

The Importance of Military Organizations in Protecting the Climate: 2008

Marriott Rive Gauche Hôtel & Conférence Center

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1. Introduction

Ladies and gentlemen:

First, I would like to tell you that it is an honor and gives me an immense satisfaction to participate in this conference on the importance of military organizations in protecting the climate. This is an excellent opportunity to obtain and share information with you and to present to you some of the climate protection policies in my country and within our armed forces.

It is a great pleasure for me to return to Paris, where I have lived twice: first as an intern for the promotion of the 104th Military School from 1990 to 1992, then as a military attaché near the Embassy of Brazil, between 1998 and 2000.

I am thus very honored to be able to represent my country and my army at this important forum of international renown.

My intention is to show you, though briefly, the Brazilian participation in climate protection and the recent related measures adopted by the government. Then I will address a few issues regarding the Amazon, our rainforest, and the presence of armies in the region.

And finally I will address the importance of armies in climate protection, legislation, staff training, and support for monitoring operations of slash and burn.

2. Development

A. Brazil and climate protection

With its Constitution approved in 1988, Brazil took an important step in formulating its environmental policy. For the first time in the history of the nation, a constitution has devoted an entire chapter to the environment. Thus, Article 225 stipulates that “everyone has the right to an ecologically balanced environment, which is a common good for the use of the people and essential to a healthy quality of life, which requires public authority and at the community level, the duty to defend and preserve it for present and future generations.”

Brazil has participated in the collective effort of nations to minimize the consequences of greenhouse gas emissions in the atmosphere and in climate change. Thus, in 1992 Brazil hosted the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), an international treaty, resulting in the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), better known informally as the “Earth Summit,” created in Rio de Janeiro. At home, we call it ECO 92.

Brazil was the first country to sign the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the National Congress ratified the Convention on 29 May 1994.

The Kyoto Protocol, which has become more known than the Convention itself, was signed in 1997 (December 11 1997), but it did not come into force until 2005 (16 February 2005). It established a common responsibility, although differentiated for the 175 signatory countries.

Brazil is also a signatory to the Kyoto Protocol that you all know. The Protocol has not yet set specific goals for my country, but we are committed, and we participate in the global effort to reduce the emission of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere.

Through the “Clean Development Mechanism,” Brazil has created a fund for the Amazon, through which it can receive funding from Annex I countries for projects protecting the climate and forests.

B. What Brazil has done voluntarily to reduce emissions of CO²

Through coordinated action by the federal government, with the participation of various ministries, including:

- The Ministry of Environment,
- The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and
- The Ministry of Defense, Brazil has sought creative and active ways to reduce CO² in the atmosphere.

Let me highlight some examples of these actions, such as the Proalcool Program, or national ethanol program, which was established in 1975 with the aim of replacing gasoline in light vehicles. The program achieved great success in the 80s. In 1990, with the low prices of gasoline and the high price of sugar, there was a drop in production of ethanol, and Brazil had to import this product. More recently, in the 2000s, with rising oil prices, growth in consumption of ethanol has increased at the same time that bi-fuel vehicles have been developed, which today constitute in Brazil, Most cars sold. (about 80% in 2007).

In the same area, the Biodiesel Program, which provides for the production of diesel from plant products such as palm and castor (Mamona), plans to add up to 5% of this product in the petroleum-derived diesel.

The government is also working to approve a national policy on climate change which is being studied by the National Congress (Chamber of Deputies and Senate Federal).

To develop the national plan on climate change, President of the Republic created (by the Decree No. 6263 of 21 November 2007) the Interministerial Commission on Climate Change (CIMGC) recently presented its findings: the national plan on climate change, which was completed and published at the end of September and is being discussed by the organization before being submitted for approval by the President of the Republic.

Finally I would like to add that the energy matrix of Brazil uses more than 40% of renewable energy, including a significant portion that comes from its large hydroelectric plants, such as the one in Itaipu on the border of Brazil with Paraguay and Argentina.

C. The Amazon

The Amazon region still attracts the attention of the international community. It is the central theme of all forums dealing with environmental preservation. Brazil, France, Suriname, Guyana, Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia are, however, directly or indirectly included in the above context.

French Guiana shares a border with Brazil for approximately 730 km, making Brazil the country with the largest land border with France.

The Amazon forest region is the richest and most diverse of all tropical forests. In terms of ecology, it is a primary forest in the state of climate, in that it consumes almost all the oxygen it produces, ending the belief that it is the "lungs of the earth."

The Amazon is one of the most humid regions of the planet, and its climate is hot throughout the year. Thanks to this phenomenon, it possesses a very rich and varied biodiversity. The diversity of plant species is the largest in the world.

Regarding the Amazon Basin, it has hydroelectric potential capable of sustaining

future industrial growth of South America.

Unfortunately, since the 70s, its ecosystem is increasingly threatened by land clearing and the exploitation of mineral resources.

Many aspects have contributed to this deterioration: the region is marked by a sparse demographic (the Brazilian Amazon has a population density of only 4.18 inhabitants/km²); by the limited presence of governments in the region; and by an intense economic exploitation. With regard to economic exploitation, there are many causes that contribute to land clearing, namely farm, forestry and mineral, followed by expansion of infrastructure, such as building roads and hydroelectric dams.

However, in Brazil much has been done for the defense and development of the Amazon. The presence of the state in the Amazon region is a priority of the Brazilian government. The need to protect this natural border and its biological heritage was behind the establishment of the system for protecting the Amazon (SIPAM) and the "Calha Norte." The program, overseen by the Ministry of Defense, was reactivated in 2000 and aims to develop military locations, and to help major centers with sustainable development and be environmentally correct. The SIPAM, established in 2002, aims to obtain information in order to allow the articulation, planning and coordination of actions of the global government in the Brazilian Amazon, for the protection of national territory, social integration, and sustainable development of the region.

Today the situation has changed significantly thanks to strengthened control mechanisms and measures to expand national parks with additional park reserves.

Despite the tightening of government measures, the results are not yet satisfactory. It is certain that there is still much to do to make governments in the Amazon region able to manage and control this richness.

The region is rich in everything that humanity needs to survive in the coming decades. The Amazon has water, source of life, and niobium, which is vital for state-of-the-art technology and also for large biodiversity of oil, gold, diamonds, and bauxite.

D. The importance of military organizations in climate protection

The management of the environment is increasingly important in the global scenario, our country, and our armed forces. The actions of prevention and environmental preservation are a constant of Brazilian military organizations.

In this way the space occupied by our regiments and naval and air bases are models of preserving the environment, often near urban centers such as Marambaia in Rio, the Military Command of Nordeste, in Recife and the Center for Instruction of War in the Jungle, in Manaus.

In 2001, we implemented the "Policy of Environmental Management of the Army," based on the principles of protection and preservation, strictly respecting the law. The same year, the commander of the Army approved the "Strategic Management of the Environment of the Brazilian Army" (degaeb) to achieve the goals espoused in the said policy.

One of the guidelines stipulates that environmental education should be promoted by the training system of the Army, aimed to develop commitment to environmental management in the military.

To achieve such a policy, it promotes the dissemination of the idea of environmental protection among conscripted soldiers who represent more than 100,000 (one hundred thousand) men each year; at the end of compulsory military service, they return to civilian life and are committed to being agents of dissemination in their communities.

Due to the agreement signed by the Minister of Defense and the Minister of Environment, the Brazilian Army participates, since 2004, the plan of action to prevent and

control land clearing in the Amazon by offering logistical support to teams of the Brazilian Institute of Environment (IBAMA), in the areas of air, land, river, security, food, housing and health.

Contributing more intensely over the past four years, the Army has contributed to a decline of about 50% of wild land clearing.

Another important cooperation regards the participation of the Brazilian Army program to revitalize the watershed of the river São Francisco. In this project the engineering units of the army work on the development of banks, the restructuring of the riverbed and ciliary vegetation, as well as water pollution. Once completed, the river may again be used as a means of communication, a continuing factor of sustainable development for the regional economy.

To spread the idea of defending and protecting the environment, the Brazilian army promoted symposiums and conferences for Brazilian military and friendly nations to strengthen the sense of responsibility towards future generations.

Thus in 2007, the 1st Symposium of the Environment of the Brazilian Army was conducted in Brasilia and brought together soldiers from across the world.

One results of the 1st symposium was the introduction of this theme to the forum of commanders of the U.S. Army, which took place in November 2007, and the creation of a specialized conference on the environment, coordinated by Brazil in 2008.

The 1st specialized conference on the environment (CEMA) was held from 26 to 29 August, in Manaus, in the middle of the Brazilian Amazon.

The event was attended by 24 (twenty-four) countries in the Americas allowing for the exchange of experiences among representatives of the U.S. Army.

This specialized conference demonstrates once again how important the Brazilian Army considers the environment and why it was held in the Amazon.

3. Conclusion

In conclusion I would like to add that Brazil and its armed forces, aware of the importance of the environment for the world and for future generations, work firmly to climate protection, and aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere and global warming our planet.

I would like to thank you for the opportunity offered to me to participate in this important conference, where I have been able to represent my country and my army; and ask forgiveness for my difficulties in speaking in the beautiful French language. Thank you all for your attention.