

## **Violence without Borders**

### **The One Billion-Dollar Market that Shifts Crime between Brazil and the United States**

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**Two boys, age seven, are playing in a suburban street. One of them notices the other bending down and extending his arm, straining as he reaches for some object on the hood of a car. Moments later the first boy lies outstretched with a bullet wound to the head. After six hours of agony, he dies in a hospital. The dead child had not been reaching for a ball or a skateboard, but a .44 caliber revolver.**

This tragedy – which could have taken place in any city in the world – happened in the United States, on Sigel Street in Philadelphia. But the gun that killed Nafis Jefferson was not manufactured in the U.S. but at the Rossi factory in the Brazilian town of São Leopoldo, Rio Grande do Sul.

But the guns – and the crime – are not moving in only one direction. Walmir Costa de Souza, 24, was wielding a .30 caliber machine gun when he was killed in a shoot-out with police at Morro Santa Marta, a shantytown in the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro. His weapon was manufactured 10 thousand kilometers away, at a Browning factory in Utah.

This is the first in a series of EXTRA articles revealing the sinister side of the quiet trade in firearms involving two countries, an exchange that has amounted to almost \$600 million over the past four years.

Over a period of three months, sixty-one crime victims, their families, police investigators, government officials, retailers, gun manufacturers, policy experts and members of NGOs came forward to contribute to this series. In putting together these articles, EXTRA reporter Marcelo Gomes not only relied on these many sources but was able, thanks to a grant from the Woodrow Wilson international Center for Scholars, to spend three weeks with the editorial staff of one of the top U.S. newspapers -- Washington Post -- in September of this year.

### **Two Distant Deaths but One Shared Grief**

Washington, D.C. and Rio de Janeiro  
“It’s all still very devastating, I still think of my son every day,” says Tennille Jefferson, 34, Nafis’ mother. It was when she arrived home on the evening of April 19, 1999, that Ms. Jefferson learned from her neighbors that her son had been shot in the head.

“Nafis was smart, outgoing and happy,” his grieving mother adds. “He had just come home from school and was playing in the yard with friends. The last time we talked was that morning. We were happy because I had just gotten a new job.”

Walmir, on the other hand, died on the morning of February 14, 2008. Along with five other drug dealers, he stood atop Santa Marta hill watching as police raided his shantytown. Walmir’s sister, Raquel Souza, 28, describes the events that unfolded:

“Because [Walmir] had the most powerful gun, he told the others to escape and ended up alone. My brother was very tough, and he finally paid the price. He was willing to kill and die for his family. Unfortunately, he got into drug dealing in 2004. I knew since then that he could die at any moment, but it’s hard to accept that his life was taken when he was so young.”

## **Top of the Charts**

Brazilian-made guns are imported legally into the U.S. Manufacturers sell to importers who in turn sell to local retailers. According to estimates published by Small Arms Survey, a Swiss NGO, 270 million firearms are now in the hands of the U.S. civilian population, placing it first in a ranking of the most heavily-armed societies in the world. “Every year more than nine thousand people are killed by firearms in the U.S.,” says Dennis Henigan, director of the Brady Center for the Prevention of Gun Violence. “We must strengthen legislation so that these guns do not get into the hands of criminals.”

Carlos Oliveira, chief of the Anti-Weapons and Explosives Department (Drae) of Rio’s civil police from 2002 to 2008, adds that “Organized crime in Brazil, especially drug traffickers, want the more powerful, high-caliber weapons. For this reason the police only find out about these guns when they are apprehended.”

An investigative committee of the Brazilian congress found, in 2006, that many U.S.-manufactured firearms are legally exported to Paraguay before being smuggled into Brazil. According to Congressman Raul Jungmann of the State of Pernambuco, “there are U.S.-based firms that, always with the aid of a Brazilian, legally export guns to Brazil and then divert them to criminals.”

**Tomorrow’s report: Over a period of 13 years Brazilian-made firearms were used in at least 77,000 crimes committed in the U.S.**

**In 13 years 4,464 Murders Were Committed with Brazilian-made Firearms.**

Nafis was one of 4,464 victims killed by a Brazilian-made firearm between 1989 and 2001. This number is roughly equal to the total number of murders committed in Washington D.C., the nation’s capital (pop. 600,000) during the same period (4,718), or one-third of the 13,636 U.S. homicides for the year 2009.

The nine-year statistical gap can be attributed to U.S. legislation that proscribes public access to information concerning the tracing of firearms used in crimes.

Both the U.S and Brazil are important producers of weapons, ammunition and weapons accessories for export throughout the world. From 2007 to November 2010, Brazil's exports of such products reached the equivalent of US\$ 1.15 billion, according to the Foreign Trade Division of its development ministry. And Americans are Brazil's most important weapons customers, buying up 82% of its total production.

U.S. spending on Brazilian firearms continues to grow, from \$122 million in 2007 to \$185 million last year. Brazil, on the other hand, imported in the same year \$57 million in weapons, of which only \$12 million was of U.S. manufacture.

Although the foreign trade division of Brazil's tax authority can account for only 28,582 weapons exported to the U.S. between 2007 and 2009, the number for the same years is actually 2,352,725 according to the country's armed forces, the entity ultimately responsible for controlling armaments imports as well as exports.

Experts claim that Brazil skews its small-arms export figures, and further characterizes these products as hunting implements, thereby detracting from any consideration of their possible use in the commission of crime. This scheme was uncovered through research of U.S. International Trade Commission data, conducted by Pablo Dreyfus of the NGO Viva Rio.

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- Video interview with the Brady Center's Dennis Henigan speaking out in favor of stricter gun-control legislation in the U.S.

Charts and graphs:

**Brazil-U.S. Arms Trade**

(Guns, cartridges, parts and accessories)

Exports to the U.S. Imports from the U.S.

Value (Brazilian reais)

202 million 211.1 million 307.9 million 252.6 million

2.3 million 4.4 million 6.5 million 6.6 million

2007 2008 2009 2010\*

\*Up to November

TOTAL Imports from U.S. Exports to U.S.

(2007-2010) R\$19,967,254.51 R\$973,888,130.29

Source: Foreign Trade Division (SECEX), Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade

**The Weapons' Path**

From the Factory to the Street

From the U.S. to Brazil

1 Factory in the U.S. > 2 Legal Export > 3 Importer (e.g. in Paraguay)> 4 Consumer Purchases Firearm> 5 Weapon Illegally Smuggled to Brazil

Firearms enter Brazilian territory through the State of Mato Grosso or Paraná and are transported via highway, through São Paulo until they reach Rio

From Brazil to the US.

1 Factory in Brazil> 2 Legal Export> 3 Importer in the U.S.> 4 Distributors (licensed merchants)> Consumers