

## Argentina Army Seems to Be Smuggling Weapons to Brazilian Mafia Groups

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A Brazilian congressional committee began Wednesday, February 1st, contacts with Argentina and other neighboring Mercosur members and Suriname to request frontal action against arms trafficking following reports of weapons flowing to Brazilian organized crime.

The Congressional Investigating Committee received still-unverified reports that members of the armed forces of the four countries were involved in, or covered up arms sales to organized crime groups in Brazil.

During closed-door hearings held last year by the committee, witnesses alleged that military officers from neighboring countries were involved in the illegal trade.

The witnesses, whose identities are being kept secret, provided testimony that legislators consider sufficiently reliable, despite the fact that some of the individuals appearing before the committee were linked to the arms business.

"The information provided has to be investigated by Interpol, by Brazilian authorities and by police in the neighboring countries," emphasized Moroni Torgan, chairperson of the committee.

"According to the allegations, high-level officers in Argentina, Paraguay, Uruguay and Suriname are involved in arms smuggling," insisted Torgan, a former head of the Brazilian Federal Police.

The witnesses provided the names of five generals in the armies of Suriname, Uruguay and Paraguay, and of six high-level officers in the Argentine army, allegedly involved, according to Brasília press reports.

The committee was told by the witnesses that heavy weapons, such as rocket launchers, grenades and landmines, were among the arms sold to criminals.

The weapons were diverted from arms factories in neighboring countries, according to the witnesses, and sold to notorious groups such as the Red Command and the First Capital Command.

The Red Command, one of Brazil's largest criminal organizations, controls the illegal drug trade in Rio de Janeiro state, especially in Rio's "favelas," or shantytowns. The group has carried out attacks on buses, stores, hotels, schools and shopping centers with firearms and bombs in recent years.

The Red Command has waged bloody wars for control of drug trafficking in Rio's slums with its chief rival, the Third Command. The First Capital Command is considered Sao Paulo's largest criminal group and Brazil's most dangerous drug-trafficking organization.

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