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Subject:

Fw: Brazilian police take over Rio's biggest slum (AP)

From: OpsNewsTicker

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To: NEWS-Mahogany

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Subject: Brazilian police take over Rio's biggest slum (AP)

RIO DE JANEIRO (AP) - More than 3000 police and soldiers backed by armored personnel carriers raced into Brazil's biggest slum before dawn November 13, quickly gaining control of a shantytown ruled for decades by a heavily armed drug gang.

It was the most ambitious operation yet in an effort to increase security before Rio hosts the final matches of the 2014 World Cup and the 2016 Olympics. Officials are counting on those events to signal Brazil's arrival as a global economic, political and cultural power.

"We're taking back this territory for the 100,000 citizens of Rocinha, people who have needed peace," said Sergio Cabral, governor of Rio de Janeiro state.

The action in Rocinha is part of a campaign to drive the drug gangs out of the city's slums, where the traffickers often rule unchallenged. The city of Rio de Janeiro has more than 1000 shantytowns where about one-third of its 6 million people live.

Authorities said it took just 90 minutes to seize control of Rocinha. Police simultaneously overran the neighboring Vidigal slum, also previously dominated by the drug gang Friends of Friends.

Both slums sit between two of Rio's richest neighborhoods, and Rocinha's ramshackle shacks climb a mountainside covered in Atlantic rain forest. Police methodically cleared alleys and streets on their way up steep, winding roads.

Huey helicopters continued to pound the air above, crisscrossing the hill and flying low over the jungle surrounding the slum, as police hunted down suspects who may have fled into the forest. By midday, local outlets reported just one arrest, though that couldn't be independently confirmed.

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