

Brazilian Journalist Shot Three Times After Reporting on Drug Traffickers

Contributed by Emerson Luiz
Thursday, 20 September 2007

International Press Freedom organization Reporters Without Borders (RSF) is voicing its concern about the attack upon Amaury Ribeiro Junior, a reporter with the national daily "Correio Braziliense", who specializes in covering police news.

He was hospitalized, yesterday, September 19, after being shot in the stomach while outside a bar on a street in the Brazilian capital Brasília suburb of Cidade Ocidental, where he had gone to cover organized crime. The police have arrested a suspect in the shooting.

"We do not yet know if Ribeiro was personally targeted or if he was the victim of random criminal violence, but he was in the area to investigate drug trafficking," the press freedom organization said. "We call for a swift and thorough investigation to identify those responsible for this murder attempt."

Brasília's main daily has no doubt that the assassination attempt was a message for the newspaper to drop the case and stop reporting on drug trafficking. The attempted murder is the paper's front page only headline today: "Traffic Tries to Silence Correio with Bullet. It Won't."

Ribeiro, who is from the southeastern state of Minas Gerais, has written many stories for Correio Braziliense about violence and drug trafficking in the Brasília area. He had been investigating in Cidade Ocidental for more than a month, interviewing youths linked to gangs and families who had been the victims of violence. Because of threats, he was using a car without Correio Braziliense or other press markings.

Correio Braziliense's recent articles about violence in the capital and surrounding region have elicited promises of action from the municipal authorities. The federal government has also announced that the police will be reinforced in the region.

Ribeiro Junior was operated on Wednesday night when doctors extracted a bullet that was lodged in the groin region. The last medical bulletin from the Gama hospital is that the journalist is doing fine and is in no danger of complications.

He is the author of several reports on the rising violence in the Entorno neighborhood. He was just collecting more information on drug traffickers from Cidade Ocidental, which is a mere 30 miles from the National Congress.

The reporter was shot while watching a TV news broadcasting in a bar. According to witnesses, he was approached by a hooded young man who appeared without any announcement and shot the journalist three times with a .38 caliber revolver, before fleeing.

