

Changing intelligence

*The Brazilian Intelligence Agency has broadened its scope in recent years. **Marcio Paulo Buzanelli**, the head of the agency, discusses how Brazilian intelligence has evolved since being civilianised, highlighting its response to international terrorism and regional friction.*

Brazil may seem an unlikely target for international terrorists of any ideological conviction. However, Marcio Paulo Buzanelli, director general of the Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Agencia Brasileira de Inteligencia: ABIN), is alert for any suggestion to the contrary.

He says: "Although it is extremely remote, there is a possibility of terrorist attacks against Brazilian targets, such as critical infrastructure." Furthermore, he adds, one upcoming event has caught his attention: "In July, Brazil will host the Pan-American Games. Athletes, representatives and journalists from all the countries in the Americas will be present and the event will have great visibility. Just imagine an attack by even a small organisation – it would immediately attract international attention to its cause."

It has been 35 years since the Palestinian group Black September murdered a group of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympics. Sport normally escapes the scourge of terrorism, but today not even Brazil can fully discount the risk of being the victim of an increasingly global phenomenon.

Nonetheless, Buzanelli is realistic about threats to Brazil. He says: "There are no threats of disintegration, threats to the political structure and there are no conflicts between states." He says given the lack of a direct and continuous terrorist threat to Brazil, one of the intelligence agency's major roles is preventing industrial espionage and other forms of organised crime.

These roles seem well suited to Buzanelli. Aged 56, he has been an intelligence officer since 1978 and has specialist experience in combating organised crime since the early 1990s. He was ABIN's liaison officer with the US Joint Inter-Agency Task Force East, based in Key West, Florida, from 2000

to 2002, and was director of ABIN's intelligence department until August 2005, when he was appointed director-general.

Buzanelli should hope that this experience will help him avoid repeating previous scandals involving ABIN during its investigations into criminal activity. In March 2005, Brazilian magazine *Veja*

'Brazilian intelligence had a structure dating back to the Cold War – it needed to function more efficiently'

– citing documents leaked from ABIN – reported that President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's party, the Workers' Party (Partido dos Trabalhadores: PT), may have received a donation of USD5 million for its 2002 election campaign from the insurgent group Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia: FARC). Embarrassingly, ABIN said afterwards that some documentation in its archive may not be true. The PT confirmed that meetings between party members and the FARC took place, but that no money changed hands.

Modernisation

Beyond organised crime and industrial espionage, Buzanelli says one of his main goals since becoming a top security adviser to President Lula has been to modernise ABIN and rid it of any traces of the days when intelligence in Brazil, like in other countries in Latin America, was the exclusive realm of the military.

For decades, intelligence was run by the National Intelligence Service (Servico Nacional de Infor-

macoes: SNI), set up in 1964 by the then military government. It was not until 1995 that President Fernando Henrique Cardoso appointed a civilian to lead the newly created Under-Secretariat of Intelligence (Subsecretaria de Inteligencia: SSI) and then, in 1999, its successor ABIN.

"The principal challenge we had was to transform the organisational architecture and improve our personnel's capacity to deal with the threats we face," Buzanelli says, adding that ABIN now has a presence in all 26 Brazilian states, including Amazonia. "The Brazilian intelligence apparatus had a structure dating back to the Cold War, it needed to function in a more efficient manner."

International intelligence

Alongside its domestic expansion, ABIN is witnessing an increase in its international operations. In late 2006, President Lula instructed ABIN to prepare agents for despatch to Venezuela and Bolivia. ABIN had previously maintained liaison officers only in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires, in Washington and in Key West, Florida.

The decision appears to be in response to the influence being exerted in South America by Venezuela's President Hugo Chavez at the expense of Brazil's traditional leadership role. In May 2006, Bolivian President Evo Morales ordered the nationalisation of his country's natural gas fields, a

move that affected Petrobras, Brazil's main energy company, and irked Lula. Many in Brazil saw the hand of Chavez behind Morales.

However, officially that is not the motive for sending ABIN agents to Venezuela and Bolivia. Rather, it will be to ensure a more effective and reciprocal exchange of information to combat

international organised crime, such as drug trafficking. "There is no special reason for sending agents to Venezuela or to Bolivia; it will make the exchange of information more agile," Buzanelli says. He adds that ABIN has relations with more than 60 foreign agencies that have representation in Brazil. "Venezuela and Bolivia are friends of Brazil." ■

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