



Police Training in Addressing the Criminal Use of Explosives: A Study A Comparison of Teaching Practice and the First Response in Brazil

*Police Training in Addressing the Criminal Use of Explosives: A Comparative Study on
Teaching Practice and First Response in Brazil*

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Summary

The criminal use of explosives in Brazil has intensified in recent decades, especially in actions against financial institutions, attacks on security forces, and incidents involving high risk to the population and state agents. This scenario poses significant challenges to police training, particularly regarding the technical preparation of professionals who act as first responders in such incidents. The overall objective of this article is to analyze the existence of training gaps in police capacity building for dealing with the criminal use of explosives, comparing teaching practices in specialized courses with the reality of first police response in Brazil.

Specifically, this study sought to examine the growth and characteristics of the criminal use of explosives in the country; analyze the adequacy of police training for the initial response to these incidents; and discuss teaching practices in explosives specialization courses as a strategic element for mitigating these gaps. The methodology adopted consisted of qualitative bibliographic and documentary research, with a comparative analysis of scientific articles addressing the criminal use of explosives, police training, and teaching in specialized technical courses. As a result, an asymmetry was identified between the complexity of incidents involving explosives and the content offered in initial training courses, which exposes police officers and society to unnecessary risks. It is concluded that strengthening specialized teaching and including minimum content on explosives is crucial.

Explosives training in police courses is an essential measure for improving first response and preserving lives.

Keywords: Explosives; Police Training; Critical Incidents; Teaching Practice; Public Safety.

Abstract

The criminal use of explosives in Brazil has intensified over the past decades, particularly in actions against financial institutions, attacks on security forces, and incidents involving high risk to both the population and state agents. This scenario poses significant challenges to police training, especially regarding the technical preparation of professionals who act as first responders in such occurrences. The general objective of this article is to analyze the existence of training gaps in police capacity to confront the criminal use of explosives, comparing teaching practices in specialized courses with the reality of the first police response in Brazil.

Specifically, the study sought to: examine the growth and characteristics of criminal use of explosives in the country; analyze the adequacy of police training for the initial handling of such incidents; and discuss teaching practices in explosives specialization courses as a strategic element to mitigate these gaps. The methodology adopted consisted of bibliographic and documentary research of a qualitative nature, with comparative analysis of scientific articles addressing the criminal use of explosives, police training, and teaching in specialized technical courses. As a result, an asymmetry was identified between the complexity of incidents involving explosives and the content offered in initial training courses, which exposes police officers and society to unnecessary risks. It is concluded that strengthening specialized teaching practices and including minimum content on explosives in police training courses are essential measures for improving the first response and preserving lives.

Keywords: Explosives; Police Training; First Response; Teaching Practice; Public Security.

INTRODUCTION

According to Feitoza and Alves Junior (2020), Brazil recorded 4,571 occurrences with criminal explosives (2013-2017), especially attacks on financial institutions, spread throughout almost all regions of the country. These authors classify the use of explosives and Explosive devices for criminal purposes in Brazil are a "sad reality," The scope and relevance of this issue in the context of crime deserve closer attention. responsibility for governmental institutions. This concern is compounded by the need the State must prepare for emerging risks, such as terrorist suicide tactics with Improvised explosive devices (IEDs), common among ultra-radical jihadist groups. (Aguilar, 2020).

For military police officers who work daily with explosives and bombs, the Concerns are high due to the fact that a simple mistake can have the result loss of the police officer's life, but in several cases, of other individuals as well. The specialized literature and international documents recognize operations involving explosives as high-risk activities, given the lethal consequences associated with technical failures and operational (Mano, 2020).

Thus, in this dual threat scenario (criminal and terrorist), the effectiveness of the response The initial police officer's role is put to the test. The military police officer, being the first to arrive at incidents, Your safety and that of the population are exposed to unnecessary risks when you do not have the

minimum technical knowledge. Machado et al. (2020) classify incidents involving explosives. such as "low-frequency, high-impact critical incidents," in which initial decisions Inadequate measures produce irreversible consequences, such as increased human harm and compromise of evidence. Cotta (2009) reinforces that the first police intervention is the "phase "sensitive incident management," where errors make subsequent technical action impossible. specialized units.

In this sense, the absence of systematized content on explosives in courses on Initial training creates a paradoxical scenario: the first responder police officer is required to... technically appropriate conduct in highly complex situations, without him having having been previously prepared for such. Studies indicate that this training gap generates Operational uncertainty favors decisions based on common sense and increases risk. for both state agents and the civilian population. (Dias, 2025).

Although frequently associated with international terrorism, the use of artifacts Explosives in Brazil are part of a distinct logic, predominantly marked by... The actions of organized crime and high-impact armed violence events. Symbolic, psychological, and operational. Studies based on the Global Terrorism Database (GTD). They indicate that, although Brazil is not among the countries most affected by terrorist acts, Classics, it records a significant number of events involving explosions, attacks and actions. violent acts that resemble terrorist typologies, especially in the use of explosives and in the production of collective fear (Dory and Caseiro, 2021).

In this context, the criminal use of explosives constitutes a threat. complex, characterized by low frequency and high impact, requiring technical responses. highly qualified. Carvalho's (2020) analysis of bomb incidents in Bahia reveals that the initial training of military police officers is insufficient for technical responses, requiring integration between specialized knowledge, operational protocols and Continuous training is necessary, otherwise human and material damage may increase.

Paradoxically, recent research shows that even police units specialized companies face significant structural limitations, such as deficits in maintenance of Equipment and critical asset management compromise operational availability. and reinforces the importance of the initial response phase as a crucial moment in mitigation. initial risk assessment (Sales and Januário, 2025).

Furthermore, the Standard Operating Procedures established by the Police themselves Military officials assign relevant technical responsibilities to the police officer in the operational role during the operational phase. initial steps in responding to incidents involving bombs and explosives, such as area isolation and classification of the situation.

threat and activation of specialized units. However, such regulatory requirements This contrasts with the absence of systematized content on explosives in the courses of basic training, revealing a training gap that exposes agents and civilians to risks. unnecessary (PMAM, 2022).

An analysis of the curriculum of training courses for newly graduated military police officers in Bahia (lieutenants, sergeants and soldiers), according to Carvalho (2020) identified the "non-existence of a discipline that covers such content" regarding bombs and explosives. Aiming, then, to "less exposure to risk on the part of police officers and society," thus, the following emerges: The need to include basic concepts of this subject in training courses.

The central problem addressed in this article, therefore, is: in what way does the lack of Standardization and insufficient focus on concepts of explosives and counterterrorism tactics. in police training courses (CFO/CFSD) impact the effectiveness of First Response in Incidents involving explosive devices in the context of Brazilian organized crime?

The overall objective of this research is to analyze how the lack of standardization and the focus Insufficient knowledge of explosives and counterterrorism tactics in training courses.

Police Officer Training Courses (CFO/CFSD) impact the effectiveness of First Response in incidents involving explosive devices. Explosives in the context of Brazilian organized crime. Specific objectives include:

1. Understanding the rise of crime involving explosives and the evolution of threat tactics. in Brazil;
2. Assess the need for state preparedness for complex risks;
3. Identify Gaps in police training (CFO/CFSD) for First Response.

The following hypothesis is put forward: The absence of standardization and insufficient focus. in the concepts of explosives and counterterrorism tactics in police training courses (CFO/CFSD) compromise the effectiveness of First Response, increasing risks to agents/civilians and facilitating organized crime activities in incidents involving explosive devices.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted using the qualitative-exploratory research method, with The objective is to analyze scientific articles and POPs to understand gaps in the First Response to incidents involving explosives in the context of Brazilian organized crime. According to According to Minayo (2001, p. 22), qualitative research answers very particular questions. It... In the social sciences, it is a concern with a level of reality that cannot be quantified, such as regulatory requirements and CFO/CFSD training. For this purpose, data were used. Secondary information from public bodies (articles, PMAM/MARTE POPs), interpreted to achieve

Conclusions regarding impacts on operational effectiveness based on published articles.

The theoretical foundation of the research was based on scientific theories related to Public security, anti-bomb doctrine, and formative police analysis. Studies on First Response (Cotta, 2009), criminal use of explosives (Machado et al., 2020) and gaps in this The topics covered in CFO/CFSD training courses are essential for analysis. The research focused on national context (emphasis on Military Police in the North/Southeast), investigating its application in organized crime.

Regarding its nature, the research was basic in nature, as defined by Gil (2008), which aims to generate new and useful knowledge for the advancement of science in public safety and bomb disposal training.

The method used was inductive, as described by Lakatos and Marconi (2003, p. 86), where it says that induction is a mental process through which, starting from data From sufficiently established particulars, a general or universal truth is inferred that is not contained within them. in the parts examined.

Therefore, the goal of inductive arguments is to lead to conclusions whose content is much broader than the premises on which they were based, detailing characteristics of the phenomenon.

Documentary procedures were used, as described by Duarte (2002), to observe and describe normative and formative practices in the context of policing. bomb disposal.

The research techniques involved collecting secondary data through sources. Bibliographical sources, such as scientific articles, books, and official documents (Ordinance 001/2016). According to Bardin (2011, p. 45), content analysis was used to interpret the data. collected, allowing for a detailed understanding of the texts and POPs.

The data analysis was performed based on a literature and document review. as suggested by Severino (2007), which is the one that is carried out from the record available, resulting from previous research, in printed documents such as books, articles, theses, etc. It utilizes data or theoretical categories already developed by others. researchers and duly registered. The texts become sources for the topics to be researched. The researcher works based on the contributions of the authors of the studies. analytical data from the documents (Feitoza; Carvalho), categorizing: (1) advance tactics crime; (2) emerging risks; (3) gaps First Response.

Regarding ethical aspects, the research did not require submission to a committee. Ethics (Resolution 510/2016), since it does not involve human beings or personal data. identifiable, restricting the use of statistical and documentary information to

institutional domain.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Rise of Crime and the Evolution of Threat Tactics

In general, explosives are understood to be substances capable of undergoing... extremely rapid and violent transformations when subjected to certain stimuli. The United Nations Police Manual for Anti-Bomb Actions defines explosives as "products that are characterized by transforming rapidly." and violent after adequate excitation, from its original state to the gaseous state, producing an explosion" (UN, 2001). Similarly, Brazilian military doctrine It defines explosives as chemical substances or mixtures of chemical substances that, when properly initiated, they undergo extremely rapid decomposition. producing heat, gases and high pressures (BRAZIL, 2008). These definitions highlight Key elements include the need for an initiating agent and the rapid release of energy. and the generation of high pressure levels, factors that explain the high destructive potential. of these substances.

The evolution of criminal tactics in Brazil demonstrates that the use of explosives has become less common. of being an exclusive trait of international terrorist groups (Feitoza and Alves Junior, 2020). The use of these materials as instruments for committing crimes has become part of... Increasingly, the modus operandi of national criminal organizations (Machado et al., 2020). ATM explosions, attacks on financial institutions, use of Improvised devices used against police forces and bomb threats have become commonplace. particularly since the 2000s, requiring responses from public security institutions. increasingly qualified and specialized (Carvalho, 2020).

In the Brazilian context, the bomb squads of the state Military Police are those responsible for responding to incidents involving explosives in public places, large-scale events and high-risk situations, in the exercise of the constitutional mission of preservation of public order and the safety of persons and property (Carvalho, (2020). In addition to immediate incident response, these units also work on prevention. and in mitigating risks associated with the criminal use of explosive devices, through Security sweeps, countermeasures, and technical support for special operations. (Oliveira Junior, 2020).

The Federal Police's actions regarding bombs and explosives focus on cases where...

There is a federal interest, federal crimes, or security of authorities, involving the use of groups. specialized teams that conduct sweeps, bomb threat response, and post-bomb investigations. explosion (APCF, 2023).

Data highlights the magnitude of the phenomenon in the country. Between 2013 and 2017, there were 4,571 incidents involving explosive devices were recorded in Brazil, with an annual average of close to a thousand incidents (Feitoza and Alves Junior, 2020). In the state of Amazonas, the reality This is also worrying, with 231 incidents recorded between 2013 and 2017 – higher than the average. national by state and demonstrating the persistence of the problem (Feitoza and Alves Junior, 2020). These numbers confirm that the criminal use of explosives is a widespread reality and persistent in the national territory (Leo, 2018).

According to Feitoza and Alves Junior (2020), incidents involving explosives They have a high social impact, as they directly affect the feeling of security. population and produce psychological effects that go far beyond immediate material damage. The authors highlight that, between the 1960s and 1990s, the use of these artifacts was... mostly associated with international terrorist organizations, using tactics such as package bombs, letter bombs, and car bombs. However, starting in the 2000s, Brazilian criminal organizations have begun incorporating explosives as a tool for... the practice of various crimes, especially attacks on financial institutions and actions against the State.

Given the inherent ability of explosive substances to rupture and fragment structures. objects and generate highly lethal shockwaves, their use by criminal agents represents a significant threat to public safety. As Cotta (2017) points out, Incidents involving bombs and explosives constitute complex critical events, in which The physical and psychological effects extend beyond the immediate material damage, requiring solutions. Technical, integrated, and highly coordinated. This scenario poses increasing challenges to... state institutions, which need to adapt their operational strategies and models of A response to the increasing complexity of threat tactics observed in the context. contemporary Brazilian.

In addition to the quantitative increase in occurrences, it is observed in the national context... an evolution of threat tactics, marked by the sophistication of the artifacts employed, by strategic choice of targets and the use of explosives as a tool for psychological impact. and symbolic (Feitoza and Alves Junior, 2020). According to Leo (2018), violence with explosives In Brazil, it presents hybrid characteristics, in which practices historically associated with Terrorism, as the deliberate production of collective fear and its widespread media coverage, are...



incorporated by criminal organizations, even if unrelated to specific motivations.

classic ideologies.

This dynamic contributes to broadening the social impact of occurrences involving explosives, which go beyond immediate material damage and directly affect the perception of public safety (Feitoza and Alves Junior, 2020). The specialized literature on Anti-bomb operations recognize that incidents of this nature constitute critical events. complex, requiring highly coordinated responses, otherwise the risk may escalate and collapse may occur. of incident management and worsening of human and institutional consequences (Matos, 2020).

Adding to this scenario is the fact that the evolution of criminal tactics has not been... accompanied, in the same proportion, by the structural capacity of the State in all its levels (Machado et al., 2020). Recent research indicates that even police units Specialized companies face significant limitations related to asset management and maintenance. of equipment and operational availability, which increases the vulnerability of the system. Public safety in the face of threats involving explosives (Oliveira Junior, 2020).

This reality is aggravated by the rise in crime involving explosives, which does not... expressed only by the "substantial increase in the number of occurrences involving use criminal of explosives in the period from 2013 to 2017, but due to the increasing complexity of scenarios encountered:

Although responses were not obtained from all states in the federation, the total numbers obtained at the national level are worrying; there were almost 5,000 criminal incidents involving explosives over the last five years, which gives us an approximate average of 900 incidents per year. (FEITOZA AND ALVES JUNIOR, 2020, p. 24).

This poses strategic, operational, and institutional challenges, preparing the groundwork. for analyses of police action in the initial response phase (Carvalho, 2020).

The Need for Preparedness for Complex Risks

According to Leão (2016), the response to incidents involving bombs and explosives in Brazil is, predominantly the responsibility of state bomb disposal units, given the lack of legal provision for the Federal Police to act outside its jurisdiction. constitutional. This institutional configuration imposes on the Military Police of the states the leading role in confronting this type of threat, which, however, is not limited to traditional organized crime.

In this sense, Aguilar (2020) highlights the need for the State to develop new



force design models capable of responding to emerging risks and complexes, involving both ultra-radical fundamentalist terrorist organizations (OTUR) as well as Ultra-Violent Criminal Organizations (OCUV). The author emphasizes that the Understanding these threats requires overcoming simplistic views, such as the stereotype of "suicide bomber," since terrorist suicide tactics present multiple forms of execution, with varying levels of planning, lethality, and psychological impact, requiring different response models.

The specialized literature indicates that such scenarios constitute rare, yet significant, events. high impact, in which the risk is not limited to the physical effects of the explosion, but involves also symbolic, social and institutional dimensions. As Dory and Caserio demonstrate. (2021), practices historically associated with terrorism, such as the deliberate production of Collective fear and widespread media coverage have been incorporated by organizations. criminals, increasing the complexity of managing these incidents in the context Brazilian.

From an operational perspective, Sampaio Júnior (2020) observes that military police officers They often do not feel safe acting in incidents involving bombs and explosives, whether in responding to criminal threats or in their technical use. artifacts in specific professional activities. For the author, reducing this insecurity This necessarily involves providing adequate equipment and training. Continuous technical training, through specialized training and courses, capable of preparing the police officer trained to operate in high-risk environments.

Cotta (2017) emphasizes that the degree of danger and the specificities of the incidents The use of explosives imposes on first responders the need for familiarity with the... Main types of artifacts, their activation mechanisms, and their effects. Given the risk. To ensure the physical safety of officers and third parties, the use of [security devices] becomes essential. specific operational protocols, adequate logistical resources and technical training compatible with the complexity of the scenario faced.

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Furthermore, recent research indicates that even specialized units They face structural limitations related to asset management and equipment maintenance. and operational availability, which reinforces the importance of realistic preparation and systemic approach to addressing these threats (Sales and Januário, 2025).

Thus, continuous training, combined with adequate logistical support such as clothing... bomb disposal systems, disruptor cannons, robotic arms, portable X-ray systems and kits of Remote management is a central element in mitigating the risks inherent in this type of... occurrence (Cotta, 2020).

Police Training and the First Response: The Gap in Basic Knowledge

In incidents involving bombs and explosives, the first state agent to respond to... The person called in most cases is the military police officer on patrol, a professional. who, as a rule, do not possess specialized technical training in the field of bomb disposal. This This condition makes the first response a critical link in the public safety chain, as decisions Mistakes at this early stage can amplify human, material, and institutional damage. Literature indicates that basic technical knowledge and adequate training are essential conditions. essential for preserving the physical integrity of police officers and third parties in incidents Critics involving explosives (Dias, 2025).

Carvalho (2020), when analyzing the training of newly graduated military police officers in Bahia, identified a significant lack of basic knowledge related to bombs and explosives. According to the author, this educational gap, in a context of increasing Incidents involving explosive devices put the public and the security agents themselves at risk. This poses high risks, in addition to compromising the institutional capacity to respond. The inclusion of Including basic content about explosives in initial training courses is cited as a measure. capable of improving the effectiveness of the first response and reducing the likelihood of activation. accidental artifact.

From a regulatory perspective, Standard Operating Procedures and manuals Institutions establish clear responsibilities for the first responder in incidents involving Suspected explosives, such as isolating the area, evacuating the site, controlling the flow of people. of people and activation of specialized units, preventing any attempt to Handling the artifact. Such guidelines require scene organization and technical decisions. suitable for minimizing deaths and injuries, requiring knowledge from the uniformed police officer. minimum requirements for threat recognition and initial risk assessment (Fortes, 2012).

In this sense, anti-bomb literature emphasizes that acting in the first response is not... It replaces the technical intervention of specialized teams, but it is crucial for preparing. adequately assess the incident scenario. The lack of basic knowledge on the part of The first respondent tends to generate empirical responses and initial errors that produce effects. cascading into complex incidents, amplifying damage and hindering technical management. after the occurrence (ABCFAV, 2007).

This guideline is illustrated by the advice that non-specialized professionals They should limit their actions to initial safety measures and contacting the police. specialized, as highlighted in the Security Guard Manual, which states that the property security guard... This professional is not qualified to act effectively in incidents involving explosives, and should only take initial measures and activate specialized teams. (ABCFAV, 2007). This understanding reinforces, by analogy, the need for clear delimitation. of the duties of a uniformed police officer, combined with the minimum training for safe execution. of these responsibilities.

In addition to initial training, the literature points to the relevance of teaching practice in courses. specialized as a strategic element for the dissemination of technical knowledge. Guimarães (2020), when examining the Police Explosives Technician Course of the PMDF, identified Weaknesses in the instructors' pedagogical training, despite their solid operational experience. According to the author, the predominance of traditional and unreflective methods limits the Didactic innovation compromises the quality of knowledge transmission, impacting negatively impacting the training of multipliers and, consequently, the qualification of the first group. ostentatious response.

Adding to this scenario is the fact that specialized police units also They face structural limitations related to asset management and maintenance. equipment, which further increases the importance of a qualified first response. as an initial risk mitigation mechanism. Research indicates that, in the face of these Limitations are mitigated by the need for appropriate technical performance from the first responder, which plays a compensatory role. reducing the likelihood of the incident worsening until the teams arrive. specialized (Sales and Januário, 2025).

Thus, the gap in basic knowledge about bombs and explosives in training police work should not be understood merely as a specific pedagogical deficiency, but as a systemic operational vulnerability. The absence of minimum content and Standardized methods compromise the safety of officers and the public, and weaken the effectiveness of... first response and negatively impacts the institutional capacity to address



critical incidents involving the criminal use of explosives, highlighting the urgency of its inclusion in police training curricula (Carvalho, 2020).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding the characterization of the criminal use of explosives in Brazil, the results demonstrate that this phenomenon exhibits not only quantitative growth, but also... Above all, there is an increase in the complexity of operational scenarios. The literature reviewed indicates that such occurrences produce effects that go beyond immediate material damage, directly impacting the public's perception of safety and demanding answers. highly coordinated. These findings reinforce the classification of these events as Critical incidents are complex and underscore the need for appropriate technical preparedness. with the risk involved.

Regarding the duties of the military police officer in the initial response phase, the results highlight a significant mismatch between regulatory requirements and training. effectively offered. Standard Operating Procedures assign to the uniformed police officer. Relevant technical responsibilities such as area isolation, evacuation, and management. initial scene setups that require minimal knowledge of threat recognition and risk assessment. However, the literature indicates that such content is not addressed in systematically in initial training courses, weakening the safe execution of these responsibilities.

Regarding the identification of gaps in basic police training, the analysis reveals that this A disability is not limited to a specific pedagogical problem, but constitutes a... Operational vulnerability of a systemic nature. Empirical studies indicate that the absence Having a basic understanding of bombs and explosives fosters empirical responses and decisions. Inadequate measures in the initial phase of the event, potentially leading to cascading effects and compromising... jeopardizing the safety of officers and civilians and hindering subsequent technical operations by the units. specialized.

The results also demonstrate that the concentration of technical knowledge in Highly specialized courses, accessible to a limited number of professionals, limit the dissemination of this knowledge to those effectively carrying out the core activity, precisely those responsible for First intervention in incidents involving explosives. This scenario is aggravated by limitations. structural challenges faced by specialized units related to asset management and Operational availability, which reinforces the strategic importance of a first response.

qualified as an initial risk mitigation mechanism.

Thus, the research findings corroborate the hypothesis that the insufficiency of Systematized content on bombs and explosives in police training courses. This compromises the effectiveness of the initial response in such situations. The literature The analysis converges in indicating that the inclusion of minimum and standardized content about Explosives in basic police training, coupled with strengthening teaching practice in courses. specialized training constitutes a viable and necessary strategy for reducing operational risks. the preservation of lives and the improvement of institutional capacity to cope with Critical incidents involving the criminal use of explosives in the Brazilian context.

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