

Casualties in Angola have been relatively high in relation to the size of the Cuban population. In addition to combat losses, tropical diseases have also taken their toll, not only on the troops serving in Angola but also back in Cuba where previously unheard of diseases imported from Africa have caused problems in agriculture, animal husbandry, and in the general population (i.e., AIDS, dengue, conjunctivities or red eye, rare strains of VD, and African swine fever, to mention only a few).

Much of the heaviest fighting took place between 1975 and 1978, when the MPLA was able to consolidate its hold over the Angolan capital and most of the national territory with the support of Cuban troops. By March of 1977, the MPLA and Cuban forces had stabilized their military control enough for Fidel Castro to visit Angola (and several other African countries) and brag about the victory. But two months later, in May of 1977, a coup was attempted against Agostinho Neto by Nito Alves and Jose Van Dunem with the support of several army units. The bloody uprising was defeated, with Cuban troops playing an important role. Heavy fighting took place again in Cabinda Province in June of 1977 against FLEC guerrillas, who were routed. In July, about 4,000 more Cuban troops arrived to provide additional support for the MPLA.

Despite the additional Cuban troops, UNITA was able to launch a military offensive in December 1977 against the government. The next year, in April and June, Cuban-supported military offensives were carried out against UNITA, but the guerrilla units led by Savimbi had by then been able to consolidate their forces in tribal lands of people who supported UNITA.

The relationship of the Cuban Revolutionary Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias, FAR*) with the MPLA began in the early 1960s. At that time, the FAR provided instructors to the MPLA, which was operating in Brazzaville, Congo.