

Fish mafia in lawless triple frontier

[Clique aqui para ver a notícia no site](#)

In Iceland, it is not difficult to buy a river turtle the size of a table, one and a half meters long and weighing maybe 80 kilograms. "They catch them at night and no one sees them," said Antonio, the owner of a grocery store built, like the rest of the city, on stilts to avoid flooding when Yavari rises. Iceland is a municipality of 23,000 people in the Peruvian Amazon, a tiny island surrounded by the Amazon, a few kilometers from the so-called Triple Frontier, where Brazil, Peru and Colombia meet.

Antonio came to Iceland 40 years ago looking for a piece of land. He takes out a plastic bottle filled with green liquid. "This is the turtle soup we're making, it's delicious." They wanted to try. But the memory of Dom Phillips and Bruno Pereira has taken away the appetite, because the trafficking of coveted Amazonian tortoise meat, as well as other exotic aquatic species from vast rivers that traverse the jungle, is a key element in understanding the murder of a British journalist and a Brazilian Indian two months ago near Iceland. .

Many tortoises, as well as giant pirarucu or paiche fish, are illegally caught in the vast Yavari Valley Nature Reserve, located on the Brazilian side of the border. Any mining activity is prohibited there – fishing, hunting, forestry, gold mining, which is not the business of the indigenous people. At least that's what the law says.

The Yavari Valley Reserve is home to some of the most isolated indigenous peoples in the world.

"There are three categories of fishermen here," says Manuel Chorimpa, a spokesman for Univaja, the Brazilian NGO that Bruno Pereira worked for. "There is one who goes out every day and sells to survive; the one that has a refrigerator on the boat and fishes further to get peixeliso (fish without scales up to 50 kg), highly coveted in Colombia. Then there is one that catches pyraruk, turtle, tambaki... in the reserve. They are involved in drug trafficking and are dangerous people." Much is at stake in the Valle del Yavari nature reserve, the place on the planet with the most isolated indigenous peoples and no contact with the rest of the world. "Many indigenous peoples live here at the head of the four rivers. We have found traces of seven isolated villages in addition to the 23 already identified, and there may be more," says Clovis, a Marubo indigenous who led a campaign against illegal logging in the reserve. "Everyone is in danger."

Behind this is smuggling and the expansion of the drug business across the triple border, where you can get into any of the three countries without passing through passport control. "Most of what is hunted and caught in the reserve is sold in Colombia," says an indigenous leader at the Univaja headquarters that Bruno Pereira worked for. "The big fish businessmen are drug dealers who finance illegal fishermen in exchange for getting valuable fish to sell across the border; Bruno was killed for grabbing a fish," he says.

"There are three countries with different economic interests, and all of them lack a state," Corimpa says. Crime fills the gap. "This is a poor region with job offers; people will do anything to survive." According to the latest figures from the Getúlio Vargas Foundation in Rio (FGV), the Brazilian part of the Triple Frontier is already the second poorest municipality in Brazil. Leticia, a Colombian border town an hour by boat from Iceland, has fewer visible signs of poverty among the population. Being killed over a few kilos of fish or turtle meat is further proof of how little life is worth living in this lawless region. On the day we arrived in Tabatinga, a Brazilian municipality across from Leticia, a girl was killed by a stray bullet in the course of settling scores between alleged drug dealers.

Two months ago, a British journalist and a Brazilian indigenous activist were killed in the area.

On the outskirts of Iceland lived Rubén Darío da Silva Villar, the alleged intellectual author of the murder of Pereira and Phillips. Nicknamed Columbia, he bought illegally caught fish and meat from the reserve to sell in all three countries. He was the owner of a boat seized by the police with 400 kg of pyrarucu, two large and 35 small turtles, as well as 400 kg of game meat, obtained illegally in the reserve. He is suspected of being involved in the drug trade. An illegal hunter and fisherman join the list of criminals infiltrating indigenous reserves through violent intrusions. These include loggers who sell the precious timber on the black market and garimpeiros (illegal miners) who mine gold for processing in countries like Switzerland.

Indigenous peoples are becoming increasingly vulnerable. With the coming to power of Jair Bolsonaro, part of the environmental protection system was dismantled. "There are no incentives for development; without alternatives, it is easier to extract wood from the stock; if there were alternatives, there would be no invasions," says Clovis.

There is another threat to the natives. "North American evangelical missionaries are already using drones to locate isolated indigenous people and evangelize them," Clovis explains. Where there was more resistance in Brazil, "in Peru, a large number of indigenous people are already evangelicals," he says.

"Evangelical missionaries are already using drones to locate isolated indigenous peoples," they explain at one NGO. Part of the future of the indigenous peoples of Yawari and beyond will depend on the outcome of the Brazilian presidential election, which will take place in the first round on 2 October. Bolsonaro has never made a secret of his desire to end the protection of indigenous reserves. "You can't keep prehistoric people in a rich zoo," he often says.

Lula, on the other hand, is looking to beef up the federal police force in order to reassert control over remote areas of the Amazon, such as the Yawari Valley. "If we are very careful, we can prevent a repeat of what happened with Dom and Bruno," he said at a meeting with foreign journalists in Sao Paulo.

Another encouraging fact is that in Brazil's legislative elections, which are held on the same day as the presidential elections, a list of 181 indigenous candidates was presented. Most importantly for an area like Triple Frontier, Lula's new government will re-establish cross-border integration projects through multilateral organizations like Unasur. The coming to power of a number of left-wing governments in Chile, Colombia, Bolivia, Peru and Mexico will facilitate the implementation of strategies to promote development and combat drug trafficking, including proposals for the decriminalization of drugs. "The region is fragmented and polarized, and regional initiatives need to be re-established in areas ranging from economic development to crime control," says the former director of Unasur in Brazil. "With Lula, Brazil will be able to regain its former role as the leader of integration."

Source: www.lavanguardia.com

*The article has been translated based on the content of www.lavanguardia.com. If there is any problem regarding the content, copyright, please leave a report below the article. We will try to process as quickly as possible to protect the rights of the author. Thank you very much!

*We just want readers to access information more quickly and easily with other multilingual content, instead of information only available in a certain language.

*We always respect the copyright of the content of the author and always include the original link of the source article. If the author disagrees, just leave the report below the article, the article will be edited or deleted at the request of the author. Thanks very much! Best regards!