

# **Human Security in the Favela:**

## **The impacts of SALW proliferation and the Drug Trade in**

### **Rio de Janeiro**

*Abstract:*

The urban shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro are beds of insecurity that prohibit development within their borders. The federal government of Brazil has officially disclosed it does not hold sovereignty over these shantytowns, or favelas. The proximate causes of favela community failure, small arms proliferation and the drug trade, must be addressed before the root causes of favela failure, poverty, education, and economic opportunity, can be reached. The security sector structure exacerbates these proximate causes. The favelas of Rio de Janeiro present an excellent case study for security and development policy.

This report will discuss the history and social conditions of the favelas. It provides a critique of policies used to address violence in the favelas. It offers policy suggestions, including community policing and international cooperation. The report concludes the Brazilian security sector needs progressive restructuring; policies to address favela community reintegration must be long-term; international interdiction efforts should be used to dismantle the local drug trade in Rio de Janeiro; and, local NGOs should receive more international funding for their favela community development efforts. Finally, this report offers other avenues for investigation, including Brazilian security sector transformation, small arms trafficking in Paraguay, and transnational organized crime in South America.

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*"Human security in its broadest sense, embraces far more than the absence of violent conflict. It encompasses human rights, good governance, access to education and health care and ensuring that each individual has opportunities and choices to fulfill his or her own potential. Every step in this direction is also a step towards reducing poverty, achieving economic growth and preventing conflict. Freedom from want, freedom from fear and the freedom of future generations to inherit a healthy natural environment – these are the interrelated building blocks of human – and therefore national security."*

*"The proliferation of small arms, and munitions and explosives has also aggravated the violence associated with terrorism and organized crime. Even in societies not beset by civil war, the easy availability of small arms has in many cases contributed to violence and political instability. These, in turn, have damaged development prospects and imperiled human security in every way."*

*- Kofi Annan, UN Secretary-General*

### **Introduction:**

The shantytowns of Rio de Janeiro are beds of insecurity that prohibit development within their borders. These urban slums, or favelas, present a number of security challenges that political actors must face before they address social problems perpetuated by the drug trade, or implement much needed development programs. Insecurity and its proximate causes prohibit the development programs needed to address root causes of the social problems allowed to thrive in the favelas.

Three drug gangs control over half of the 800 favelas in Rio de Janeiro. Some 500,000 Brazilians live under a feudal system where one man is king of the hill. He holds an allegiance to his criminal organization, himself, and his community, where he is judge, jury and executioner. Of these 500,000 Brazilians, some 10,000 defend their turf from police and rival gang members with war-grade weaponry. Thousands others sell

marijuana and cocaine into the second largest cocaine consumer market in the world. You will not find crack, heroin, ecstasy or other drugs. Criminal elements strictly control the drug trade in Rio de Janeiro. The Brazilian has a difficult situation to remedy, and admits as much.<sup>1</sup>

To perpetuate control over the hundreds of mini-states in Rio de Janeiro, the feudal lords must control the two principle resources: guns and drugs. They buy guns from organized crime gangs in Paraguay. Similar elements in Colombia provide a constant supply of cocaine. Transnational organized crime plays a significant role in the escalating violence in Rio de Janeiro. The implications of favela gangs such as the Comando Vermelho building professional relationships with revolutionary groups such as the FARC to secure a pipeline of cocaine supply are beyond the scope of this report. Nevertheless, such a relationship has many implications for regional security.

What has perhaps as much if not more significance is the pipeline of small arms sales from Paraguay to Brazil. Brazil currently ranks tenth amongst world arms suppliers, seventh in deliveries to developing nations, and grossed over \$200 million in arms sales last year.<sup>2</sup> Many of these arms, legitimately sold to Paraguay, return to Brazilian cities via illegitimate routes. Rio de Janeiro state authorities have a stockpile of some 42,972 small

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Wawro, "Letter from South America," *Naval War College Review*, 55, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 115.

<sup>2</sup> Richard F. Grimmett, "Conventional Arms Transfers to Developing Nations: 1995-2002," Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, (September, 2003), 65.

arms and light weapons, many of which contributed to the 87,172 deaths caused by firearms between 1991 and May of 2003.<sup>3</sup>

Within this context the situation has reached a level where the nation state has failed to provide security for its citizenry. An antiquated security sector exacerbates the problem because military and civil police engage drug gangs in urban warfare, where favela communities are battlegrounds. After years of cyclical disruption of a normal life, favela community residents have come to distrust the very men and women sworn to protect them and uphold the social contract between citizen and state. The degradation and current situation of the favelas in Rio de Janeiro presents an excellent case of how development cannot occur without security.

How did favela communities arrive in such a condition? How does SALW proliferation threaten human security and retard development in favela communities? Why is the current security system not working? What might be cohesive policy to rescue favela communities from their marginalized position?

To address these questions, this report will document the history of the oldest and most powerful criminal organization in Rio de Janeiro; will describe the current social conditions within favela communities; will discuss human security within the context of security and development norms; will conduct a critical review of the root and proximate causes that threaten human security in the favela communities of Rio de Janeiro; will critique current policy used by the municipality and state of Rio de Janeiro and its

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<sup>3</sup> Pablo Dreyfus, interview with author, July 15, 2003.

Secretary of Security to address favela community failure; and will conclude by offering five policy recommendations to improve human security in Rio de Janeiro. Areas of further study will be discussed in the conclusion.

## **PART I**

### **The Commando Vermelho:**

The Red Command, known as “Commando Vermelho” in Portuguese, is the oldest, most organized, and arguably the most powerful drug gang in Brazil. The Commando Vermelho (CV) is an organization comprised of a network of lower-class Brazilian teenagers and young men who control the favela community in which they live.

Traditionally, favela community leaders have been called “donos.” Each dono in the CV network defends and supports one another to ensure illicit market share and system survival. The donos, in turn, follow the leadership of a small group of hardened criminals currently imprisoned in Bangu I or Bangu II, the maximum security prisons located just north of Rio de Janeiro. This network of criminals has become so strong, it is known as the “parallel power” by Brazilian journalists, politicians, and policemen. What is now an organization that operates beyond Brazilian state sovereignty began in the late 1960’s as the brainchild of common criminals.

The 1969 National Security Law passed by the Brazilian military government decreed that all those suspected of robbery would be tried by military courts and subject to 10 to 24 years in a maximum security prison. As a result, many of the revolutionaries who

robbed banks to fund their struggle against the military government arrived in maximum security prison, where they commingled with hardened criminals. The political prisoners offered their organizational skills to the hardened criminals in exchange for rights within the prison environment.<sup>4</sup> The result was the formation of a highly organized criminal organization.

This organization eventually became known as the Commando Vermelho. The nascent CV leveraged its numbers and organization to gain more rights within the prison system. As its numbers grew, the CV began influencing freed members. The CV leadership within prison could control the activity of their members outside the prison as professional criminals always run the risk of returning to state prison, where upon they would receive severe punishment or death for not following orders. With such a vice-grip on control, the leadership then realized its organization could be used outside the prison system for profitable gain. Soon after the formation of the Commando Vermelho, members on the outside began kidnapping and robbing banks to raise enough money to purchase the freedom of key individuals within the organization. Once freed, they organized the network-like growth of the Commando Vermelho through the 1980s.

During this time CV leaders became aware of cocaine profit, as shipments smuggled from Bolivia spurred cocaine market formation in Brazilian cities. Since the 1980s, the Brazilian cocaine market has grown to the second largest in the world. In 2000, this market consumed from 35 to 50 metric tons of pure cocaine.<sup>5</sup> For the CV, this market is

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<sup>4</sup> Dowdney, 29

<sup>5</sup> Central Intelligence Agency, "Cocaine Trafficking and Consumption in Brazil," August 2002.

very lucrative, empowering, and since its inception, has been the foundation of the Comando Vermelho's power. As the focus shifted from marijuana to cocaine, the CV made a concerted effort to control the cocaine market in Rio de Janeiro.

Gang leaders continued to control the CV from prison, reasonably protected from the increasing violence in favela communities. As the organization spread outside prison, members began establishing and stealing secure areas within the favela to sell drugs. Many of these areas, called "bocas de fumo", had been established by small-time criminal groups via the marijuana trade. The CV forcefully captured many of these sales points to quickly construct its cocaine sales channels.

Initially, small groups called "quadrilhas" performed the paramilitary tasks of invasion and defense for the CV. By the mid-1980s, as the cocaine market explosion fueled violent conflict, armed gang members began to protect their turf, joined gang members from other favelas to raid a third, and performed traditional policing tasks within their own community. The cocaine market now holds three competing drug gangs, each fueled by independent connections to the illicit drug trade in Colombia and small arms smuggling out of Paraguay.<sup>6</sup> Their constant struggle over market share in Rio has led to an urban war, where gangs fight one another, and all three fight civil and military police.<sup>7</sup>

But the CV did not directly contribute to the formation of favela social structure, or the hierarchical organization upon which the founders installed their criminal system. The

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<sup>6</sup> These gangs are known as the Red Command (Comando Vermelho), the Third Command (Terceiro Comando), and the Friends of Friends (Amigos dos Amigos).

<sup>7</sup> See, Appendix B – Charts, Graphs and Maps.



favela social structure is the result of years of state apathy. After witnessing a massive urbanization movement, due in part to poor economic policy and long overdue land reform, politicians were continually unwilling to address the needs of impoverished peasants, who in the early 1900s began squatting on the fringes of urban society in cities like Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Salvador de Bahia.

### **Favela History and Social Structure:**

In 1897 soldiers who had fought in the War of Canudos migrated south from the arid northeastern state of Bahia.<sup>8</sup> They received government permission to temporarily settle along the ridges of the Santo Antônio and Provêdencia hills, located in the center of Rio de Janeiro. Soon after, Provêdencia Hill became known as “Favela” Hill, in reference to a plant, which grows abundantly in the Canudos region of Bahia. In 1904, there were some 100 shacks on Provêdencia or “Favela” Hill; by 1910, there were some 1,314 shacks in Santo Antônio; and, by 1933 some 1,500 on Provêdencia.<sup>9</sup>

What started as a reward for patriotic military service soon became a bastion of poor squatters, who, like the soldiers, migrated to Rio de Janeiro to escape harsh living conditions in Northeastern Brazil. Local and state Politicians largely ignored their presence in the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. By the 1920s, many other hills in Rio de Janeiro had been claimed by squatters. As they moved from the center of town toward the wealthier neighborhoods of Leme, Copacabana, Botafogo and Ipanema, the favelas

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<sup>8</sup> The War of Canudos was a short war fought in the late 1890's between separatists and loyalists in the northeastern state of Bahia.

<sup>9</sup> University Federal do Rio de Janeiro, “Historia da Favela,” <http://www.fau.ufrj.br/prourb/cidades/favela/historicotIN.html> (3 November, 2003).

captured political attention due to their lack of waste treatment infrastructure, already installed in much of the city.

By the 1930s, Brazilians living in Rio de Janeiro considered favela dwellers an inferior part of society. Health problems and epidemic outbreaks in favela communities drove politicians to implement urban development programs to improve favela living conditions. But the urban development projects of the 1940s stopped far short of integrating favela communities into mainstream Brazilian society. Favela communities remained on the fringes, considered the “ghettos” of urban centers.

In the 1960s military bureaucrats built low-income housing projects on the fringes of Rio de Janeiro to address the problems attributed to favela community proliferation in the city. Their policy did little to slow favela growth in Rio. Ultimately, it created large tracts of low-income housing, such as Complexo da Maré and Complexo Alemão, which have become criminal gang strong holds.

Practically since conception, favela communities have harbored crime, which only increased as diminishing economic opportunity increased poverty, limiting the options for survival. In response to the growing crime, local strong men in the favela communities began organizing a vigilante justice system to replace the absence of state authority. Over time, strong men replaced the state judicial system with vigilante justice. The leaders of these vigilante gangs became known as “the friend” or “the man” to those favela dwellers that lived under his watchful eye.

Many of the benevolent donos of the past have been replaced by drug lords driven by the need to assure their own survival, and the survival of their criminal system. In truth, many “drug donos” remain benevolent to their communities, but they subjugate the well-being of favela communities to the needs of controlling their piece of turf. Every drug dono who controls a favela runs his community like a mini-state in which he is king. There is not consistent police presence. Drug dono influence over the favela community assures security. There is no theft, child abuse, spousal abuse, or rape. Limb removal, community exile and death are consequence of violating favela law, and happen only with the expressed permission of the drug dono. He maintains a social contract with all his subjects who live in his community. He is the judge, jury and executioner.

The Comando Vermelho installed itself on top of the institutionalized relationship between the traditional dono and his favela community. Since the introduction of the cocaine drug trade, the drug-gang affiliated dono has assumed more power and influence over his favela community. He controls the flow of drugs in and out of the favela. He is the commander of the favela’s private army, often little more than a group of armed teenagers. He is the CEO of the favela’s illicit business, and pays his bodyguards, soldiers, salesmen, lookouts, and messengers. He watches over his community like any feudal lord that protects his own first, his subjects second. The drug dono pays tax and tribute to the leadership of his particular drug gang, but within the favela, the dono is still king.

The drug trade has permanently transformed many favela neighborhoods into urban battle fields, where armed youth tote sacks of cocaine, 9mm pistols and automatic machine guns in broad daylight, and police enter with lethal force much like an invading army.<sup>10</sup> Often it is said that the difference between a living veteran and a dead rookie is the split second it takes to think twice about killing a child because you never know if he is armed or not.<sup>11</sup>

The price for community security has risen beyond acceptable norms, and the community is powerless to affect change in favela communities. Daily violence between the drug gangs and police produces an alarming number of innocent deaths. Misfired bullets, sprayed out of machine guns wielded by untrained children and scared policemen, kill these unfortunates. Problems facing favela communities have only become more complex and serious. Together they represent both root and proximate causes of favela failure.

### **Root and Proximate Causes of Favela Failure:**

The illicit drug market and the proliferation of small arms and light weapons are both proximate causes of favela community failure. Their presence intensifies an already complicated social condition in the favela communities of Rio de Janeiro. Increased availability of cocaine, automatic rifles, grenades, and hand-held rocket launchers escalates violence as drug lords defend their turf from rival gangs and the police. The Brazilian security sector exacerbates the problems caused by the illicit drug market and

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<sup>10</sup> See appendix A. - photos

<sup>11</sup> Sam Logan, "Impoverished Brazilian Youth Face Little Option But to Die Young," Interhemispheric Resource Center, 16 September, [http://www.americaspolicy.org/articles/2003/0309brazil\\_body.html](http://www.americaspolicy.org/articles/2003/0309brazil_body.html) (15 October 2003).

small arms proliferation. The military and civil police, coupled with the proximate causes of favela community failure, directly contribute to the degradation of human security in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. Poverty, a lack of education and economic opportunity all contribute to the root causes that have manifested themselves in the proliferation of favela community failure in Rio de Janeiro. Political apathy toward resolving root causes for favela failure has been a historical norm.

Progressive politicians and civil society cannot invest money and time in schools, economic programs, jobs, and political representation of favela communities until the urban warfare that rages within them ends. Battles fought in favela communities must stop before establishing any measure of security. What began as a temporary living arrangement for a small group of patriotic Brazilian soldiers in 1894 has become the battlefields of a raging urban war in 2003. It is a tangible example of how challenges to human security prohibit development.

## **PART II**

### **Security and Development:**

Security and development did not attract joint consideration until well after the end of the Cold War. Politicians and military generals still consider national security a matter of great importance, not to be bothered with development issues. But they can no longer ignore that security between states is less relevant in the present climate of world events. Conflict is almost exclusively intrastate, propagated by non-state actors, such as drug gang members in Rio de Janeiro or rebel fighters in Liberia or Sudan. The changing

nature of international relations has pressured international thinkers and actors toward new considerations and theories of next generation security.

Researchers, academics, and policy experts observe that while development is necessary and fundamental, it is not successful in an insecure environment. Even now, as the world watches how insecurity compromises development in Iraq, journalists, policy actors, and other observers emphasize security and development as a joint consideration, making room for security and development as a single bullet point on the political agenda.

This ideological windfall, in many ways, led to the famous 1997 Ottawa Convention on Landmines, when hundreds of NGOs met with 120 States to promote anti-personal landmine (APL) removal, stockpile destruction, and international awareness of the security problem that unexploded APLs cause for development in third world countries. The Ottawa Conference and its definition of new international norms underlined how insecurity caused by the proliferation and misuse of small arms and light weapons (SALW) retards development in many of the same underdeveloped and developing countries plagued by APLs.

The United Nations (UN) identified the proliferation of SALW as a global development issue early in 1996, when the General Assembly passed resolution A/50/70, and again in 1998, when the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) presented a draft resolution calling for states to reduce the illicit trade of SALW. Over fifty countries, including the G-8, signed and ratified the resolution.

In 2001, the UN convened the first global conference on small arms and light weapons. The UN conference on the *Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects* produced a program of action (POA) that now provides a set of international norms to be internalized by nation-states through domestic legislation and implementation procedures. The small arms POA establishes norms for state and regional cooperation toward the control of SALW transfer between states; it requires the establishment of a “national coordination agency” on small arms; it requires states to identify and destroy stocks of surplus weapons; and, among a long list of other requirements, requires that states mark firearms at the point of manufacture to ensure effective tracking and control.<sup>12</sup>

The UN general assembly then passed resolution 56/24V, which officially adopted the 2001 Program of Action and reiterated the importance for member state compliance. In July, 2003, the first biennial meeting of states convened to review individual state implementation progress and domestic adoption of the 2001 Program of Action.

While many states still fall short of international SALW norms and implementation continues to be a challenge, this nascent arms control regime has a promising future. The development of an international instrument to track the production and sales of small arms worldwide, and an information sharing system that promotes communication and cooperation between nation states are well supported endeavors. Additionally, the norms

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations, “Program of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade of Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects,” UN Document A/CONF.192/15

established by the 2001 POA have contributed to a growing body of international norms that promote security and development as an interlinked issue.

**Human Security:**

Civil society on international, regional and national levels now works to place disarmament on the agenda of policy actors as a primary focus for the improvement of not just state security, but the security of individuals and communities within the state. The focus on matters of security within the state evolved into the concept of *human security*, born from observations that security of the state is not enough to guarantee the security of the citizen and communities within.

Geneva-based NGO Small Arms Survey recently highlighted in the 2003 publication of its yearbook, *Small Arms Survey*, that the proliferation and misuse of SALW contributes to human insecurity worldwide. This annual publication is a resource for drafting arms control laws needed to domesticate the international norms established by the 2001 Small Arms Program of Action.

Fatal and non-fatal injury, forced displacement, and declining access to basic needs are primary indicators of the humanitarian impacts of SALW.<sup>13</sup> Beyond the negative effects in post-conflict states such as Liberia and El Salvador, firearm proliferation and misuse causes violence in peaceful states such as Jamaica, South Africa, and Brazil, creating warlike symptoms and situations within countries not at war.<sup>14</sup> Such symptoms may

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<sup>13</sup> Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2002*, Geneva Switzerland, pg. 155.

<sup>14</sup> Small Arms Survey, *Small Arms Survey Yearbook 2003*, Geneva Switzerland, pg. 3.



require a military-style response, but a military operation to control urban violence is not always the best solution.

**SALW Proliferation in Favela Communities:**

Brazil is South America's leading producer of small arms and light weapons. The leading production company, Taurus, is licensed by the Brazilian government to sell its weapons to either the Brazilian military and police forces or other countries. The Brazilian Ministry of Defense controls the supply and traffic of licit arms. The Federal Police, analogous to the FBI in the United States, controls the demand and use of these weapons.<sup>15</sup>

During the 1980s, as the drug market grew exponentially in Rio de Janeiro, criminal organizations sought secure sources of firearms and ammunition from inside Brazil and through attempts to connect with arms dealers in South America. Corruption in the Brazilian police ranks allowed clandestine purchase of weapons stolen from Brazilian stockpiles, which were poorly managed. In the early 1990s criminal organizations leveraged their connections with arms dealers in Paraguay's Ciudad Del Este, who sold them stolen war-grade weapons made in Argentina for military use there.<sup>16</sup>

Through these and other illicit sales-channels drug lords arm their soldiers with grenades, bazookas, and an impressive array of automatic machine guns including AK-47s, M-16s, and FALs. In response, the civil and military police of Rio de Janeiro increased their

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<sup>15</sup> Pablo Dreyfus, interview with author, 15 July, 2003.

<sup>16</sup> Pablo Dreyfus, interview with Author, 15 July, 2003.

firepower. The current policy of so-called "blitz" occupation - whereby highly trained civil police enter and occupy a favela with the same lethal force and shoot-to-kill mentality employed by soldiers in battle – is not working. Rio de Janeiro needs a new set of policies and goals to ensure favela community security, not more of the same military-style shoot outs with gang members.

### **PART III**

#### **A Critique of Security Policy:**

For more than a century, the armed forces have influenced the ideology, organization, and modus operandi of military police infrastructure in Brazil. During the most recent military regime, from 1964 until 1985, the Brazilian government used military police like units of the Army for individual operations and missions. Since 1985, the nature of the Brazilian government has shifted from a military dictatorship to a democratic republic. Unfortunately, many outdated regimes and institutions, like the military police, have not been modernized to reflect the current needs of Brazilian citizens. Nearly two decades after the end of the military regime, the military police system still behaves like a member of the armed forces.

Priority is given to maintaining hierarchy and top-down control of lower ranking individuals, not regular policing responsibilities and performance. Traditional policing, which may include constant community presence, a focus on prevention, a defensive posture, and a respect for citizen rights, has not replaced highly visible missions, executed with military style, force and objectives. Ad hoc decision making is common,

whereby policemen make decisions based on instincts, fear, or social prejudices. A situation where a well-trained policeman, who is aware of a need to respect individual rights and defend the good of the public order, makes ad hoc decisions is often necessary. But this necessity is grossly abused when a racist, scared, and under equipped policeman must make similar moment-dependent decisions without directions from authority. Importance is placed on pleasing a superior and “not getting it wrong.” This model is, “ineffective, atomizes policing, and encourages police misconduct and excessive use of force on the streets, while over disciplining minor internal infractions.”<sup>17</sup> In such an antiquated policing system, the popularity of a military-style approach to public security policy is easily justified.

Two groups of police implement policies designed by the Secretary of Security of the state of Rio de Janeiro and throughout Brazil. Military Police are responsible for maintaining public order and the policing of public spaces. Civil Police are responsible for investigative policing. According to Amnesty International, which cited a study completed by the office of the Secretary of Security for the state of Rio de Janeiro, most of Rio’s 37,000 Military Police are poorly educated, young black males who receive some US\$325 a month in salary.<sup>18</sup>

For the purposes of this report, two public security policies will be examined: direct confrontation and community policing. Direct confrontation labels the military-style

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<sup>17</sup> Jacqueline Muniz, “Reform of the Military Police: The Military Model and its Effects,” Center for Brazilian Studies, Oxford, May 2002, 1.

<sup>18</sup> Amnesty International, Rio de Janeiro 2003: Candelaria and Vigario Geral 10 years on, AI Index AMR 19/015/2003, 8.

occupation of favela communities. Community policing reflects an approach more representative of the duties and responsibilities of a traditional civilian police force.

Many argue that a more progressive approach, like community policing, must be adopted by the mainstream if favela communities are to be rescued from their current dismal state. But despite the success of pilot community policing programs, this policy holds little favor with current Rio de Janeiro state and municipality administration officials. Decision makers are reticent to deviate from a well established norm that finds its roots in the current structure of the security sector infrastructure. Yet many observers, and some Brazilian politicians, find this structure outdated and in need of reform. A broad based community policing policy alone is not a panacea, but nor is security sector reform.

**Direct Confrontation Policy:**

On January 10, 2003, over 250 military and civil police, 58 cars, and two helicopters participated in what is known as a “Mega-Operation,” an example of the direct confrontation policy supported by the current Secretary of Security and the Governor of the state of Rio de Janeiro. Armed with assault rifles and a roving search warrant, which allowed them to search any favela resident or enter any favela community home, police invaded favela communities in the northern and western parts of Rio de Janeiro in search of four alleged drug gang leaders. By the end of the operation, fourteen were dead, including three minors and two policemen. While some arrests were made, the four targeted individuals were not apprehended. According to Amnesty International, the

roving search warrant used by the administration of public security for the state of Rio de Janeiro “does not have a solid legal basis” under Brazilian criminal law.<sup>19</sup>

In August, 2002, the new governor of Rio de Janeiro state, Rosihna Mateus, nominated her husband and former state governor Anthony Garotinho as head of public security. As governor, Anthony Garotinho increased the number of policemen in the state of Rio de Janeiro by 13 thousand and significantly increased the number of police vehicles on patrol.

The current public security policy platform for Rio de Janeiro state includes increasing the man power of a police unit known as the Battalion of Special Operations (BOPE in Portuguese), increased nocturnal patrols on principle state roadways, and improved collaboration with other members of the security sector bureaucracy such as the Federal Police and the Ministry of Justice.<sup>20</sup> As Secretary of Security, Anthony Garotinho is an advocate of zero tolerance policies. His public security policies reflect a strong arm, realist approach. His efforts have been largely unsuccessful.

On May 7, 2003, Secretary Garotinho admitted publicly the situation of violence in Rio de Janeiro was out of control.<sup>21</sup> He then outlined a new security plan, based on the initial platform presented at the beginning of his tenure. Additions to the original policy included a reorganization of the Special Mobile Tactics Group (GETAM in Portuguese);

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>20</sup> O Globo, “Rosinha Apresenta Programa de Segurança Publica,” O Globo Online, 8/30/02.

<sup>21</sup> Folha do São Paulo, “Garotinho Admite Situação de Descontrole no Rio,” Folha Online, 5/07/03.

the implementation of the Tactical Action Group (GAT in Portuguese); and the acquisition of a telephone listening device to improve intelligence gathering techniques.<sup>22</sup>

In October, 2003, Garotinho took a step toward tighter control over the movement of goods and persons in and out of targeted favela communities by sending battalions of civil and military police to control human traffic in and out of those communities.

Garotinho justified his policy of using lethal force to occupy targeted communities by arguing that in doing so they would, “economically suffocate the traffic of drugs and arms,” in and out of the favela.<sup>23</sup> Other “suffocation” operations include “Operation Asphyxia” and “Maximum Pressure.” In these massive community occupation procedures as many as 880 men occupy 20 or more favela communities simultaneously. Heavily armed policemen occupy favelas communities with lethal force and the fear of death.<sup>24</sup> They often shoot first and ask questions later.

Increased numbers of policemen and military fire power, quick responses to drug-gang ambush operations on patrolling units, and city-wide occupation operations known as “Mega-Operations” all characterize Garotinho’s direct confrontation strategy, installed during his term as governor from 1998 to 2002 - now amplified in 2003. Yet these operations yield little more results than a steady body count. From 1998 to 2002, state officials recorded a total of 11,961 homicides and 107,172 wounded in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Conversely, security officials seized 14,877 firearms and made 31,563 drug busts

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<sup>22</sup> Folha do São Paulo, “Em Meio a Ataques, Garotinho Anuncia Medidas Contra a Violência,” Folha Online, 5/07/03.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Statement made by Rubem Cesar Fernandes, Director of Viva Rio, Rio de Janeiro, July 16, 2003.

in the same five years.<sup>25</sup> The direct confrontation approach produces results. Policemen seize guns and drugs. They apprehend suspected criminals and kill killers. But they do not make the public feel safe. Favela community occupation is not policing for the good of public security. It reflects a military style used to defend a country from its enemies, not protect the public. It is further repression of favela community residents, not protection.

Authorities employ suffocation operations as preventative measures. Garotinho maintains an offensive stance as well. Offensive operations, normally carried out by the special operations core groups such as the BOPE, GAT, and the GETAM, react to drug-gang ambush attacks on police patrols and occupation police battalions, spearhead man hunts for suspected gang leaders, or make seizures in favela communities, where arms or drugs are allegedly kept and guarded.

Offensive operations often result in the most violence. Heavily armed, specially trained policemen use military tactics and lethal force to enter a community defended by minors and young men armed with pistols, shotguns, automatic weapons, grenades and sometimes bazookas. The number of civilians killed in violent confrontation with police rose by 153% from 1998 to 2002, from 355 cases to 900. During the same four years the number of police killed in action rose 72% or from 99 cases in 1998 to 170 in 2002.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Center of Criminal Research and Analysis, "Annual Crime Statistics for the Capitol of Rio De Janeiro, 1991-2002," Office of the Rio de Janeiro state Secretary of Security.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

This realist approach has been historically ineffective, and unpopular with favela communities. It promotes a cyclical relationship of conflict between the state and drug gangs, which causes violence in favela communities, reinforces public skepticism of police integrity and accountability, and promotes communal support for drug lords.

Direct confrontation strategies are also complicated by the removal of communication devices – cell phones, radio transmitters, walkie-talkies – just before the operation begins. Secretary Garotinho worries that corrupt cops in his ranks will call ahead and warn drug lords of impending police raids and blitz occupations. Nevertheless, sound judgment employed by policemen during occupation operations is compromised in a situation where armed youths threaten with lethal force cops who have little to no communication with their command.

Meanwhile, after years of living through blitz-style seizure and occupation, drug lords have begun using favela neighborhoods as defensive barriers to police invasion. In turn, favela communities learn to distrust the very authority charged to protect them, choosing to rely on drug lords for security, who they consider the lesser of two evils. When asked about her view of the police, one favela resident stated, “I am 38 years-old, and since I was ten, I have seen the police beat up and kill my neighbors and friends.”<sup>27</sup>

But not all favela community residents suffer from continuous battle. Fortunately, community policing policies, run as pilot programs in select favela communities, have

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<sup>27</sup> S. Husain, “Community Policing in Brazilian Favelas: Effective Implementation of Human Rights Standards?,” Netherlands School of Human Rights Research, 1.



received some political attention. In the favela communities of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho successful community policing has dramatically reduced violence, and through building trust and respect between police and favela residents, it has opened the door for development to take root.

### **Community Policing:**

In mid-2000, residents of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho revolted against their desperate situation by throwing rocks and stones at policemen and barricading roads. A police shoot-out with drug-gang members had killed five innocent civilians. Local anti-violence NGO, Viva Rio cooperated with state government officials to allow Colonel Antonio Carbalho of the Military Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro (PMERJ in Portuguese) to organize a trip to Boston, Massachusetts to learn about new policing techniques in use there. While in Boston, Carbalho and a number of other PMERJ officers attended a conference on violence and community policing, and met with Lt. Detective Gary French, who explained the tactics and policies that he used in a successful community policing program there.

Colonel Carbalho returned to Rio de Janeiro, and he and other military police officers communicated to drug lords through intermediaries that if they keep the community free of violence, make sure they conduct their business in private and not involve minors, then the police would make every effort to assure that community cops work within every letter of the law. With a testy agreement in hand, Colonel Carbalho formed his community police unit.

He recruited 100 soldiers from the PMERJ to provide security to a community of 12,000 residents. Training focused on individual rights and prevention, and his recruits received instruction on the protection of citizens and individual rights. They were instructed to carry out their mandate according to three rules: no armed people in the community, no children involved in drug trafficking, and no abuse of citizens by the police.<sup>28</sup> During the first few months of the community policing operation, over thirty members of Carbalho's battalion were fired or transferred for bribery, extortion, violence, or civilian mistreatment. With such corruption removed, the operation slowly began to see positive results.

Initially, community members reacted with disdain but were tolerant. They noticed that the neighborhood had been cleansed of violence and attributed that change to the increase number and regularity of policemen in their midst. But many still complain. Sebastião Filho, president of the community resident association, is among them.

The commanders have tried to correct faults in the police, and local people are more respectful. We don't have any confidence in the police. We are simply seeing more of them on the streets, and that has inhibited [crime]. There is more coexistence now.<sup>29</sup>

While it will take a long time to repair decades of mistrust, community policing is a promising start.

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Andrew Downie, "Taking Boston's Lead, Police in Rio Lighten Up," *The Christian Science Monitor*, November 8, 2000.

Colonel Carbalho is not focused on the drug trade, a position that flies in the face of the “no tolerance” policy adopted by the Secretary of Security. He argues that if violence is first addressed, opportunities to curb drug sales will arise as development programs to promote education and employment offer other options for young drug dealers. “I am not here for [stopping drug trafficking],” he told a local reporter, “Why would I want to bust into people’s homes? What they do in the privacy of their own house is not my business.”<sup>30</sup>

Clearly, his concern is on citizen rights and security in the streets of Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho, not stopping the drug trade. That comes next. If anything, he maintains a ceasefire agreement with the drug lords, as any state official would with any insurgent group. It has sustained itself long enough to allow development programs to undermine the drug trade through education and legitimate economic opportunity.

As a stand alone policy, community policing is promising. Once leaders account for corruption, and the individual policemen receive proper training, community policing leads to a dramatic reduction of violent crime. Amnesty International reported that during a visit to Cantagalo and Pavão-Pavãozinho communities, it learned that homicides, once rife there, had been reduced to zero.<sup>31</sup>

As a policy within a larger framework of public security policies, community policing still has little traction. There are still no reliable numbers or official statistics that provide

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Amnesty International, 8.

data on the effectiveness of community policing. This suggests that as a policy community policing has not won the attention of high-level decision makers on the local, state or federal levels. Additionally, community policing has “suffered from inconsistent political support and changes in leadership.”<sup>32</sup>

Another hurdle for community policing programs is zero tolerance. The current administration in Rio de Janeiro has adopted a zero tolerance policy regarding the traffic, sale and use of illegal drugs. This policy, while not often implemented to arrest users, is the ideological back bone for the arguments that favor the direct confrontation approach. The “cease fire” approach used by community police operations, whereby an unspoken agreement between cops and criminals makes room for peace, is not popular in Brazilian politics – a fact reinforced by the lack of political will behind supporting community policing programs in favela communities.

**Civil Society Development Activity:**

Political apathy toward favela community violence continues to be an obstacle. Yet civil society and one NGO in particular works hard to erode the decades-old political position while remaining ever vigilant to introduce development programs in those favela communities where security has been accomplished.

Rio de Janeiro-based anti-violence NGO Viva Rio stands out in a large group of anti-violence NGOs that currently operate in Rio de Janeiro. Viva Rio is responsible for the

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

formation of the first community policing project. Viva Rio has completed landmark studies on violent conflict in favela communities, particularly regarding the nature of this violence and how it affects minors and youths.<sup>33</sup> Viva Rio works closely with Federal, State, and local authorities to improve illegal weapon identification, tracing, and stockpiling techniques.<sup>34</sup> This NGO is very focused on matters of public security but runs a number of community outreach and development programs.

Under the Viva Rio community development umbrella, the “Viva Favela” (*Live Shantytown*) project works specifically with education and awareness programs in a number of favelas. “Viva Cred” (*Live Credit*) operates a micro-finance unit in impoverished and low income communities. “Armas Não, Ela o Eu” (*No to Guns, Her or Me*) is a peace campaign designed to inform women about the dangers of the misuse of firearms. Women force their husbands to choose between his gun, or “her”, and his wife, “or me.” Another female awareness campaign, “Belleza” (*Beauty*) is designed to educate women about birth control, domestic violence, and other female issues. The popular sports project “Luta Pela Paz” (*Fight for Peace*) administers a boxing club and sports facility located in the heart of favela violence. Many of the young members trade their assault rifles for boxing gloves. Students learn about conflict resolution while training for boxing tournaments.

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<sup>33</sup> See Luke Dowdney, “Children in Organized Armed Violence in Rio de Janeiro,” Viveiros de Castro Ltda., Rio de Janeiro 2003.

<sup>34</sup> See William Godnick, Pablo Dreyfus, Carolina Looty de Paiva Dias, Benjamín Lessing, “Controla de Armas Pequenas en el Mercosur,” International Alert & Viva Rio, October 2003.

Meanwhile, national awareness campaigns such as gun destruction ceremonies and anti-violence marches, promote peace and non violence in a town where a stray bullet kills an innocent person every two days. The last anti-violence march attracted over 50,000 Brazilians. Viva Rio has also worked with Brazilian media giant O Globo to insert anti-violence rhetoric into the script of popular television programs.

## **Part IV**

### **Policy Recommendations:**

The right approach to increasing security and sparking development in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro is the subject of much political debate. Conservatives argue that an overpowering military presence is necessary to remove the scourge of organized criminal activity from favela communities. More progressive thinkers suggest drug decriminalization is the answer to reducing violence in favela communities. But the fact is neither works.

Increased military pressure on drug lords will only increase violent conflict in favela communities. The organized drug gangs have an endless source of man power, as long as favela youths think its cool to tote an assault rifle, close ties with weapons dealers, and an endless supply of cocaine from Colombia, whose profitable sale will continue to fill their cash coffers. If state authorities decriminalize marijuana and cocaine, it would remove the economic incentive for drug gangs to sell drugs. But such an event might result in increased violent crime in the streets of Rio de Janeiro as hundreds of armed youths descend into middle and upper class neighborhoods to rob banks and kidnap innocent

civilians.<sup>35</sup> While pundits from the left and right disagree on a number of policy options available to address the problem of security and development in the favela, there are five fundamental components necessary to address the failing favela communities in Brazil that should not be ignored.

The current situation in favela communities is the result of over 20 years of institutionalized separation from state authority, reach and care. Any policy to address such institutionalization must be a long-term program of at least 20 years, during which time state authorities work to bring favela neighborhoods into the state water, electric, and municipal systems.<sup>36</sup> The favelas must be made into neighborhoods, wherein lower-class Brazilians engender a sense of dignity as a citizen of the Brazilian state, not a subject of the king of the hill.

According to the Central Intelligence Agency, 20 percent of the cocaine produced and trafficked from Colombia through Brazil is sold and consumed in Brazil. It is the second largest consumer market for cocaine in the world. More funds must be directed to demand reduction policies, domestic interdiction, and border control efforts. Researchers from the RAND Drug Policy Research Center focused on demand reduction in the United States and concluded that increased spending in treatment is more cost effective than domestic interdiction for every added dollar invested in both programs.<sup>37</sup> The same may be said for Brazil.

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<sup>35</sup> Luke Dowdney, interview with author, 5 August, 2003.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Peter C. Rydell and Sussan S. Everingham. *Controlling Cocaine: Supply vs. Demand Programs Santa Monica*: RAND Drug Policy Research Center, 1994, 4.

Brazilian authorities should focus on deconstructing the local drug market by targeting the international connections between Brazilian drug gang leaders and criminal organizations in Paraguay and Colombia. By now it is clear that deconstruction of the local drug market is a difficult and bloody affair. The porous border between Brazil and Paraguay, created by the Mercosur Trade Agreement, lends itself to smuggling.

International criminal organizations have established gun smuggling operations between Ciudad del Este, Paraguay and Rio de Janeiro. Financial Aid from the United States and intelligence sharing between the Brazilian and the American intelligence communities may help contain the growing regional threat posed by transnational organized crime currently growing in number and strength in the more remote regions of South American jungles. International cooperation between Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, and Paraguay is essential to tracking down and arresting those responsible for the continued wholesale of guns and drugs for use and sale in favela communities.

Within Brazil, security sector transformation is fundamentally necessary. Since the end of the last military regime in 1985, the civil and military police systems have not been readjusted to a policing mission needed by a peaceful democratic nation state. Military generals molded their police systems to enforce unpopular policies and maintain control over a large body of political dissidents. Torture, impunity and corruption were part of the system during the military regime. Because politicians still have not reformed these brutal police forces, brutality, corruption, and the use of torture still prevail in Brazil.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nigel Rodley, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Report on Mission, 20 August, 12 September 2000: E/CN.4/2001/66/Add2



Finally, the current disarmament campaign, organized by Viva Rio, must gain more momentum and political support. Stricter controls on the sale and use of SALW in Brazil, increased interdiction efforts to reduce arms smuggling between Brazil and Paraguay, better cataloging and stockpile practices, and continued arms destruction and public awareness marches will all combine to reduce the amount of SALW in circulation in Rio de Janeiro. Viva Rio has embarked on many fronts to forward arms control and favela community development efforts in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Continued international financial support assures the continued success of this important NGO.

**Conclusions:**

Statistics produced by the Center for Urban Conflict and Violence of the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro show that an increase in firearms seizures may correlate significantly to a reduction in violent death.<sup>39</sup> While there may be a slight cause and effect relationship between these two variables, the presence of a number of other mitigating variables, which are hard to control, affect this data, suggesting that arms control is not the only solution to a reduction of violence in the favela communities of Rio de Janeiro.

While the relationship between homicide and arms seizures may not be causal, empirical evidence shows that the uncontrolled proliferation and misuse of illicit small arms and light weapons directly contributes to the proximate causes of favela community failure,

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<sup>39</sup> See Appendix B – Graph 1.

which for this report include the current state of the security sector in the state of Rio de Janeiro, the drug trade in the city of Rio de Janeiro and the use of SALW by untrained youth, employed by drug gangs. These causes, taken as a whole, directly contribute to the deplorable situation of human security in favela communities.

If we could remove weapons all together from favela communities, drug lords would be forced to take residence elsewhere, invading policemen would have less reason to fire their own weapons, and the young men, who so often die from shootouts with policemen, might find dignity in employment elsewhere.

But the reality is weapons continue to enter the favelas faster than authorities seize them. Drug lords, for more than 20 years, have become institutionalized fixtures in hundreds of favela communities throughout the city of Rio de Janeiro. State and local politicians are conservative and still support direct confrontation and zero tolerance policies.

Policemen are corrupt, poorly trained and equipped, and not trusted by their leadership. They are often not held accountable for their actions, and take justice into their own hands. They are mostly Afro-Brazilian men ordered to kill Afro-Brazilian teenagers and young adults. Policemen are paid by the legitimate state authority, while the soldiers of drug gangs receive payment from another authority, in their eyes also legitimate. Both authorities have deep wells of funding and manpower.

This study has shown that direct confrontation policies in favela communities such as Complexo do Maré, Complexo do Alemão, and others results in the death of policemen, minors and innocents; the perpetuated mistrust between favela community members and state authority; and, the continuation of a vicious cycle of violence that, as a whole, crates an impasse beyond which much needed development programs such as community banking, schools, legal council, and social awareness and infrastructure projects cannot reach.

For years we have seen how a direct confrontation approach to the problem of favela community insecurity has resulted in violent death, with little more than insignificant arms and drug seizures.<sup>40</sup> This policy is best suited to function in an environment where outdated security sector ideology and systems are still in use, suggesting that with out the historical and intrinsic influence of the armed forces, the military police of Rio de Janeiro would not be able to organize and execute invasion and occupation missions. These missions should be reserved for extreme cases. When necessary, they should be conducted not by state and local police authorities, but highly trained national authorities with an clear mandate and mission. Security sector transformation, in whole or in part, is necessary before violence in favela communities will end.

This study has shown that community policing efforts have been empirically successful. These programs are effective at reducing crime through an unspoken agreement with drug gang members. They make an initial step beyond the violence so resources may be focused on removing the drug trade and use of small arms and light weapons from favela

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<sup>40</sup> See Appendix B – Chart 2

communities. They improve relations between favela community members and the police. They represent a step towards normal policing and a feasible path toward the process of security sector transformation. Finally community policing stations should be the norm, not exceptions to the rule or considered “pilot” or experimental.

It the city of Rio de Janeiro development programs are in place, well funded, and managed by individuals with the necessary experience to succeed. Yet with the current climate of mega-operations, SALW proliferation, and drug sales, these important development initiatives and outreach programs will never reach those who need them the most. Favela communities will continue to suffer. Unless there is a shift in policy their residents will continue to contribute to homicide statistics and the favelas of Rio de Janeiro will continue to present a case study of how development cannot thrive in an environment of human insecurity.

**Further Investigation:**

This report covers in limited detail the vast complexity of the root and proximate causes of violence in the favela communities in Rio de Janeiro. Nevertheless it contributes to the small but growing body of work dedicated to human security in favela communities. We need more research that focuses on human security challenges in favela communities.

The international criminal connections used to perpetuate the availability of guns and drugs in favela communities are poorly understood. More investigation into the connections between revolutionaries in Colombia such as the Fuerzas Armadas

Revolucionarios de Colombia (FARC) and the Comando Vermelho would be useful for Brazilian federal police officials interested in identifying these harmful relationships. Additionally, investigation into the connections between organized criminal outfits in Paraguay, which sell firearms to drug gangs in Brazil, is needed to help Brazilian authorities identify and stop the illicit traffic of war-grade SALW.

More research to investigate the effects of community policing is needed. This program, however successful in its pilot programs, will never receive political backing or the resulting funding unless Brazilian politicians are convinced it is a cost-effective and sound program.

Finally, investigation into the possible outcomes of international intelligence sharing between Colombia, Paraguay, Bolivia, Peru, Brazil and the United States is necessary. While these four nation-states may be reticent to share information necessary to protect the nation security of each state, the increasing communication and operation between international criminal and terrorist organizations will eventually lead to a regional security problem, which may come to compromise the security of all states in the Western Hemisphere.

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### Appendix A. Photos

Photo of Commando Vermelho “soldado,” 16 years of age, with an AK-47, and a “vapor,” 15 years of age, with two 9mm pistols and cocaine.



- by Anja Kessner

Photo of invading military police officers in a favela community.

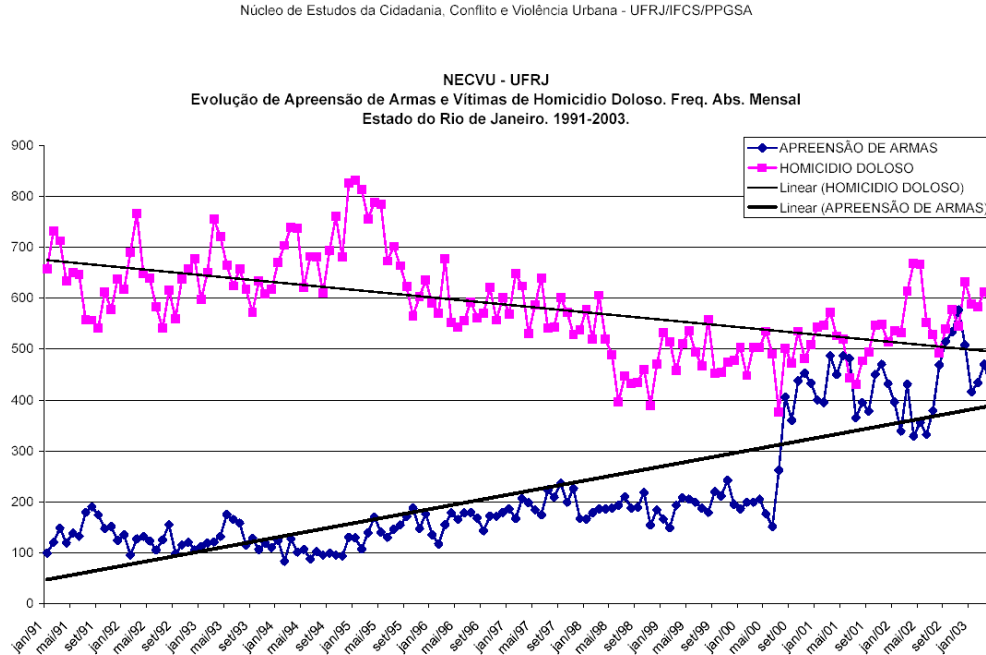


## Appendix B. Charts, Maps, and Graphs

**Map 1** – Relief of Rio de Janeiro. Red, Yellow and Orange dots represent favela communities under the control of one of three drug gangs.



**Graph 2** – Data compiled by the Center for Urban Violence and Conflict Studies, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. The Pink data points represent the number of homicides per month, from Jan. 1991 to Jan. 2003. The Blue data points represent the increase in firearms seizures during the same period.



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**Graph 3** – Deaths Caused by Police in the State of Rio de Janeiro. Data compiled by the office of the Secretary of Security for the state of Rio de Janeiro.

