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Gang violence increases in Sao Paolo

URL: <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0607/060715-sao-paolo.html>

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15 July, 2006

THE ARTICLE

Gang violence increases in Sao Paolo

A state of virtual anarchy has broken out in Brazil's largest city Sao Paolo because of an upsurge in gang violence. Most of the city's bus companies have stopped running out of concern for the safety of drivers and passengers. Almost seventy buses have been torched in the last few days and plainclothes police officers have been riding the buses to deter the criminals from boarding. Armed gangs are roaming the streets in search of police officers and prison guards - potential targets on their hit list. Six law enforcement officers were mowed down yesterday in revenge for a police crackdown on organized crime. The new wave of attacks was apparently ordered by the First Command of the Capital (PCC) crime faction, a syndicate that runs many Sao Paolo prisons and has a considerable stake in the city's burgeoning narcotics industry.

The violence has wreaked havoc in the city for most of this year. The PCC were responsible for five days of chaos in June when they killed over 200 people. Imprisoned leaders of the group are managing to organize events from their cells and create mayhem with the city's public transportation system. The current flare-up is reportedly in protest at the proposed transfer of PCC leaders to tougher prisons, where their communication channels would be diluted. They also seem to be settling scores after the police killed dozens of their cadres in a crackdown in May. Sao Paolo's secretary for public security stated his city would not be intimidated by the gang. He warned: "There will be no white flag....There will be more clashes and they are going to come off worst; under no circumstances can they win. We will not be held hostage."

WARM-UPS

1. CITY SAFETY: Walk around the class and talk to as many students as you can. Find out their opinions on the safety of the city in which they live. Share your findings with new partners.

2. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words from the article are most interesting and which are most boring.

Anarchy / Brazil / gang violence / buses / prison guards / organized crime / narcotics / violence / chaos / prison cells / protests / intimidation / hostages

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

3. CRIMINAL GROUPS: What do you know about organized crime in these countries? Conduct a survey of your class members to find out. Share your findings with new partners

Italy

USA

Japan

Colombia

Honk Kong

Iraq

Russia

Other _____

4. CRIMES: Write down (or brainstorm) three recent crimes you have read about in your town. Talk about them with your partner(s). Is your town becoming more dangerous? What kinds of crimes are typical in your town?

5. PENALTIES: With your partner(s), decide on the penalties for these crimes. Change partners and compare penalties. Discuss how these crimes can be prevented.

- a. Gunning down police officers
- b. Drug trafficking
- c. Running prostitution rings
- d. Human trafficking
- e. Money laundering
- f. Trading in exotic and endangered animals
- g. Running protection rackets
- h. Kidnapping and holding people for ransom

6. GANGS: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with gangs. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article's headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

- | | |
|--|-------|
| a. Gang violence has forced many subway lines to close in Sao Paolo. | T / F |
| b. A gang is hunting for police officers and prison guards. | T / F |
| c. The recent violence has been unplanned and spontaneous. | T / F |
| d. The gang has done much to fight drug traffickers. | T / F |
| e. The violence has affected the city for most of the year. | T / F |
| f. Gang leaders are organizing the violence from their prison cells. | T / F |
| g. Sao Paolo's security secretary is ready to get out the white flag | T / F |
| h. Sao Paolo's security secretary fears the gang will take hostages. | T / F |

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| a. virtual | chaos |
| b. upsurge | murdered |
| c. torched | caused |
| d. mowed down | increase |
| e. burgeoning | frightened |
| f. wreaked | escalating |
| g. mayhem | near |
| h. diluted | surrender |
| i. intimidated | weakened |
| j. white flag | set ablaze |

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| a. virtual anarchy has broken | are roaming the streets |
| b. out of concern | scores |
| c. Armed gangs | havoc in the city for most of this year |
| d. revenge for a police | mayhem |
| e. has a considerable | out in Brazil's largest city |
| f. The violence has wreaked | off worst |
| g. create | crackdown on organized crime |
| h. settling | can they win |
| i. they are going to come | for the safety of drivers |
| j. under no circumstances | stake in... |

WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the gaps in the text.

Gang violence increases in Sao Paolo

A state of _____ anarchy has broken out in Brazil's largest city Sao Paolo because of an _____ in gang violence. Most of the city's bus companies have stopped running out of concern for the safety of drivers and passengers. Almost seventy buses have been _____ in the last few days and plainclothes police officers have been riding the buses to _____ the criminals from boarding. Armed gangs are roaming the streets in search of police officers and prison guards - potential targets on their _____. Six law enforcement officers were mowed down yesterday in revenge for a police crackdown on organized crime. The new _____ of attacks was apparently ordered by the First Command of the Capital (PCC) crime faction, a _____ that runs many Sao Paolo prisons and has a considerable stake in the city's _____ narcotics industry.

The violence has _____ havoc in the city for most of this year. The PCC were responsible for five days of chaos in June when they killed over 200 people. Imprisoned leaders of the group are managing to organize events from their cells and create _____ with the city's public transportation system. The current _____ is reportedly in protest at the proposed transfer of PCC leaders to tougher prisons, where their communication channels would be _____. They also seem to be settling _____ after the police killed dozens of their cadres in a crackdown in May. Sao Paolo's secretary for public security stated his city would not be _____ by the gang. He warned: "There will be no white flag...There will be more _____ and they are going to come off worst; under no circumstances can they win. We will not be _____ hostage."

deter
burgeoning
upsurge
wave
hit list
virtual
syndicate
torched

intimidated
diluted
mayhem
clashes
scores
wreaked
held
flare-up

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Gang violence increases in Sao Paolo

A state of virtual _____ has broken out in Brazil's largest city Sao Paolo because of an upsurge in gang violence. Most of the city's bus companies have stopped running out of _____ for the safety of drivers and passengers. Almost seventy buses have been _____ in the last few days and plainclothes police officers have been riding the buses to _____ the criminals from boarding. Armed gangs are roaming the streets in search of police officers and prison guards - potential targets on their hit list. Six law enforcement officers were _____ down yesterday in revenge for a police crackdown on organized crime. The new wave of attacks was apparently ordered by the First Command of the Capital (PCC) crime _____, a syndicate that runs many Sao Paolo prisons and has a considerable stake in the city's _____ narcotics industry.

The violence has wreaked _____ in the city for most of this year. The PCC were responsible for five days of _____ in June when they killed over 200 people. Imprisoned leaders of the group are managing to organize events from their cells and create _____ with the city's public transportation system. The current flare-up is reportedly in protest at the proposed transfer of PCC leaders to tougher prisons, where their communication channels would be _____. They also seem to be settling _____ after the police killed dozens of their cadres in a crackdown in May. Sao Paolo's secretary for public security stated his city would not be intimidated by the gang. He warned: "There will be no white flag....There will be more _____ and they are going to _____ worst; under no circumstances can they win. We will not be _____ hostage."

AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words '**gang**' and '**violence**'.

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT "GANGS" SURVEY: In pairs / groups, write down questions about gangs and organized crime.

- Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
- Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
- Make mini-presentations to other groups on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:

- virtual
- concern
- roaming
- mowed
- wave
- stake
- wreaked
- mayhem
- proposed
- diluted
- intimidated
- held

DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

- a. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- b. What is your image of safety in large Brazilian cities?
- c. What would you do if anarchy broke out in your town?
- d. Do you think the best way to reduce crime is to increase the number of police officers?
- e. Would you join the police force in a city in which crime and violence were out of control?
- f. How are gang leaders able to organize their activities even when they are in a prison cell?
- g. What would you do if there was a shootout in the street you were walking down?
- h. What activities keep the police busy in your town?
- i. Do you have a lot of respect for the police?
- j. If your town became very violent, would you move somewhere else?

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

- a. Did you like reading this article?
- b. What do you think about what you read?
- c. Can you understand why people join gangs?
- d. Which organized crime gang in the world today do you know most about?
- e. What punishment would you give to a gang leader?
- f. What kinds of organized crime are there in your country?
- g. Do you think women also figure prominently in the leadership of gangs?
- h. What question would you ask the leader of a crime syndicate?
- i. What do you think his/her answer would be?
- j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

- a. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
- b. Was there a question you didn't like?
- c. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
- d. What did you like talking about?
- e. Which was the most difficult question?

SPEAKING

GANGSTER DAY: With your partner(s), imagine what a gang boss does in the day described below. Fill in the table with as many details as you can. Choose a syndicate from any country:

Our gang boss operates in _____. His/Her name is _____.	
Breakfast	
Meeting with rest of gang	
Training	
Shopping	
Planning of next job	
Evening / night	

Change partners and share with each other your different images. Decide which day would make the best movie scenes.

HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google's search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find information about one criminal gang. Talk about what you discover with your partner(s) in the next lesson.

3. NEWS REPORT: Write a newspaper report on the level of crime and criminal activities in your town/country. Read your report to your classmates in the next lesson. Which report was best and why?

4. LETTER: Write a letter to a gang boss. Tell him what you think of his activities. Ask him three questions. Show your letter to your classmates in the next lesson. Your classmates will write a reply.

ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:

- a. F b. T c. F d. F e. T f. T g. F h. F

SYNONYM MATCH:

- | | |
|----------------|------------|
| a. virtual | near |
| b. upsurge | increase |
| c. torched | set ablaze |
| d. mowed down | murdered |
| e. burgeoning | escalating |
| f. wreaked | caused |
| g. mayhem | chaos |
| h. diluted | weakened |
| i. intimidated | frightened |
| j. white flag | surrender |

PHRASE MATCH:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| a. virtual anarchy has broken | out in Brazil's largest city |
| b. out of concern | for the safety of drivers |
| c. Armed gangs | are roaming the streets |
| d. revenge for a police | crackdown on organized crime |
| e. has a considerable | stake in... |
| f. The violence has wreaked | havoc in the city for most of this year |
| g. create | mayhem |
| h. settling | scores |
| i. they are going to come | off worst |
| j. under no circumstances | can they win |

GAP FILL:

Gang violence increases in Sao Paolo

A state of **virtual** anarchy has broken out in Brazil's largest city Sao Paolo because of an **upsurge** in gang violence. Most of the city's bus companies have stopped running out of concern for the safety of drivers and passengers. Almost seventy buses have been **torched** in the last few days and plainclothes police officers have been riding the buses to **deter** the criminals from boarding. Armed gangs are roaming the streets in search of police officers and prison guards - potential targets on their **hit list**. Six law enforcement officers were mowed down yesterday in revenge for a police crackdown on organized crime. The new **wave** of attacks was apparently ordered by the First Command of the Capital (PCC) crime faction, a **syndicate** that runs many Sao Paolo prisons and has a considerable stake in the city's **burgeoning** narcotics industry.

The violence has **wreaked** havoc in the city for most of this year. The PCC were responsible for five days of chaos in June when they killed over 200 people. Imprisoned leaders of the group are managing to organize events from their cells and create **mayhem** with the city's public transportation system. The current **flare-up** is reportedly in protest at the proposed transfer of PCC leaders to tougher prisons, where their communication channels would be **diluted**. They also seem to be settling **scores** after the police killed dozens of their cadres in a crackdown in May. Sao Paolo's secretary for public security stated his city would not be **intimidated** by the gang. He warned: "There will be no white flag....There will be more **clashes** and they are going to come off worst; under no circumstances can they win. We will not be **held** hostage."