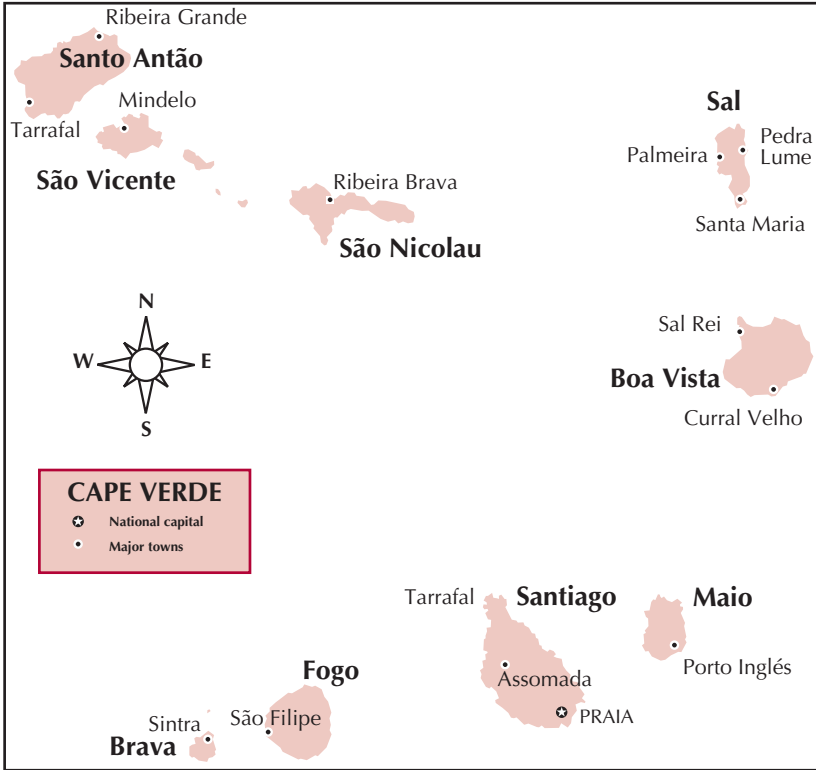


**PART II**



## CAPE VERDE

### OVERVIEW

Cape Verde, a string of small islands in the Atlantic Ocean, conducted its armed struggle for independence from Portugal mainly on the mainland of what is today Guinea-Bissau. Thus, the influx of small arms into the country was not as significant a problem as in many other liberation wars. Cape Verde's geographical isolation has also shielded the tiny island state from subregional conflicts that have spilled over into countries sharing porous borders with war-ravaged neighbours. Compared with the problems of rising poverty,<sup>1</sup> drug abuse, and child prostitution,<sup>2</sup> small arms trafficking is not a significant issue in the country—although recent reports suggest that armed robbery is on the rise.<sup>3</sup> Because the government of Cape Verde does not believe it has a small arms problem, it has opted to forgo the establishment of a national commission,<sup>4</sup> but it has a parallel structure that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) recognizes.<sup>5</sup>

### OUTLOOK

Cape Verde has also recently experienced a rise in armed violence and social ills—despite the fact that since 1992 it has been home to a functioning multiparty democracy, and the military stays well out of the political fray. Its reputation as a critical transshipment point for drugs—cocaine, heroin, and cannabis—smuggled from Latin America to West Africa and Europe<sup>6</sup> raises concerns that existing infrastructures could support gun trafficking should the demand for it arise. Indeed, both arms and drug smugglers tend to rely on the same well-worn smuggling routes.<sup>7</sup>

## PART II

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ECOWAS Economic Community  
of West African States

## ENDNOTES

- 1 IRIN (2003).
- 2 IRIN (1999).
- 3 Written correspondence with Mohamed Lamine Coulibaly, Regional Conflict Resolution Adviser, Oxfam GB, 11 January 2005. This situation is partly due to the island's position as West Africa's only direct air connection with South America via Brazil, a drug exporting country that also hosts many Cape Verde nationals (Reeve, 2004).
- 4 Written correspondence with Carlos Reis, Advisor to the Minister of Defence of Cape Verde, 1 April 2005.
- 5 Bah (2004, p. 37).
- 6 Reeve (2004).
- 7 Some arms have allegedly been trafficked to the Casamance region of Senegal. See Ebo (2003, p. 33).

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