

Organization Attributes Sheet: First Command of the Capital (PCC)

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A. When the organization was formed + brief history

- The First Command of the Capital (PCC) is an organized crime group based in Sao Paulo state, Brazil.
- The PCC was started in 1993 by a group of inmates inside the Taubate penitentiary as a prisoners union to fight against the oppression of Brazilian prisoners including torture, overcrowding, unsanitary conditions, and ill treatment.¹ The Taubate penitentiary contains prisoners who were transferred from other institutions because they were undisciplined and had previously killed other inmates.²
- The formation of the group was in direct response to the killing of 111 Sao Paulo penitentiary inmates during a prison riot in the early 1990s.³ The killings were given the nickname, “the Carandiru massacre.”⁴
- After formation, the group quickly began recruiting large numbers of inmates and its power began to extend outside of Sao Paulo prisons and into the streets of Sao Paulo. The group began drug trafficking and arms trafficking to provide sources of income to further its ability to oppose Brazilian authorities.
- In 2001, PCC leaders ordered a rebellion at 29 different prisons in Sao Paulo state in which 19 inmates were murdered. The attacks were coordinated through the use of cell phones.⁵
- In March 2003, members of the PCC murdered Antonio Jose Machado Dias, a Sao Paulo judge responsible for the operations of the high security prisons in Sao Paulo where many high-ranking members of the PCC were detained. Machado Dias was reportedly murdered because he was in favor of stern punishments for gang members and restricted conjugal visits and fraternization among inmates.⁶
- In May 2006, the PCC perpetrated a wave of violence in the state of Sao Paulo after many key members of the group were transferred to higher security facilities. Riots broke out simultaneously at 74 different detention centers throughout Brazil, and were accompanied by attacks on police stations and other public buildings, resulting in over a hundred deaths and many other injuries.⁷ The attacks targeted Brazilian authorities, specifically prison guards and police officers.⁸ The group also attacked 17 banks and torched 82 city buses.⁹
- Presently, the PCC wields a great amount of power in Brazil and is said to possess substantial political power in the country.¹⁰

B. Types of illegal activities engaged in,

a. In general

- Drug trafficking, murder, robbery, theft, embezzlement, arms dealing, kidnapping, extortion.

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

- The PCC dominates drug trafficking in Sao Paulo. Drugs, primarily marijuana and cocaine, are brought into Sao Paulo by members of the group via Paraguay. The drugs are transported overland and are usually hidden inside vehicles.¹¹ In the beginning of the PCC’s drug trafficking operation, the group depended on middlemen to smuggle in narcotics from Paraguay, but as it gained power, it set up a permanent presence in Paraguay to eliminate this middleman problem.¹²
- The PCC supplies other gangs such as the Red Command with drug shipments in Rio

Information derived from several sources and searchable databases.

All research conducted according to the project manual.

de Janeiro, and sells drugs in the favelas of Sao Paulo.¹³

- Weapons trafficking is also a primary activity of the First Command of the Capital and is highly lucrative. Much like for drug trafficking, the PCC utilizes ground transportation from Paraguay into Sao Paulo to bring in weapons.

C. Scope and Size

a. Estimated size of network and membership

- Overall membership size has been estimated at 85,000 to 125,000, making it one of the largest organized gangs in the western hemisphere.¹⁴
- Members are in nearly every prison in Brazil, and are the most prevalent gang in Brazilian prisons.

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

- Throughout Sao Paulo state, Brazil. Focused in the city of Sao Paulo.
- Salto del Guaira, Ciudad del Este, and Pedro Juan Caballero, Paraguay.¹⁵

D. Leader Characteristics

a. Who is/are the leader(s)

- Marco Herbas Camacho aka "Marcola" – top leader of the PCC.¹⁶
- Robson Lima Ferreira aka "Marcolinha" – head of the armed branch of the PCC.¹⁷
- Antonio Caballero – leader of PCC in Paraguay, responsible for drug trafficking.¹⁸
- Juan Carlos Portillo – PCC leader in Ciudad del Este.¹⁹

b. Leadership timeline

- Marco Herbas Camacho became the supreme leader of the PCC in October 2002 after a power struggle that left 15 senior leaders of the PCC dead.²⁰
- Camacho remains in charge today.

c. Leadership style (autocratic, diffuse, etc.)

- Largely diffuse, Camacho is the main leader but each prison has its own individual manager with a large amount of soldiers. Important operations, however, are initiated by Camacho who can coordinate activities from his jail cell with the use of a cellular phone.

E. Organizational Structure

a. Topology (cellular, hierarchical, etc.)

- Official membership structure is hierarchical; however, many unofficial cells of the group operate within prisons.
- Formal membership is structured in a hierarchy of towers, (those who lead the gang in a particular prison) pilots, (those who organize communication) and soldiers.²¹

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?

- Formal and informal membership both play major roles within the network. Formal membership has been placed at around 6,000 and includes the group's fee paying members within a hierarchy. However, many inmates within Brazilian prison systems are controlled by the group as informal members and claim membership in order to keep themselves alive.²²
- Formal members are required to undergo a baptism, a pledge to obey the group's principles.²³ This is similar to the Italian Mafia's initiation.

c. Command and Control (decentralized or centralized)

- Generally decentralized – members operate out of many different locations in

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- Paraguay and Brazil, both inside prisons and on the streets of numerous cities.
- Centralized for operations: the use of cell phones inside prisons is vital for the group's command and control as the group is able to coordinate attacks and prison riots through simple cell phone conversations while at different prisons.²⁴

F. Resources

a. Financial

- The group charges a monthly fee to its members of around \$22 for those who are in prison, which includes legal fees and payments to prisoner rights advocates.²⁵ Members who are out of prison are charged a monthly fee of around \$230.²⁶
- Group extorts transportation buses around Sao Paulo.²⁷
- Trafficking of large quantities of marijuana and cocaine is highly lucrative for the PCC.
- The PCC engages in many bank robberies to fund its operations.²⁸

b. Human

- Prison systems allow nearly unlimited recruitment opportunities.
- Drug transporters.

c. Logistical

i. Forgery, safe-houses, etc.

- PCC drug traffickers in Paraguay use farms as bases for their operations.²⁹

ii. Key routes

- Transportation of drugs from locations in Paraguay to Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

d. Transportation

i. Land

- Highways are utilized to transport drug shipments.
- Mules are also used to take drugs into Brazil through trails due to the harsh geography of the border region.³⁰

ii. Sea

- Information not found.

iii. Air

- Information not found.

iv. Intermodal container

- Hidden inside vehicles.

G. Trafficking Methods and Modalities

a. Corruption

- PCC drug traffickers face little resistance from Paraguayan law enforcement agencies.³¹

b. Concealment

- Drugs are hidden inside vehicles.

c. Deception

- Information not found.

d. Circumvention (avoiding border entry points)

- Porous border security between Paraguay and Brazil facilitates drug trafficking.

H. Prior / Existing Relationships

a. Other criminal organizations (cooperative and conflictual)

- The First Command of the Capital (PCC) has a coalition with the Red Command (CV),

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Rio de Janeiro's most dominant drug trafficking group. The PCC supplies cocaine to the Red Command. Together these two groups control the drug trade in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, Brazil.

- The PCC has ties with FARC, and it has been stated that the two groups engage in an arms-for-drugs trade. FARC has also provided kidnapping expertise to the PCC.³²

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

- There have been reported cases of law enforcement agents assisting and protecting members of the PCC. In May 2011, the deputy chief of the Investigation Division of the Salto del Guaira Police was investigated for his involvement with the group in a bank robbery.³³
- Prison guards aid members of the PCC, providing them with a variety of weapons and cell phones. Guards have also been involved in assisting PCC members in escaping from prisons.³⁴

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

- Cooperative relationship with FARC in the arms and drugs trade.

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

- PCC possesses an anti-establishment ideology that opposes the federal government of Brazil and pushes for better treatment of prisoners.
- The group has been labeled as a political movement.³⁵
- PCC wrote a sixteen-point manifesto that stresses the group's ideological goals and the fight against oppression and injustice inside the Brazilian prison system.³⁶

J. Technical Sophistication

- The group uses an advanced arsenal of weapons including assault rifles, hand grenades, firebombs, and home made bombs. Cell phones are used as the primary mode of communication between cells. There has also been a reported case of the group purchasing Stinger missiles.³⁷
- Drug trafficking operations between Paraguay and Brazil possess low technical sophistication with traffickers hiding drugs in vehicles.

K. Penchant for Innovation

- Moderate – Use of advanced weapons allows for the group to effectively combat Brazilian authorities. Also, the use of cell phone communication within prisons is a successful innovation that allows for highly coordinated operations.
- Penchant for innovation in drug trafficking is low.

L. Activities in United States

a. Includes both criminal and non-criminal activities

- Information not found.

b. *Specific detail: trafficking activities ; logistical activities*

- Information not found

c. Linkages with US groups

i. Market/transaction links

- Information not found

ii. Stable supplier

- Information not found

iii. Franchise arrangement

- Information not found

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| iv. HQ and Branch office |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information not found |
| M. Evaluations |
| a. Strengths |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruiting from within prisons allows for a large membership, making it difficult for authorities to contain the group. Leaders within the PCC are able to command operations from their jail cells with the use of cellular phones, without resistance from prison guards. Operating on both sides of the Paraguay-Brazil border makes trafficking efforts easier. Willingness to carry out brutal violence against authorities. Ideology of demanding better prisoner treatment wins the hearts and minds of many in the general public. Engage in drug dealing in Sao Paulo where there is a large market for cocaine. |
| b. Weaknesses and vulnerabilities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> |
| c. Additional insights |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The First Command of the Capital arouses great concern because it has utilized tactics that can be viewed as terroristic. By focusing the majority of its attacks on law enforcement agents and prison guards, the PCC reveals a willingness to pursue a confrontational strategy against the state. |
| Other Notes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PCC engages in drug trafficking and arms trafficking as a source of income, but this is not its ultimate objective. The group is focused on fighting against Brazilian authorities to improve prison conditions and ultimately alter the way the Brazilian prison system is operated. In this way, the First Command of the Capital is more of a movement than a street gang. |

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<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/wideangle/uncategorized/18-with-a-bullet-brazil-primeiro-comando-da-capital-pcc/2242/>

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⁴ Hanson, Stephanie. "Brazil's Powerful Prison Gang." *Council on Foreign Relations* 26 Sep 2006, Web.

<http://www.cfr.org/brazil/brazils-powerful-prison-gang/p11542>

⁵ "Timeline: The PCC Rebellions." *Financial Times* 18 May 2006, Web. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/45fefb38-e5fc-11da-b309-0000779e2340.html#axzz1OiUhyItf>

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⁸ BBC

⁹ PBS

¹⁰ Council on Foreign Relations

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- ¹⁸ "Corruption is a very important part of criminal groups, says Paraguayan minister." *UNODC* 21 May 2010, Web. <http://www.unodc.org/southerncone/en/imprensa/entrevistas/2010/05/21-a-corrupcao-e-uma-parte-muito-importante-dos-grupos-criminosos-diz-ministro-paraguaio.html>
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- ²² Council on Foreign Relations
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- ²⁷ "Organized Crime Controls Metropolitan Sao Paulo Public Transport Vans," *O Estado de Sao Paulo*, (Internet Version-WWW) in Portuguese, July 29, 2005, OSC: LAP20050729000107
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