

UNITA soon launched an offensive of its own. Savimbi's troops struck into Moxico Province, capturing Lupire on 19 September and other towns in later weeks. The rebels were operating 200 miles inside Angola.

In August 1985, the government launched drives against the rebel-held towns of Cazombo in the northeast and Mavinga in the southeast. Four motorized infantry brigades headed for Cazombo; five brigades moved against Mavinga. The offensive was supported by Soviet-made MIGs, helicopters, and fighter-bombers of the Angolan Air Force.

Savimbi knew that he lacked sufficient strength to retain both towns. His forces, therefore, abandoned Cazombo, which they had held for 22 months.

In mid-September, South Africa launched another invasion of Angola. The South Africans said they were in pursuit of SWAPO guerrillas again. The Angolan government, however, charged that the South Africans were actually fighting its troops involved in the drives against Savimbi. The government produced the body of a South African medical orderly killed near Cazombo. The South African Air Force was said to be providing air support for the rebels. On 7 October, Savimbi claimed full control of Mavinga and defeat of the government forces, who were now reportedly retreating under counter-attack and in disarray.

The Cuban forces have been successful in keeping the MPLA in power but have been unable to defeat the UNITA guerrillas. Without the support of Cuban troops and military advisers from the Soviet Union and East Germany, the Angolan government would not have been able to retain power. The total number of Cuban combat troops and technical and support personnel has reportedly reached as high as 36,000 at times in the past 10 years. In 1985, Castro stated that to date over 200,000 Cubans had served in Angola. During the Third Congress of the Cuban Communist Party, in February of 1986, several Cuban generals sporting Angolan combat decorations sat among the 1,790 delegates.