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The Red Command or Red Commando (Comando Vermelho) is Brazil's most powerful drug gang (About.com 21 Oct. 2002; Libération 12 June 2002; Downdey 2002, 170). The Red Command's territorial base territory is the favelas, or shantytowns, of Rio de Janeiro (ibid., 22; About.com 21 Oct. 2002; Chicago Tribune 2 Feb. 2003). On one hand, favelas give the Red Command a strategic geographical position that allows it to control comings and goings and, on the other hand, they provide them with the necessary manpower for selling drugs (Downdey 2002, 22). The presence of military-style quadrilhas in the streets and the graffiti markings of the Red Command initials "CV" on buildings in a favela indicate that a territory is under the gang's rule (ibid., 33; Chicago Tribune 2 Feb. 2003). Drug gangs like the Red Command control favelas using paramilitary-style techniques (Downdey 2003, 19).

Several sources indicated that the Red Command's main activity is trafficking drugs (About.com 21 Oct. 2002; Chicago Tribune 2 Feb. 2003; Latinamerica Press 21 Oct. 2002; Washington Post 19 Sept. 2002) like marijuana and cocaine (Downdey 2002, 6; Courier international 4-10 July 2002). One of these sources reported that the Red Command controls 90 per cent of cocaine trafficking in Rio de Janeiro (ibid.). The organization is also involved in roadblocks, robbery and kidnappings (About.com 21 Oct. 2002).

The organizational structure of the Red Command is described as originating as "a network of affiliated independent actors rather than a strictly hierarchical organisation with a single head figure" (Downdey 2002, 22). Each dono, or leader, manages the activities of a Red Command faction within a given community (ibid.). Two of the most powerful Red Command donos, Luiz Fernando Da Costa (also known as Fernandinho Beira-Mar and Seaside Freddy) and Elias Maluco, are currently serving time in prison (ibid., 31; Agence France-Presse 30 Sept. 2002). A prison-based structure that centralized power within the organization gave rise to the positions of president and vice-president of the Red Command-positions that were filled by incarcerated donos who "rule prison life, settle internal faction disputes that occur outside of prison and make the final decision on any matters of mutual interest for faction affiliates" (Downdey 2002, 32). Outside prison, one dono is designated as the liaison between the Red Command donos who are not incarcerated and those serving jail time (ibid.). An former drug trafficker and member of the Red Command described the organization as "a cross between a workers co-operative and a state power" (ibid.).

According to Luke Downdey, a strict hierarchical and militarized structure controls the operation of drug gangs in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (ibid., 33). In descending order, the hierarchy consists of the leader (dono); the dono's general manager in the favela (gerente geral); three sub-mangers who are responsible for the sale of marijuana (gerente de preto), the sale of cocaine (gerente de branco), and overseeing the 'soldiers' (gerente de soldados); managers responsible for the sale of both marijuana and cocaine from their specific sales points (gerente de boca); security 'soldiers' (soldado); personal armed security guards who act as the dono's and gerente geral's right-hand men (fiel); drug dealers (vapor); look-outs (olheiros); and...
Some of these positions are open to children (ibid., 8). The same source also indicated that drug gangs in Rio de Janeiro employ 10,000 of the city's residents (ibid., 6). For more detailed information on the organizational structure of drug gangs, see Child Combatants in Organised Armed Violence: A Study of Children and Adolescents Involved in Territorial Drug Faction Disputes in Rio de Janeiro at the following Internet address: <http://www.iansa.org/documents/2002/childrenoav.pdf>. The author of this report, Luke Dowdney, is a researcher at Viva Rio (WCC 9 Sept. 2002), a non-governmental non-profit organization fighting for peace and development in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro (Viva Rio n.d.).

enquêtait sur le trafic de drogue dans les 'favelas' de Rio." (NEXIS)


**Additional Sources Consulted**

IRB Databases

**Internet sites, including:**

Amnesty International

BBC News

Centre for Geopolitical Drug Studies

Human Rights Watch

Observatoire géopolitique des drogues

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

WNC

**Search engine:**

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