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Security and Control: The Role of Tactical Intervention Groups in Brazilian Prisons

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The growing activity of Tactical Intervention Groups (TIGs) in Brazilian prisons raises debates about their organization, practices, and impacts on security and human rights. Based on a national survey conducted by the National Human Rights Council (CNDH) in 12 states, the study analyzes structure, recruitment, training, intervention strategies, and oversight mechanisms. The results reveal significant regulatory disparities, deficiencies in record-keeping, and weaknesses in monitoring, highlighting the need for standardization, greater accountability, and human rights training.

Keywords: prison security, tactical intervention groups, prison administration, human rights, Brazil

Segurança e Controle: O papel dos Grupos de Intervenção Tática nas Prisões Brasileiras A crescente atuação dos Grupos de Intervenção Tática (GITs) nas prisões brasileiras suscita debates sobre sua organização, práticas e impactos na segurança e nos direitos humanos. Com base em levantamento nacional do CNDH em 12 estados, o estudo analisa estrutura, recrutamento, treinamento, estratégias de intervenção e mecanismos de controle. Os resultados apontam fortes desigualdades normativas, falhas nos registros e fragilidades na fiscalização, evidenciando a necessidade de padronização, maior responsabilização e formação em direitos humanos.

Palavras-chave: segurança prisional, grupos de intervenção tática, administração prisional, direitos humanos, Brasil

Introduction

Brazilian prisons face persistent structural and social challenges that necessitate diverse strategies to maintain order and security within correctional facilities. One such strategy is the establishment of Tactical Intervention Groups (TIGs), specialized forces designed to handle crises such as riots, hostage situations, and mass disturbances. The increasing prevalence of these units across various states highlights their growing role in prison administration. However, their deployment remains controversial, particularly considering broader discussions on prison militarization, human rights, and law enforcement oversight.

TIGs operate within a complex legal and institutional framework, often navigating between security demands and the protection of fundamental rights. Their primary function is to intervene in emergencies, yet reports suggest they are sometimes used for routine security tasks,

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raising concerns about their operational scope. The lack of standardized guidelines governing their use across states has led to disparities in recruitment, training, and intervention tactics. While some states enforce strict regulatory frameworks, others rely on discretionary practices that can increase the likelihood of rights violations.

One of the critical issues in assessing the legitimacy of TIGs is the potential for excessive use of force. Numerous reports from human rights organizations have documented cases where tactical teams have been implicated in violent interventions, sometimes resulting in injuries or fatalities (BRASIL, 2018; BRASIL, 2024). The absence of consistent oversight mechanisms exacerbates these concerns, as many states do not have independent review bodies to evaluate the legality and proportionality of their actions. Additionally, there are gaps in data collection, with some units failing to maintain systematic records of their interventions.

Beyond concerns over force and oversight, the effectiveness of TIGs in achieving their stated security objectives remains unclear. While proponents argue that their presence deters prison violence and reinforces institutional order, critics suggest that their involvement in daily security operations may contribute to an adversarial dynamic between prison staff and inmates. Research has shown that heavily militarized approaches to prison security can sometimes escalate conflicts rather than resolve them, particularly in overcrowded and high-tension environments like those found in Brazil.

The discussion on TIGs also intersects with broader themes of penal policy and criminal justice reform. As Brazil continues to grapple with issues of mass incarceration, alternative approaches to prison security – such as conflict mediation, de-escalation strategies, and rehabilitation-focused models – are increasingly being advocated. The role of TIGs within this evolving landscape must be examined to determine whether their continued expansion aligns with national and international standards for correctional management.

Given these complexities, this study aims to describe some main issues concerning TIGs in Brazil, and to analyze them within the general context of prison facilities. By examining their structure, recruitment processes, training protocols, intervention strategies, and oversight mechanisms, this research seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on prison governance and human rights. The findings may inform policymakers, scholars, and advocacy groups about the strengths and limitations of TIGs, offering evidence-based recommendations for reforming their operations and enhancing accountability.

1 Review of the Related Literature

The role of tactical intervention units in prison systems has been extensively studied internationally, particularly in the United States and Europe. Research on Special Operations

Response Teams (SORTs) in the U.S. and their European counterparts has highlighted the delicate balance between maintaining security and ensuring human rights protections (ZINGER, 2006; NAYLOR, 2016; CLIQUENNOIS; SNACKEN; VAN ZYL SMIT, 2021). Studies emphasize that when prison intervention units operate without clear regulatory frameworks and independent oversight, the risks of excessive force and abuse increase significantly (WOOLDREDGE, 2020; DOLOVICH, 2021) These concerns are particularly relevant in Brazil, where institutional accountability remains a persistent challenge (FERREIRA, 2021).

In the Brazilian context, most academic discussions on prison security have focused on issues such as overcrowding, gang dynamics, and systemic human rights violations (DIAS; SALLA, 2013; DARKE, 2013; MANSO; DIAS, 2017; BUTLER; SLADE; DIAS, 2018). The emergence of TIGs as a formalized response to security threats has received some attention in scholarly research. Preliminary studies suggest that the operational practices of these units vary widely across states, contributing to inconsistencies in how prison security is enforced (SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024). This lack of uniformity presents challenges for policymakers attempting to establish best practices for prison intervention strategies.

Furthermore, relevant national literature points out that these groups may have originated at the end of 1980's in Rio de Janeiro, whose prisons were embedded in a context of high violence rates, gangs' disputes, and several crises, when the External Operations Service (Serviço de Operações Especiais, or SOE, in Portuguese) was created to escort prisoners (SILVA, 2020; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024). At the beginning in the 2000s, the model expanded and specialized with the creation of the Diretoria Penitenciária de Operações Especiais (*Special Operations Penitentiary Board of Directors*) (DPOE) in Brasília and the Grupo de Intervenção Rápida (GIR) (*Group for Rapid Intervention*) in São Paulo, which began to focus on tactical interventions within prisons, such as riots and rebellions (SILVA, 2020; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024). This expansion was marked by a process of "mimetic isomorphism", where other states, such as Minas Gerais with COPE (Comando de Operações Especiais, or *Special Operations Command*), replicated this structure, disseminating a militarized intervention doctrine, mainly inspired by DPOE doctrines and its common practices (SILVA, 2020; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024).

TIGs definitive consolidation occurred in the 2010s, with a multiplication of these groups throughout the country and the creation of the Penitentiary Intervention Task Force (Força de Intervenção Penitenciária, FTIP) in 2017, which institutionalized interstate cooperation under federal coordination for prison crisis management, in which National Prison Department (currently Senappen) played a major role (ROTTAVA, 2020; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024).

Comparative studies indicate that the absence of independent oversight bodies exacerbates issues related to misconduct (TAYLOR; BURANELLI, 2007) among tactical units. Countries with more transparent accountability mechanisms, such as Canada (GISLER; PRUIN; HOSTETTLER, 2018) and Germany (MÜLLER, 2019), have reported lower instances of abuse and a greater

emphasis on rehabilitation-oriented intervention strategies. In these systems, intervention teams are not only trained in tactical response but also conflict mediation and crisis de-escalation. In contrast, Brazilian TIGs often prioritize combat training over negotiation skills, raising concerns about their preparedness for handling complex prison conflicts without force.

Scholarly discussions on the militarization of prison security often draw parallels between the role of tactical units and broader trends in law enforcement. Research suggests that when correctional security forces adopt a militarized stance, it can lead to an adversarial relationship between inmates and prison staff, undermining efforts to foster rehabilitation and institutional stability (WORLEY; WORLEY; LAMBERT, 2019; CREWE, 2011). These insights are particularly relevant in Brazil, where high levels of incarceration and punitive policies have created a volatile prison environment prone to unrest.

The literature also highlights the importance of accountability mechanisms in mitigating the risks associated with high-security interventions. Studies have found that independent oversight bodies, such as ombudsman offices and human rights commissions, play a crucial role in ensuring that tactical units adhere to legal and ethical standards (PRENZLER, 2000). The lack of such mechanisms in many Brazilian states raises concerns about unchecked abuses of power. Without external scrutiny, there is little assurance that TIG operations align with the principles of necessity and proportionality outlined in international human rights agreements.

Recent debates in criminology and penal policy have also examined the long-term effectiveness of tactical intervention teams in reducing violence within prisons. While some studies argue that well-trained intervention units contribute to safer prison environments (KOŁTUN, 2021), others caution that excessive reliance on force can escalate conflicts rather than resolve them (BOTTOMS, 1999; STEINER; WOOLDREDGE, 2018). These conflicting perspectives highlight the need for further empirical research to assess the impact of TIGs on prison security outcomes in Brazil. Future studies should incorporate both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to analyze the patterns of intervention, use of force, and long-term institutional effects.

According to the national literature (SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024; OLIVEIRA, 2018), TIGs redefined the identity of prison officers, effectively during the transformation of "penal police officers" focused on repression and the logic of war against the "enemy within", long before the constitutional formalization of these professionals as public safety officers, which took place in 2019. The FTIP, created in 2017, culminated in this process by establishing a standardized national network for serious crises, institutionalizing the militarized intervention model. However, this created a fundamental paradox: while professionalization brought more organization and operational control, it also deepened militarization, leading to the progressive abandonment of resocialization objectives. The result is a system where risk management and repression of immediate violence take precedence over human rights and social reintegration, reinforcing violence.

These characteristics suggest that 'intervention' is frequently carried out for the main purpose of solving immediate security crisis, to restore order and to respond violent riots with state violence. Despite the argument that tactical interventions have the objective to restore internal order and, in some cases (such as federal interventions) to make main social activities viable, such as labor, healthcare and educational activities (ROTTAVA, 2020), the militarized intervention model acts in a dubious sense. On one hand, it represents the concrete management of violence and state neglect over Brazilian prisons, meaning that whenever internal disturbance defies state authority, exceptional repression is guaranteed for maintaining things 'as they are'; on the other hand, their lack of transparency and control gives them an aura, or a superficial image of effectiveness, legitimizing their frequent use and, ultimately, trivializing the indiscriminate use of force, or even vexatious practices, in prison ambiences.

From this perspective, some questions emerge, and might help us to deepen data analysis: what brings these groups together and what separates them at the subnational level? Are militarized intervention model or practices observed among these Groups? In what extent?

2 Data Collection and Methodology

This study utilized a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative data collected from the National Survey on the Functioning of Tactical Intervention Groups in Prison Environments with qualitative assessments of operational frameworks. The survey was distributed to all Brazilian state (subnational) governments through official letter signed by the President of the National Human Rights Council (Conselho Nacional dos Direitos Humanos – CNDH), receiving responses from 13 federal units (states and the Federal District). Data was gathered from March 2022 to February 2023. The questionnaire included 45 items covering organizational structure, recruitment processes, operational procedures, use of force, and oversight mechanisms.

The questionnaire was annexed to the official letter signed by CNDH President addressed to states' governors, which described the intention of the National Council to proceed to gather relevant data on these Groups, to base its decisions and to formulate recommendations concerning human rights for prison population. It was also clarified that the data would compose a Report for the Council. Furthermore, it was also stated that all information provided would be subject to data processing, to guarantee the disclosure of aggregated statistical data and that qualitative information would also be properly treated, guaranteeing confidentiality and anonymity, whenever necessary, and that the Report would be publicly presented. This article's author was officially assigned by CNDH through a Resolution (CNDH, 2023a), as a rapporteur to treat, analyze and systematize collected data, on which this article provides its analyses. The Report was presented via videoconference during the Council's meeting occurred on August 15th, 2024.

The selection of participating states was based on voluntary responses, which presents a limitation in terms of representativeness. While the survey covers units from different regions, the absence of data from several states suggests the need for further research. Additionally, responses varied in detail, indicating discrepancies in record-keeping practices and levels of transparency. Some states provided comprehensive answers, while others offered minimal insights, affecting the ability to make generalized conclusions.

A major component of this study was the analysis of procedural standardization across TIGs. The research examined whether states have uniform guidelines for intervention, training, and documentation of incidents. The findings indicate that while some states maintain structured policies, others operate with significant discretion, leading to inconsistencies in practices and accountability.

To supplement survey data, secondary sources were consulted, including legal frameworks, government reports, and academic literature on prison security. This comparative analysis helped contextualize findings within broader discussions on penal security and human rights concerns. Additionally, media reports on major prison interventions were reviewed to assess the public perception and reported outcomes of TIG actions.

Ethical considerations were paramount in this study, as research on security forces and correctional institutions involves sensitive data. Efforts were made to ensure that information was presented objectively, relying on official documentation, and verified sources. The study does not aim to condemn or endorse TIGs, but to provide an analytical perspective on their operations and effectiveness.

The study also faced limitations related to access to confidential reports. Many states declined to provide detailed records of their interventions, citing security concerns. This lack of transparency underscores the challenges in evaluating the true extent of TIGs' impact on prison management. Future studies should incorporate interviews with prison staff, inmates, and independent observers to gain a more comprehensive view of these units' effectiveness.

Overall, the methodology adopted in this study provides a solid foundation for analyzing the role of TIGs in Brazil. While gaps in data remain, the findings offer valuable insights into the governance, training, and accountability of these tactical units, contributing to ongoing debates on prison security policy.

3 Results and Discussion

Firstly, it is observed that only thirteen states responded to the request formulated. Although the number represents less than half of the total number of Brazilian federative units, it is worth noting that the group of respondents includes federative units with significant relative weight in terms of the population contingent deprived of liberty in prison environments: São Paulo, Minas

Gerais and Rio Grande do Sul, in addition to Rondônia, Amazonas, Pará, Amapá, Rio Grande do Norte, Pernambuco, Mato Grosso, Mato Grosso do Sul, Tocantins and the Federal District.

Although the State of Amapá responded to the official letters addressing the survey, it did not provide a direct response to the items contained in the questionnaire, limiting itself to sending documentation related to the Prison Tactical Group – GTP. Not all Federative Units submitted complete responses to all items in the questionnaires, which limits the general conclusions of this study.

The information that served as a basis for this article could not be questioned or subject to new requests, since we accessed the sole data offered as answers to the questionnaire. Thus, the inconsistencies identified are reported, suggesting the need for further analysis of the quality of the information provided, as well as questioning unsubstantial information by official public agencies.

According to the National Penitentiary Department Information System (current National Secretariat for Penal Policies) – SISDEPEN, for the months of January to June 2023, the thirteen federative units that responded to the survey had a contingent of 410,396 people held in deprivation of liberty units (in different types of prison regime – whether in provisional detention or in closed open and semi-open regimes). This number corresponds to 64% of the total population deprived of liberty in prison establishments in Brazil.

Therefore, the federative units that responded to the questionnaire have Tactical Intervention Groups that operate in units that house more than half of the people deprived of liberty in prison establishments in the country, making this analysis relevant. Regarding the nomenclature, it is worth noting that three respondents have a parallel in the designation of these groups: São Paulo, Mato Grosso, and Minas Gerais name them Rapid Intervention Groups, which suggests that such interventions occur on an emergency basis, in response to pressing and urgent needs of crises in prison environments. It is also worth noting that both São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul have intervention subunits (or cells) organized at the regional level, which suggests a possible mobilization of these groups in a decentralized manner, in order to offer rapid responses to crisis situations. Minas Gerais also has groups of another nature (such as those specialized in the use of dogs), whose data were presented. In any case, this article deals, in most cases, with the Main Tactical Group that is the object of the response of the Federative Units.

4 Structure and Composition

All respondents stated that their respective intervention groups were created from the year 2000 onwards. The oldest Group is the Special Operations Penitentiary Directorate (DPOE), created on May 26, 2000, by the Federal District, and the most recent among the respondents is the Penitentiary Actions Group (GAP), from the State of Pará, created in 2021.

All respondents stated that the Group of their federative unit has a commander or coordinator, which suggests that all groups have a minimum chain of command. 8 respondents stated that this commander is appointed by the Secretary of State responsible for the area of penitentiary administration. Another 4 respondents stated that other authorities are responsible for this appointment: in Minas Gerais, the State Governor is responsible for appointing the commander of the Special Operations Command (COPE), while the directors of the prison units are responsible for appointing their respective Rapid Intervention Groups and Canine Operations Group. In the state of Rio Grande do Sul, the Superintendent of Penitentiary Services, subordinate to the Secretariat of Penal and Socio-Educational Systems, is responsible for the appointment. In Pernambuco, the Executive Secretary of the Executive Secretariat of Reintegration (subordinate to the Secretariat of Justice and Citizenship) is responsible for appointing the commander of the Group. In Mato Grosso do Sul, the situation is more distant from that of the other federative units: the commander of the Tactical Intervention Group (GIT) is appointed by the Commander of the Penitentiary Operations Command, which suggests an internally organized appointment structure, not subject to supervision and direct subordination by the State Secretariat.

The importance of the hierarchical structure of these units is due to the need for such commands to be exercised by occupants who can be dismissed at will, considering that, in cases of widespread rebellions or crisis situations in the prison system that are beyond the control of the Administration or, especially, in cases of blatant violations of rights by these forces, the leaders can be immediately removed from their duties, without prejudice to investigations and accountability by the competent authorities. In addition, subordination to state/district civil bureaucracy personnel reinforces the nature of the activities of these employees who, according to Rule No. 74.3 of the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – Nelson Mandela Rules (UN, 2015), must be of a civilian (and not military) nature.

These characteristics are considerably relevant, since hierarchical structure may define rigid and well-stablished chain of command, and this is particularly observed among military organizations. Otherwise, one cannot infer that all these Groups are subject to direct interference of political power of Governor's fixed mandates, since their commanders are appointed by different authorities: Secretariat, Commander of Penitentiary Operations, or others. This heterogeneity suggests a weak political control, and might pose risks, since police autonomy is more likely to result in negative outcomes such as corruption and violence (FLOM, 2020; MARENIN, 1985), especially in weak institutional settings, as oversight and accountability are limited, as discussed further.

Furthermore, the normative provision, the existence of statutes and regulatory standards regulate the functions and provide for the creation of each of these groups. The following table systematizes the existing standards relating to each of these groups:

Table 1 – List of Standards that Establish and/or Regulate the Operation of TIGs

Group/State	Regulatory/Constitutive Norms
Grupo de Intervenção Penitenciária Amazonas	Disciplinary Regulation of the Military Police of Amazonas (RDPMAM), Standard Operating Procedure of the Penitentiary Administration Secretariat of the State of Amazonas (POP-SEAP/AM) and General Action Rules (NGA).
Diretoria Penitenciária de Operações Especiais (DPOE) Distrito Federal	State did not provide a clear answer about the act of creation - Decree No. 40,833, of May 26, 2020 (creates the Secretariat that provides for it within the scope of its structure).
Grupo de Intervenção Rápida (GIR) Mato Grosso	Did not provide an answer (answered only the appropriate questions, not organizing the answers in a systematic manner). Decree No. 610, of December 6, 2023.
Grupo de Intervenção Tática (GIT) Mato Grosso do Sul	AGEPEN Ordinance No. 14, of March 2, 2018. State Law No. 5,147, of December 27, 2017.
Comando de Operações Especiais (Cope) Minas Gerais	Resolution No. 1618, of July 7, 2016, which approves the Regulation and Procedural Standards for routine activities in the security and service areas of the Prison Units of the State of Minas Gerais (ReNP) and Decree 47,795/2019, which provides for the organization of the State Secretariat for Justice and Public Security Revoked by Decree No. 48,659, of July 28, 2023.
Grupo de Intervenção Rápida (G.I.R.) Minas Gerais	SEDS Resolution No. 1266, of April 25, 2012 - GIR
Grupo de Operações com Cães Minas Gerais	There was no response regarding the regulation that governs it. However, see: SEJUSP Resolution No. 256, of 2022.
Grupo de Ações Penitenciárias (GAP) Pará	Ordinance 387/2021/GAB/SEAP.
Gerência de Operações de Segurança (GOS) Pernambuco	Did not respond, but the provision of attributions is found in Decree No. 26,998, of August 5, 2004.
Grupo de Operações Especiais (GOE) Rio Grande do Norte	Ordinance No. 0200/2011.
Grupo de Ações Especiais (GAES) Rio Grande do Sul	Ordinance No. 15, of March 8, 2010 (Susepe) Decree No. 53,931, of February 22, 2018.
Grupo de Ações Penitenciárias Especiais Rondônia	Portaria n°1254 de 11 de maio de 2021 Decreto nº 18.727, de 27 de março de 2014.
Grupo de Intervenção Rápida (GIR) São Paulo	SAP Resolution No. 155, of June 19, 2009.
Grupo de Operações Penitenciárias Especiais (GOPE) Tocantins	SECIJU/TO Regulatory Ordinance No. 363, of May 18, 2021.

Source: Prepared by the author from gathered data.

Regarding the size of these Groups, it is observed that there is no relationship between this and the number of penal facilities in the federative unit or the number of people deprived of liberty in them.

The Group with the largest number of members is the Rapid Intervention Group of Minas Gerais, which has 737 prison officers. São Paulo is in second place in this ranking, with 356 prison officers.

A unique situation was identified in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, which stated that no prison officer is a permanent member of its Tactical Intervention Group since this activity depends on a request by calling up members of the Tactical Escort Group, since, according to the State, the initial training for entry and level of knowledge (required) is the same (as that required for the Tactical Intervention Group).

An important issue is to differentiate Rapid Intervention Groups (Grupos de Intervenção Rápida) and Special Intervention Groups (Grupos de Intervenção/Operações Especiais). Rapid Intervention Groups (GIRs – Grupos de Intervenção Rápida) are the tactical first responders embedded within a specific prison unit. Their primary mission is to react swiftly to urgent security incidents occurring within the walls of their assigned prison. This includes quelling inmate fights and riots, responding to internal hostage situations, conducting urgent cell searches for weapons or contraband, and restoring immediate order during disturbances to support regular prison staff. GIRs are trained in basic tactical response focused on close quarters combat and riot control within the prison environment. They are commanded locally, typically reporting directly to the warden or security chief of their specific prison. Essentially, they are the on-site tactical team handling day-to-day emergencies.

On the other hand, Special Operations Groups (GIOEs/GCOEs – Grupos de Intervenção e Operações Especiais/Grupos de Coordenação e Operações Especiais) operate at the state or regional level, forming an elite tier above the GIRs. They are called in to handle situations that are too complex, large-scale, or high-risk for the local GIR to manage effectively. Their responsibilities include executing high-risk inmate transfers, conducting large-scale, pre-planned operations targeting organized crime networks or major contraband rings within the prison system, responding to major, coordinated riots or uprisings spanning multiple facilities, performing complex hostage rescues, and providing specialized support (e.g., snipers, negotiators, explosive breaching experts) during critical incidents. GIOEs/GCOEs undergo significantly more advanced and intensive training than GIRs, encompassing diverse techniques, such as advanced hostage rescue, high-risk entry, intelligence-driven operations, and complex operational planning. They are commanded centrally by the state-level prison administration (e.g., SEAP) and deploy across the entire state prison system as needed.

These differences are important to address, since these groups act on a complementary basis, but they distinguish themselves from each other. There is a hierarchy between GIOEs/GCOEs, which operate as an 'elite force', and the GIRs. GCOEs are well-known as inspired by military doctrines[1], and trained on typical military police practices (OLIVEIRA, 2018; SILVA, 2020; SILVA; RIBEIRO, 2024), situating them at the apex of security forces for prisons. Distrito Federal's DPOE is particularly known as a training nodal point for what one can conceive as GCOEs doctrine, which leaded later to the federalization of Tactical Groups (Força de Cooperação Penitenciária, Força-Tarefa de Intervenção Penitenciária or, later, Força Penal Nacional).[2]

This might result in a dual-undocked system of prison intervention: while GIRs are familiarized with daily prison routines, GIOEs/GCOEs consider themselves as elite groups, whose daily practices are different from prison daily routines and, therefore, *special* and needed in severe crisis contexts. This distinguishing characteristic leads to a concentration of knowledge that might pose also relevant challenges for effective political control for these special operation groups by political authorities, such as Governors or Secretariats. It also suggests that closeness to daily prison routines by GIRs might accommodate routine prison administration practices (violent or non-violent), while specialty for urgent and energetic measures are frequently monopolized by GCOEs, responding intra-prison violence with state violence (physical, psychic and sometimes lethal) during direct conflict episodes.

Furthermore, an important aspect of the spread of a federalization of GCOEs doctrine is the capture of emergency measures, at the federal government level, by militarized practices. FTIP was established on a Federal Government initiative during severe prison riots, which culminated in abominable episodes of carnage, mutilation, and decapitation of members of rival prison groups in northeastern and northern Brazilian states (such as Rio Grande do Norte, Amazonas, and Roraima). An energetic effort to intervene immediately on this complex scenario was taken by the National Prison Department (Depen) at the Ministry of Justice in 2017, creating the FTIP, composed of federal, state, and Federal District prison officers, according to federal cooperation agreements with subnational level states. This suggests a bottom-up design for such forces and resulted in initial training processes captured by subnational state-level authorities, further mixed with exceptional federal officers' training processes characterized by restricted procedures, and disciplining of inmates.

Another aspect that deserves attention refers to the exercise of an equal basis of access, for women to these penitentiary intervention groups. Considering the importance of ensuring equal access and retention conditions for personnel in the penal police careers, there is generally a significant discrepancy in the composition of these groups.

The table below summarizes the reality regarding members of the Tactical Groups for prison intervention.

Table 2 – Proportion of female members of TIGs

State	Number of Members	Female members	Female Ratio (in relation to total number of members)
Amazonas	81	2	2,5%
Distrito Federal	124	7	5,6%
Mato Grosso	42	3	7,1%
Mato Grosso do Sul	0*	0*	0*
Minas Gerais	737	5	0,7%
Pará	45	6	13,3%
Pernambuco	0	0	0
Rio Grande do Norte	21	0	0
Rio Grande do Sul	280	34	12,1%
Rondônia	151	7	4,6%
São Paulo	356	10	2,8%
Tocantins	24	1	4,1%

Source: Prepared by the author from gathered data.

As can be seen in Table 2, the Federal Unit whose Tactical Penitentiary Intervention Group has proportionally the largest number of women is Pará, with approximately 13% of its staff being female. A similar proportion is recorded in Rio Grande do Sul. Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte do not have any women in their tactical groups. Mato Grosso do Sul is highlighted with an asterisk because its situation differs from that of the other Federal Units, given that calls for service in the Tactical Group occur sporadically.

There is a general disproportion in the composition of these groups, possibly related to the gender disproportion in the composition of the prison police forces at the state level. This may, in turn, be related to gender stereotypes that associate intervention activities with attributes that are mistakenly seen by common sense as exclusively or predominantly with the male gender, such as physical strength, authority, courage, and command.

Although there are no requirements for the equal composition of these groups, it is noteworthy that at least two Tactical Groups do not have a single woman in their ranks (Pernambuco and Rio Grande do Norte), which may suggest a difficulty in promoting access on a fair and equal basis between men and women. This is at odds with the provisions of Rule No. 74.3 of the Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners – Nelson Mandela Rules, which provides for the maintenance of competent men and women in the prison service (UN, 2015).

Gender disparities within TIGs are therefore a notable finding. Most units are overwhelmingly male dominated, with few states reporting any female officers. The inclusion of women in tactical teams remains minimal, reflecting broader patterns of gender inequality within law enforcement agencies. One might conceive that addressing this imbalance could contribute to more diverse perspectives in crisis resolution and reduce the likelihood of excessive force during interventions. However, some studies suggest that inclusion of women in police forces show that female officers tend to mimic men or to be assigned to roles that might reproduce gender roles, and reinforce police violence (RIBEIRO, 2018; CALAZANS, 2004). Moreover, the scanty integration of women to such forces might be explained by the major proportion of male inmates over female inmates in Brazilian prisons: according to the National Secretary for Penal Policies (SENAPPEN, 2025), approximately 6% of the whole prison population is made up of women, while 94% is made up of men. This unequal composition might reflect the concerns of prison administration with both national (BRASIL, 1984) and international standards (UN, 2015), stating that prison officers should correspond to the same gender of inmates, especially during personal searches.

5 Selection, Recruitment, and Improvement

When analyzing the requirements for entering these activities in more detail, respondents generally stated a similar set of desirable attributes and requirements and objective selection

criteria: (1) impeccable conduct/absence of serious offenses/absence of initiation of Administrative Disciplinary Proceedings against them; (2) passing a probationary period; (3) completion of a rapid intervention course; (4) physical fitness; and (5) psychological evaluation.

In the case of the Pernambuco Security Operations Management, the only objective criterion for admitting prison police officers to the Group is a "physical test". In the case of Amazonas, selection occurs through an analysis of the curricula of volunteer military police officers, who must have completed two courses: the Shock Operations Course (COC) and the Rapid Intervention Course in Prison Precincts. Although the criteria vary greatly from Group to Group, there is a need for these criteria to be better defined, established based on proof of experience, which could also be accompanied by additional remuneration for the nature of the activity performed, always ensuring ethics and commitment to human rights. Remuneration appropriate to the nature of the exceptional activity performed could be accompanied by the definition of fair criteria for recruiting qualified professionals, and members of the prison police force of the respective federative unit.

Training process in less-lethal techniques and technologies and in differentiated use of force appears in a fragmented manner, on many occasions focused on a specific type of equipment, such as the use of handcuffs, police baton, use of dogs, explosives, not integrating a common curricular base, but disciplines that are often dispersed, or minimally articulated among themselves.

From the perspective of knowledge integration, it is essential that the training processes for these professionals reflect the exact moments in which each of the immobilization, restraint, and use of force techniques is used, in order to prevent abuse. The Pernambuco Security Operations Management Office does not provide any specific training for its members.

Only Pará, Mato Grosso, Rio Grande do Sul, Amazonas, and Mato Grosso do Sul stated that the police officers who are members of their respective Tactical Groups take courses/content in human rights. Mato Grosso do Sul was the only federative unit that mentioned that the course "Protection of Human Rights: Prohibition and Prevention of Torture" was mandatory, offered permanently and via distance learning by the National School of Public Administration – Enap, through the Virtual School of Government modality, and aimed at anyone and everyone interested. All respondents stated that they had specific training in the use of weapons and less-lethal technologies.

With the exception of São Paulo (which did not explicitly state the training content of the Group's members), Pernambuco (which stated that no specific training is provided for members and did not respond to the item), Amapá (which did not explicitly respond to the questionnaire), Tocantins (which did not explicitly state the content in its response) and Minas Gerais (which also did not respond directly to the item, limiting itself to mentioning Resolution No. 1,618 of July 7, 2016, which only provides for the existence of standard operating procedures for the prison system, including the procedure for urgent or emergency care of prisoners, and the dissemination of Regulation and Procedural Standards content by employees who will act as knowledge multipliers in the system), all other Tactical Intervention Groups stated that their employees take courses in

Pre-Hospital Care/first aid content. Considering the nature of the activities performed during or after an intervention in a prison environment, having this knowledge can be extremely relevant to saving lives and ensuring the necessary care for victims, whether they are deprived of liberty, prison officers, or third parties.

It is also worth mentioning that the Federative Units still have a highly heterogeneous model for training the personnel of these Tactical Intervention Groups. Briefly, one can state that these groups do not have explicit and well publicized standards for recruiting its members. The need for specialized knowledge on prison security practices has been for a long time required: maybe one of the most dramatic episodes which took place in Brazil was the riot occurred on 2 October 1992, in the Casa de Detenção or Carandiru Penitentiary, in São Paulo State, which resulted in an inbreak of São Paulo Military Police to the facility and the slaughter of 111 men. The typical combat and confrontation tactics prioritized by military police forces announced thus the need of systematic review of intervention protocols in prison units and of agents responsible for conducting them, at least at discursive level. Another aspect of such need for specialized knowledge training programs is a recurrent rivalry between military polices – frequently responsible for external security in prison facilities in some states – and prison officers, or, as observed formerly, the capture of prison administration by military polices (OLIVEIRA, 2018). Additionally, formal, and informal networks for sharing practices and knowledge across state-level TIGs comprise challenges for systematical training programs.

Although coordination by a national body is important – such as the National School of Penal Services, linked to the Ministry of Justice and Public Security – this coordination should not prioritize models from one group (whether federal or from a federative unit), but ensure the plurality of actors involved in the pedagogical processes, as well as in the best practices of these groups, through disciplines that integrate knowledge such as Differentiated and Proportional Use of Force, Less Lethal Instruments and Technologies, Crisis Management, Pre-Hospital Care, and other knowledge. Lack of national government coordination in this training process seems to pose challenges to the future and professionalism of such state/subnational level groups and might reinforce the need for activating 'elite'/special groups, such as FTIP, in crisis and emergency situations, concentrating power in such instances.

A key observation is the variation in the recruitment and training of TIG personnel. While some states have established rigorous selection processes, others lack clear criteria for admission into these specialized units. Training also varies considerably, with some units emphasizing human rights education and crisis de-escalation techniques, while others focus primarily on tactical combat training. This disparity increases the risk of excessive force and misconduct.

6 Visual and Group Identity

Regarding the visual identities of these Groups, the Survey sought to identify coats of arms, emblems, and insignia that represented them. This is an important aspect, which partially reflects the images and construction of identities of the professionals who are part of these groups.

Recurring images attributed to the construction of the visual identity of these groups are gas masks, rifles/shotguns in a crossed position, and lightning (which may suggest the speed and precision necessary for intervention actions). The eagle/bird of prey appears as an animal alluding to vision and dexterity in at least two emblems (MS and PA). The coat of arms of the Penitentiary Intervention Group of the State of Amazonas, which has the indication PMAM in the lower left corner (alluding to the State Military Police – PMAM stands for Polícia Militar do Estado do Amazonas) indicates a close relationship between the Group of the prison area and the state military police. The coat of arms of the DPOE of the Federal District is the only one that expressly mentions the "penal police", which suggests that the group finds strong support in the definition recently given to the category of professionals working in the prison system. Also worthy of note are the emblems of the Special Operations Group of Rio Grande do Norte, which bear the Latin words *Fide* (by, through faith), *Viribus* (with strength), and *Honoris* (of honor), and of the State of Pará, which, despite including an incomplete sentence, uses the expression *Omnia Vincit* (all conquers), without making clear the subject of the sentence – whether it would be the Group itself or the Secretariat that "conquers all". COPE/MG uses the symbolism of the skull (suggesting the aspect of death, notably used by military police forces, such as the Special Operations Battalion of the Military Police of Rio de Janeiro – BOPE) crossed by a knife and two rifles that it superimposes, as well as the Latin expression just below *Superbia in praelia* (Pride in battles), also without making clear in which battles it actually operates.

The symbols suggest the use of combat tactics (reinforced by images such as Spartan war helmets, such as the GIR of MG, or the Latin expressions that refer to the Roman military structure), images related to the use of force, and the agile and precise dimension.

7 Conducting Interventions, Weapons, and Recording Data and Information

The conduct of interventions by tactical groups in sensitive environments, such as prisons, is complex and requires careful analysis, especially with regard to the weapons used and the documentation of related data and information. The arsenal employed by these groups, often consisting of non-lethal weapons, raises critical considerations about the proportionality and necessity of force in different contexts. In addition, the accuracy and completeness in recording data and information related to interventions are essential to ensure the responsibility, transparency, and accountability of these groups.

Therefore, the questionnaire also asked about the number of interventions carried out by tactical groups since their creation. The results point to various ways of structuring the actions of these groups, as can be seen in Table 3 below:

Table 3 – Number of interventions carried out by TIG since its creation

State	Number of Interventions Carried Out
Amazonas	Not answered
Distrito Federal	Not answered (answered only the number of interventions carried out over the last three years: 53)
Mato Grosso	Not answered (answered to 140 interventions carried out from 2021 to 2022)
Mato Grosso do Sul	Stated to proceed with an average of 16 to 20 interventions per year
Minas Gerais	Not answered (suggests 5 interventions carried out by the COPE in 2020 and 2021)
Pará	2
Pernambuco	Not answered
Rio Grande do Norte	Approximately 1000 interventions
Rio Grande do Sul	195
Rondônia	Not answered
São Paulo	8.829 (considering only the GIR)
Tocantins	Not answered

Source: Prepared by the author from gathered data.

Table 3 points to considerable inconsistencies and difficulties in obtaining information on the exact number of interventions carried out by each Group. Although almost all respondents (except for the State of Pernambuco, which did not respond to the question) stated that they keep records of the interventions carried out, the systematization of this data seems far from systematic organization, in accessible and structured databases.

The clear discrepancy between the number of interventions carried out by the groups (COPE in Minas Gerais carried out only 5 interventions, while the GIRs in São Paulo carried out more than 8 thousand interventions) suggests what has been pointed previously: GIRs are activated for regular procedures inside prison facilities, such as routine body inspections, cells and pavilions inspections, among others, while COPE and elite/special groups are in charge of quelling riots and drastic intervention for recovering self-managed prison facilities (through which inmates begin to have full control of routines and prison security after a riot, for example). This difference reinforces the inequality among groups, and a structure based on legitimation through specialization and necessity.

In this sense, the response given by the oldest of these Groups, regarding the item that asked about the number of interventions carried out since its creation, the DPOE, of the Federal District, is illustrative:

> The DPOE has been in existence for over 20 (twenty) years and most of the records were made in physical documents.
> As previously reported, efforts have been made to establish a more efficient document flow to meet statistical demands. Likewise, preventive actions have been taken throughout the existence of the Directorate. Furthermore, it is worth noting that external oversight bodies, as well as the Criminal Enforcement Court of the Federal District - VEP/TJDFT, monitor all occurrences in which the Differentiated Use of Force is necessary. (CNDH, 2023b)

It is also interesting to note that the actions of these groups can vary greatly – tactical intervention does not always occur to quell a situation of flagrant internal disorder – but it can also occur in a preventive manner, as in the case of the aforementioned DPOE, which stated:

> The Penitentiary System of the Federal District has not recorded any Rebellions for 20 (twenty) years. This milestone was achieved through preventive procedures and actions, which, in the first four months of 2022, resulted in an average of 5 (five) monthly preventive operations. When applying the same average to previous years, the average number of preventive operations in the last 3 (three) years is 180 (one hundred and eighty). CNDH, 2023b)

For illustrative purposes, let one see what is provided for in the Standard Operating Procedure of the Intervention Group of the State of Amapá:

> Art. 39 Prison Operations include typical actions to support riots, escort and transport of prisoners, escapes, rebellions, recaptures, enforcement of arrest warrants, internal and external security of prison establishments, searches, protection of authorities and witnesses, simulated reproductions and other operations authorized by law, as well as determined by the Chief Executive. (Ordinance No. 223, of August 9, 2011) (AMAPÁ, 2011)

Despite the semantic imprecision of the aforementioned article (since, obviously, no prison operation is intended to support riots, escapes, or rebellions, but rather to provide support for actions to dissuade or resolve these critical events), it is noted that a significant part of these operations carried out by the Amapá State Prison Tactical Group refer to exceptional events, while others are confused with routine activities carried out by prison police officers (such as internal security, searches and external security of establishments).

Although there is not enough evidence to infer about the daily activities of these Groups, those that act sporadically possibly do so exceptionally, in situations of crisis management. On the other hand, in the set of responses, it was possible to verify other groups that carry out preventive measures, which suggests that their actions occur in a less exceptional manner than imagined, to the extent that, according to judgments of opportunity and convenience, the Penitentiary Administration deems it necessary to use preventive measures against disturbances

of order and discipline within penal units. It is worth emphasizing that these measures must be entirely based on guiding principles of human rights, in addition to the fact that the actions of these groups are subject to specific discipline in standard operating procedures (SOP), subject to mechanisms of external control of police activity. This is not a mere judgment of opportunity and convenience typical of discretionary acts of the Administration, but must also be accompanied by risk analysis, assessment of scenarios, and adoption of appropriate protocols for searches, inspections and search procedures, use of force, and other measures. Although the CNDH did not request access to these documents (relating to SOPs) in its survey (which would require in-depth analysis), it is essential that the actions of these Groups – whether exceptional or routine – are disciplined by standardized procedures.

Another possible inference is that the lack of precise boundaries between what is a typical routine activity of prison officers who regularly work in prison units and the typical activities of officers belonging to tactical groups may create gray areas in the actions of these officers, with disputes over the real need for these groups to be used. The repercussions of these disputes may ultimately result in actions devoid of criteria, which are felt by the population deprived of liberty.

With regard to the record of weapons and technologies used, 11 of the 12 respondents stated that they periodically monitor the quantity of weapons and less-lethal technologies used in each intervention; only the State of Pernambuco did not respond to this question. Of the 11 respondents, all (100%) stated that they had not used lethal projectiles inside prison units in the three years prior to data collection. In general, the registration data regarding the use of elastomers (rubber projectiles) and stun grenades are not very significant (less than 10). For example, the Federal District, whose group (DPOE) did not provide a response regarding the total number of items used per intervention, despite claiming to record this. The State of Mato Grosso provided a response with percentages, although the question asked for the quantity used per intervention. São Paulo also did not specify the quantity used. Mato Grosso do Sul stated in its response, in turn, that it is based on the degree of risk posed by each situation, for the use of stun grenades, and on the number of operators of 12-caliber weapons, for the use of elastomers. The Federal District's response regarding the use of elastomers and stun grenades was curious: "Each preventive or repressive action has a different characteristic, even though they are of the same nature [sic]. Therefore, each preventive or intervention action may or may not require the use of stun grenades/elastomers." (CNDH, 2023b). The data suggest two possible inferences. The first is that, despite claiming to record the weapons and technologies used in each intervention, these records are considerably precarious or insufficient. The second is that, if they are not, few are the interventions carried out by these tactical groups that actually use less-lethal weapons and technologies. There is a low capacity to present formal records of the weapons used in the interventions. Respondents were also asked about the records of deaths and injuries in intervention actions. Only one respondent – COPE (Minas Gerais) stated that it had a record of deaths resulting from an intervention carried out. According to the information provided:

> During operational support provided at the Sete Lagoas I Prison on February 20, 2020, near the end of the operation, emergency medical care was requested for an inmate (Omitted), who was feeling unwell. The inmate was promptly attended to by the Unit's nurse,(Omitted). Due to the severity of the case, SAMU was called, and the Basic Support Unit (Censored), consisting of the driver (Omitted), nursing technicians (Omitted) and (Omitted) [...]. (CNDH, 2023b)

Records of injuries, in general, are also quite poor – whether they involve prison officers or people deprived of their liberty. In general, although they claim to keep records, most do not systematically demonstrate how many people were injured each year during interventions carried out, which suggests the need to improve these records.

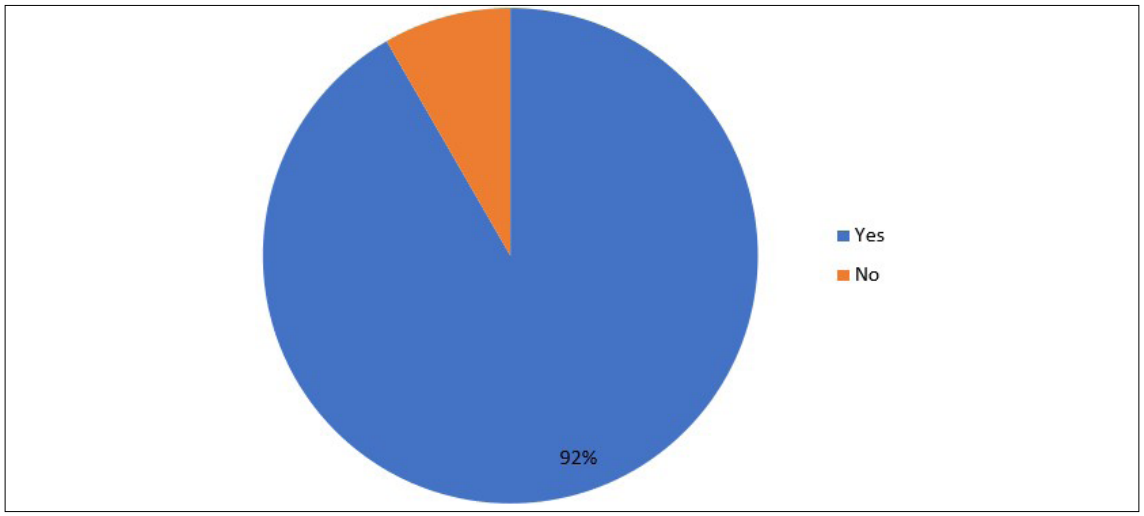
8 Control and Evaluation

The effective implementation of control and evaluation mechanisms is essential for the performance of tactical groups in prison units. These mechanisms not only guarantee accountability and transparency in operations but also ensure that the actions of these groups are aligned with ethical principles, human rights, and legal standards. In sensitive environments, such as prisons, the importance of careful evaluations and adequate supervision cannot be underestimated, since they improve operational efficiency, minimize the risk of abuse, and promote a balanced approach between maintaining order and respecting individual rights.

Thus, respondents were asked about the control mechanisms exercised at two levels: an internal one, through its own Internal Affairs Department, and an external one, through the flow of information on intervention occurrences to Public Prosecutors and Judges of the Criminal Enforcement Courts.

The results indicate the following:

Chart 1 – Percentage of Tactical Groups Subject to Internal Affairs Department Control



Source: Prepared by the author from gathered data.

As can be seen in Chart 1, 11 (eleven out of twelve) respondents submit the activities of their Tactical Groups to the respective Internal Affairs Departments. Only the Federal District (DPOE) reported not doing so, as "there is no Internal Affairs section yet. However, there is an Investigation Management Department" (CNDH, 2023b), and that

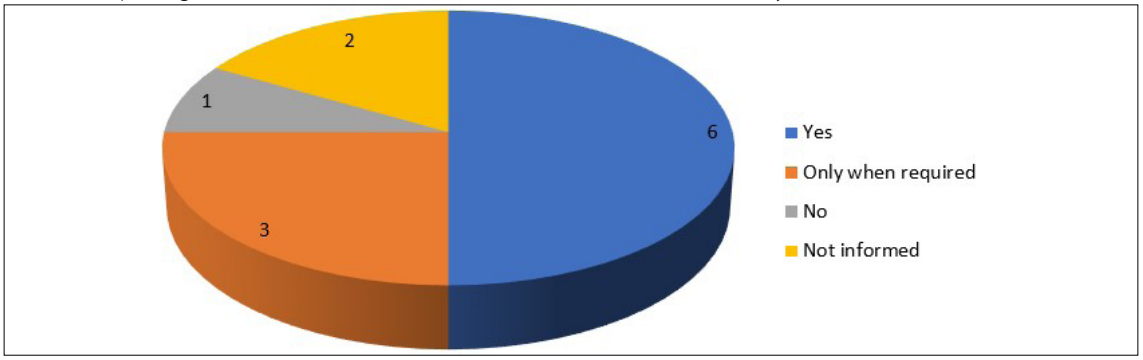
> the Special Operations Penitentiary Directorate – DPOE, which has the Tactical Intervention Group, within the scope of this SEAPE, participates in operations and interventions together with the Prison Police Officers working in the Prison Units (CNDH, 2023b).

And "that the police officers assigned to the DPOE act together when they receive a call for support from the Prison". It highlights that, "at the time, the managers register the facts in an Administrative Occurrence, in which the circumstances of the event are reported and, thus, forwarded to the competent authorities for the appropriate purposes" (CNDH, 2023b). It also explains that "to date, there are no specific administrative disciplinary procedures against agents of the Group (due to their activities carried out in the Group), since the actions are carried out simultaneously between DPOE and Prison officers." (CNDH, 2023b)

As can be seen, the absence of an Internal Affairs Office, in the case of the Federal District, seems to make the role of controlling misconduct ineffective, since the facts are reported solely by managers, without the exercise of a strengthened internal control body. Despite this, even in cases where these Internal Affairs Offices exist (as in the case of the other 11 respondents), the number of procedures instituted is absolutely insignificant, considering that they were asked how many procedures had been carried out since the creation of the Group: the state that reported having the highest number of procedures instituted was Minas Gerais (COPE), with five procedures instituted, followed by Tocantins, with three procedures instituted. The Amazonas Group, although recently created, has an established procedure, while the other states, although claiming to have an Internal Affairs Department, also stated that no procedure had been established, or, as was the case in Pernambuco and Mato Grosso do Sul, preferred not to say whether any procedure had been established.

The Survey also sought to determine whether the activities are subject to control by the bodies responsible for monitoring criminal enforcement, such as the Judiciary and the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Chart 2 – Reporting of incidents to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Judiciary



Source: Prepared by the author from gathered data.

One of the most striking issues identified is the variation in intervention frequency, with São Paulo reporting 8,829 interventions compared to Pará's two. This inconsistency, although related to essential differences between Rapid Intervention Groups (GIRs) and elite units suggests a lack of standardized criteria for deployment. This raises concerns about the overuse of force in routine operations by GIRs, as well as a potential lack of preparedness in other contexts that may require crisis management.

Despite claims of record-keeping by most states, data on the use of force remains inconsistent. Several states failed to provide precise figures on the deployment of non-lethal weapons, suggesting deficiencies in accountability mechanisms. Furthermore, while all states reported maintaining internal oversight through internal affairs offices, very few disciplinary actions have been recorded, indicating possible systemic barriers to accountability.

External oversight of TIG operations is also limited. While some states report informing judicial authorities about interventions, others fail to provide regular updates, leaving room for unchecked misconduct. Strengthening external oversight structures is imperative to ensure that these units operate within legal and ethical boundaries. The lack of independent review mechanisms exacerbates concerns regarding the use of excessive force and potential human rights violations.

Conclusion

This study has provided a broad overview of Tactical Intervention Groups in the Brazilian prison system, highlighting key concerns regarding their operation, oversight, and impact on human rights. The findings indicate that while TIGs play a significant role in maintaining prison security, their lack of standardized regulations and accountability mechanisms poses substantial risks.

TIGs have a not negligible origin attached to military organizations: since Rio de Janeiro's SOE during the 1980's, the training of special groups is frequently provided by military polices. TIGs also adopt aesthetic military symbols: mottos (e.g., *superbia in praelia*), skull iconography (COPE/MG), and war imagery reinforce adversarial identities.

TIGs operate within a fragmented governance framework, marked by significant disparities in regulatory standards, training protocols, and operational mandates across states. A major difficulty during this study was to gather consistent information, since many respondents did not answer fully our questionnaire, providing missing information and sometimes evasive responses. We addressed main issues in a wider framework, meaning, Brazilian prisons context. In other words, Brazil's reliance on TIGs reflects deeper disorders in its penal system: overcrowding, gang dominance, and institutional neglect.

Additionally, inconsistent record-keeping, opaque deployment criteria, and weak oversight mechanisms, as seen before, exacerbate risks of excessive force. External supervision by prosecutors

and judges remains irregular, while internal affairs bodies lack independence and efficacy. The absence of standardized incident documentation, particularly regarding injuries, fatalities, and weapon use, as well as impact assessment of operations, not only impedes transparency, but also undermines effective social control over these groups. Historical deployments (e.g., FTIP interventions in Amazonas, Roraima) correlate with documented human rights violations, underscoring the urgency of independent review.

A stark divergence existing between Rapid Intervention Groups (GIRs), deployed for routine security tasks (e.g., searches, inspections), and elite units (e.g., COPE, FTIP) reserved for high-risk crises blurs operational boundaries, enabling the misuse of tactical units for non-emergency scenarios. São Paulo's GIRs, for instance, reported 8,829 interventions – largely – routine while Minas Gerais' COPE deployed only five times for major rebellions. Such inconsistency risks normalizing force and eroding proportionality.

Policy recommendations include the establishment of national guidelines for TIG operations, enhanced training programs emphasizing human rights and de-escalation tactics, and improved transparency through systematic reporting requirements. In this sense, sustainable reform requires deprioritizing repression and recentering corrections on human dignity, transparency, and social reintegration.

Additionally, the findings indicate that TIGs are often deployed for routine security tasks rather than strictly emergency interventions. This raises questions about their role within the prison system and whether their use aligns with international best practices. If TIGs are consistently engaged in non-emergency operations, their function may need to be reconsidered to prevent unnecessary escalation of force.

The study also found that the majority of TIGs lack formalized mechanisms for evaluating their effectiveness. Without clear performance metrics or impact assessments, it is difficult to determine whether these units achieve their stated security objectives. Future policies should prioritize the development of assessment frameworks to measure the long-term outcomes of tactical interventions.

Overall, the results highlight an urgent need for regulatory reform. The discrepancies in governance, training, deployment, and oversight suggest that Brazil's approach to TIGs lacks cohesion. A standardized framework is necessary to ensure that these units operate under clear guidelines that balance security concerns with human rights obligations.

Future research should explore the perspectives of inmates and prison staff to gain a more holistic understanding of the impact of TIG interventions. Comparative studies with other countries could also provide valuable insights into best practices that could be adapted to the Brazilian context, mainly alternative frameworks centered on rehabilitation. By addressing the issues identified in this study, policymakers can work towards a more effective and rights-respecting approach to prison security.

The role of TIGs in Brazilian prisons must be carefully reassessed. While they provide an essential function in handling emergencies, their long-term utility should be evaluated against broader correctional goals. A shift towards preventive security measures and rehabilitation-oriented strategies may ultimately yield more sustainable outcomes for Brazil's correctional system.

Notes

[1] This does not mean that GIRs are not inspired by military doctrines or practices. Brazilian research indicates that prison officers are not just inspired by but actively formed and governed through military practices and logics, which structure training, daily routines, identities, and the use of violence in prisons (OLIVEIRA, 2018; KING; VALENSIA, 2014).

[2] The DPOE was responsible for training diverse prison security guards in other to conceive an homogeneous protocol for prison intervention during crisis events. Its Director was responsible for the Força-Tarefa de Intervenção Penitenciária. The National Secretariat for Penal Policies (SENAPPEN) exclusively coordinates the Prison Intervention Task Force (FTIP), under federative cooperation agreements between the Ministry of Justice and Public Security (MJSP) and the states/federal district, as per Law 11.473/2007, with its Federal Prison System Directorate leading operations according to Decree 11.103/2022. Comprised of highly trained Federal Prison Police officers specializing in prison intervention and escorts, who coordinate mobilized state prison police, the FTIP is effectively deployed to resolve crises, riots, and rebellions, restoring order and discipline within prison systems. The FTIP has a significant operational history, including its first deployment during the 2017 Alcaçuz Prison crisis in Rio Grande do Norte (26 inmate deaths), the 2018 Monte Cristo Penitentiary rebellion in Roraima (33 deaths), and multiple 2019 interventions in states like Ceará, Amazonas (55 deaths), and Pará (58 deaths), where it effectively regained control of 13 prison units. The violations of human rights of the application of this doctrine through FTIP is well documented in the National Preventive Mechanism on Torture (MNPCT, 2018).

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