Angola in Transition:
The Cabinda Factor

by Shawn McCormick

In accordance with the Portuguese-mediated agreement signed by leaders of the governing Movimento Popular de Libertação de Angola (MPLA) and the União Nacional para a Independência Total de Angola (UNITA) in May 1991, the 16-year civil war that erupted in Angola as the country achieved independent statehood in 1975 has ended. Efforts to implement the second priority mandated in the agreement—national elections by late 1992—are being assisted by a range of international actors, including the United Nations, the United States, Russia, and Portugal. More than 12 parties are likely to participate in the elections (scheduled for September 29 and 30, 1992). The process of achieving a third key element of the agreement—demobilization of three-fourths of the two armies and integration of the remaining soldiers into a 50,000-strong national force—seems unlikely to conclude before elections are held.

Although media attention focuses on developments and major players in the capital city of Luanda, where UNITA has officially established a presence, analysts of the Angolan scene are according new attention to tiny Cabinda province (where an increasingly active separatist movement is escalating its pursuit of independence from Luanda) as “possibly Angola’s last and most important battlefield.”

The significance of Cabinda—a 2,807-square-mile enclave along the Atlantic Ocean separated from Angola’s other 17 contiguous provinces by a 25-mile strip of Zaire—lies in the fact that current offshore oil production, including that from the Takula and Malanga fields, totals more than 310,000 barrels per day (bpd). This is roughly two-thirds of Angola’s total daily production of 500,000 bpd. The country’s overall oil revenues provide an estimated 95 percent of the government’s present earnings, yet only 1 percent of that amount is redirected to Cabinda, whose oil resources are responsible for the majority of this income. The bulk of Angola’s 2.1 billion barrels of proven oil reserves lies in and off Cabinda. Initial geological reports on the unexplored deep-water areas off Cabinda’s coast estimate additional recoverable reserves of as much as 3 billion barrels. Aside from oil, Cabinda is abundant in hardwoods for timber export (including ebony, rosewood, and African sandalwood), phosphates in excess of 100 million tons, and palm oil.

Despite the enclave’s vast resource base, economic conditions are among
the worst in Angola, with few jobs available in the formal sector. A lasting legacy of Portuguese colonialism is the dearth of educated Cabindans. By 1968, there were only two lawyers, three doctors, and one accountant in Cabinda. The situation has improved somewhat since then, but literacy rates remain extremely low. Accurate figures are unavailable, but Cabinda's population is probably somewhere around 100,000. The last census (which was incomplete) took place in 1971 and came up with an estimate of 81,000.

**Historical Context: 1483 to 1880**

In the fifteenth century, what is now Cabinda lay within the boundaries of the kingdoms of Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo. When Portuguese explorer Diogo Cão arrived at the mouth of the Congo River in 1483, Portugal’s interest in the region was purely commercial. The focus soon shifted from an initial unsuccessful search for silver to the lucrative slave trade. At first, Portuguese "control" of the area north of Luanda up to Cabinda was limited. This region could be more accurately described as within Portugal’s sphere of influence rather than under its authority. There was strong competition from British, Dutch, and French traders who possessed higher-quality goods to barter for slaves. It was not until 1733 that Lisbon decided to solidify its hold over a portion of the Angolan coast from Luanda to the Congo River—an area that did not include Cabinda to the north. Cabinda was commonly referred to at the time as a series of villages along a natural bay 70 kilometers north of the Congo River.

Only 50 years later did Portugal attempt to assert its dominance over this area in order to guarantee a steady flow of revenues from what had become one of the largest slave-trading centers in West Africa. In 1783 the Portuguese constructed a fort in the port of Cabinda, which was destroyed the following year by French forces with assistance from the Ngoyo and Kakongo kingdoms. An agreement signed by Portugal, Britain, and France (the Convention of Madrid) in 1786 allowed each of these countries to engage in slave trading in the area north of the Congo River, including Cabinda, in exchange for Portuguese domination south of the river.

Three African families—all descended from early Ngoyo rulers—emerged at the end of the eighteenth century to dominate local trade in Cabinda: the Nkata Kolombos in Taife, the Nsambo in Porto Rico, and the Npunas (commonly known as Puna) in Simulambuco. They controlled the trading of local goods (food, fresh water, supplies) with European slave traders. Their virtual monopoly was challenged in the early nineteenth century, however, by Francisco Franque, the son of an African servant of a French trader; the trader had died during a stop in Cabinda and left his wealth to the elder Franque. Francisco Franque was sent by his father to be educated in Brazil and became a highly influential and wealthy participant in the slave trade. He eventually grew so powerful that the central government in Luanda authorized him to act on its behalf in Cabinda. In 1840, Franque assembled a small army and forced the Nsambo family out of Porto Rico.

In 1853, Manuel José Puna led a delegation of Cabindan chiefs to Luanda, requesting the extension of Portuguese central administration from Angola to include Cabinda. Although the effort initially failed to gain support, the Portuguese realized the importance of maintaining ties to Puna and accepted his request to educate his two sons in Coimbra, Portugal. In 1871, King Luís I and Queen Maria Pia of Portugal not only agreed to receive Puna and preside over his baptism, but bestowed upon him the title of "Baron of Cabinda" and provided him with an annual pension.

When the slave trade collapsed in 1867 due to international pressure and lack of profit, the Cabindan economy feebly struggled to shift toward the far less profitable export of palm oil and kernels, and general trade. This coincided with an increased interest in the region on the part of various European merchants and whalers.

**The Scramble for Africa**

It was not until the nations of Europe decided in the 1880s to delineate specific boundaries between their African possessions that Cabinda became a formal part of Portugal’s overseas empire. The status of the territory constituting present-day Cabinda was similar to that of many disputed regions of Africa where a particular European power enjoyed a considerable degree of control but did not possess the region through either force or treaty. In the period preceding the 1884-1885 Conference of Berlin, various European powers scrambled to document their territorial claims by signing treaties with local chiefs across the continent in exchange for trade guarantees and protection.

In an effort to form a land bridge linking Angola with Mozambique, Portugal undertook to occupy land where it had not previously maintained a significant presence—along the Congo River, and eastward toward

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Present-day Cabinda lies within the boundaries of the former kingdoms of Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo, all three of which were in existence when the first Portuguese traders arrived in the late fifteenth century. These ethnic groups were linguistically and culturally related to the Kongo kingdom (which extended from areas of what is now southern Gabon to northern Angola). At one time Kongo vassals, the three kingdoms had become nominally independent by the end of the sixteenth century. Three subethnic groups—the Kakongo, Vili, and Woyo—reside along the coastal region; these had relatively extensive contact with the Portuguese. Another three—the Linge, Sundi, and Yombe—dominate the Mayombe interior; they dealt more with the French and Belgians in what are now Congo and Zaire.

The Loango were primarily a trading people who brought slaves, ivory, tobacco, and a myriad of other goods from as far away as Stanley Pool (near present-day Kinshasa) and São Salvador in northern Angola (renamed Uige). The seat of the Loango kingdom was in the Kwilu Nyari basin but it extended to the coastal regions of present-day Cabinda and northward to Gabon. Just south of the Loango kingdom were the smaller chiefdoms of the Kakongo and Ngoyo.

According to local tradition, the Loango, Kakongo, and Ngoyo shared a common ancient ancestress named Ngununu. This legend reflects the sense of common lineage and history that exists among the major ethnic groups in the Cabinda region.

The central governments of the Kakongo and Ngoyo kingdoms began to lose their authority in the 1840s. This trend accelerated in the 1860s, when the ending of the international slave trade deprived Cabindans of their primary source of income. The Loango kingdom followed suit in the 1880s, as power shifted from central authorities to local districts. —S.M.

Nyasaland (Malawi) and Rhodesia (Zambia and Zimbabwe). Interestingly, formal control over most of Angola’s present-day 17 contiguous provinces had not been established until the mid-nineteenth century. The southern coastal city of Moçâmbedes (Namibe), for example, was founded in 1840, more than 350 years after the first Portuguese arrived in Angola.

In 1883, Portugal significantly increased its presence north of the Congo River in the face of French and Belgian competition. Manuel José Puna and Chico Franque (a nephew of Francisco Franque, who died in 1875) had jointly invited the Portuguese to send warships to Cabinda to prevent other European militaries from consolidating relations with those Cabindans who were interested in maintaining their own business ties. Navy Captain Brito Capelo was tasked with negotiating treaties with local chiefs in various coastal cities. Although Portugal claimed significant territorial rights in the region based on these treaties, the Conference of Berlin granted Belgium control of a 25-mile access strip on the north side of the Congo River, Portugal the enclave of Cabinda, and France the area further north, including Pointe-Noire.

The Treaty of Simulambuco

Among the treaties concluded by the Portuguese at this time was one that has become the basis for some Cabindans’ claim that the enclave deserves independence. Signed in both Portuguese and the local dialect following several weeks of often difficult negotiations, the Simulambuco Treaty of 1885 formally linked Cabinda to the Portuguese empire. Puna and Franque demanded from the Portuguese negotiator, Captain Capelo, a lifelong pension not only for themselves, but for two additional members of the Franque family. Following this lead, elders of the Nkata Kolombo family reluctantly agreed to a separate treaty with Portugal later that year.

The Simulambuco Treaty was an effort by the central government in Lisbon to consolidate its control over the region in the Angolan context. In 1887 Cabinda was made the capital of the Congo District of Angola, which stretched from Cabinda to just north of Luanda itself. For logistical reasons, this arrangement was altered in 1917 when the capital of the region was moved to Maquela do Zombo (in present-day Uige province). Cabinda was subsequently categorized in seven different ways through 1946, including association with the Congo District, the Luanda District, and status as a district in its own right with a governor linked to the governor-general of Angola. In 1946, the latter arrangement was declared permanent.

The integration of Cabinda into the Portuguese empire was clearly different from the original links set with Angola south of the Congo River. The “special” relationship with Portugal, however, has been overemphasized by various African and Portuguese personalities in Cabinda throughout the years. Evidence frequently mentioned is the inscription on a monument constructed in 1954 at Simulambuco during a visit by Portuguese Prime Minister António Salazar commemorating the integration of “the territory of Cabinda into the Portuguese nation.” The annual festivities held to mark the signing of the treaty are also cited as examples of why the Portuguese relationship with Cabinda is distinct from that with Angola.

FLEC’s Origins and Evolution

The origins of the Cabindan independence movement are vague at best. The first known group, the Associação dos Indígenas do Enclave de Cabinda (AIEC), was formed in 1956 with the stated aim of separating from Angola in order to form a union with either the French or Belgian Congo (now respectively Congo and Zaire). AIEC based its claim for independence from Angola on the Treaty of Simulambuco.

The Associação dos Ressortissants do Enclave de Cabinda (AREC), founded in 1959 by Luís Ranque Franque (a descendant of Francisco Franque) as a humanitarian organization, soon converted itself into an overt political group known as the Movimento de
the Alliance du Mayombe (ALLIAMA). A third smaller
differences and formed the Frente de
Enclave de Cabinda (FLEC) with Franque as president.
A number of smaller Cabindan nationalist groups sprang up but
quickly dissipated, including the União Social dos
Mayombes de Luali (USML) and the Comunidade
Cabindense (COMCABI).

The beginning of Angola's armed independence
struggle in February 1961 put new pressure on the
various Cabindan movements. Leadership disputes
within MLEC caused the group to split. In December
1961, Henriques Tiago Nzita broke away to form the
Comité de Acção da União Nacional de Cabinda
(CAUNC), which sought support from
Congo-Léopoldville (now Zaire). In August 1962 Nzita
stated that in terms of culture, history, and language,
Cabinda was an integral part of Congo-Léopoldville.
António Eduardo Sozinho Zau also left MLEC to create the
Alliance du Mayombe (ALLIAMA). A third smaller
group attempted to enlist the support of senior MPLA
leader Alexander Taty. At a conference in Pointe-Noire,
Congo on August 4, 1963, the groups reconciled their
differences and formed the Frente de Libertação do
Enclave de Cabinda (FLEC) with Franque as president.
The new group did not begin armed attacks inside
Cabinda until the following year.

Citing the Treaty of Simulambuco, FLEC sought a
direct dialogue with Portugal on independence for the
enclave on the grounds that Cabinda was distinct from the
announcing the establishment of a government in exile in
Tshela (Zaire) with Pedro Simba Macosso as prime
minister. In a further effort to establish FLEC's
"revolutionary" and "governmental" credentials, Nzita
was put in charge of the Comité Revolucionário
Cabinuais (CRC) in Pointe-Noire.

Zaire's President Mobutu Sese Seko and the central
government in neighboring Congo reportedly began
aiding various FLEC factions in the late 1960s even
though FLEC had little impact and was conducting few
military attacks. A range of sources indicate that the goal
of both Zaire and Congo was the eventual annexation of
Cabinda, where Gulf Oil (operating as Cabinda Gulf Oil
Company [CABGOC]) began production in 1967.

The April 25, 1974 coup in Lisbon by the Armed
Forces Movement set in motion the decolonization of
Portugal's overseas territories. In scheduling Angola's
independence for November 11, 1975, the new
government in Lisbon implicitly ignored FLEC's call for
independence by recognizing only the MPLA, UNITA,
and Holden Roberto's Frente Nacional de Libertação de
Angola (FNLA) as legal parties. As the MPLA
consolidated its control in the power struggle that
accompanied independence, it too ignored FLEC's
demands.

**Cabinda Under the MPLA**

FLEC was marginalized after independence by its own
internal breakup and the introduction into Cabinda of
2,000 Cuban troops plus significant numbers of
government soldiers. In late 1976, the government of
Congo ended its tacit support for FLEC. Mobutu followed
suit in 1978 following a rapprochement with the Angolan
government. A declaration of independence for Cabinda by
Nzita's faction, the CRC, on May 1, 1977, received little
outside attention. Franque followed Nzita's lead on October
16, declaring the "Independent State of Liberated Areas of
Cabinda." FLEC then further splintered into five separate
groups, including the Comando Militar de Libertação de
Cabinda (CMLC) under Colonel Luemba Tubi and Major
Luís Fernandes.

Gulf Oil's Exploration and Production President Melvin J.
Hill told a congressional subcommittee in September 1980
that Cabindan "dissident movements" had disrupted the
company's operations in the enclave: "Gulf's only onshore
pipeline has been blown up on four occasions, at a
different location each time, most recently in October 1979.
On each occasion the safety valve on the oil well closed, fire
damage from spilled oil was minimal, and the damage was
repaired within a matter of days."

During the early 1980s, FLEC factions continued to
conduct occasional small-scale attacks from Zaire against
government forces, but with decreasing frequency and
potency. Factions of FLEC contend that a cease-fire was
signed between the government and FLEC in 1985, but
there is no record of such an accord.

There was little military activity in Cabinda from 1985
to mid-1989. The day after the abortive Gbadolite peace
effort in June 1989 (see "Angola: The Road to Peace" by
Shawn McCormick, CSIS Africa Notes no. 125, June
1991), a FLEC faction announced an intensification of
the "national liberation struggle until Cabinda becomes
independent." A statement issued in Lisbon called for a
referendum on self-determination to be monitored by the

On April 25, 1990, a FLEC faction under Nzita tried
to raise its profile by kidnapping four French and four
Congolese employees of Elf Aquitaine. Following
discussions with senior French military officials and the
intervention of Mobutu, the hostages were set free. On
September 20, two Portuguese employees of the
Portuguese firm Mota e Companhia Limitada were
abducted; they were released in November. A
representative of Nzita told reporters in Kinshasa that
"We want the issue of the independence of Cabinda to be
negotiated in Lisbon by the Portuguese government—the
former colonial power—and members of our movement."

Not to be outdone, another FLEC faction kidnapped an
American civilian helicopter mechanic in mid-October.
He too was released, but only after weeks of negotiations.

FLEC factions undertook a series of small-scale military
attacks against government forces during 1991. The
most significant development during that year was a strike by the 1,000 Cabindan employees of Chevron (which purchased Gulf Oil in 1984) between July 15 and August 3. Although negotiations dealt with working conditions and pay, most of the Cabindan collective bargaining effort appeared to be supported by FLEC elements. This may be indicative of considerable backing for FLEC's goals among Chevron's Cabindan work force.

In November 1991, the government moved an additional 15,000 troops into the enclave and imposed a dusk-to-dawn curfew after Nzita's faction reportedly attacked the residence of the provincial governor. UNITA Minister of Information Jorge Valentin charged that the government was contravening the spirit of the May 1991 peace agreement by introducing the additional forces. President José Eduardo dos Santos later took the position that the government had acted to counter a possible cross-border invasion.

During late December and mid-January 1992, clashes between Nzita's forces and government troops resulted in a significant number of casualties. The government said its troops would observe a "pause in the fighting" and had no orders to attack FLEC. In March and April, four vehicles belonging to Chevron were burned by Nzita's fighters, but no injuries were reported. On April 21, 1992, 24 people were wounded during a grenade attack on a commercial market in Cabinda by unidentified FLEC elements. In another April incident, eight government soldiers were killed by FLEC and six trucks were destroyed.

During Pope John Paul II's visit to Angola in early June 1992, the pontiff received a muted response to his calls for cooperation between Cabinda and Angola. Speaking to an estimated 10,000 people gathered at the Cabinda airport for a mass, the Pope said: "Your great country, Angola, needs the work and the solidarity of all for its reconstruction. . . . I hope that all will help to resolve the problems of Cabinda without violence, but with peace and dialogue, respecting the people and their concerns, but also keeping in sight the needs of the entire country."

The government began registering voters in Cabinda for the September elections on June 11. Seven registration teams of seven people each will attempt to document all eligible voters in the coming months so they can participate in the elections. The government expects to register 84,000 voters in Cabinda. None of the FLEC factions will have candidates in either the presidential or parliamentary elections because a party must have at least 100 registered supporters in at least 10 provinces.

The Components of FLEC, 1992

FLEC has long been plagued by two significant problems: an inability to attract broad popular support and fractionalization. On the other hand, it is noteworthy that no matter what mutations FLEC and its various factions have undergone throughout the years, the theme of independence for the enclave has endured as a priority. Today there are two armed and three principal political factions of FLEC as well as a number of smaller groups that also claim to represent the people of Cabinda:

1. FLEC/FAC. FLEC/Forças Armadas Cabindesas is the largest of the FLEC factions. It is led from Paris by veteran Cabindan nationalist Henriques Tiago Nzita, who was an officer in the Portuguese colonial army and a founding member of FLEC. Although FLEC/FAC claims to have 5,400 troops inside Cabinda, intelligence sources estimate the number at roughly 600. The military wing is under the direct command of General Victor Jorge Gomes, who has said that he is ready to fight "up to the last sacrifice" for the "total independence of the former Portuguese protectorate."

Pedro Puna, cousin of former UNITA Secretary General Miguel N'Zau Puna, is FLEC/FAC's overseas representative in Portugal. Both men are descendants of Manuel José Puna. Various sources have corroborated his claim that not only did Zaire's President Mobutu supply Nzita's faction with weapons in 1975, but France and Belgium were its military benefactors from 1978 to 1979. During a two-hour interview with this writer in April 1992, Puna said that the military shipments sent by Paris and Brussels (which he stated have not been used to date) consisted mainly of antitank weapons and rocket launchers, and that Nzita continues to "get us aid and arms" from various European countries. When pushed as to which countries are currently providing support to FLEC/FAC, his reply was that "only God and Nzita know."
Puna added that FLEC/FAC has "great feelings" for the United States and its people, but will use "all means necessary" against U.S. interests to achieve its goal of independence: "In all frankness, we will destroy Chevron to help our people. This is not a threat. We are at war. We understand the position of the United States, but they must understand ours. We want to find a way to not make our people into bandits." This faction claims to control six areas of Cabinda: Massabi, Sanga Mongo, Ndindi, Nambemba, Lucula, and Mayombe.

2. FLEC/Renovada. FLEC/Renovada (formerly known as FLEC/PM) is headed by Colonel Tiburcio Zinga Luemba. Tiburcio broke away from FLEC/FAC because of "differences" with Nzita and General Gomes. Sources indicate that the poorly equipped and trained forces under Tiburcio's command number under 150. Although FLEC/Renovada is smaller in size than FLEC/FAC, it has undertaken a number of daring small-scale attacks against the government and was responsible for the October 1990 kidnapping of Brent Swan, an American helicopter mechanic who was working under contract for Chevron.

FLEC/Renovada has claimed at various times to be supported by an assortment of "right-wing" groups in the United States, South Africa, and Japan. There are also reports that some of its fighters have been trained in South Korea at camps established by the World Anti-Communist League (WACL).

3. FLEC/CSC. FLEC/Conselho Supremo de Coordenação is an umbrella political organization recently established under the leadership of Francisco de Assis Peso Bambi to bring all of the disparate FLEC factions under one structure. FLEC/CSC is known to include representatives of FLEC/Renovada, UNALEC (see below), and many Cabindan exiles; it is noteworthy, however, that no one from FLEC/FAC attended the inaugural meeting on November 11-12, 1991, despite the fact that Nzita is cited as a member of FLEC/CSC's Presidential College. This organization claims to have 4,000 FANC (Forças Armadas Nacional de Cabinda) soldiers under its command led by General Gomes (FLEC/FAC), Colonel Tiburcio (FLEC/Renovada), and a Señor Kissila.

Bambi presented a legal claim for Cabinda independence to the president of the Portuguese National Assembly on May 25, 1992, citing a number of Portuguese statutes and treaties with Cabinda. Bambi's principal argument is that the decisions taken by various Portuguese governments to grant independence to the overseas territories (in 1974 and 1975 following the April 25, 1974 coup) were a violation of Portugal's 1933 constitution, which stated that no portion of the Portuguese territory, including overseas possessions, could secede. During a conversation with this writer in Lisbon in April 1992 and subsequent telephone conversations in June, Bambi contended that Lisbon has a historical responsibility to assist in FLEC/CSC's nonviolent attempt to gain independence for the "former Portuguese protectorate."

FLEC/CSC is a useful vehicle for the various FLEC leaders and elements at the present time, but there is a growing consensus among analysts of the Angolan scene that it holds little promise of being the mechanism to unify FLEC. It is not a cohesive organization. Although the FLEC/CSC leadership claims that it controls all FLEC soldiers in Cabinda (including those in FLEC/FAC), Pedro Puna said that he, Nzita, and Gomes consider FLEC/CSC to be useless without their participation and they have no intention of becoming members.

4. UNALEC. The União Nacional de Libertação do Enclave de Cabinda was founded in 1985 by Professor Afonso Massanga, a Cabindan, to "review the political and historical claims of the Cabindan people." During this writer's hour-long conversation with Massanga in Lisbon in April 1992, he said that the principal goal of UNALEC was to "bring Cabindans into a negotiating process with the Angolan government in order to find a peaceful solution." When asked what differentiated his organization from the others, Massanga said that "UNALEC believes in diplomacy whereas the other factions believe in fighting for independence." He summarized his goals for Cabinda as independence, a multiparty political system, and strong ties with the West, including the United States as the country's "protector."

He was unable, however, to identify a specific segment of the population that supported him.

5. UNLC. Headed by Domingos Jimbe, the União Nacional de Libertação de Cabinda has been working to form an alliance with FLEC/Renovada since 1989. Jimbe claimed success on April 10, 1990, when the two organizations issued a communiqué in Brazzaville saying they had decided to "harmonize their forces and work for a lasting peace." The announcement came after four joint sessions held in the "liberated zones" of Cabinda between March 8 and 29, 1990. Since these 1990 meetings, UNLC is reported to have held discussions with representatives of the Angolan government in various overseas locations.

6. Other small FLEC factions (including FLEC/Lubota, headed by Francisco Xavier Lubota, and the Cabindan Communist Committee) occasionally issue statements and claim responsibility for armed attacks, but there is little evidence of their role in such operations.

Recent MPLA Peace Initiatives

Shortly after the signing of the May 1991 agreement in Portugal, Angolan President dos Santos organized a select committee of senior MPLA representatives to begin establishing secret contacts with each of the FLEC factions. This committee is led by MPLA Politburo Member Maria Mambo de Café, a Cabindan by birth and currently assigned to the enclave. Other members of the committee include Minister of Defense Pedro Maria Tonha "Pedalê" (also a Cabindan), National Security Adviser General José Maria, and Vice Minister of Foreign Relations Venancio de Moura. The stature of these individuals is indicative of the priority the government decided to give to finding a solution to the Cabinda issue.

Prior to the visit of President dos Santos to the United States in September 1991, General Maria secretly
traveled to Canada, where he met with Luis Ranque Franque, who is living in exile. The purpose of this trek was to invite Franque to meet with dos Santos during the president's stay in New York. Franque agreed and the meeting took place out of public view. In November 1991, a small MPLA delegation that included de Café and General Maria traveled to Paris for a difficult and important meeting with FLEC/FAC's Nzita. Sources familiar with the meeting say that Nzita agreed to meet with dos Santos only "as an African man, not as president of Angola." Nzita was invited to Luanda, but he declined and insisted on meeting in "a third country." No meeting between the two leaders has yet taken place.

The government committee's various contacts with FLEC factions in early 1992 bore fruit on April 18 when dos Santos received UNLC leader Jimbe in Luanda. A government communique released after the meeting stated that "UNLC is fighting for a peaceful solution of Cabinda and is regarded as one of the main political forces in the region." Other FLEC factions have labeled Jimbe a "traitor" for meeting with dos Santos.

In discussions with this writer in late May 1992, de Café and General Maria separately stated that the central problem in trying to deal with FLEC was the inability of the various factions to create a common front with which the government could negotiate. There was hope on the part of the government that FLEC/CSC could play this role, but FLEC/FAC's apparent refusal to align itself with the umbrella organization has cast serious doubts on prospects for establishing a consolidated FLEC front.

On June 18, 1992, President dos Santos traveled to Libreville, Gabon, to discuss the Cabinda issue with President Omar Bongo. He was accompanied by Minister of External Relations Pedro de Castro dos Santos Van-Dúnem "Loy," de Café, Maria, and de Moura. Dos Santos told reporters that after talking to Bongo, he met with Alfredo Raul, an Angolan who lives in Congo and is independently attempting to organize a conference on Cabinda.

Following this meeting, Luis Ranque Franque returned to Luanda for the first time since independence and met with President dos Santos. Although no details of the June 30 meeting were disclosed, the government announced that an "agreement in principle" between the two sides was reached. Franque was reportedly accompanied by Domingos Jimbe.

Where the Key Actors Stand:

1. The Present (MPLA) Government. The Angolan government has consistently affirmed its desire to find a peaceful solution to the situation in Cabinda that would result in greater autonomy, not independence. It says it is prepared to discuss autonomy and a larger share of oil revenues for the enclave. Reliable sources indicate that the MPLA regime would be willing to increase repatriated oil funds from the present level of approximately 1 percent to 10 percent. Dos Santos takes the position that Angola is one country "from Cabinda to Cunene" and cites the 1963 Organization of African Unity charter's commitment to the principle of respect for former colonial boundaries.

2. UNITA. Dr. Savimbi has consistently held to the position that UNITA favors autonomy for Cabinda but not independence. Many of his statements on this subject are similar to those of the MPLA. During the course of UNITA's 16-year war with the MPLA, Savimbi claimed to have the support of the Cabindan people because the grandson of Manuel José Puna, who had signed the Treaty of Simulambuco, was a senior member of his organization. The departure from UNITA in March 1992 of former Secretary General Miguel N'Zau Puna and the only other senior Cabindan, Secretary for Foreign Affairs Tony da Costa Fernandes, has cast doubt on that claim.

3. The Major FLEC Factions. Each of the major FLEC factions—FLEC/FAC, FLEC/Renovada, FLEC/CSC, UNALEC, and UNLC—takes the position that independence for the enclave is the only acceptable solution. Although some of the factions are pursuing a military course and others a political route, and despite their conflicting claims to be the true representatives of the Cabindan people, the ultimate goal has not changed since the formation of FLEC in 1963.

4. N'Zau Puna and Fernandes. Contrary to UNITA's initial intention, N'Zau Puna and Fernandes did not join the Cabindan independence struggle after leaving Savimbi's organization. On the contrary, they say that one of their principal missions will be to convince the people of Cabinda to accept autonomy and join with UNITA in a "post-Savimbi era" to lead Angola.

During my more than five hours of discussions with Puna and Fernandes in Lisbon in April 1992 and a subsequent conversation in Washington in May, they said that one of the principal reasons they left UNITA was because Savimbi had told them (after the signature of the May 1991 agreement) that he no longer supported autonomy for Cabinda.

It is their stated position that (1) the key to whether the people of Cabinda will demand independence or accept autonomy lies in effective leadership and (2) despite the small-scale activity of various armed factions of FLEC and the formation of other political groups, Cabindans do not look to FLEC for leadership.

Prospects for a United FLEC

The prospect for a unified FLEC that could rally the support of the Cabindan people behind its cause is limited. Although a case can be made that unification would be possible if Nzita or Franque could overcome their historical differences with various individuals to assume leadership, it was under their direction in earlier years that FLEC splintered.

The N'Zau Puna and Fernandes question complicates this issue. If they were to undertake to bring FLEC's factions together, their agenda would not be independence but greater autonomy for the enclave within the Angolan nation. In assessing the ability of these two men to unify Cabinda, one must keep in mind...
that neither has been resident in the province for the last 25 years, they lack an organizational base and means of communication with their fellow Cabindans, and their support is untested and uncertain beyond family ties.

Military attacks by FLEC/FAC and FLEC/Renovada increased in March 1992 when N'Zau Puna and Fernandes withdrew from UNITA. The FLEC factions appear worried that these two men—one the grandson of the traditional chief who signed the Treaty of Simulambuco and the other the nephew of the (Catholic) Archbishop of Cabinda—could pose a direct challenge to Simulambuco and the other faction. They are not sure whether the traditional chief is enough of a figurehead to maintain allegiance of the Cabindan people.

From the perspective of the FLEC factions, the return of N'Zau Puna and Fernandes, as well as recent initiatives by the MPLA government to negotiate with all FLEC factions, raise the possibility that the "more important" groupings (notably FLEC/FAC and FLEC/Renovada) could be overshadowed in the months ahead by smaller and "less significant" ones such as UNLC or the effort being undertaken by Alfredo Raul. In the face of these new variables, the military factions are likely to continue or even escalate their attacks unless and until an effective dialogue is established.

Potential Outside Actors
Zaire and Congo have supported various FLEC factions in the past and until last year's unrest in Kinshasa and Brazzaville both were (at a minimum) giving FLEC tacit permission to operate from their territories. Among the historical and cultural factors behind this support may be the fact that Cabindans are ethnically related to both Zairians and Congolese. Given the uncertain political future of Zaire and Congo, however, it is unlikely that FLEC can count on significant support from these neighboring states in the near term.

The interests of the French government and Elf Aquitaine in Cabinda are blurred at best. Elf has a reputation for "hedging its bets" in present or prospective regions of oil production. Given the fact that approximately two-thirds of Angola's current oil production comes from Cabinda, it could be in Elf's interest to cultivate a "special relationship" with elements in FLEC. Informed sources indicate that the French government may be providing FLEC/FAC with some level of assistance, and Pedro Puna made reference in his April 1992 interview to support from France in 1978-1979. Senior Angolan government officials and Western intelligence sources are highly suspicious of France's role in Cabinda and allude to collusion on the part of the French government and Elf with elements in Congo and Zaire to support the separatist aims of FLEC. The Angolan government is closely examining all such reports.

In Sum
Cabindan nationalist sentiment surged with the outbreak of the armed struggle against Portugal in 1961, again with the April 1974 Lisbon coup which resulted in independence for the overseas territories, and following the signing of the MPLA-UNITA peace agreement in May 1991. For economic reasons (the chance to keep the revenues generated by the enclave's oil), an overwhelming majority of the population of Cabinda might be tempted to favor independence if such a proposal were ever put to a vote. Given the potential utility of those same oil revenues in financing the rebuilding of Angola as a whole, however, no central government in Luanda, now or in the foreseeable future, can be expected to opt for independence.

Whatever government emerges victorious from the September 1992 electoral process will have at its disposal a newly organized 50,000-strong military. FLEC will be no more serious a threat to the next Angolan government than it was to the Portuguese prior to independence. Indeed, continued military actions on the part of FLEC factions could be more dangerous to FLEC itself than anyone else, because the attacks could cause the relatively moderate elements of the new government who call for negotiations to be overshadowed by those supporting the total elimination of FLEC. Many of FLEC's few hundred poorly armed and trained fighters would be killed in such an operation; others would flee into Zaire and Congo. But if an escalation of guerrilla activity does not occur, an effort by Luanda to co-opt significant FLEC elements through the extension of greater autonomy is a real possibility.