

Organization Attributes Sheet: Fernandinho Beira-Mar Gang/Red Command

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The Red Command (CV) developed out of Leftist dissidents thrown into the prisons during the military dictatorship in 1979.¹ This organization then developed into a gang, which gained control of several favelas in Rio de Janeiro.² In the 1990s, Fernandinho Beira-Mar (Luis Fernando da Costa) became an important figure in the group, eventually broadening its contacts to international weapons and drugs suppliers in Suriname, Colombia, and Paraguay.³ In 1994, the Third Command (CT) split from the CV.⁴ By 2003, CV was thought to control 58% of the Rio drug trade, while CT and another group called Amigos dos Amigos (ADA) controlled another 36%.⁵ It is also reported that the CV and the First Command of the Capital (PCC) of Sao Paulo are in a loose alliance.⁶ Beira-Mar was arrested in 2001 and put in prison,⁷ but has been able to control his trafficking businesses from within prison.⁸

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Drugs and weapons trafficking

b. *Specific detail: types of illicit trafficking activities engaged in*

- Red Command controls many neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro, from which the gang distributes cocaine and other drugs.
- Luis Fernando da Costa connected Red Command with weapons suppliers in Suriname, as well as drug suppliers in Colombia and Paraguay.

C. Scope and Size

a. Estimated size of network and membership

- There are thousands of people directly involved in Red Command.⁹

b. Countries / regions group is known to have operated in. (i.e. the group's operating area)

- Brazil, Paraguay, Colombia, Suriname

D. Leader Characteristics

a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Luis Fernando da Costa (aka Fernandinho Beira-Mar) began as a dealer in the favela of Beira-Mar in Rio de Janeiro, and then worked his way up the ranks of the CV. He was imprisoned in the mid-1990s, but then escaped from prison.¹⁰ After his escape he left Brazil to establish connections with the FARC in Colombia, and with criminal elements in Paraguay.¹¹ His network also plugged into the Suri-Cartel of Suriname.¹²
- While many reports declare that Luis Fernando da Costa is the head of the CV, there are many others arguing that he was one of many different leaders, and that he was not of central importance to the CV.¹³ This is because the CV is organized in a relatively decentralized manner.¹⁴ The group has two sets of hierarchies, one in the prison system and one outside.¹⁵ Both hierarchies are made up of a number of independent *donos*, or leaders.¹⁶ The non-prison hierarchy allots a *dono* to every favela.¹⁷ Coordination between the *donos* seems to be more by consent than by hierarchical command.

b. Leadership timeline

- There is not definitive information available about the top leadership of the organization, the exact constitution of which is disputed by different experts. The information about leadership in the different favelas is both too specific and too incomplete for the purposes of this investigation.

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

c.	Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership of the CV as a whole appears to be diffuse, while leadership within the more specific favelas or prisons is more autocratic.¹⁸ Under this assumption, Luis Fernando da Costa would lead his immediate supporters by command, while independent elements of the broader CV would not be under his direction.
E. Organizational Structure	
a.	Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The overall typology of CV is that of different cells of independent hierarchically organized groups tied to specific geographic areas, but which are all bound together by a shared tradition of rules, symbols, and social/business relations.¹⁹ These traditions are the ideology that binds disparate groups into the CV.
b.	Membership – is there formal or informal membership in the organization or network? What role do informal or nonmembers play in trafficking and other criminal activities?
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership appears to be formal, particularly at the favela level. At the level of international connections membership in the network is informal, with groups cooperating with each other as independent but allied businesses.
c.	Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decentralized at the higher levels, with more centralization closer to the street level.
F. Resources	
a.	Financial
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It was reported in 2003 that the CV makes about \$264 million a year from the drugs and weapons trade.²⁰
b.	Human
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At the street level, CV depends on teenagers as foot soldiers. At the higher levels there have been lawyers and government officials implicated. There are reports that parts of the CV have received military training from the FARC.²¹
c.	Logistical
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The favelas are protected by armed gangs. The police do not enter them, without a large force and a lot of firepower – although in recent months the government has reassured its authority in many favelas. (Need a reference here) • Luis Fernando da Costa owned ranches and landing strips in Paraguay,²² and made use of clandestine landing strips in the Amazon for weapons and drugs trafficking.²³ ii. Key routes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Luis Fernando da Costa has been connected to the Colombia-Suriname-Europe route that was/is at the center of the Suri-Cartel.²⁴ • He has also been tied to a route moving drugs and weapons from Colombia and Bolivia through Paraguay to Brazil.²⁵
d.	Transportation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Land <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cars, buses, trucks ii. Sea <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium and small boats iii. Air <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small planes iv. Intermodal container

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- Information not found.

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

a. Corruption

- Luis Fernando da Costa's escape from prison is thought to have been facilitated by the prison guards.²⁶ In general, the Brazilian justice system is corrupt.

b. Concealment

- Information not found.

c. Deception

- Information not found.

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- Luis Fernando da Costa is known for circumventing border controls by innovating the Suriname and Paraguay routes for drugs and weapons.

H. Prior / Existing Relationships

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- Alliance with the PCC²⁷
- Worked closely with FARC²⁸
- Linked to Suri-Cartel²⁹
- Linked to Paraguayan drug traffickers and money launderers³⁰
- Enemy of Morel family in Paraguay³¹
- Enemy of CT and ADA³²

b. Corrupt politicians, law enforcement, political parties and other state entities, etc.

- No information found, but an organization of this size and importance in a country with such a history of public corruption is likely to be heavily engaged in bribery and intimidation of officials.

c. *Specific detail: Any alliances / past dealings with terrorist groups.*

- Alliance with FARC³³
- Linked to Jamil Fahd, who is a weapons and drug trafficker in Paraguay with ties to Hezbollah.

I. Ideological / Ethnic / Familial Orientation (if any)

- The CV is built around a leftwing populist ideology, which lends itself to Robin Hood comparisons.

J. Technical Sophistication

- Luis Fernando da Costa is technologically proficient, as shown by his use of cell phones to direct business from prison, his organization of complicated international logistics, his training from the FARC, and his familiarity with high caliber weaponry.
- The street level of CV has access to high caliber weaponry, but relies primarily on low-tech resources, like lookouts and spies, to control the favelas. Members are presumably more proficient with the use of technology at higher levels of the organization.

K. Penchant for Innovation

- Luis Fernando da Costa has a high penchant for innovation, having been involved in innovating the Suriname and Paraguay routes for drugs and weapons to Rio, and having shown his ability to adapt to changing prison conditions, as despite being moved periodically by authorities, he maintains links with his organization outside prison.³⁴

L. Activities in United States

a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities

- There was no information found showing a direct link to the CV, or Luis Fernando da Costa, and the United States.

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

b.	<i>Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found
c.	Linkages with US groups
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Market/transaction links <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found ii. Stable supplier <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found iii. Franchise arrangement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found iv. HQ and Branch office <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information not found
M. Evaluations	
a.	Strengths
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Red Command is a very large organization, with a lot of fire power and finances, which are difficult to assess because of its quasi-cellular organization, and the fact that the higher level leadership is able to continue operating from behind prison walls. • Luis Fernando da Costa has been able to connect the Red Command with the most important drug and weapons dealers in the region, even as he remained behind bars since the early 2000s. • Both Red Command collectively and Luis Fernando da Costa individually have been constructed into near-mythic entities, as a consequence of the Brazilian government and media’s exaggeration of their power and importance. This, along with their leftwing populist ideology, allows both Red Command and its most famous leader to appeal to public opinion among the large population of poor Brazilians, finding protection and new sources of recruits from the poor and marginalized youths within the favelas.. • Luis Fernando da Costa’s connections in Paraguay, Colombia, and Suriname ultimately gives the CV access to eastern European arms markets, and, with the connection between da Costa and Jamil Fahd, he is but a degree of separation from terrorist groups with a support presence in the Tri-Border Area.³⁵
b.	Weaknesses and vulnerabilities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decentralized structure of the Red Command at the level of the different favelas sometimes leads to internal conflicts that might result in splits in the organization, as with the CT. • The lack of centralized control over international allies, also allows for differences to develop between suppliers and buyers of drugs and weapons. • The fact that much of the CVs higher leadership is in prison means that if corruption in the prison system was successfully combated a power vacuum could result that would exacerbate whatever differences exist between the independent favela <i>donos</i>.
c.	Additional insights
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The supply routes that Luis Fernando da Costa and the Red Command are involved in tend to be concerned with moving weapons into Colombia and Brazil, and so the direction of the routes leads away from the United States. • There is no information to show that Luis Fernando da Costa and CV have been involved in shipping contraband to the United States. • To the extent that CV and Luis Fernando da Costa export contraband from Brazil, it tends to be in the direction of Europe.

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- There is indirect evidence that some of these weapons have been routed towards Hezbollah, but the reports suggest that this was done by an independent partner of Luis Fernando da Costa, i.e. Jamil Fahd of Paraguay.³⁶
- It is possible that this flow of weapons from Suriname/Colombia to Paraguay and then to the Middle East could be reversed, with weapons being shipped from the Middle East to South America and then connecting with other groups to reach the United States.

Other Notes

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¹ Ramos, Ricardo. "Cidade maravilhosa para o tráfico," *Congresso em Foco*, June 14, 2006.

<http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/Noticia.aspx?id=7039>.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ "Fernandinho Beira-Mar un temible capo aliado de Hernández Norambuena," *El Mercurio*, June 15, 2005.

<http://www.emol.com/noticias/internacional/detalle/detallenoticias.asp?idnoticia=185620>.

⁸ Logan, Samuel. "Making Millions from Behind Bars," *Security in Latin America*, November 27, 2007.

<http://samuellogan.blogspot.com/2007/11/making-millions-from-behind-bars.html>.

⁹ Dowdney, Luke. *Children of the Drug Trade* (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2003) 51.

¹⁰ Feltrin, Ricardo. "Saiba mais sobre o traficante Fernandinho Beira-Mar," *Folha Online*, November 11, 2002.

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u58844.shtml>.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25, 2002: 127-43, 139; "Department of Justice Hands Down Drug Indictments Against FARC Terrorists," *Drug Enforcement Administration*, March 18, 2002.

<http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr031802.html>; Logan, Samuel. "Beyond the DEA's Presence in Suriname," *International Relations and Security Network*, August 15, 2006.

<http://www.samuellogan.com/articles/beyonds-the-deas-presence-in-suriname.html>.

¹³ Dowdney, Luke. *Children of the Drug Trade* (Rio de Janeiro: 7Letras, 2003) 41.

¹⁴ Ibid. at 40-51.

¹⁵ Ibid. at 44.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid. at 46.

¹⁸ Ibid. at 46-51.

¹⁹ Penglase, Ben. "Bastard Child of the Dictatorship," *Luso-Brazilian Review*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2008: 118-145.

²⁰ Ramos, Ricardo. "Cidade maravilhosa para o tráfico," *Congresso em Foco*, June 14, 2006.

<http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/Noticia.aspx?id=7039>.

²¹ "Ameaçado pelo narcotráfico, juiz federal vive confinado em forum," *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 7, 2005.

http://www.migalhas.com.br/mostra_noticia.aspx?cod=13766.

²² Logan, Samuel. "Making Millions from Behind Bars," *Security in Latin America*, November 27, 2007.

<http://samuellogan.blogspot.com/2007/11/making-millions-from-behind-bars.html>.

²³ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25, 2002: 127-43, 139; "Department of Justice Hands Down Drug Indictments Against FARC Terrorists," *Drug Enforcement Administration*, March 18, 2002 (available at:

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²⁴ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25, 2002: 127-43, 139; "Department of Justice Hands Down Drug Indictments Against FARC Terrorists," *Drug Enforcement Administration*, March 18, 2002 (available at: <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr031802.html>); Logan, Samuel. "Beyond the DEA's Presence in Suriname," *International Relations and Security Network*, August 15, 2006.

<http://www.samuellogan.com/articles/beyonds-the-deas-presence-in-suriname.html>.

²⁵ "Traficante da quadrilha de Beira-Mar que vivia no Paraguai é extraditado para o Brasil," *Jornal do Brasil*, April 02, 2011. <http://www.jb.com.br/pais/noticias/2011/02/04/traficante-da-quadrilha-de-beira-mar-que-vivia-no-paraguai-e-extraditado-para-o-brasil/>.

²⁶ Feltrin, Ricardo. "Saiba mais sobre o traficante Fernandinho Beira-Mar," *Folha Online*, November 11, 2002.

<http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/folha/cotidiano/ult95u58844.shtml>.

²⁷ Hanson, Stephanie. "Brazil's Powerful Prison Gang," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, September 26, 2006. <http://www.cfr.org/brazil/brazils-powerful-prison-gang/p11542>.

²⁸ "Ameaçado pelo narcotráfico, juiz federal vive confinado em forum," *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 7, 2005.

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²⁹ Ortiz, Román D. "Insurgent Strategies in the Post-Cold War: The Case of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, vol. 25, 2002: 127-43, 139; "Department of Justice Hands Down Drug Indictments Against FARC Terrorists," *Drug Enforcement Administration*, March 18, 2002 (available at: <http://www.justice.gov/dea/pubs/pressrel/pr031802.html>); Logan, Samuel. "Beyond the DEA's Presence in Suriname," *International Relations and Security Network*, August 15, 2006.

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³⁰ "Ameaçado pelo narcotráfico, juiz federal vive confinado em forum," *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 7, 2005.

http://www.migalhas.com.br/mostra_noticia.aspx?cod=13766.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Cirino, Julio. "El insospechado poder del narcotráfico," *Libertad Digital*, September 14, 2002.

<http://www.libertaddigital.com/opinion/julio-cirino/el-insospechado-poder-del-narcotrafico-10746/>.

³³ "Ameaçado pelo narcotráfico, juiz federal vive confinado em forum," *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 7, 2005.

http://www.migalhas.com.br/mostra_noticia.aspx?cod=13766.

³⁴ Feltrin, Ricardo. "Saiba mais sobre o traficante Fernandinho Beira-Mar," *Folha Online*, November 11, 2002.

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³⁵ "Ameaçado pelo narcotráfico, juiz federal vive confinado em forum," *O Estado do Sao Paulo*, April 7, 2005.

http://www.migalhas.com.br/mostra_noticia.aspx?cod=13766.

³⁶ "A Global Overview of Narcotics-Funded Terrorist and Other Extremist Groups," *Library of Congress – Federal Research Division*, May 2002. http://www.au.af.mil/au/awc/awcgate/loc/drug_funded_terrorism.pdf.