

Year V, v.2 2025 | Submission: 12/15/2025 | Accepted: 12/16/2025 | Publication: 12/17/2025

Specialized Policing in the Amazon: Feasibility of Creating a Battalion of Border Policing in Tabatinga/AM

Specialized Policing in the Amazon: Feasibility of Creating a Border Policing Battalion in Tabatinga/AM

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Summary

This article analyzes the feasibility of implementing a Border Policing Battalion in Tabatinga/AM, using the Border Police Battalion (BPFRON/PR) model as a reference, in light of the logistical, territorial, institutional, and sociocultural specificities of the Amazon region. A qualitative, exploratory, and analytical approach is adopted, based on a literature review and comparative institutional analysis. Initially, the geopolitical, criminal, and socioeconomic context of the Brazil-Colombia-Peru tri-border area is characterized, highlighting territorial vulnerabilities, border porosity, and the activities of transnational criminal organizations. Subsequently, the operational and institutional conditions of public security in the Upper Solimões region are analyzed, highlighting structural limitations of conventional policing, logistical difficulties associated with the predominance of river mobility, and weaknesses in interoperability between agencies. Finally, the applicability of BPFRON/PR to the Amazonian context is evaluated, identifying convergences and divergences and pointing out adaptation strategies compatible with the reality of Tabatinga, with emphasis on permanent territorial presence, a hybrid structure based on river transport, Amazonian operational doctrine, and interagency action. It is concluded that the implementation of a specialized unit is strategically viable, provided that the model is adapted to regional particularities and that local logistical and institutional capacities are strengthened.

Keywords: Public security; Borders; Specialized policing; Tri-border area; Amazon.

Abstract

This article analyzes the feasibility of implementing a Border Policing Battalion in Tabatinga, Amazonas, using the Border Police Battalion of Paraná State (BPFRON/PR) as an analytical reference, considering the logistical, territorial, institutional, and sociocultural specificities of the Amazon region. A qualitative, exploratory, and analytical approach was adopted, based on a bibliographic review and comparative institutional analysis. Initially, the study characterizes the geopolitical, criminal, and socioeconomic context of the Brazil-Colombia-Peru tri-border area, highlighting territorial vulnerabilities, border porosity, and the presence of transnational criminal organizations. Subsequently, the operational and institutional conditions of public security in the Alto Solimões region are examined, highlighting structural limitations of conventional policing, logistical challenges related to river mobility, and weaknesses in interagency coordination. Finally, the applicability of the BPFRON/PR model to the Amazonian context is assessed, identifying convergences, divergences, and adaptation strategies compatible with the reality of Tabatinga, with emphasis on permanent territorial presence, a hybrid structure with a fluvial base, an Amazon-specific operational doctrine, and interagency cooperation. The study concludes that the implementation of a specialized border policing unit is strategically feasible, provided that the model is adapted to regional particularities and supported by strengthened logistical and institutional capacities.

Keywords: Public security; Borders; Specialized policing; Tri-border area; Amazon region.



1. INTRODUCTION

Brazil shares approximately 17,000 kilometers of land borders with ten countries.

South American countries, with a significant portion of this territorial outline located in the Northern region, particularly in the Legal Amazon. The country's continental size, coupled with low population density demographic factors and the limited state presence in remote areas have been identified in the literature as a factor that favors the actions of transnational criminal organizations, especially at borders.

Amazonian regions. In the state of Amazonas, approximately 3,870 km of border with Peru, Colombia and Venezuela presents significant logistical and operational challenges. Peru and Colombia are among the others. The world's largest cocaine producers, which exacerbates security risks in that region. strategic (UNODC, 2018).

In this context, the municipality of Tabatinga/AM, located on the triple border with Colombia. Peru stands out as one of the most sensitive points in the regional criminal dynamic. The area functions as a strategic route for the flow of drugs originating from Peru and Colombia, using predominantly the river routes to the interior of the Brazilian territory and, subsequently, to the Studies indicate that territorial and logistical control of these routes is a point of contention. continuous conflict between different criminal organizations, among which the Primeiro Comando stands out. from the Capital (PCC) and the Comando Vermelho (CV), creating a scenario marked by instability, strategic rearrangements and recurring episodes of violence in the Alto Solimões region (MELO, 2021).

Although several initiatives have been implemented by the federal government, such as the System Amazon Protection System (SIPAM) and the National Border Security Strategy (ENAFRON), Institutional assessments indicate that these policies face significant structural limitations. especially with regard to interagency coordination, the definition of responsibilities and effectiveness. operational in the border region. Such weaknesses compromise the State's ability to to respond in an integrated and continuous manner to the contemporary dynamics of organized crime. transnational, particularly on the Amazonian borders (BRAZIL, 2018).

In this scenario, marked by the structural limitations of federal security policies of Due to borders and the difficulties of coordination at the national level, the literature has discussed the potential of decentralized and specialized policing models, capable of responding more Flexible and continuous adaptation to the territorial specificities of border regions. Among these experiences, The Border Police Battalion (BPFRON) of the Paraná Military Police stands out, created in 2012, focusing on overt, repressive, and integrated action in the border areas of that state, combining a permanent presence, specialized personnel, and coordination with federal agencies and international. This institutional arrangement has been analyzed as an alternative to the logic predominantly centralized national policies, by prioritizing territorial adaptation,



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Operational specialization and integration between different levels of government.

Studies (CAMPOS; SOUZA, 2023; LUZ; SOUZA; CUNHA, 2019) indicate that BPFロン It has delivered significant results in combating organized crime, especially due to its... interagency capability, the use of specialized tactics, and a permanent presence. in sensitive areas. The analysis of applying a similar model in Tabatinga thus arises, as a possibility to be evaluated for strengthening state presence and territorial control, provided that the necessary adaptation to specific logistical, environmental and... sociocultural aspects of the Amazon.

Therefore, the aim of this article is to analyze the feasibility of implementing a Specialized Border Battalion in Tabatinga/AM, taking as a reference the experience of BPFロン/PR. To this end, a qualitative literature review is adopted, exploring the theoretical foundations of specialized policing and the practical experiences reported by literature.

The article's structure is organized as follows: initially, the fundamentals are discussed. of specialized border policing in Brazil and the case of BPFロン; then, an analysis is made of The challenges and potential of applying this model in Tabatinga are discussed; finally, the following are presented: Final considerations, with a view to contributing to the debate on public safety in the region. Amazonian...

2. Specialized Border Policing: Fundamentals and EXPERIENCES

2.1. Border policing in Brazil

Policing in border areas in Brazil has historically been marked by Institutional discontinuity, low effectiveness, and lack of integration among the various bodies. involved. The country's territorial size, coupled with the heterogeneity of its border areas, imposes complex challenges for public security forces, who need to deal simultaneously with issues sovereignty, drug trafficking, smuggling, irregular immigration, and environmental crimes.

At the federal level, several initiatives have been implemented over the past few decades with the intention is to structure a public policy focused on border protection, among which are They highlight the National Border Security Strategy (ENAFロン), created in 2011, and the Integrated Border Protection Program (PPIF), established in 2016. Both initiatives They sought to promote coordinated action between the Armed Forces, Federal Police, and Highway Police. Federal, intelligence agencies, and state police forces. However, studies indicate that the execution of these



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Policies have been hampered by budgetary constraints, institutional fragmentation, and overlap.

due to competencies and difficulties in interagency coordination, which compromises its effectiveness in the face of the contemporary dynamics of transnational organized crime in border regions (VASCONCELLOS, 2025).

In the Amazonian border regions, the challenges are exacerbated due to unique environmental characteristics. The region's logistical and social challenges. A permanent police presence is hampered by factors such as scarcity. lack of personnel, difficulties with river mobility, lack of infrastructure and low population density. population. According to Cardoso and Rodrigues (2025), the fragility of policing in these areas This directly contributes to the proliferation of transnational crimes, such as drug and arms trafficking. and illegal drugs.

In this context, strengthening specialized policing emerges as an alternative. promising. The experience of BPFRON/PR reveals the importance of units with tactical operations, Targeted training, knowledge of the terrain, and the ability to coordinate with other institutions. According to Campos and Souza (2023), the effectiveness of operations in sensitive regions depends directly from the presence of police forces in the territory and from operational intelligence. shared among security agencies.

Therefore, border policing in Brazil requires more than just a sporadic presence of The State, through planned, integrated action sensitive to the specificities of each region. The experience The Paraná-based BPFRON provides valuable input for considering viable operational alternatives for The Amazon, respecting its unique characteristics.

2.2. The BPFRON/PR experience

The Border Police Battalion of the Military Police of Paraná (BPFRON/PR) was created in 2012, in the context of intensified actions to combat organized crime in the region of The tri-border area between Brazil, Paraguay, and Argentina. The unit emerged as a strategic response to... shortcomings of conventional policing in dealing with complex crimes such as drug trafficking, Weapons, contraband, and smuggling, which had been growing rapidly in the border towns. people from Paraná.

The organizational structure of BPFRON was designed to operate in a specialized manner. with a focus on tactical missions, police intelligence, interagency integration and knowledge. territorial. According to Campos and Souza (2023), one of the unit's distinguishing features is its capacity to Maintain a permanent and visible presence in sensitive areas, working in conjunction with the Police. Federal Police, Federal Highway Police, Federal Revenue Service, and Armed Forces, in addition to maintaining channels of cooperation with police forces from neighboring countries



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Operational results over the last decade reinforce the effectiveness of the model.

As Luz, Souza and Cunha (2019) point out, BPFロン seized thousands of tons of drugs, weapons, ammunition and contraband goods, generating a significant economic and logistical impact in criminal organizations operating on the borders. In addition, the unit has invested in continuous training of its members in the use of embedded technology and land mobility and river transport — which brings it closer to the real demands of Brazilian border areas.

Another relevant aspect of the Paraná model is its intelligence-driven approach and Risk analysis allows for more efficient allocation of personnel and resources. According to with Cardoso and Rodrigues (2025), operational specialization, combined with articulation Interinstitutional cooperation and administrative continuity are key factors for performance. positive result from BPFロン.

Thus, the experience in Paraná reveals that border policing requires more than... Episodic presence: requires a dedicated structure, its own operational doctrine, and territorial integration. permanent. These elements form the basis for reflecting on the feasibility of replicating a A similar model exists in the Amazonian reality.

2.3. The police presence as an instrument of social order.

The presence of the police apparatus in the territory goes beyond simply suppressing crime. It is also an expression of the power of the State and its capacity to establish order, protect rights and regulate social behaviors. This concept is rooted in a sociological tradition. which recognizes the normative and symbolic role of the police in modern societies.

For Durkheim (1983), social order depends on the internalization of collective norms and the The effectiveness of institutions in reinforcing them. When there is a failure or absence of formal social control, Spaces open up for anomie and the growth of violence. In this sense, the presence The visible and continuous presence of the police — especially in vulnerable areas — plays a central role. in reaffirming social norms and building a sense of security.

Complementing this view, Bittner (2003) argues that the essential function of the police is "To deal with situations where something that needs to be done urgently requires the use of legitimate force." This This definition broadens the understanding of police activity as a public service aimed at... stabilization of conflicts and mediation of life in society, especially in contexts of tension and disorder.

Bayley (2006), in turn, highlights the importance of legitimacy in police actions. According to him, police presence is only effective when perceived as fair, proportionate, and integrated into... an institutional framework that respects fundamental rights. This is particularly sensitive in areas



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border regions, where the State is often perceived as absent, selective, or arbitrary.

In the Amazon region, the police presence becomes more complex due to... historical fragility of state presence, large geographical distances, ethnic diversity- cultural and operational aspects of criminal organizations with a strong territorial presence. In this context, the The actions of the security forces in Tabatinga/AM should be understood not only as Not an instrument for containing crime, but also a mechanism for asserting the State itself. in a border territory marked by institutional limitations, low governance capacity and intense activity by illicit transnational actors, where sovereignty is permanently at stake. tense and disputed (BRAZIL, 2018; MELO, 2021).

Therefore, it is understood that the creation of a specialized border battalion, along the lines of... The work of BPFロン can contribute not only to the suppression of crime, but also to... Strengthening a legitimate, continuous state presence that is sensitive to local dynamics.

3. Challenges and Potential for Implementation in Tabatinga/AM

The implementation of a specialized border battalion in Tabatinga/AM requires a A thorough analysis of the geographical, social, and institutional characteristics of the region. Although the case The Paraná state government offers important operational lessons; the transposition of its structure to the Amazon region is key. Western culture requires profound adaptations in the face of territorial complexity and the dynamics of crime. cross-border and local logistical limitations. This section aims to discuss the main elements that influence the viability of the proposal, based on four complementary axes: the geopolitical and criminal context of the tri-border area; the operational conditions of the forces of public safety; the socioeconomic reality marked by informality and selective presence of the State; and, finally, the points of convergence and divergence between the models under analysis, with proposals for territorial and institutional adaptation.

3.1. Geopolitical and criminal context of the tri-border area

Tabatinga/AM is located in one of the most strategic and sensitive regions of the territory. national, forming the tri-border area between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru. This territorial division It is characterized by extensive forest areas, low population density, and large distances. logistics and a hydrographic network that acts as the main axis for the circulation of people and goods. These characteristics give the region a high level of operational complexity and make it particularly susceptible to the actions of transnational criminal networks.

The region formed by the municipalities of Tabatinga, Benjamin Constant and Atalaia do Norte.

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It presents socioeconomic indicators that express the specificities of the Amazonian context and

They reinforce the need for a qualified state presence. Tabatinga, with approximately 73,000

It has the largest population in the region and plays a central role in logistics and...

border trade. Benjamin Constant, with approximately 37,000 inhabitants, has a density

Small population and strategic location on the banks of the Solimões River. As for Atalaia do Norte

It has the smallest population, estimated at approximately 15,000 inhabitants, and one of the lowest Human

Development Indexes in the state, with a high population density.

less than 0.2 inhabitants/km² (IBGE, 2025).

Despite demographic differences, the three municipalities share characteristics.

Similar structural features, such as geographic isolation, precarious infrastructure, strong

dependence on river navigation and the intermittent presence of public authorities. These factors impose

Significant restrictions on state action hinder the continuous presence of security forces,

at the same time as they create conditions favorable to the actions of criminal organizations

transnational. This context reinforces the relevance of the discussion about policing models.

specialized, adapted to the territorial and institutional particularities of the region.

Figure 1 – Map of the Triple Frontier Region (Brazil–Colombia–Peru)



Source: Google Maps, 2025.

The Amazonian tri-border region is characterized by high geopolitical complexity, in which the

The Brazilian state faces historical difficulties in exercising sovereignty continuously and

homogeneous. The fragility of the state presence and the porous nature of the borders favor its actions and

Territorial dispute between transnational criminal organizations, among which the First stands out.



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Comando da Capital (PCC) and Comando Vermelho (CV). These organizations seek to control routes. drug trafficking strategies originating from Peru and Colombia — countries recognized as the world's largest cocaine producers — primarily using the region's river waterways. Amazonian (IPEA, 2018; MELO, 2021; UNODC, 2018).

In this context, studies indicate that, given the limited or discontinuous role of the State, Criminal organizations have begun to exercise alternative forms of territorial and social control. These Practices include imposing informal rules of coexistence and monitoring movements. riverine and terrestrial networks and the structuring of their own information and surveillance networks in communities. riverine and indigenous communities. This is a criminal governance arrangement that takes advantage of their vulnerabilities. institutional tools to consolidate local influence and operational capacity, making public safety... In the Amazon region, this is a challenge that goes beyond mere repression and demands... strategic, integrated and sensitive approach to cross-border dynamics (MARTINI, 2025; MELO, 2021; IPEA, 2018).

Furthermore, the municipality of Tabatinga experiences intense cross-border traffic of The movement of people and goods between Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, much of it carried out in a way... Informal and with reduced state control. The fragility of immigration control mechanisms and Customs regulations increase the territory's vulnerability to exploitation by criminal networks involved in Practices such as human trafficking, smuggling, and money laundering. These networks take advantage of... porosity of borders and local institutional limitations, reinforcing the complexity of The dynamics of crime are posing additional challenges to the Brazilian state's actions in the Amazon region. (IPEA, 2018; MELO, 2021; UNODC, 2018).

Given this scenario, it becomes evident that the Amazonian tri-border area demands solutions. specific institutional frameworks capable of integrating sovereignty, territorial intelligence, and a permanent presence. of the security forces. The current context, marked by instability, criminal competition and Constant rearrangements of illicit power require specialized structures capable of operating in environments complex and require coordinated responses from different spheres of public power.

3.2. Operational and institutional conditions of local public security

Public safety in the Alto Solimões region faces structural limitations. organizational and territorial factors that compromise the effectiveness of state actions in addressing Cross-border crime. Although the municipality of Tabatinga has a police battalion. The Military Police of the State of Amazonas (PMAM), this unit performs predominantly... generic, geared towards conventional visible policing, responding to urban incidents, to the control of civil disturbances and other activities typical of a multi-purpose police force. It deals with-

if, therefore, it is an operational structure without functional specialization, devoid of doctrine.

This lack of specialization directly impacts the institution's capacity for response.

Interagency relations, mastery of river navigation, permanent territorial presence, and systematic employment.

Strategic intelligence coordinated between the state and federal levels.

Additionally, the reduced interoperability between public security agencies — in federal, state, and municipal spheres — hinders the sharing of information, the construction integrated diagnostics and the coordination of joint operations. This fragmented approach expands regional vulnerability to criminal organizations operating transnationally, with high mobility, logistical capacity and local co-optation mechanisms, exploring institutional weaknesses and gaps in state coordination to expand its territorial influence and operational (MARTINI, 2025).

The situation becomes even more complex due to the extensive territorial area and the predominance of river logistics as the main means of access increases costs. operational and restricts the continuous presence of the State in remote areas. As Medeiros analyzes. (2025), river policing in the Amazon requires an efficient and adapted logistical arrangement. The region's specific geographical characteristics constitute a central element in enhancing the effectiveness of actions. combating drug trafficking in hard-to-reach locations. In this context, the lack of a Specialized forces limit territorial control and the ability to respond to... Criminal factions take advantage of these institutional gaps. As Cardoso and [names] point out. Rodrigues (2025), the absence of specialized and permanent police structures at the borders Amazonian initiatives promote the consolidation of safe routes and support points in vulnerable communities. both for drug trafficking and for recruiting local labor.

Given this scenario, the proposal to create a border police unit with the profile The specialized program in Tabatinga is a strategic alternative to strengthen state action. in a proactive, technically skilled and territorially adapted manner. Although embedded in context

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Despite its distinct geographical location, the BPFロン/PR model presents institutional and operational elements. relevant information that can contribute to building an arrangement compatible with the specificities of Amazon.

3.3. Convergences, divergences, and adaptation strategies to the Paraná model

The proposal to establish a specialized border battalion in Tabatinga/AM, Inspired by the experience of BPFロン/PR, it requires careful analysis of the convergences and divergences. existing between the two contexts. Although the Paraná model has presented results There are factors that are relevant in combating organized crime on the borders with Paraguay and Argentina. significant structural and territorial differences that pose challenges to its direct transposition to The Amazonian reality.

Among the points of convergence, the existence of borders vulnerable to action stands out. of transnational criminal organizations, especially those associated with drug trafficking, to Smuggling and arms trafficking. In both contexts, the fragility of the state presence and the The porous nature of borders favors the actions of organized factions. As Luz (2020) analyzes, the BPFロン has established itself as a national benchmark by combining visible policing with integrated intelligence, rapid response capability, and joint operations with federal agencies and state governments.

However, the logistical and territorial differences between the contexts are significant. BPFロン operates in regions characterized by consolidated land infrastructure and availability of Air support and higher population density, while Tabatinga and neighboring municipalities — Benjamin Constant and Atalaia do Norte — have predominantly river access, limited road coverage and extensive population voids. As Cardoso and Rodrigues (2025) point out, the Amazonian logistics demands its own doctrine, including permanent river patrols. Mobile detachments and coordination with local leaders are essential for effective action in isolated areas.

Table 1 – Territorial and Criminal Comparison

Dimension	BPFロン/PR	TABATINGA/AM
Location.	Dry border with Paraguay and Argentina.	Triple river border with Colombia and Peru.
Nature of the Terrain.	Urban area, with highways and support air.	Dense forest, extensive rivers and low connectivity.
Dominant crime rate.	Smuggling, arms trafficking and transnational drug trafficking, gangs	

Source: Author's elaboration (2025).

Furthermore, the Amazonian context imposes the need for intercultural sensitivity.

The border with Colombia and Peru involves the daily movement of indigenous, riverside, and other populations. foreign forces, requiring specific technical preparation and differentiated approaches on the part of the forces. security. Medeiros (2025) emphasizes that the effectiveness of specialized policing models in The Amazon depends, to a large extent, on the capacity to adapt to cultural specificities. local environmental and institutional factors.

Therefore, the feasibility of deploying a specialized battalion in Tabatinga is not...

It is limited to simply replicating the BPFron model, but is contingent upon its adaptation to... particularities of the Amazonian scenario. This implies rethinking the physical structure, the logistical means, the Training of personnel and operational protocols, prioritizing territorial presence and work. Interagency relations and the social legitimation of policing. Adapting the Paraná model to reality. The Alto Solimões region is therefore a central requirement for its effectiveness.

Having overcome the analysis of convergences and divergences, it is now appropriate to present the main conclusions of the research and their implications for the formulation of public policies aimed at to public safety in border regions.

4. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Given the challenges observed in the Amazonian tri-border region and the associated possibilities

Regarding specialized policing models, this study sought to analyze the feasibility of creating a... Border Police Battalion in the municipality of Tabatinga/AM, taking as a reference the experience of BPFron/PR. The analysis was based on a qualitative approach, from a review bibliographic and case studies, with the aim of understanding the critical elements that influence The effectiveness of public security actions in border regions. The final considerations are... presented below in three sections: summary of the main findings, strategic relevance of the model. for the Amazonian reality and recommendations for public policies and future research.

4.1. Summary of findings

The research showed that the Amazonian tri-border area, especially in the Upper Amazon region...

Solimões presents a complex public security context, characterized by weaknesses.

Institutional challenges, logistical limitations, and the intense activity of transnational criminal organizations. A



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Analysis of the literature indicates that the integrated, specialized, and ongoing work of BPFron/PR

This was a significant factor in combating organized crime on Brazil's southern borders.

When applying this analytical framework to the case of Tabatinga, conditions are identified that allow for consideration of adopting a similar model, provided that it is accompanied by adaptations substantial to the local context.

The environmental, territorial, and sociocultural specificities of the Amazon — such as predominance of river navigation, isolation of communities and the significant presence of Indigenous and riverside populations demand a policing model sensitive to their dynamics. territorial, as highlighted by Medeiros (2025). The literature also points out that the presence A prolonged and territorially oriented institutional approach constitutes a central element for strengthening state control and the containment of criminal networks in border regions.

4.2. Strategic relevance of the model for Tabatinga

The establishment of a specialized battalion in Tabatinga is of strategic importance to the Brazilian state. Located on one of the main routes for international drug trafficking, the The city plays a logistical role in the flow of drugs originating from Colombia and Peru. geographical location on the tri-border area, associated with the presence of criminal factions and limitations Local institutional frameworks necessitate continuous and territorially oriented state responses.

Tabatinga also has institutional and operational conditions that favor implementation. of a specialized unit. Its geopolitical centrality in Western Amazonia stands out, institutional demand for a permanent state presence and the operational precedent represented by The Arpão I Integrated River Base, whose operations can be coordinated with a new specialized arrangement. These elements indicate the viability of a structure with the potential to impact the dynamics. regional criminals and contribute to strengthening state sovereignty.

4.3. Recommendations for public policy formulation and future studies

The implementation of a specialized policing model in Tabatinga presupposes Consistent adaptations to the specificities of the Amazonian context. The design of a hybrid structure, combining a permanent river base with mobile river detachments and terrestrial. Additionally, the incorporation of an operational doctrine is shown to be necessary. Adapted to the Amazon, with training in river navigation, survival, and intercultural interaction. especially in indigenous and riverside areas.

Strengthening river logistics, with suitable vessels and capacity to...



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Operational self-sufficiency and the use of monitoring technologies constitute a central element for the effectiveness of the model. International cooperation with security forces from Colombia and Peru, through mechanisms of technical cooperation and intelligence, it should also be considered as a strategic component in combating transnational crime.

These guidelines contribute to the construction of an operational model that is feasible. Adaptation and replication, based on the literature and sensitive to local dynamics. Future studies can deepen comparative analyses on the impacts of specialized structures in different areas. South American borders, in order to support the formulation of more consistent public policies, and lasting for public safety in the Amazon.

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