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Mandela praises improved ties with Angola



Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos explains a traditional Angolan dance to President Nelson Mandela
President Nelson Mandela has ended a state visit to Angola during which he thanked the government for what he called its unwavering support in the struggle against apartheid.

Mr Mandela said relations with Angola had "improved a hundred times" because of his visit.

He pledged support for the Angolan ruling party, the MPLA, in the final stages of the country's peace process.

Mr Mandela also called on a delegation of South African businessmen, which has accompanied him, to invest in the reconstruction of Angola.

Prior to his departure, President Mandela laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier to honour all Angolans and South Africans who died in Angola in the fight against apartheid.

Angolan President Jose dos Santos, accepted an invitation to visit Pretoria before the end of this year.

A BBC correspondent in Luanda says Mr Mandela took pains to emphasise his gratitude because the Angolans resented the fact that it took him four years to make his first official visit.

She says the atmosphere between Nelson Mandela and his Angolan hosts seemed to improve considerably during his 24-four hour stay in Luanda.

Prior to President Mandela's arrival, the Angolan authorities were suspicious of his relationship with the former rebel movement, Unita.

The Angolan government made enormous sacrifices to support the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

For two decades it allowed the African National Congress to maintain its four largest military bases inside Angola, as a result of which the country was invaded and devastated by the South African armed forces.