

August 5, 2008

# Italy Begins Military Effort to Quell Crime

By ELISABETTA POVOLEDO

ROME — Soldiers were deployed throughout [Italy](#) on Monday to embassies, subway and railway stations, as part of broader government measures to fight violent crime here for which illegal immigrants are broadly blamed.

By the time it is fully effective next week, the effort will flank regular police officers and the military police with 3,000 troops, a visible signal to citizens that the government “has responded to their demands for greater security,” Defense Minister Ignazio La Russa said in an interview on the Italian Sky News channel.

The conservative government of [Silvio Berlusconi](#) won elections in April while promising to crack down on petty crime and illegal immigrants. The new patrols of soldiers, who are not empowered to make arrests, do not seem aimed only at illegal immigrants, though the patrols were deployed to centers where illegal immigrants are housed.

“Security is something concrete,” Mr. La Russa said on Monday. The troops, he said, will be a “deterrent to criminals.”

Critics of the government have condemned the deployment as a superfluous measure that could prove counterproductive.

“Putting troops on the street sends a dramatic message that the situation is more serious than it is in reality,” said Marco Minniti, the shadow interior minister of the center-left Democratic Party, the largest opposition party.

Television news stations showed military officials searching immigrants’ suitcases at subway stations. Potential terrorist targets were also under greater scrutiny. In Milan, troops were stationed around the city’s Gothic cathedral, and in Naples they watched the American Consulate.

In the capital, troops are to be stationed around embassies, consulates and centers for illegal immigrants in outlying neighborhoods where they live. They will not be securing the city’s historic monuments because local officials fretted that the military presence could scare off tourists.

“They will only be in areas where they have no impact on normal citizens,” Rome’s center-right mayor, Gianni Alemmano, told reporters.

Critics of the effort, which was part of a larger anticrime package pushed through Parliament last month, also object to the use of troops rather than the police, saying the military is better suited for emergencies in Lebanon, Afghanistan and Iraq, where they are posted, than urban crises.

"You need to be specially trained to carry out some kinds of controls," Nicola Tanzi, the secretary of a trade union that represents Italian police officers. "Soldiers just aren't qualified."

He also questioned whether the \$93.6 million that will be spent for the extra deployment, called Operation Safe Streets, might not have been better used to increase the budgets for Italy's police and military.

# China confident of safe Olympics

**Days before the Olympic Games open in Beijing, the Chinese authorities have said they are confident that athletes and spectators will be safe.**

This assurance comes after an attack - blamed on separatist Muslim militants - that killed 16 policemen in the western region of Xinjiang.

A spokesman for the organisers said preparations had been made to meet all conceivable threats at Olympic venues.

Meanwhile China has apologised for the beating of two Japanese journalists.

The journalists, a reporter and a photographer, were detained near the site of Monday's attack in Kashgar.

Police held them for two hours and punched them, they said.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Qin Gan told a senior diplomat at the Japanese embassy in Beijing that China regretted the incident, Kyodo News agency reported.

Officials and police in Kashgar also apologised for the incident, but accused the two men of breaking rules, Xinhua news agency said.

## **'Prepared to respond'**

China is working to play down any threat to the Games in the wake of Monday's attack.

"China has focused on strengthening security and protection around Olympic venues and at the Olympics Village, so Beijing is already prepared to respond to any threat," Beijing Games spokesman Sun Weide was quoted as saying.

The International Olympic Committee said it also believed the Chinese authorities had done everything possible "to ensure the security and safety of everyone at the Games".

About 100,000 police and soldiers are on standby ahead of Friday's opening ceremony, and the already tight security has been stepped up in Tiananmen Square.

Security has also been beefed up in Xinjiang, Xinhua news agency said. Police intensified road checks and increased personnel at government offices, schools and hospitals in Kashgar, the agency said.

Kashgar, known as Kashi in Chinese, is some 4,000km (2,500 miles) from Beijing, near the border with Tajikistan.

Early on Monday, two men drove a rubbish truck into a group of policemen, then attacked them with grenades and knives.

The men - a taxi driver and a vegetable seller from the local area, according to Chinese media - were later arrested.

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The BBC's James Reynolds at the scene of the attack that killed 16 policemen

Although the episode happened a long way away from Beijing, the very fact that it happened four days before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games is making organisers nervous, says the BBC's James Reynolds in Xinjiang.

But, says our reporter, at the scene itself there is almost no trace of the incident, apart from three uprooted trees.

### **Uighur suppression**

Xinjiang, in the north-west of the country, is home to the Muslim Uighur people. Uighur separatists have waged a low-level campaign against Chinese rule for decades.

Human rights groups say Beijing is suppressing the rights of Uighurs.

Last week, a senior Chinese army officer warned that Islamic separatists were the biggest danger to the Olympics.

#### **CHINA'S UIGHURS**

Ethnically Turkic Muslims, mainly in Xinjiang

Made bid for independent state in 1940s

Sporadic violence in Xinjiang since 1991

Uighurs worried about influx of Han Chinese and erosion of traditional culture

Col Tian Yixiang of the Olympics security command centre told reporters the main threat came from the "East Turkestan terrorist organisation".

The term is used by the government to refer to Islamist separatists in Xinjiang.

Late last month a group called the Turkestan Islamic Party said it had blown up buses in Shanghai and Yunnan, killing five people.

But China denied that the explosions were acts of terrorism.

The Washington-based IntelCenter, which monitors terrorism communications, said the Turkestan Islamic Party had released a video entitled Our Blessed Jihad in Yunnan.

In it the group's leader, Commander Seyfullah, said it was responsible for several attacks and threatened the Olympics.

"The Chinese have haughtily ignored our warnings," IntelCenter quoted him as saying.

"The Turkestan Islamic Party volunteers... have started urgent actions."

Story from BBC NEWS:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/7542167.stm>

# Brazil Through Foreign Eyes

August 2, 2008

Meet Ben Pearce from the UK who has travelled to Brazil several times, and more recently moved here. Read the following interview in which he tells us about some of his most memorable experiences and gives some useful advice to newcomers.



## **1. Tell us a little about yourself, where are you from, what do you do etc.?**

I am a 27 year old lad from the South coast of England (a town called Bournemouth), who after growing up by the sea sought the bright lights and greater opportunities of the city. I moved to London 4 years ago to complete a masters degree at LSE and have since worked in policy, affordable housing, city regeneration and on London employment and training programmes, funded by the EU.

## **2. When did you arrive in Brazil and what brought you here?**

After 4 years in London I have just arrived in sunny Belo Horizonte, in mid July 2008, to begin the next chapter of my life. I left London on a high and I came primarily to be with my long-suffering girlfriend Ana, a Mineira, after over a year apart between here, Stuttgart, Bournemouth and London! I also always harboured desires to live abroad, and to learn another language fluently. It was now or never!

## **3. What were you first impressions of Brazil?**

I first came to Brazil in 2006, and have been here 4 times since. When I stepped off the plane in mid-November at Rio airport, I remember the initial blast of heat and humidity, softened by the smiles of the airport staff who pointed me in the right direction. After that it was the diversity of the city, the beautiful mountains peppered with poverty through the colourful favelas that cling to them, right through to the dated glitz of the Copacabanna. My first impression of my new home in Belo Horizonte was something more modern and sedate: a cleaner, greener Rio, nestling in the lush hills of Minas Gerais. My overall impression of Brazil right now is of a place that is booming, new buildings on every street corner, and parks being scrubbed-up... no doubt in time for the Autumn local elections here!

## **4. What do you miss most about home?**

At the moment Im missing my former flatmates in South London, and the sights and smells of the Capital. I miss the English sense of planning and organisation too - and the idea that people know what is going on prior to five minutes before it happens! I don't miss the weather though. At all. Other than that its the little things, especially good tea!

## **5. What has been your most frustrating experience in Brazil?**

I have not been in Brazil long enough to tell but I get frustrated with the short-sightedness of people sometimes. For example, people shout and scream if there is the slightest bit of traffic when they are helping to cause it by not walking! I think the randomness of the bureaucracy will also start to grate...

## **6. What has been your most memorable experience in Brazil (specific incident)?**

There are so many to chose from! I think the memory or image I will treasure will be standing

on top of the sugar-loaf mountain in Rio de Janeiro, and looking out over mountains, city and a never ending ocean. This was in 2006 and it made me realise that I should look to live abroad and further my horizons. (I could also add watching Cruzeiro football team play at the huge Mineirao stadium, which was something special)

### **7. What do you most like about Brazil (in general)?**

I like that despite the modernity and sometimes bland skyscraper backdrop, culture and history is embedded at every step. This is most seen in the restaurants along side-streets. I love the food and drink that Brazil offers, though I'm not sure that my stomach always appreciates it. Anyone planning a trip should check out Belo Horizonte and Minas Gerais for its gastronomy... and savour the simplicity of a chopp on plastic chairs in one of the many boteca-bars that line the side streets of Savassi and Centro areas.

### **8. What is your favorite restaurant/place to hang out here?**

For me its Albano's Chopperia (Rua Pium in the Anchieta area where I live). Albanos brews the most refreshing beer I've had! There is always a mixed crowd here of young, old, wealthy, local.. its a snapshot of the best of Minas life.

### **9. Do you have any funny stories/incidents to tell about your time in Brazil?**

I think it was the time that a member of my girlfriend's family got to know the fine bottle of Scotch whiskey I had brought them... not realising how strong it was, nor that it is best enjoyed in moderation rather than the whole bottle. He was ill for ages - and initially we had to dive for cover!

### **10. What difference between your homeland and Brazil do you find most striking?**

From a housing background I find it fascinating to see the difference of a welfare state... in the comparison of English 'council housing' to Brazilian favelas. I have a huge admiration for the inhabitants of the favelas, building their own roofs about their heads where the state has not or can not provide. Visually it means a striking difference between rich and poor, where as in London for example, ex-council flats can blend in and be snapped up by young buyers for hundreds of thousands of pounds.

### **11. How is your Portuguese coming along? What words do you find most difficult to pronounce/ remember or are there any words that you regularly confuse?**

The Portuguese is rusty but getting better all the time! I have a lot of trouble with grammar in the past tense. For some reason I've been confusing the words 'hear' and 'egg' (ouço and ovo) which meant for some confused dinner guests who hoped my ear was not on the menu.

### **12. What advice do you have for newcomers to Brazil?**

Learn Portuguese and stay away from resort holidays! It is only then that you will really appreciate the variety of life that Brazil has to offer, and be able to sample local delicacies and attractions. I would also recommend leaving valuables at home, and walking around to get a sense of the cities - it is a lot safer than people realise, as long as you are careful.

### **13. What are some things that you would recommend for a visitor to do in São Paulo (or anywhere else in Brazil)?**

Having only visited Sao Paulo airport, which is best avoided, I would recommend a visitor to look beyond Rio and Salvador, and venture inland to Minas Gerais, or go north past Natal to the beautiful beaches such as Praia da Pipa.

Are you a foreigner who has lived in, or is living or travelling in Brazil? Are you a Brazilian who

has a lot of contact with foreigners and/or lived outside of Brazil? Are you interested in telling your story? If you would like to volunteer for our interview series, or if you would like to recommend someone, please send a blank email to [gringoes@gringoes.com](mailto:gringoes@gringoes.com) with "Interview" in the subject. We will send you the interview questions by return email.

# Primates 'at risk of extinction'

By Steve Connor, Science Editor  
*Tuesday, 5 August 2008*

Nearly half of all the species of monkeys and apes in the world are in danger of extinction with primates as a whole representing one of the most threatened group of mammals today, a study has found.

The latest assessment of man's closest living relatives has found that 48 per cent of the 634 different kinds of primates could soon die out completely due to factors such as habitat loss and hunting.

Scientists who carried out the study for the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) believe that the situation has worsened significantly since the last time a similar investigation of primates was done five years ago.

In some parts of the world the threat to primates has reached crisis proportions. In Vietnam and Cambodia, for instance, about nine out of every 10 species are now listed as either vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered – the three most threatened classifications on the IUCN's Red List of Threatened Species.

"What is happening in south-east Asia is terrifying. To have a group of animals under such a high level of threat is, quite frankly, unlike anything we have recorded among any other group of species to date," said Jean-Christophe Vie, deputy head of the IUCN's species programme.

The review was carried out by hundreds of primatologists who assessed factors such as the loss of habitat, total population size or pressures from hunting which could affect a species chances of survival in the coming century.

"We've raised concerns for years about primates being in peril, but now we have solid data to show the situation is far more severe than we imagined," said Russ Mittermeier, president of Conservation International, and a primate specialist on the IUCN's Species Survival Commission.

"Tropical forest destruction has always been the main cause, but now it appears that hunting is just as serious a threat in some areas, even where the habitat is still intact. In many places, primates are quite literally being eaten to extinction," Dr Mittermeier said.

Primates include species as small as the tiny mouse lemurs of Madagascar, which can fit inside a teacup, to the large lowland gorilla of western Africa. They also include man's closest living relative, the chimpanzee, which shares about 98 per cent of its DNA with humans.

Dr Mittermeier said that one in every three primate species is now either endangered or critically endangered compared to about one in five primates classified in these two risk categories before the results of this latest assessment emerged.

"The pressures on them have increased with the big push towards growing monoculture crops, in part for their use as biofuels. The growing of palm oil crops in south-east Asia and soya beans in the Amazon have taken their toll," Dr Mittermeier said.

"But hunting of primates for bushmeat has also increased. This was a subsistence issue but now it's almost become a luxury food with a higher price than for chicken or fish, both in African and in south-east Asia," he said.

Among the most threatened primate species were two of the red colobus monkeys – Bouvier’s red colobus and Miss Waldron’s red colobus, neither of which has been seen by primatologists for the past quarter of a century.

Despite the threats to primates, scientists have since 2000 described 53 new primate species that are new to science, including 40 species from Madagascar. In 2007, researchers discovered a population of greater bamboo lemurs living a wetland site on the island, about 240 miles from the only other known population of the species – bringing the total number of individuals living in the wild to about 140.

The latest report, however, says that there have been success stories, notably the black lion tamarin and the gold lion tamarin of Brazil’s decimated Atlantic Forest, which have been brought back from the edge of extinction, being classified as endangered rather than critically endangered.

Anthony Rylands of the IUCN’s Primate Specialist Group, said: “If you have forests, you can save primates. The work with lion tamarins shows that conserving forest fragments and reforesting to create corridors that connect them is not only vital for primates, but offers the multiple benefits of maintaining healthy ecosystems and water supplies while reducing greenhouse gases emissions that cause climate change.”