973
Split in MPLA surfaces; Daniel Chipenda leads major anti-Neto faction.

1974
April Coup by Armed Forces Movement in Portugal signals early end to colonial rule.

June Neto denounces white settler groups setting up military training camps; South Africa reported to be providing military advisers.
UNITA signs unilateral ceasefire with Portuguese military forces in Angola (17th).
Spinola and Nixon meet in the Azores, to agree on a plan of decolonization with "safe-guards" (19th).
MPLA begins open organizing in Luanda.

July Post-coup Portuguese Government sets up 5-man Junta to govern Angola.
Many die in racial and political violence as whites attack muceques in Luanda; MPLA calls general strike to protest attacks on the population; MPLA accuses PIDE (former secret police) officers of provoking disorders; beginning of white settler exodus.
White Angolan and South African Press begin propaganda campaign in support of Savimbi, as a "moderate" leader.

August MPLA Congress held in Zambia to heal Neto-Chipenda split unsuccessful.

September Zambia, Zaire, Congo, Tanzania Heads of State meet with Neto and MPLA dissidents; Neto confirmed as President of MPLA (August 31–September 4).
Secret meeting in Sal (Cape Verde Islands), between Spinola, head of the Portuguese government and President Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire. Agree on a coalition Government for Angola to be headed by Roberto, Savimbi and Chipenda, excluding Neto (14th). Spinola's plan fails when he is ousted in Portugal at end of month.

October First local ceasefire between MPLA and Portuguese armed forces signed in Cabinda (8th); FNLA ceasefire with Portuguese (15th); FNLA delegation arrives in Luanda to open office (16th); MPLA sign general ceasefire with Portuguese (21st).
Right-wing coup attempt by white settlers and conservative officers fails.
Series of violent incidents in Luanda, going on into November, between whites and Africans in Luanda—linked to FNLA/UNITA attempts to destroy MPLA power in the city.

November MPLA official delegation arrives in Luanda (10th).
Separatist forces under long dormant FLEC, Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda, follow up on calls for secession from Angola by attempted take-over. Have Zaire and Congo backing. Driven out of Cabinda by 700 MPLA troops with Portuguese support.
Texaco announces discovery of important oil fields off-shore northern Angola.
FNLA and UNITA sign agreement for military and political cooperation (25th).

December MPLA expels Chipenda

Dec/January Neto signs agreements with Savimbi and Roberto as precursor to joint negotiations with Portuguese for independence.
January
In Mombasa FNLA, UNITA and MPLA meet with Kenya's President Kenyatta, and establish procedures for negotiating independence agreement with Portuguese (4th).
Alvor Agreement signed between Portugal, MPLA, FNLA and UNITA (15th). Established a transitional coalition government, with a Presidential Council and Council of Ministers (three ministers from each movement, and Portugal); a unified army; Independence set for November 11, 1975.
CIA urges “40 Committee” to renew and enlarge aid to Roberto. CIA stresses strategic importance of Angola for its internal wealth and because of its location adjacent to Namibia, from which a radical regime could “support an insurgency” against South Africa. “40 Committee” votes to give Roberto $300,000 in clandestine support.
Investiture of Transitional Government (31st).

February
Fighting in Luanda and Luso between MPLA and Chipenda faction.
Chipenda integrates forces with FNLA.

March
With Zaire assistance FNLA troops begin expulsion of all rivals from Northern Angola, launch military operations against MPLA.
In Luanda FNLA attacks MPLA headquarters killing at least 50 MPLA recruits in attempt to curb development of peoples’ militias and local committees under the MPLA Poder Popular movement (22nd-26th). Intensive fighting between FNLA and MPLA.

April
FNLA continues build-up in north, with new equipment, much of it of US origin coming via Zaire.
Renewed fighting in Luanda; FNLA attack MPLA-affiliated trade union headquarters. Withdrawal of Portuguese troops from north allows FNLA to take over military installations. High Commissioner Cardoso refuses to allow Soviet shipment of arms into Luanda.

May
Arms build up—FNLA receives French, US and other equipment. MPLA supplied with increasingly sophisticated Soviet and Eastern European arms.
Continued clashes in Luanda FNLA/MPLA.

Spring
CIA supplies $300,000 in arms to UNITA.

June
New fighting between FNLA and MPLA in Luanda.
Another truce agreed to (Nakuru Agreement) on June 21st, under pressure from Portuguese and African States, but fighting continues.
Cuba sends 250 advisors to MPLA to assist training.
CIA asks “40 Committee” (top-secret Committee which must approve all clandestine operations) for $30 million for Angola. Kissinger orders National Security Council study.

July
MPLA launch offensive against FNLA in Luanda; oust main FNLA forces and take control of Luanda.
Escalation of U.S. covert intervention in Angola. “40 Committee” approves $30 million for secret operations—$14 million to go directly in cash to FNLA and UNITA, balance in arms to be channeled through Zaire and Zambia (17th).
CIA subsequently reported to be receiving much of its intelligence from close liaison with South African security sources at this point.
FNLA counter-attacks against MPLA, driving down from the north with heavy Zaire assistance—reports of US equipment being used. Takes Caxito, 50 km north of Luanda.
Beginning of airlift of Portuguese settlers out of Angola, with U.S. and Western assistance—400,000 reported to have left by mid-October.
Sale of arms from US to Zaire goes up from $350,000 in 1974 to $16 million in first seven months 1975.
Heavy fighting between FNLA and MPLA reported in Malange and Lucala, northeast of Luanda.

August
FLEC declares independence for Cabinda at OAU meeting.
UNITA and FNLA withdraw Ministers from the Transitional government.
South African force invades Angola on the pretext of “protecting” Cunene Dam from SWAPO attacks (end first week in August).
Fighting in Cabinda between MPLA and FNLA.
Acting High Commissioner declares collapse of Transitional government, announces is taking back control.
FNLA takes control of north.
MPLA consolidates position in Luanda.
UNITA orders general mobilization, alleging attacks on supporters by MPLA troops, declares war on MPLA.
MPLA moves south, takes Lobito and other southern towns from UNITA.
Sharp escalation in US weapons being sent across border from Zaire.
Nathanial Davis, Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, resigns in protest against Kissinger’s interventionist policy (31st).
September
US planes airlifting arms from Zaire to Negage for FNLA and US armoured cars used in columns advancing from Zaire.
MPLA captures all major towns in south in fighting with UNITA except Nova Lisboa (now re-named Huambo).
MPLA claims control in 12 provinces, including oil and diamond producing areas.
Savimbi admits he is receiving arms from western sources.
MPLA involved in heavy fighting with FNLA around Caxito.
South African and US press reports big increases in Soviet weaponry to MPLA including rockets and tanks from March onwards.
New York Times reveals massive US aid to Zaire, partly in an attempt to re-inforce UNITA/FNLA. Administration now pushing to increase direct aid to Zaire to $60 million (from $20 million in 1974).

October
FNLA/UNITA in heavy fighting with MPLA around Mocamedes; MPLA establishes extensive control in south.
US Administration revealed to be seeking $81 million aid package for Zaire, including $19 million in direct military assistance.
South African organized invasion of Angola from Namibia (Oct. 20-23). Initial reports indicate 500 white mercenaries and at least 1000-1500 troops involved. In early February Defense Minister Botha admits that 4000 to 5000 troops involved.
U.S. Airforce Starlifter transport planes reported to be carrying arms from Zaire to Silvo Porto and other towns re-supplying UNITA.
Chipenda goes to Windhoek, Namibia.
4 shiploads of Soviet arms with 200-400 Cubans reported heading for Angola.

Early November
Heavily armored South African forces advancing up coast join with UNITA/FNLA (Chipenda) troops, inflict serious defeats on MPLA, cover 500 miles in 9 days, capturing many major towns, including Sa Da Bandeira, Mocamedes, the ports of Benguela, Lobito and Novo Redondo.
FNLA launches new attack on Cabinda, repulsed.

November 11
Independence Day; Portugal refuses to designate any Angolan party as the legitimate Government. MPLA announces the establishment of the Peoples' Republic of Angola, almost immediately recognized by over 30 countries, including several African states. FNLA/UNITA announce the formation of the Popular and Democratic Republic of Angola. There are no recognitions of that Government, then or later.
3000 Cuban troops arrive in Luanda.
FNLA presses hard from the north with the assistance of Zairois troops and US and other western aid; MPLA checks advances on Luanda. Continuing pressure on MPLA from the UNITA/FNLA/South African troops in south.
Kissinger still insists "to the best of my knowledge the South Africans are not engaged officially" (28th).
Chinese announce ending support for FNLA.

December
South African military advisers reported working closely with UNITA and FNLA on all battle-fronts; heavy concentration South African troops in south; MPLA troops, now increasingly well equipped with Soviet arms and supported by Cuban troops fighting along the Benguela railroad.
South African fighter bombers reported operating from base in Zaire.
MPLA begins advances against FNLA in north, moving toward Ambriz.

Mid December
South African advance halted and turned in south.
Attempts to recruit U.S. mercenaries reported.
Mounting public evidence of extensive US involvement—and collaboration with South Africa; reports that US Navy task force placed on alert; US spotter planes flying missions over Angola from Zaire; US cargo planes air-dropping supplies to the South African columns.
Savimbi flies to South Africa, holds consultations with SA officials "at highest level" urging continued SA role in Angola.
South Africa announces sending reservist commandos to Angola (17th).
Increasing reports on conflict between FNLA and UNITA forces.
Pressure against covert Administration intervention mounts in US.

December 19
US Senate votes 54 to 22 on Tunney Amendment to Defense Appropriations Bill, prohibiting further covert aid to the FNLA and UNITA.
Administration spokesman promises covert arms supplies will continue despite Senate vote (23rd).
Gulf Oil under State Department pressure announces suspension of Cabinda operations, refuses to make $125 million royalty and other payments due to Luanda Government (22nd).
Prime Minister Vorster appeals to West for increased aid in Angola (31st).
1976

January

In New Year offensive MPLA forces reinforced by Soviet equipment and Cuban troops move against FNLA and Zairois armies in the north, capture Uige, FNLA capital, on 5th.

Drive against UNITA, South African and mercenary armies in south.

OAU meeting deadlocks on Angola—22 countries supporting recognition of the MPLA-led Government, 22 supporting a reconciliation position (11th-13th).

In north FNLA and Zairois troops driven back almost to border by month-end; reports of widespread looting and destruction as forces retreat.

In south, MPLA forces retake a number of important positions, including Cela, the South African military stronghold.

Nzau Puna, UNITA chief of Staff confirms collapse of UNITA/FNLA alliance.

Reports of increasingly heavy South African losses—MPLA takes several South African prisoners.

South African forces retreat to consolidate along wide “buffer zone” on the Angolan side of the Namibian border, last week in January.

January 27

U.S. House votes 323 to 99 to confirm Senate Tunney Amendment, barring all covert aid to UNITA and FNLA.

Kissinger announces Ford Administration considering overt financial aid to UNITA and FNLA. Claims there are 11,000 Cubans in Angola (29th).

By the end of the month MPLA appears to be in direct control of large areas of Angola. Western reporters indicate that in most MPLA areas, despite serious problems, administration is functioning effectively.

Defeats and the withdrawal of South Africa generate extensive drive for recruitment of mercenaries in US and Britain, reportedly with CIA funds totalling over $500,000.

February

UNITA forces collapse as MPLA makes rapid advances, capturing Huambo (UNITA capital) and move on to take Lobito and Novo Redondo on the Atlantic coast and Silvo Porto and Luso in east.

In north Sao Salvador and Santo Antonio do Zaire, last FNLA-held towns captured—placing MPLA in partial control of the mouth of the Zaire River—able to threaten all Zaire river traffic going to major port of Matadi.

Official South African sources reveal that South Africa undertook Angolan invasion after close consultation with US, and on basis of promised aid.

Reports of executions of some British mercenaries.

President Ford announces he is not “giving up on Angola”—appears to threaten future subversion of a MPLA government—recalling that “the Savimbi forces were significant at the time the Portuguese were there . . . (they could) certainly impose a handicap on the economic viability of Angola.”

Senator Tunney reveals UNITA had received $50 million from Saudi-Arabia—U.S. acting as “go-between”, after the Senate Amendment cutting off covert aid.

28 African states now recognize MPLA led Peoples’ Republic of Angola; admitted to the OAU as 47th member.

February 12, 1976

This chronology has been compiled from many sources, including U.S. and European press, journals, radio reports and interviews, which often present conflicting information. It makes no claim to being a definitive work, but is an attempt to provide some clarity and as much accuracy as possible on the major developments in Angola.

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