



Terceiro Comando Puro - The Pure Third Command

The Pure Third Command (Terceiro Comando Puro - TCP) can be traced back to a split from the Red Command prison gang in the mid-1980s. While it is not as dominant as its rivals in that gang or in Amigos dos Amigos, it is considered Rio's third most powerful street gang.

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## History

While the TCP itself was founded in 2002, it has roots in the now-defunct Third Command (Terceiro Comando - TC). The TC split from the Red Command (CV) in the mid-1980s, when enterprising members decided to form a breakaway group to take advantage of Brazil's rapidly expanding drug market.

Some analysts have suggested the impetus for the split was a leadership vacuum in the CV, which at the time was headed by a younger generation of less-stable gangsters. The TC was founded by former CV members looking for a more efficient, business-like approach to the drug trade.

Throughout most of the 1990s, these two gangs were the dominant criminal actors in Rio de Janeiro, with their affiliates battling over control of drug trafficking and extortion rackets in favelas across the city.

When Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) broke from the CV in the late 1990s, it formed a loose alliance with the TC. Both gangs concentrated their efforts on territory held by their former cohorts in the Red Command.

This pact did not sit well with Nei da Conceição Cruz, alias "Facão," (pictured) a local TC kingpin who oversaw drug trafficking in the northern cluster of favelas known as the Complexo da Mare. An ADA boss known as Paulo Cesar Silva dos Santos, alias "Linho," had begun to encroach on his territory. As a result, he split from the TC in 2002, creating his own organization and declaring war on both the TC and ADA.



Facão's group remained a relatively minor player until September 2002, when the CV carried out a devastating series of hits on the TC's imprisoned leadership with the help of ADA co-founder Celsinho da Vila Vintem. The once-mighty TC was brought to its knees.

With the leadership wiped out, the gang's members defected to more powerful organizations. Local drug bosses who had been affiliated with the TC swore allegiance to either the ADA or Facão, who took advantage of the incident to name his gang the "pure" TC, or Terceiro Comando Puro.

## Leadership

Like other gangs in the city, the TCP lacks a strong hierarchy. It is best seen as a loose horizontal coalition of local crime bosses who associate according to mutually beneficial interests, rather than a vertical, mafia-type organization.

Facão was captured and imprisoned in 2009, but other TCP gang leaders are among Rio de Janeiro's most wanted. Following the 2012 death of Marcio Jose Sabino Pereira, alias "Matemático," the most high-profile TCP figure in the city today is Fernando Gomes de Freitas, also known as "Fernandinho Guarabu."

For years, the 35-year-old drug kingpin has overseen criminal activities in the favelas on Ilha do Governador, the largest island in Rio's Guanabara Bay and site of the city's main airport, the Galeão-Antônio Carlos Jobim International Airport. Despite repeated police operations in the area, Fernandinho Guarabu has consistently evaded capture, fueling widespread speculation that he enjoys a cozy relationship with local authorities.



## Geography

While TCP-affiliated groups operate in favelas throughout the city, they are strongest in the north and west of Rio de Janeiro. Their traditional strongholds include the favelas of Ilha do Governador, as well as the western and northern neighborhoods of Senador Camara and Complexo da Mare.

## Allies and Enemies

While gang leaders make alliances based on necessity dictated by local conditions, the history of the TCP has created a strong organizational culture which pits it against the two largest gangs in Rio de Janeiro, Amigos dos Amigos and the Red Command. As with their rivals, the TCP's main allies are corrupt authorities among the police force, who largely turn a blind eye to their activity in exchange for kickbacks, and occasionally supply them with weapons.

## Prospects

Like other criminal groups in the city, the police pacification program has led the TCP to adopt a lower profile in the favelas in which it operates. There is evidence to suggest that the threat of increased state presence creates an incentive for gangs like the TCP to operate with less violence, but only time will tell whether it will reduce their overall influence.

## Resources:

"As Cores do Crime," Luciana Vicente Portugal Pereira, 2009

"Facção Terceiro Comando Puro," Instituto Brasileiro de Combate ao Crime

"O Movimento. A constituição e reprodução das redes do mercado informal ilegal de drogas a varejo no Rio de Janeiro e seus efeitos de violência," Michel Misse 2003

"Violent Corruption and Violent Lobbying: Logics of Cartel-State Conflict in Mexico, Brazil and Colombia," Benjamin Lessing, 2013.

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