

# Brazil slum raids leave 12 dead

The Miami Herald  
Oct. 17, 2007

RIO DE JANEIRO, Brazil --

Hundreds of police agents swooped in on drug gangs in two Rio de Janeiro shantytowns, setting off gunbattles that killed 12 people, including an officer and a 4-year-old boy, officials said.

About 400 police officers, including members of elite units, entered the sprawling Coreia and Senador Camara slums on Wednesday to search for weapons and serve arrest warrants, said a police spokesman who declined to be identified according to department policy.

Intense gunfire broke out between police and alleged drug members as authorities staged the raid in broad daylight. Television news footage showed a police helicopter flying over the area and people running for cover as agents opened fire from atop a hill. One woman sought shelter from the hail of bullets by cowering behind a concrete wall, clutching a child.

Eleven suspected gang members were arrested, and police seized a machine gun, rifles, pistols, grenades, ammunition, cocaine and marijuana, according to Globo TV's G1 Web site. Police said 10 of the dead were drug traffickers. An officer also died.

The boy, Jorge Kaua Silva Lacerda, was caught in the crossfire and died when a bullet entered his heart, police said. It was not immediately clear who fired the shot that killed him.

Three more officers and two alleged traffickers were wounded in the raid.

Rio Gov. Sergio Cabral praised the raid in an interview with CBN radio, saying the drug gangs target innocents and blame police.

"The security secretariat has carte blanche to act against traffickers," Cabral said.

But human rights groups accuse Rio's police forces of widespread corruption and violence, and say they routinely justify killing civilians by alleging they were gang members resisting arrest.

Wednesday's operation was the bloodiest since police killed 19 alleged traffickers in the Alemao slum in May.

Rio is one of the world's most violent cities, with an annual homicide rate of about 50 killed per 100,000 inhabitants. Most of the killings take place in the city's shantytowns, which often are controlled by heavily armed gangs.

