The Brazilian Navy mounted a genuine military operation on Marambaia Island, located off the southern coast of Rio de Janeiro, from June 24th to 30th for INCURSEX OpEsp 2017. The purpose of the exercise was to train personnel on the use of naval expeditionary forces within the context of a political and strategic crisis through carrying out special operations missions.

Approximately 800 service members from 13 different organizations participated in the exercise, among them the Marine Special Operations Battalion (Tonelero Battalion), the Tactical Air Control Battalion, the Marine Anti-Aircraft Defense Battalion, and the Combat Divers Group. Also involved in the exercise were the frigate Liberal, the Amazonas Class Offshore Patrol Vessel, and the Tupi submarine as well as helicopters, fighter aircraft, transport planes, remotely piloted aircraft, and military combat service support vehicles.

The Brazilian Air Force (FAB, per its Portuguese acronym) also participated in the operation using a C-95 Bandeirantes aircraft. Brazilian Marine Corps Colonel Luís Manuel de Campos Mello, the commander of Tonelero Battalion, coordinated INCURSEX OpEsp 2017 and said that it is the largest-scale operation conducted by the Brazilian Navy. “Our combat power and the resources we obtained for use during the six
Col. Campos Mello assessed, adding that the exercise creates the conditions for rapid deployment, making it possible to operate with all available resources working together. “Our naval, air and land units worked together to improve their understanding of concepts like reconnaissance and command,” he said.

According to the colonel, the main challenge faced during the exercise was the command and control over different naval, air, and marine units deployed on land and sea. “The Navy controlled and coordinated surveillance teams sent in by a submarine at sea, ship movements for landing squadrons beyond the horizon, amphibious commando teams, underwater attacks by combat divers, launching paratroopers, operations using remotely controlled aircraft, helicopters, guiding attacks by Naval Air Force planes, and kinetic actions against enemy land targets by Special Operations and Infantry troops,” Col. Campos Mello noted.

**The benefits of INCURSEX OpEsp 2017**

“The operation practices the Brazilian Navy’s mobilization and rapid response capabilities for use by naval expeditionary forces in crisis situations, employing troops who are highly trained for high-risk combat missions,” Col. Campos Mello highlighted, adding that in a real-world situation, the Navy units may be supported by other forces, such as FAB, other naval districts, and land forces, as exemplified in the training operation on Marambaia Island. For Col. Campos Mello, INCURSEX OpEsp has contributed to maintaining a high level of operations for the troops when carrying out their defense missions in border regions and in the Blue Amazon – Brazil’s maritime territory that covers an area of approximately 3.5 million square kilometers.

The exercise simulated a politically and strategically hypothetical situation. “It’s a mock war game where we use conflicts between fictitious nations to create deployment situations and to train the operability of the troops in the most diverse situations,” Col. Campos Mello explained. Activities included amphibious incursions, mock reconnaissance, infiltration techniques, and fire control as well as commando operations using naval and air support and disembarking from a landing craft with a semi-rigid hull.

“Initially, we practiced launching our troops from naval and air units for covert landings. At present, the troops are trained on how to disembark into the sea from ships,” Col. Campos Mello said. According to him, one of the main highlights of the operation is maintaining simultaneously coordinated operations while new
Brazilian Marine Corps Captain Thiago da Silva Gomes participated in the exercise as an operations officer in the Land Combat Contingent (CCT, per its Portuguese acronym). In this role, he took part in planning the CCT’s maneuvers, its specialized reconnaissance activities, and its use in direct actions. For him, participating in INCURSEX OpEsp 2017 was very important for his own operational growth. “There were a countless number of lessons learned, and they will be my guidelines for planning new missions,” he stressed.

According to Capt. Thiago Silva, the main challenge was planning varied operations to be carried out at the same time and using naval and air resources. “In one of the tasks, the objective was to neutralize a guerilla training camp. Three phases of maneuvers were employed: one was specialized reconnaissance which infiltrated the area in a freefall jumping operation, making use of an airplane for getting to the area of operations; another was direct action which neutralized the training camp, and the final one was an infantry platoon that escorted potential prisoners who were on another warship,” he described.

Despite the difficulties, Capt. Thiago Silva stressed that the situations created over the days of the exercise and the array of military units involved provided important lessons during the operation. “Through those situations, we improved our modus operandi and we grew professionally. That’s important for all of the service members who participated in the operation,” he concluded.