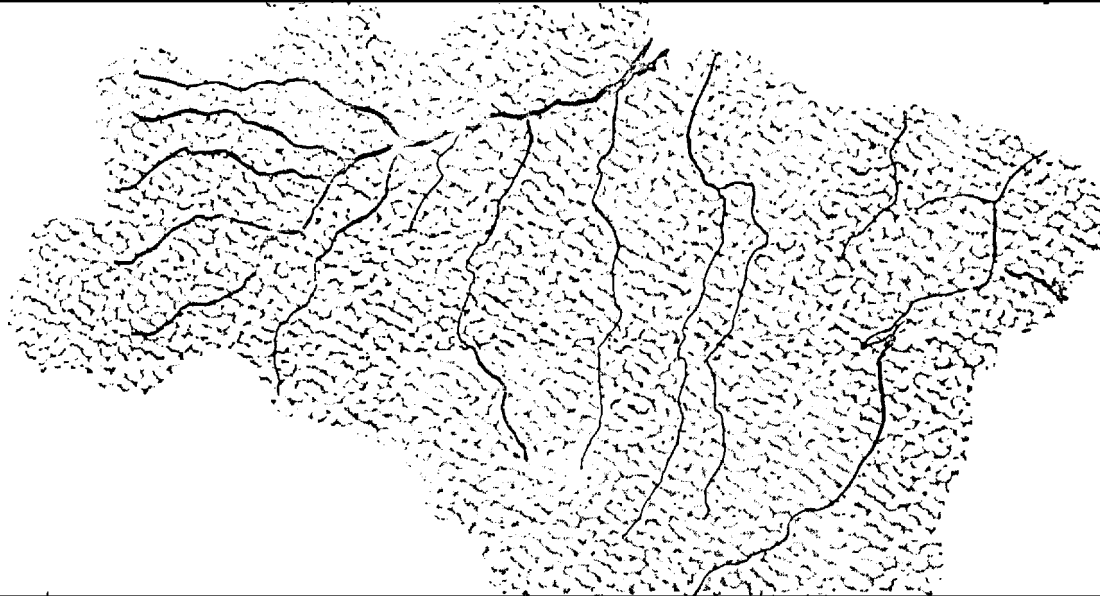


CPYRGHT

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# BRAZIL'S OVERSEAS MILITARY OPERATIONS

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Robert Reynolds

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THE course of history in the  
20th century has brought the  
United States into two World Wars  
and several smaller scale military ac-  
tions.  
Whether as participant or sponsor,  
the United States has acted in each  
instance in concert with other nations.  
These allies in wartime and in peace-  
time have included several of the  
countries of Latin America, and none  
has proved to be more steadfast in  
its support than Brazil.  
For the first 40 years of the 20th

century, Brazil's armed forces did not take part in any world conflict, although a Brazilian naval force was on its way to the Mediterranean when World War I ended. A Naval War Operations Division of two cruisers, four destroyers, one auxiliary cruiser, and one seagoing tug sailed from Brazil for Freetown, Sierra Leone, on 1 August 1918.

In one contact with a German submarine en route, the Brazilians made a depth-charge attack and were credited with its destruction. Its other operations were limited to patrol duties off the African coast from Dakar to Gibraltar.

#### Lead to World War II

Postwar Brazil had no enthusiasm for foreign entanglements and withdrew from the League of Nations in 1926. It was not until Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini had pressed their threats of global aggression beyond the point of no return that the Brazilians took sides in the deteriorating world situation.

The government at that time was in the hands of President Getulio D. Vargas who had consolidated his power in the years following the 1930 coup which brought him to the Presidency. Vargas found himself in an ambiguous situation by 1939. On one hand, Brazil's economy was closely linked to that of the United States. Moreover, through cultural ties and

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as a result of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Good Neighbor Policy, a large number of the Brazilian people sided with the Allied cause.

On the other hand, Vargas had among his advisors a number of pro-Axis sympathizers, and Germany and Italy were good customers for Brazilian cotton. Brazil's population included strong German, Italian, and Japanese minorities in several strategic areas. While many in these colonies remained loyal to Brazil, the loyalty of other elements was questioned, and there were undoubtedly some with pro-Axis sentiments.

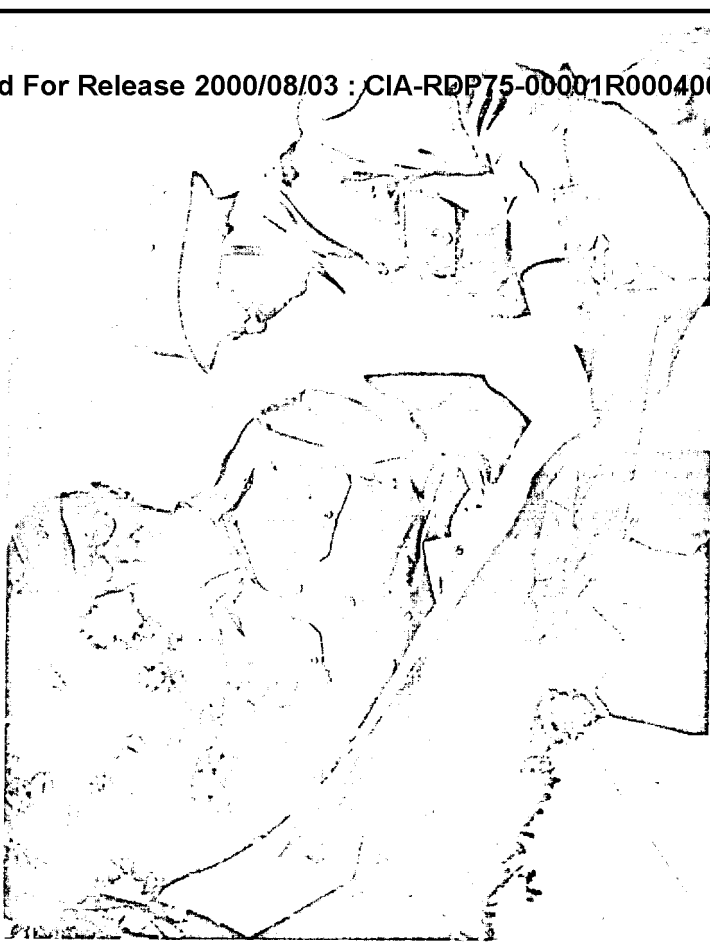
#### Neutrality Declaration

President Vargas' first solution to this dilemma was a declaration of neutrality on 20 October 1939. In the ensuing months, as the *Wehrmacht* moved machine-like into Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and France, Vargas edged closer to the apparent winner. In June 1940 he all but adhered to the Axis in a speech welcoming a "new era."

New era or not, there were geopolitical realities to consider. President Vargas in January 1941 granted the United States air and naval base rights in or near Belém and Natal, Recife, and Fernando Noronha in northeastern Brazil. These bases were required by the United States to insure communications later with North Africa.

Within the year, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Entering the war, the United States quickly sought Latin-American support at the Third Meeting of Foreign Ministers of the American Republics in Rio de Janeiro in January 1942. Brazil joined the majority of the Latin-American Republics in breaking relations with the Axis countries.

German submarine attacks against Brazilian shipping followed the severance of relations. Public anger mounted as coastal shipping vessels fell prey to German torpedoes. It reached a peak after the Germans sank five ships off Sergipe in a 48-hour period in August 1942. Mobs



Major General João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes commanded the FEB as part of Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark's 5th Army

sacked German and Italian commercial establishments in violent protest. On 22 August 1942 Brazil declared war on Germany and Italy.

Although the idea of organizing a Brazilian Expeditionary Force (FEB) began to take root with the declaration of war, it was August 1943 before a 1st Expeditionary Infantry Division was created by a War Ministry decree. Major General João Baptista Mascarenhas de Moraes was the unit's

for years. Overnight it was necessary to substitute American for French methods and equipment. General Mascarenhas had the help of about three dozen division officers who had attended US military schools and, from January 1944, a US Army mission sent to Brazil.

Minor problems included learning to use 105-millimeter and 155-millimeter howitzers, creation and integration of an aerial observation and fire

control squadron, translation of Army field manuals into Portuguese, and familiarization with modern communications equipment. With intensive training, the 1st Expeditionary Infantry Division was combat ready by mid-1944.

From July to September, 15,000 officers and men of the division sailed to Naples aboard ships of the US Navy. By February 1945 the FEB totaled over 25,000.

The first FEB detachment to see action had replaced a US unit in the

the north. There followed a series of advances—first unopposed, then met with heavy artillery fire.

On 18 September the Brazilians experienced their first encounter with German infantry when the detachment attacked and seized the town of Camaiore. This action proved they could be relied on and earned for them the congratulations of Lieutenant General Mark W. Clark, 5th Army commander.

The FEB spent a total of 239 days in action against the Germans. From



Brazilian paratroopers on duty in the Dominican Republic have their equipment checked in an area just north of Pisa on 15 September 1944. Not since their war with Paraguay in 1870 had Brazilian troops been in foreign combat. On the morning of 16 September, the Brazilian general commanding the FEB detachment asked for and received permission to move his part of the line to

ments, the FEB lost 451 dead, 2,722 wounded or injured, 23 missing, and 35 prisoners. A total of 20,573 prisoners were taken. These included an entire German division which surrendered in the last days of the war.

#### Brazil's Air Force

In the meantime, Brazil's Air Force, which had just won its autonomy from the army, was represented in World War II by the 1st Fighter Squadron. It received its training for combat at US Army Air Force bases and began combat operations at Tarquinia, Italy, on 31 October 1944.

After suffering a series of combat casualties, the squadron moved to Pisa in December and began operating on a solid basis. Its mission, like those of the US squadrons who made up the rest of the 350th Fighter Group, was a fighter-bomber mission. They had no interceptor or escort functions since all Axis airpower had long since been swept from the Italian skies. They were just 20 minutes' flying time from the German lines strung through the Apennines Mountains. They strafed and bombed military targets, particularly rail and road vehicles.

By the end of the war, the Brazilians had lost eight pilots to German anti-aircraft fire. Another three had abandoned their planes and bailed out over friendly territory, four parachuted into German territory and were captured, and two more who jumped in German-held territory were hidden by friendly partisans until the war's end. One Brazilian pilot who jumped was befriended and clothed by Italian partisans, and then walked 240 miles back to Allied territory. Another who bailed out was unsure of his position until he saw some soldiers in green uniforms like those of the

Germans. He was preparing to run when one of the soldiers spoke—in Portuguese. The pilot had landed in an area held by his compatriots of the FEB.

With 4,000 miles of coastline, Brazil is highly vulnerable to attack from the sea. Consequently, submarine raid against Brazil's coastal shipping brought the country into the war in mid-1942. Not unnaturally, the Brazilian Navy's contribution to the Allied war effort took the form of anti-submarine and convoy escort duties.

#### Task Force 46

After declaring war in August 1942, the Brazilian Government assigned its Northeast Naval Force to the US 4th Fleet operating in the South Atlantic. The Brazilian component was designated as Task Force 46.

Three vessels of Task Force 46 were lost as a result of the war. An auxiliary ship was torpedoed and sunk in July 1944. In the same month a corvette went down, and in July 1945—shortly after the end of the war in Europe—the venerable cruiser *Bahia* sank while returning from the war zone. There were 474 officers and men who lost their lives in these sinkings.

The Brazilian Navy distinguished itself by providing escorts for hundreds of convoys and thousands of merchant ships. By their tireless efforts, they prevented far more devastating German raids, and they freed other Allied naval elements to carry the battle to the enemy elsewhere.

Brazil did not respond to the United Nations call for military units for the Korean Conflict. The period of the action coincided with the turbulent election campaign and second term of office of President Vargas. The Brazilian military establishment was

badly divided over political issues. The Korean War had ended by the time Vargas was succeeded in office.

When the United Nations next issued an emergency summons to its members for military force contributions, it was in response to the situation which arose following the Anglo-French-Israeli invasion of the Suez Canal area of Egypt in 1956. After unsuccessfully appealing to the tripartite force to abandon Egyptian territory, on 5 November the UN General Assembly established a UN Emergency Force (UNEF) "to secure and supervise the cessation of hostilities."

Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld immediately sought offers of troops from nonaligned nations not having representation in the Security Council. Brazil was one of 10 nations whose offer was accepted.

**Suez" Battalion**

There were many volunteers for the Brazilian "Suez" Battalion, especially Arabic-speaking soldiers from families of Middle Eastern ancestry. On 1 January the Suez Battalion of 520 officers and men sailed to join the UNEF.

They were given the responsibility for patrolling a stretch of the canal running through Ismailia. Their duties entailed unexpected hazards in the form of undetonated World War I mines that still lay buried throughout the area. They met this problem and have now established a 10-year tradition of service in Suez and the Gaza Strip. The troops are logistically self-sufficient, and receive materiel and supplies by Brazilian Navy transports and the aircraft of the Brazilian Air Force.

On 15 January 1964, Brazilian General Carlos Flores de Paiva Chaves took command of all UN troops in the

area. However, he became ill and was unable to complete his four-year assignment. He was replaced in August 1964 by Brazil's General Syzeno Sarmento.

### The Congo

Suez and Gaza showed how a multinational military force could serve the interests of world peace. When the newly independent Congo became the scene of a secessionist movement in July 1960, Secretary General Hammarskjöld called on the Security Council to restore peace there through the application of the Suez formula.

He was given authority to provide military assistance and set out to create a UN Operation in the Congo (ONUC). Again, he appealed to member nations not directly involved in the problem to contribute forces. He organized a command composed of 23 nationalities and having a strength of over 15,000 infantry troops and 2,245 supporting troops.

Supporting forces included those engaged in air transport operations, and it was in this work that Brazil's contribution was made. Thirteen Brazilian pilots and 11 other personnel from the Brazilian Air Force flew to the Congo to start an air transport facility. This continued throughout the lifetime of the ONUC. The strength of the Brazilian contingent had increased to about 30. The Brazilian contribution in the Congo was recognized with the appointment of a Brazilian officer as the first commander of the unified ONUC air command. All of the formerly independent national air elements were consolidated under his command in February 1962. The Congo troubles subsided sufficiently to allow the withdrawal and disbandment of the ONUC in June 1964.

With the occurrence of the Dominican revolution in April 1965, one of the first governments to give tacit recognition to the significance of the crisis was the government of Brazil. The Brazilian position again paralleled that of the United States.

The Brazilian delegate was a member of the five-man peace committee of the Organization of American States (OAS) which recommended an OAS international military force to maintain order in the Dominican Republic. On 6 May the OAS voted to adopt the recommendation.

By 20 May the Brazilian Senate voted to send a Brazilian contingent to the Inter-American Peace Force. The military ministers designated units from the army, the marine corps, and the air force to make up a force totaling over 1,100 officers and men. They also named Colonel Carlos de Meira Matos as its commander.

On 22 May the OAS passed a resolution placing over-all command of the peace force in Brazilian hands. The Brazilians, in turn, nominated General Hugo Panasco Alvim for the commander's job on 24 May with OAS confirmation, naming Lieutenant General Bruce Palmer, Jr., of the United States as his second in command. General Palmer retained command of the US joint task force that he had brought to the Dominican Republic in late April.

General Panasco Alvim arrived in Santo Domingo on 28 May and assumed command of the Inter-American Peace Force (IAPF), as it had become known officially by that time. The Brazilian contingent of the force

—known by its Portuguese initials as the FAIBRAS—arrived a day later. General Panasco Alvim assigned Brazilian troops to guard the National Palace in Santo Domingo a few days after their arrival. Next he began replacing US troops with Brazilians at crucial sectors where the IAPF line confronted that of the Dominican rebels. Use of the Brazilian and the other Latin Americans as buffers did not eliminate friction completely at these points, but it undoubtedly reduced them.

In other ways as well, the Brazilian knack of finding solutions to ticklish problems proved to be of value in the Dominican Republic. One example was the installation of a "hot line" with rebel headquarters to aid in clarifying the origin or purpose of any new shooting.

Brazilian participation in the IAPF has brought benefits—militarily, politically, and psychologically. The motivation behind the Brazilian decision to contribute to the IAPF as expressed by President Humberto Alencar Castello Branco, was their international obligation and their survival of democracy in the Dominican Republic.

The Brazilians have rarely fought wars or other foreign military excursions. But when international obligation or force of circumstance has required it, this heterogeneous people sprawled across a land of red earth, uncharted jungles, pine forests, and desert, modern cities, and endless coastline—nearly half the area of South America—has produced the military means to meet the challenge.

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**A sketch of Brazil's overseas military commitments from World War II to the present.**

**BRAZIL - ARMED FORCES**

**JAM\*/SSCS(E. Galloway)  
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