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Angola

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by Sarah B. Taylor, MAIC

History

During the 13th century, Angola's first known residents migrated from west Africa. In 1575, imperialism found its way to this nation through Portuguese colonizers. After World War II, Angola became an important coffee supplier, and the colonial population grew to over 80,000. Consequently, clashes began between the Portuguese and the original inhabitants. The Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) and the Capitalist National Union for the Independence of Angola (UNITA) finally gained independence in 1975. Except for a brief period during 1991, UNITA has aggressively rebelled against the established government and both have used and continue to utilize landmines.



Landmines/UXO Overview

Angola is not known to have ever produced or exported any type of landmine, yet 76 different types from 22 different countries are littered throughout the country. Little information is known about the size or composition of either the government's or UNITA's stockpile. During 2001, the government reduced its use of landmines; however, the *Landmine Monitor Report* states that eyewitnesses saw the government lay landmines at night and then remove them in the morning hours. UNITA continues to use landmines throughout Angola and northern Namibia. As of late 2000, 2,610 minefields were counted, but the provinces located along the Namibian border were excluded due to the ongoing conflict.

Casualties

High casualty rates are found throughout Angola. In 2000, 840 landmine-related casualties were reported. Of these, 388 people were killed and 452 were injured by AP and anti-vehicle (AV) landmines and UXO. Children accounted for 65 percent of those either killed or injured, and 70 percent of the victims were civilians, while 50 percent were Internationally Displace Peoples (IDPs). Also, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies claims that one in every 344 inhabitants of Angola is a mine-related amputee. Additionally, Angola is a country with limited funds, where few resources are available for the disabled, and because of the ongoing conflict, it is even harder to find donors. Consequently, NGOs provide most of the assistance.

Demining

Angola's governmental mine action office, INAROOE, is responsible for coordinating the majority of the demining, including commercial deminers and NGOs. Thus far, 517 minefields have been cleared. In 2000, 1,335 AP mines, 51 AV mines and 75,017 UXO were destroyed. Between 2000 and 2001, INAROOE was in a severe crisis. Donors were unwilling to provide support for demining in a country that continues to lay landmines on a regular basis. In 2001, donors gave \$13 million (U.S.) to organizations for demining in Angola, and the government provided INAROOE with \$8 million. The \$8 million went to outstanding bills, and the organizations never actually used much of the \$13 million, except to pay to some ex-INAROOE employees.

Reality Check

In a country plagued by a 28-year internal conflict, politics are often placed over human rights. Accounts of imprisonment, torture and murder are common. Also, Angola is the second largest producer of oil in sub-Saharan Africa, yet it ranks 142 out of 162 countries in the United Nations Development Program's latest Human Development Index. The government does not provide data to the public concerning the uses of its large oil and diamond revenues. Because of the ongoing conflict and the continual use of landmines, INAROOE maintains its struggle to secure funding for its demining program. There is some hope for the future. Recently, UNITA leader Jonas Savimbi was assassinated, and since his death, the Angolan government and UNITA have signed a peace agreement ending the civil war and making UNITA a political party.

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