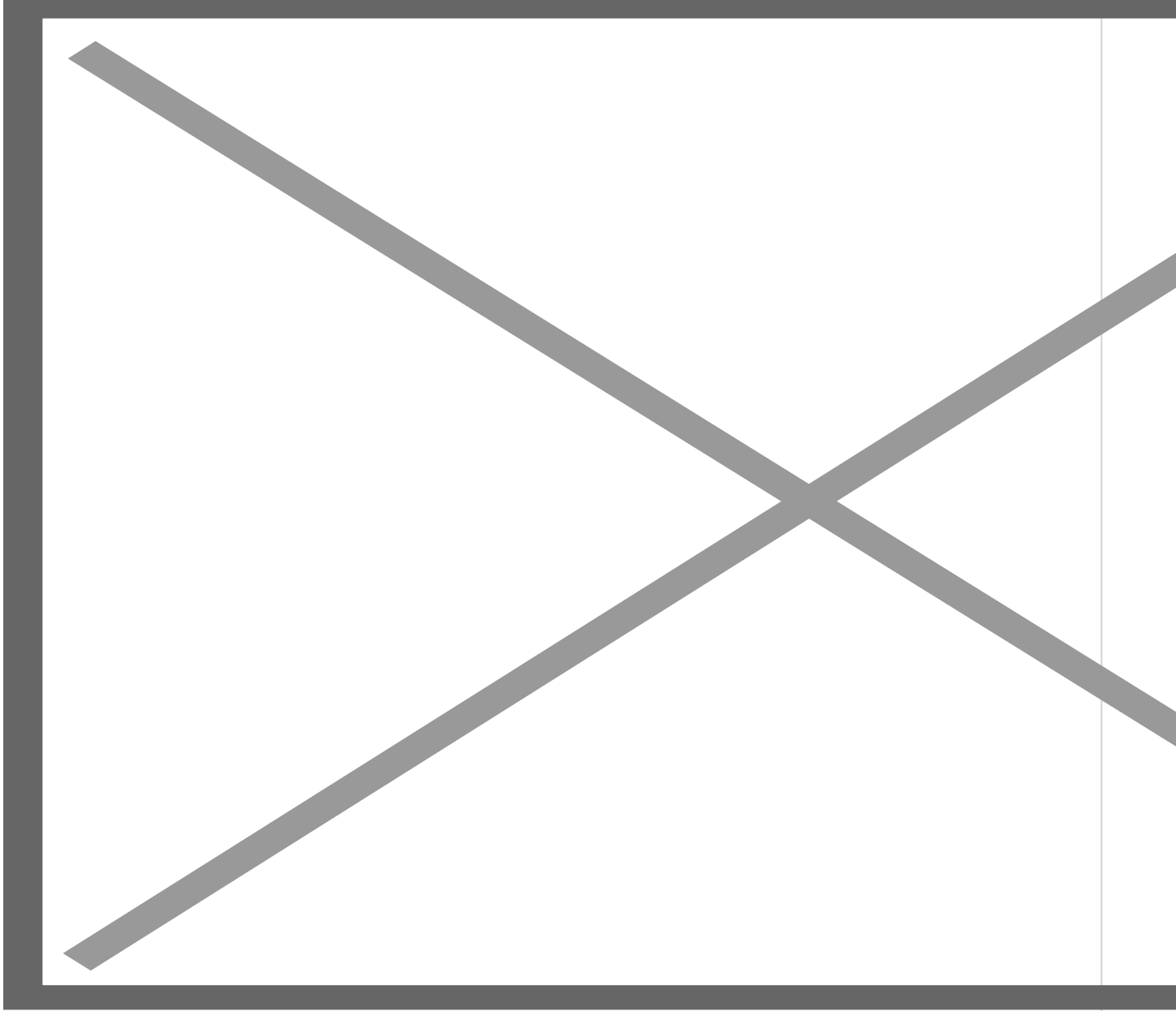


*Brazilian police carry out  
Operation Normandy on violence  
in Rio Grande Do Norte*

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**The operation involved 150 agents from the Civil, Military and Federal police. Mar. 17, 2023. | Photo: Twitter/@\_NewsCentral**

Brasilia, March 18 (RHC)-- The Government of the Brazilian State of Rio Grande do Norte reports that 150 police officers carried out early Friday morning what was called "Operation Normandy" in the cities of Natal, Parnamirim and Nísia Floresta.

Under the operation, 54 warrants were served on 22 targets, with 30 preventive arrests and 24 searches, according to the State Secretariat of Public Security and Social Defense (Sesed).

Authorities said that that Operation Normandy was organized to "dismantle a criminal organization operating on the southern coast of Rio Grande do Norte." "The investigations point to the practice of drug trafficking and robberies," said the state government, noting that "the organization moved approximately R \$ 150,000 per month with trafficking and robberies."

The name of the operation refers to the largest aircraft operation in history, when Allied troops landed on the Normandy coast.

Jose Kempes Pereira de Araújo, 45, is said to be one of the leaders of the criminal faction. Araújo, who is known as "Alicate" has been identified as "one of the masterminds of the criminal attacks that have taken place in the state."

"Alicate" has been transferred from the State Penitentiary of Alcaçuz, in Nísia Floresta, to the Federal Prison of Mossoró.

Since early Tuesday morning, at least 39 cities in Rio Grande do Norte have suffered arson and shooting attacks on stores, public buildings, and vehicles. The criminal group Sindicato do Crimen, which operates from inside Rio Grande do Norte's prisons, is allegedly linked to these attacks.

According to preliminary investigations, the unrest in the state is a response to the recent tightening of public policies to combat crime and poor conditions in the prison system.

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