

Brazil and Colombia Pledge to Continue War on Drugs



Brasilia, February 2 (RHC)-- Defense ministers from Brazil and Colombia agreed to step up their fight against drug traffickers at a meeting in the Brazilian city of Manaus, where feuding drug gangs set off a recent string of deadly prison riots.

The countries promised to share intelligence and transportation along a porous 1,000 mile border cutting through the Amazon rainforest, where they have struggled to slow the flow of drugs in recent years.

Demobilization of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, as part of a deal ending more than 50 years of war has raised concerns that heavily armed former combatants could join with increasingly powerful drug gangs in Brazil.

The splintering of FARC forces coincides with a bloody realignment among the drug gangs running the roughly \$4.5 billion cocaine trade in Brazil, the world's biggest consumer after the United States, and funneling drugs to Europe.

For years, Brazil's two most powerful gangs, the Sao Paulo-based First Capital Command and the Red Command, based in Rio de Janeiro, divided the national drug market and shared the most lucrative trafficking routes.

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