

Rio Carnival Is Marred by Violence as City's Security Troubles Worsen

By The Associated Press

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RIO DE JANEIRO — Muggings, armed robberies and confrontations during Carnival celebrations in Rio de Janeiro are underscoring the deteriorating security situation in the city.

The television network TV Globo on Wednesday showed video of gunfire between rival drug gangs, teenagers punching tourists in areas usually considered relatively safe and a police officer narrowly escaping after several people attacked him in front of his home.

Gov. Luiz Fernando Pezão of the state of Rio acknowledged there were not enough police officers on hand during the first couple days of Carnival, though more than 17,000 officers worked in Rio State each day during the festivities.

“We were not prepared,” Mr. Pezão said. “There was a failure on the first two days, and then we brought backup for police. I think there has been a mistake in our part.”

Statistics from the Friday to Tuesday festivities have not yet been released. Mr. Pezão said the number of firearms confiscated by the authorities was “incredible.”

A year after hosting the 2016 Olympics, Rio is experiencing a spike in violence. Days before Carnival, rival drug gangs closed major transportation arteries of the city.

Last year Rio used almost 12,000 police officers during Carnival, and also counted on the help of 9,000 members of the country's armed forces. This time there was no federal aid during the festivities.

Politicians avoided Rio during one of the most political Carnivals in Brazil's history, with revelers singling out for criticism Mr. Pezão, President Michel Temer and especially Mayor Marcelo Crivella, an evangelical bishop who is no fan of Carnival and left the city for Europe.

The samba school Beija-Flor de Nilópolis won the parade title on Wednesday in Rio's Sambadrome using corruption as a theme. One of its floats portrayed a rat below the building of the state oil company Petrobras, which is at the center of a corruption scandal that has engulfed politicians across Latin America.

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