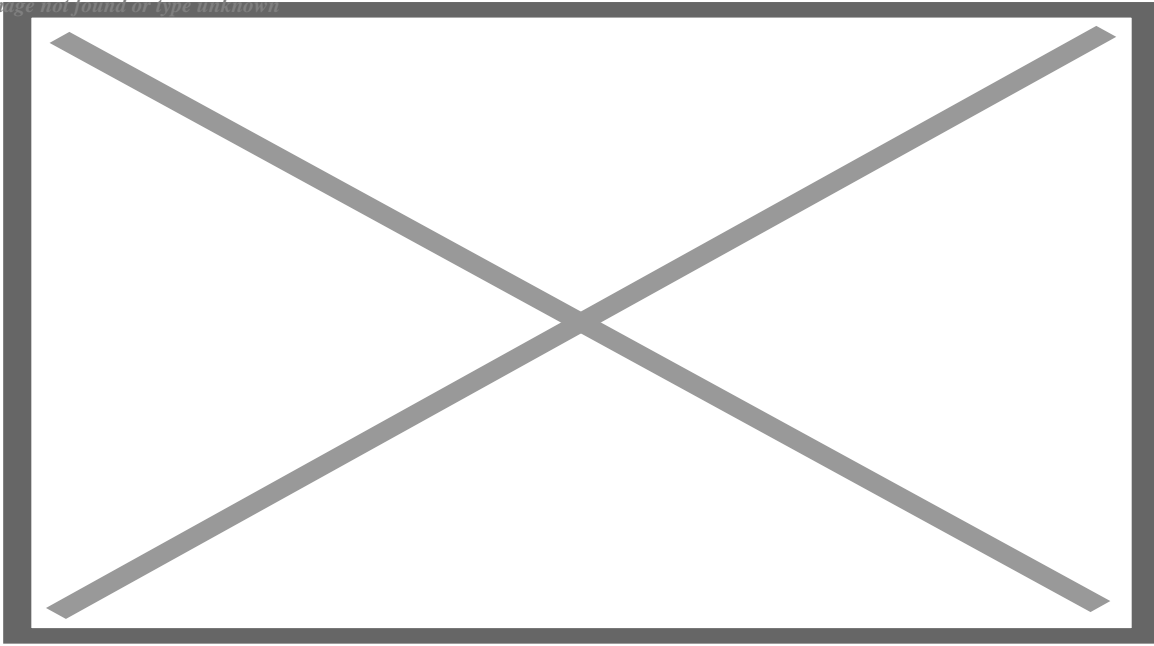


Northeastern Brazilian cities under attack

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Bus set on fire in a northeastern Brazilian city, March 16, 2023. | Photo: Twitter/ @CentraNewsGT

Brasilia, March 17 (RHC)-- In the northeastern State of Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil, the "Crime Syndicate" continued carrying out violent actions for the third consecutive day. The attacks occurred despite the fact that the Justice Ministry on Wednesday sent troops from the "National Force," an elite body of Police.

The unusual events, however, began earlier. Since Tuesday, local authorities have reported shootings and fires against vehicles, businesses, banks, and public institutions in some 20 cities of Rio Grande do Norte.

Although the number of attacks has decreased since then, Governor Fatioma Bezerra acknowledged that the situation has not yet returned to normal. Between Wednesday night and early Thursday morning, criminal groups set fire to vehicles in cities such as Natal, Joao Camara, and Sao Paulo do Potengi. They also burned a supermarket in Sao Goncalo do Amarante.

According to the latest official report, the Military Police have arrested 57 suspects and confiscated 46 explosive devices, 15 firearms, 10 gasoline drums, money, drugs, and ammunition. Two people died in

clashes with the Police.

The Crime Syndicate is an illegal organization that dominates drug trafficking in the region and operates from inside prisons. It emerged a decade ago as a dissident of the First Command of the Capital (PCC), which is Brazil's largest criminal organization and already has ramifications in other Latin American countries.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the actions of the Crime Syndicate constitute a retaliation for the hardening of policies to combat crime inside the regional prison system.

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