

**THE BRAZILIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE MARSHALL CENTER'S
PROGRAM ON COUNTERING TRANSNATIONAL ORGANIZED CRIME**

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ABSTRACT

In South America, actions of transnational organized crime have taken on an accentuated importance, increasingly engaging national institutions responsible for addressing this threat in its various angles. In this sense, and in the face of a complex and challenging task, the need to improve international cooperation for the establishment of effective partnerships has become clear, whether in the regional environment or in extracontinental areas, where there are concrete opportunities to improve capabilities against opponents increasingly organized in illicit networks. From this perspective, Brazil has participated for almost a decade in the Program on Countering Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC), promoted by the George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies in Germany. Brazil's representativeness has progressively increased, confirming the country's relevance on the international scene in this context, either by the expansion of local criminal groups and the increase of their links with international organizations, or by the maturation of the functioning of security and law enforcement institutions in Brazil, which are increasingly committed to developing collaborative actions and adopting cooperative attitudes to build intercontinental interagency efforts, in order to achieve the synergy necessary to guarantee the common objectives of our States. For all these reasons, at a time when we are celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Marshall Center, this article has the purpose of thanking the legacy left to hundreds of countries, especially Brazil, in the certainty of continuing a solid partnership to educate, engage and empower the national institutions in the silent task of protecting our societies.

Keywords:

Transnational Organized Crime, national institutions, security, State and society.

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INTRODUCTION

Specially over the past two decades, the Transnational Organized Crime has gained recognition by the United Nations as a global threat, endorsed by the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Palermo, Italy, in December 2000², given to the understanding that such issue goes beyond national or regional perceptions of geographical spaces.

In this context, bilateral or multilateral initiatives supported by international organizations have demonstrated political will and alignment of perceptions among national states, regarding the need to develop global responses to a challenge that is also global. The impacts of the challenge mentioned are increasingly widespread and cross-cutting as they touch upon security issues in their multidimensional spectrum, reaching aspects of the social, economic, and political dimensions.

In the scope of such initiatives, this article aims to disseminate the role of George C. Marshall Center for European Security Studies (GCMC)³, highlighting the institutional participation of Brazilians in the Marshall Center's Program on Countering Transnational Organized Crime for nearly a decade.

The GCMC was established on June 5th, 1993, representing one of the Regional Centers of the U.S Department of Defense and the only one from bilateral nature, conceived through a partnership between the United States Department of Defense (DoD) and the German Federal Ministry of Defense (FMoD), in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Bavaria.

A renowned instrument of German-American cooperation on regional and international security issues, in 2014, the GCMC added to its extensive portfolio another important study approach that would address the then-emerging threat on a global scale, represented by transnational organized crime. This initiative began with the creation of the course Countering Narcotics and Illicit Trafficking (CNIT), which, in the following year, was renamed Program on Countering Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC), still active today.

The CTOC examines the main methods by which the transnational criminal organizations engage in illicit activities⁴, with an emphasis on drug trafficking and its associated illicit activities, as well as related offenses including corruption and financial

² Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in Palermo, Italy. Available at <<https://www.unodc.org/lpo-brazil/pt/crime/marco-legal.html>>. Accessed on: oct 12th 2023.

³ Creation of Marshall Center. Available at <<https://www.marshallcenter.org/en>>. Accessed on: oct. 12th 2023.

⁴ Program on CTOC. Available at: <<https://www.marshallcenter.org/en/academics/college-courses/program-countering-transnational-organized-crime-ctoc>>. Accessed on: oct 12th 2023.

crimes involving both the public and private branches worldwide.

The course is primarily aimed at government employees in the areas of security, defense, intelligence, foreign affairs, researchers, magistrates and others. They form a heterogeneous group of professionals who are experts in their respective fields and/or occupy positions in which they can provide high-level advice to decision-makers, contributing to expanding the commitment efforts of State spheres entities in countering transnational organized crime.

For this purpose, the CTOC is structured into two different modules, the first consisting of presentations, panels, and interviews with renowned figures, aiming to update the global situation on the topic, as well as stimulate debates in search of intergovernmental and inter-regional solutions. As a second step, a strategy development exercise is led through a case study, allowing interaction between the faculty and student body.

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Since its creation in 2014, the CTOC has trained 1,271 officials, reaching the remarkable milestone of 115 countries, represented across all continents, as indicated in the Table 1

Table 1 – Countries participation in CTOC.

Regions	Countries participating in CTOC	Total countries by region
Europe	34	50
North America	03	03
Central America	14	20
South America	09	13
Africa	30	54
Asia	22	51
Oceania	03	03

Source: Adapted data obtained from CTOC Alumni (GCMC 2023).

In addition to enabling human resources at the highest level and strengthening personal ties and interagency relations in a broad international collaborative network, the CTOC, above all, shares resilience among state actors by connecting the five continents. It encompasses the entire criminal logistics chain in a globalized world, from countries where illicit demand originated to the regions that provide the offer.

Brazil has been present in eight of the 16 CTOC editions. The first participation took place in 2014, back when the program was still known as CNIT (Transnational Narcotic Illicit Combat), which lasted for two weeks. It was intended for the debate and sharing of good practices for improving security and intelligence institutions against the growing threat

of transnational organized crime around the world.

On that occasion, the first CNIT class comprised 69 representatives from 34 countries. The course was conducted at the Marshall Center facilities, located in the Alps region of the German state of Bavaria, as illustrated in Figure 1.



Figure 1: George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.

Source: [wikimedia.org/wiki/Category George_C._Marshall_European_Center_for_Security_Studies](https://www.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:George_C._Marshall_European_Center_for_Security_Studies).

In 2016, CNIT was renamed CTOC and, once again, Brazil was represented by Major Gustavo de Lima, from Brazilian Army, who highlighted an interesting experience during the course:

I was invited to share with representatives from 60 countries in the school's main plenary session the lessons learned about successful interagency action and integrated work between military and public security institutions in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Lima, 2023).

Such operations involved numerous agencies in carrying out the security of international events exposed to a series of threats, including the actions of criminal groups and terrorism, which could harm the physical integrity of foreign dignitaries and authorities, and also undermine the hosting of Mega Sporting Events⁵.

⁵ Term commonly used to refer to sporting events of international magnitude that took place in Brazil from 2011 to 2016, including the Military World Games (2011), Confederations Cup (2013), FIFA World Cup (2014), and the Olympic Games (2016). In these opportunities, national institutions (including the Armed Forces) developed methodologies, doctrines and interoperability for the joint confrontation of threats to the security of authorities and society as a whole, constituting an inflection point for interagency applicability in Brazil.

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Figure 2: official CTOC 2016 picture.

Source: given by Lieutenant-Colonel of Brazilian Army Gustavo de Lima (2023).

In the following year, there was a change in the profile of Brazilian participants. The CTOC would now benefit from the expertise and vision from the perspective of researchers and representatives of the Legislative Branch. This characterized the multidisciplinary aspect and the breadth of approach naturally demanded by countering transnational organized crime.

In 2020, not even the COVID-19 pandemic prevented the holding of the CTOC, which took place virtually, but with the same perception of the continuity of its actions in favor of building resilience, considering that transnational criminal organizations do not interrupt their activities, they readapt and look for alternatives to continue their illicit business. After his experience at this edition of the CTOC, Lieutenant Colonel Rodrigo Duton of the Rio de Janeiro State Military Police pointed out:

CTOC is an excellent way to learn the trending topics in countering transnational organized crime. For Brazil, a country of continental dimension that shares borders with 10 countries, prioritizing the fight against transnational organized crime is a matter of survival (Duton, 2023).

In this sense, Duton highlighted the “value of the policy paper developed by the end of CTOC as a way of being effective to our country”, asserting that Brazil should increase its participation in the program, “expanding the national critical mass on this topic” (Duton, 2023).

In 2021, the in-person activities were retaken and the GCMC promoted the event named Community of Interest⁶ integrated into the CTOC context, aiming to discuss strategic successes

⁶ Opportunity for ongoing training in which former students meet again at the Center to study topics related to their respective areas of work. their respective areas of work.

in the fight against transnational organized crime. On that occasion, Brazil was represented by São Paulo Police Chief Fabiano Barbeiro, who would return the following year to participate in the CTOC 01, from March 3rd to 29th. The Police Chief highlighted common aspects noticed in former student's perceptions:

Marshall Center has fully structured facilities and extremely available staff, creating a welcoming and fraternal environment, besides providing ideal conditions for professional improvement (Barbeiro, 2023).

Another unique characteristic is the respect towards the students, all being referred to as "participants". In this sense, it was also emphasized that the "freedom of opinion granted in the debates allows the joint construction of knowledge and the productive exchange of lessons learned" (Barbeiro, 2023).



Figure 3: official Community of Interest CTOC 2021 photo.
Source: given by Civil Police Delegate Fabiano Barbeiro (2023).

In 2022, CTOC was conducted in two editions. At that time, Brazil had expanded once again its participation, going beyond the police spectrum to include Federal Government officials, within the scope of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security. In addition, it is worth highlighting the participation of women among the Brazilians, which had not happened since 2017. Police Chief Cândida de Magalhães was a student at the 2nd edition of the CTOC. With more than 20 years' service in the Police in the states of Amazonas and Roraima she emphasized "the importance of women's participation in the peacebuilding and security agendas" (Magalhães, 2023).

Cândida highlighted the ability of Brazilian representatives to contribute to the global level discussion of strategies for combating transnational criminal organizations, considering their geopolitical position in this scenario:

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Brazil is the largest country in Latin America and has an extensive border, whose proximity to cocaine-producing countries makes it a vulnerable territory for transnational criminal organizations actions (Magalhães, 2023).

Due to her outstanding participation in CTOC of 2022, Police Chief Cândida returned to GCMC in the following year, this time to join the teaching staff as an adjunct professor, contributing to Brazil becoming part of a distinguished community in security studies.



Figure 4: adjunct professor's participation in CTOC 2023-02.
Source: given by Civil Police Delegate Cândida de Magalhães (2023).

It is noteworthy that a public employee outside the traditional "Rio-São Paulo" axis has been designated to the CTOC. The "Rio-São Paulo" axis comprises the country's largest cities, usually a priority for issues related to organized crime in Brazil. Thus, this designation signaled a broadening of the perspective on the issue, as it also drew attention to the region where the triple border between Brazil, Venezuela and Guyana is located. Since 2013, this region has witnessed the expansion of TOC into the northernmost part of Brazil (Magalhães and Carmo, 2022)⁷, and, above all, since the mid-2015s, it has been the stage for the largest migration flows in South America (Souza, 2022)⁸ due to the widespread internal crisis in Venezuela, with Colombia and Brazil being the main destination countries.

The federal police officer Rodrigo Vasconcellos, who was working at the Ministry of Justice and Public Security at the time, concluded that the international consensus on the development of TOC "represented a threat to the national security of many nations". In this sense, he adds about his stay at the Marshall Center: "The exchange of experiences, the choice of topics, and the opportunity to dedicate an extended period of time to deepening, even our own convictions, make us much better professionals" (Alves, 2023).

⁷ The main national level criminal organizations have reached the state of Roraima after 2013, enabling them to expand drug trafficking, firearms smuggling, as well as illegal mining in indigenous territory.

⁸ In 2018, the disorderly growth in migratory flow of Venezuelan people, as well as the lack of border control, resulted in the increase of criminality, beggary, invasion of public places and prostitution.

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In 2023, the year in which the Marshall Center celebrated its 30th anniversary, the CTOC edition was attended by 82 participants from 42 nationalities. The course was conducted in person over 24 days and focused on the threats to national security in the 21st century arising from the actions of transnational organized crime. According to CTOC Agenda⁹, the program examined the main methods by which the transnational criminal organizations get involved in highly structured and profitable illicit activities.



Figure 5: official CTOC 23-02 photo.
Source: given by Marshall Center (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gcmphotos>).



Figure 6: Brazilian participants in CTOC 23-02.
Source: given by Marshall Center (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gcmphotos>).

⁹ Curriculum for the George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies Countering Transnational Organized Crime (CTOC) course. Course Rhythm 14 Feb – 6 Mar.

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It is important to mention that Brazil also composed the largest delegation in the event, being represented by nine participants, which included members from Federal, Civil and Military Police, Federal Justice officers and, for the first time, by the Institutional Security Office of Presidency of the Republic (GSI/PR).

Another interesting note was the choice of Brazil as one of the countries for the case study to build a proposal of National CTOC Strategy, in which it was able to explore the complexities, particularities, and challenges on drafting a high-level document to a country like Brazil, especially considering the geopolitical context in which it is inserted.



Figure 7: presentation of CTOC National Strategy for Brazil – case study.
Source: given by Marshall Center (<https://www.flickr.com/photos/gcmcphotos>).

Throughout this brief historical record, it has become clear that Brazil has progressively increased its participation in the CTOC program over the years, according with Table 2:

Table 2 – Brazilian participation in CTOC.

Editions	Participants
2014 (CNIT)	01
2016	01
2017	02
2020	04
2022	09
2023	09
Total	26

Source: adapted from Marshall Center Alumni Program (2023).

The enhancement of Brazil's participation is noticeable, especially on the last few years, suggesting the growing interest on the matters studied in the CTOC in Brazil, probably due to the criminal organizations rising, particularly the "Primeiro Comando da Capital"

(PCC), which represents a “multinational of crime”, according to (Gakya, 2023):

PCC has nearly 40 thousand components in the national territory, operates in all South America countries and has come closer to the Italian Mafia ‘Ndrangheta¹⁰, extending its actions to the north of Africa and Iberian Peninsula (Gakya, 2023).

As a result of that, national institutions may be able to contribute with the best practices in combating these transnational criminal organizations, through their operating models and accumulated experience.

Also, in the context of the CTOC program, the Marshall Center has promoted international forums on this topic, with notable Brazilian participation in the most recent editions, namely in Germany and Italy, as shown in the following table.

Table 3 – Brazilian participation in CTOC – IF.

Editions	Participants
2021	03
2022	06
2023	08
Total	17

Source: adapted from Marshall Center Alumni Program.



**Figure 8: Brazilian team for CTOC – IF 23 and guests from Brazil's Embassy in Rome.
Source: from the Author (2023).**

In this edition, Brazilian delegation was gifted with a participation in an exclusive interview, which emphasized on the work of Special Work Group on Countering Organized Crime (GAECO), of Public Ministry of São Paulo state, and on the theme regarding PCC

¹⁰ the ‘Ndrangheta is now recognized as a major threat not only in Italy but also in many other countries where it operates, including Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, France, Belgium, Switzerland, Canada, US, Colombia and Australia. Threat Assessment Italian Organized Crime. Europol. 2013.

and the Brazilian Governments acting on countering cross-border crimes through Integrated Border Protection Program (PIIF)¹¹.



Figure 9: Brazil Panel for CTOC - IF 2023.
Fonte: The author (2023).

Beyond these forums, Marshall Center develops many activities to support the large group of former students, named Alumni¹². That happened due to the importance of adjusting the institutional bond and enhancing the link in its destination counties. In this sense, the members are allowed access to the GlobalNET¹³ platform, guaranteeing a bank data for research and other useful information for free.

In order to maintain this select universe well-informed and engaged in a collaborative network, the Center offers programs dedicated to such matters, which includes the Communities of Interest¹⁴; the Scholarship Program¹⁵; the Outreach Event¹⁶, besides Regional Forums¹⁷, such as Pan-American International forum, that took place in São Paulo from August 8th to 10th 2023.

This event, held in Brazil, represents a milestone in Brazilian participation in

¹¹ Created by the Decree 8.903, of November 16th, 2016, and modified by Decree 11.273, of December 5th, 2022.

¹² Program directed to former students which provides a diverse range of opportunities and professional development tools, keeping them engaged, informed, and involved in an international collaborative network.

¹³ Organizations network that works to promote national and international collaboration, as well as maintaining relationships and capabilities among partner institutions.

¹⁴ Continuing education opportunity for former students through returning to the Study Center in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, Germany.

¹⁵ Program funded by the Marshall Center, with a five-week immersion, where the former students carry out research on security topics.

¹⁶ Awareness events aimed at addressing current security issues and promoting security cooperation.

¹⁷ Bring together former students from selected regions to discuss relevant topics, including the fight against Transnational Organized Crime.

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CTOC-related issues promoted by the Marshall Center and marks a path of no return in terms of international inter-institutional cooperation. The Forum brought together 16 officials from the three branches of government, as well as the São Paulo State Public Prosecutor's Office, in the belief that a threat of such complexity and gravity can only be addressed with the full participation of government and society, confirming the premise strongly promoted in the CTOC.

The Pan-American Forum discussed relevant topics, including the internationalization of criminal organizations, with a focus on the regional panorama, especially in relation to the expansion of the main Brazilian criminal groups on the borders, as well as opening spaces for intersection with extra-continental perspectives, especially America and Europe, given the links and networks of illicit activities with an intercontinental scope. The activity also allowed the exchange of good practices and lessons learned in the fight against these crimes, which continue to challenge our police and law enforcement institutions.



Figure 10: Pan-American Forum for Countering Transnational Organized Crime.
Source: The Author (2023).

In this sense, understanding the ideal scope for collective diffusion and construction of solutions to the problem at hand, the Marshall Center values the heterogeneity among officials in CTOC activities, as seen in Table 4. The table highlights the importance of a cross-cutting approach to such an issue and the imperative need for the full involvement of government actors to achieve effective results. In this scenario, Brazil reached the milestone of 59 participations in activities related to CTOC since its creation.

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Table – Brazilian participation in CTOC and origin institutions

Institutions	Participations
Ministry of Justice and Public Security	06
Institutional Security Office of the Presidency of the Republic (GSI/PR)	05
Brazilian Intelligence Agency (Abin)	01
Federal Court of Auditors	01
Federal Justice	03
House of Representatives	04
Federal Police	14
Civil Police	12
Military Police	04
Armed Forces	01
Federal Public Prosecutor's Office	06
Academic	02
Total	59

Source: adapted from Marshall Center Alumni Program.

Given this finding during the research, which coincides with the unprecedented participation of GSI in CTOC 23, the possibility of using the Integrated Border Protection Program (PIIF) as an institutional platform to promote alumni gatherings was identified. This could also motivate future participants, considering the national outreach aspect of PIIF, which is in line with the Marshall Center's organic perception of the importance of keeping alumni connected despite the challenges caused by their natural dispersion after returning to their home institutions.

The GSI is responsible for coordinating the governmental actions of this Brazilian governmental program within the federal public administration, which currently includes eight ministries and the Federal Public Prosecutor's Office. With a total of 18 member agencies, the PIIF is the most comprehensive regulatory framework available to the Brazilian state for the joint fight against this transnational threat, with the mission of strengthening the prevention, control, monitoring, and repression of cross-border crimes, and is therefore fully in line with the CTOC.



Figure 11: PPIF Executive Committee symbol, which brings together 18 federal entities.
Source: The author (2023).

CONCLUSION

This article is intended to honor Marshall Center, as it completes 30 years of existence. It aims to highlight the rewarding legacy of the Program on Countering Transnational Organized Crime in training Brazilians over the last decade to provide assertive advice and build strategies to jointly confront this global threat, contributing to building resilience in our national institutions.

In this sense, it is concluded that the noticeable increase of Brazilian participation in CTOC activities is, on the one hand, due to the leading role that Brazil has achieved in the international scenario, given its geopolitical position associated with criminal organizations locally originated but interconnected on a global scale. On the other hand, it is due to the maturity of national institutions in confronting these threats, becoming essential actors in international cooperation.

In addition, alongside the Marshall Center, in its noble mission to "educate, engage and empower", there is the PPIF in Brazil, which already covers the majority of national agencies invited to participate in events related to CTOC, and is able to represent another tool for institutional coordination that seeks collective responses to the confrontation of transnational crimes.

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Given this convergence of purposes, this Brazilian program is identified as a solid and promising bridge that crosses the Atlantic Ocean towards the Bavarian Alps, revealing opportunities to strengthen the partnership between our institutions for the consolidation of increasingly integrated, secure and stable borders, benefiting progressively prosperous societies.

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