

DISPATCHES

THE MILITARY Joshua Kucera visits an Uzbek town where the U.S. is selling its soul for security.

MANUFACTURING Ben Austen finds the coffin industry's customer base in an unlikely decline.

MEDICINE Carl Elliott reveals how drug companies secretly infiltrate prestigious medical journals.

CRIME Brett Forrest patrols a Rio slum with the world's most lethal police force.

NEWTKTk Ben Wallace-Wells wonders why a feminist legal icon is defending porn stars and Octomom.

TRAVEL Christopher Buckley on his seaward adventures with thieves, storms, and Johnnie Walker Red

TECHNOLOGY Alexis Madrigal ponders the algorithmic perversity of online dating.



CRIME

The Battle of Rio

AS THE OLYMPICS APPROACH, THE CITY'S EMBATTLED POLICE INVADE THE FAVELAS.

By Brett Forrest

IT IS SUMMER, and the snitch wears a ski mask. Two cops have rousted him from the Hotel Carioca, in Rio de Janeiro's Centro district, and he lights a cigarette as he limps toward the police station, smoking through the mask's mouth hole. Rodrigo Oliveira watches from the window of his second-floor office. "We shot this guy in the leg last week," he says. "Now he works for us."

Oliveira—the head of field operations for Rio's Civil Police—is beefy, like

a bull, and that's what the other cops call him. The Bull pulls a 55-pound flak vest over his head like he's putting on an old T-shirt, and wipes the sweat off his bald head. The office door swings open and the snitch limps inside, still smoking. "Hey, my brother," he slurs.

Oliveira and his lieutenants in the Special Resources unit (known by its acronym, CORE) lean over maps of the São Carlos slum. The snitch points to a house where he says a cache of drugs

and weapons is stashed. Oliveira grabs his rifle, a Swiss-made Sig Sauer that shoots heavy, .762-caliber bullets, illegal for traditional police use. His troops bark at one another, gathering courage as they exit the office, filing past a picture of the Virgin Mary on the wall.

Rio's cops are not welcome in favelas like São Carlos. They enter in armored trucks and helicopters, and they have tacit permission to kill: in 2008, they killed an average of three people per day, or one person for every 23 they arrested. In these neighborhoods, the government has virtually no presence, and the city's three main gangs provide many basic resources, including natural gas and "security." They also provide a steady stream of victims as they fight

each other for control of the drug and arms trades.

This isn't part of Brazil's international PR campaign—the beaches, the butts, the good times. But it is the reality of the city that will host the Summer Olympics in 2016. In preparation for the Games, the state government has ordered sweeping changes in the police department, including restructuring its command, improving infrastructure, and increasing pay. More crucial, for the first time the police have begun permanently occupying favelas, dedicating up to 500 officers per neighborhood. But so far only 12 of the roughly 1,000 favelas (some of which are home to 100,000 people) have been secured, and traffickers have migrated to other slums, where the fighting remains as brutal as ever.

“The favelas have a different law, a different economy, and their own defense forces,” says George Howell, the manager of the Rio office of the International Council on Security and Development. “The only way the police can go in is with mega-operations involving hundreds of men. These are incursions into foreign territory.”

Like any occupying army, Rio's police routinely savage the law. Articles mount in *Extra*, a tabloid of colorful violence and fleeting celebrity: cops taking bribes, cops dealing drugs, cops selling their guns to traffickers, cops arresting traffickers from one gang and selling them to a rival gang to torture and kill. The past two chiefs of the Civil Police are in prison on corruption charges.

One of them is Oliveira's former boss, who once leaned on Oliveira to solicit money for his political campaign. When Oliveira refused, the chief banished him to a suburban beach community, a career dead end. He returned to Rio only after the chief was arrested.

It is stifling inside CORE's black armored truck, which the men call “The Skull.” A dozen cops pack tightly against one another on a double-backed bench. Oliveira takes a seat up front. The Skull clears traffic with its siren, leading a convoy of seven police trucks through a neighborhood of patchy vacant lots, towers of trash, and streams clogged with bicycles. “As you can see,” says Flavio Moura, a senior officer seated next to me, “this is not so nice as

Copacabana.” Several cops hang their heads and close their eyes. A helicopter flies overhead.

Twenty minutes later, the convoy enters São Carlos, and Oliveira braces himself. He expects to face up to 60 heavily armed traffickers in this operation, with only 50 cops. “I'm not here to kill anybody,” he says. “But I'm not here to die.”

The Skull opens and the Bull vaults into São Carlos. The other CORE cops file out behind him and secure a small square, their eyes scanning the rooftops. Following Oliveira, they slip through an alleyway and vanish into the favela. Shacks made of slag, tin, wood, and mud cover the hilly terrain. Rebar and drainage pipes poke from slanting concrete walls. The humidity intensifies the stench of excrement. Securing every jagged corner and blind alley, the cops move quickly, their radios chirping like birds.

They reach a hilltop strewn with garbage, and Oliveira takes a breather, sweat dripping off his nose. An old woman folds laundry on her porch. Children and young men walk by, heedless of the police. Graffiti on a nearby wall reads: I DON'T KNOW. I DIDN'T SEE. I'M NOT A SNITCH. LET ME GO.

Five shots erupt down a nearby hill, then several more. Oliveira rushes toward the sound and the other cops follow, navigating steep, crumbling stairways between houses. The snitch was right. Four suspects are holed up in a shack, trading shots with another police squad. The helicopter gunners open fire, and so does Oliveira, his big bullets shredding the shack's thin walls. The cops unload more than 100 rounds. From inside the house, a man yells in pain. In the chaos, the suspects bolt through the shack's back door and scatter through the shanty labyrinth, trailing blood.

Oliveira and his men chase two of them to the bottom of the hill, where a paved road marks the boundary of São Carlos. But the suspects have vanished. At a nearby gas station, a man gives Oliveira a lead: he saw a kid hobble down the hillside on a wounded leg, then jump into a taxi. Later that afternoon, CORE will arrest the suspect, nicknamed D2, at a local hospital. In total, they will arrest six traffickers, kill two, and seize

a stash of guns, ammo, and narcotics.

The cops guzzle water in the shade of the gas station's canopy. But the day isn't done. Oliveira has hidden a small unit of men inside a shanty, waiting for the traffickers to reemerge after the shooting dies down. “Like Troy,” he says, smiling through his fatigue. “Instead of a horse, we use a house.”

Shots ring out from up the hill. Oliveira's head jerks to attention. His eyes sparkle. He has new energy. “It seems to be music,” he says.

The shooting intensifies. The ruse has worked. The cops pile into the Skull and race back up the São Carlos slope. In a few minutes, four of the cops who had hidden in the shanty walk toward us, each holding a corner of a bedsheet, bearing a limp body.

Along a dusty row of shops, the favela's scattered residents look on, determining the identity of the dead. **A**

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LAW

Tabloid Feminist

AN ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ICON FINDS A NEW FRONTIER IN TRASH CULTURE.

By Ben Wallace-Wells

ONE MONDAY AFTERNOON in the middle of a summer heat wave, the 69-year-old Los Angeles lawyer and feminist provocateur Gloria Allred arrived at the Friars Club in Midtown Manhattan for lunch. The club's dining room—home of the roasts, thick for decades with comedians from Broadway and the Catskills—is a fussy, overly decorated place, with mincing waiters wafting through, but in Allred's personal mythology it looms large. In the '70s, she filed a gender-discrimination complaint and became the first woman permitted to lunch there. (She brought cameras, and Henny Youngman, in his decline, wandered outside to denounce her.) A decade later, she sued again, this time to win women access to the club's sauna, where members were accustomed to steaming in the nude. In