

17 jul 22 - The Failure of the Militarization in Environmental Protection in Brazil

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It is not new that the Armed Forces are used to protect the sovereignty of the Amazon. But with the arrival of Bolsonaro to power and his vice (general) president, what has changed? Come with us to connect the dots. ??

As a representative of the Armed Forces, Hamilton Mourão, Brazil's Vice President under Bolsonaro, is used by the president as a kind of wound dressing to contain the unleashed bleeding of the Brazilian socio-environmental crisis. A year after taking over as VP, the Army General was placed in charge of the National Council of the Legal Amazon, a body that was made defunct, and later recreated, by Bolsonaro to calm critics of his environmental policy. In the first six months of his term, Mourão concentrated on the Armed Forces the command of public policies for the biome and expanded the dismantling of civil control bodies against environmental crimes, as shown in an article by @agenciapublica. In addition to submitting the environmental protection agency IBAMA, and the Indigenous Peoples Protection Agency Funai, to the Army's operational hierarchy in the Amazon, Mourão began to echo the government's systematic attacks on INPE, the Space Agency responsible for monitoring deforestation via satellite, whose data indicate successive records of environmental devastation since 2018. The Armed Forces also gained prominence in Brazil's diplomatic relations with other countries. An example of this is that Mourão took over control of the Amazon Fund from former Environment Minister Ricardo Salles. Created in 2008 to support projects that combat deforestation via donations from countries and companies, the fund had been suspended since 2019 due to criticism from the main donors of Salles' catastrophic policies and lack of transparency. However, the lack of transparency remained a hallmark. In November 2020, Mourão took a tour with ambassadors of the Amazon with the aim of proving that Brazil has nothing to hide in relation to the region. What he forgot to tell is that he would make an itinerary for foreigners to see, an expression used in Brazil to describe something staged to make believe. In the same month, the space agency INPE announced that the rate of deforestation in the forest between Aug/19 and Jul/20 was the highest in the last 12 years. And there's more, of course.

Have you ever heard of Law and Order Guarantee Operations (GLO)? The GLO was created to allow the Armed Forces use in cases of exhaustion of traditional public security forces and serious situations of disturbance of order, and are carried out exclusively at the behest of the President. In Bolsonaro's Brazil, they have been used as an environmental chloroquine to contain the devastation in the Amazon. Spoiler alert: they are not effective and still cause serious side effects. We explain why. From May 11, 2020 to June 30, 2021, Operation Verde Brasil 2, which authorized the use of the Armed Forces to Guarantee Law and Order in the Amazon with the mission of reducing illegal deforestation and burning, took place. It was fulfilled within the scope of the National Council of the Legal Amazon chaired by VP Mourão, as we mentioned earlier. Through a decree signed by the president, the Armed Forces were, within the scope of the operation, above the Environmental and Biodiversity protection agencies IBAMA and ICMBio. However, for the workers of federal environmental protection agencies, the presence of the military only served to interfere in their work. Heard by @uoloficial in an article from June 2020, the agencies' workers reported that, in two months of operation, the GLO officers chased away the criminals or was it that they warned them? With their large and inadequate vehicles and helicopters, they basically warned the criminals before officers arrived, allowing them to flee and hide equipments. The GLO also discarded the operations planned by the environmental protection agency IBAMA, removing the agency from the intelligence decisions.

Our impression is that the Armed Forces are there to make our work unfeasible. They are travelling the Amazon and doing nothing, reported an IBAMA worker at the time. And the results of this GLO, which cost more than R\$ 400 million? RECORDS OF DEVASTATION IN THE BIOME, as indicated by data from INPE since the beginning of the operation, in 2020. In addition, the GLO also diverted funds from real environmental protection to improve barracks and purchase military equipment, according to a survey by @revistapiaui. It's GLOroquine went down the throat at the service of socio-environmental dismantling.

The Failure of Militarization in Environmental Protection in Brazil We've already talked here about how, for the Bolsonaro government, protecting the environment and guaranteeing the rights of traditional peoples is something for the police and the military. The government dismantled the country's environmental surveillance system and then called in the military to repair the damage. It even seems that Brazil does not know how to deal with forest destruction. Decades of experience in

combating deforestation shows that what works is investment in civil inspection and control agencies, especially IBAMA and ICMBio, with logistical support from security forces for operations to search, seize and combat environmental crimes. The intelligence work, using satellite data produced by INPE and other civil society monitoring initiatives, should be guided by identifying the great deforesters and financiers of the devastation. The government should focus on enforcing environmental legislation, in partnership with states and municipalities. The demarcation of indigenous and quilombola lands, conservation units and the fight against land grabbing would be priorities for any presidency committed to the preservation of forests and the climate. However, in Bolsonaro's Brazil, militarization is used precisely to facilitate destruction. A smokescreen created to give the impression of "service"; while the federal executive branch works with the Congress to pass bills that dismantle environmental licensing, encourage theft of public lands and threaten indigenous peoples. The Armed Forces are Bolsonaro's puppets in the socio-environmental dismantling. For those who clamor to the four winds for "national sovereignty";, nothing could be more unpatriotic. Written by Julia Alves, adapted to english by Marianna Olinger. Art by Gabriel Pasin.