From VivaRio speaker, Sandro Costa:

**History of building and favela nearby:**

Current building used to be an abandoned building where druglords left dead bodies. BOPE moved to building in 2001.

Very close to favela; when BOPE came it was similar to a military occupation of a favela; **today there are no policemen in the favela and BOPE can walk through without a gun.** Only thing that divides the BOPE from the favela is a small gate, and the gate is open most of the time. Kids in this favela have not seen what life is like under the control of the drug traffickers. They now aspire to be police, teachers, etc., instead of drug traffickers.

Kids from Manguera took a field-trip to BOPE and went inside the tank. They were scared at first, but then after the experience they said they wanted to be BOPE.

**History of Complexo do Alemão and BOPE:**

Complexo de Alemão used to have 500 heavily-armed boys/men. The occupation required over 1000 policemen. Druglords prepared a whole network of forces to stop the police. The blocked roads so that tanks couldn’t enter, for example. Shoot-outs occurred and lots of innocent people and policemen were killed. War tactics were used in Alemão. So they sent in the military police. They began to use different types of tank that could easily traverse land (bulldozers). The druglords were not ready, and so 500 guns were apprehended.

Now there are 2500 policemen in Alemão. The important drug-trafficking leadership has left the territory, but less important ones stayed. **They need more policemen to bring safety to the territory.** There are many alleyways, which makes it difficult to navigate.

**Criticism as “military occupation”:**

Some people criticize it as a military occupation. However, in the South Zone they have a greater amount of policemen. The UN suggests 1 policeman/250,000 inhabitants, and in the South Zone there is 1/230,000 and that is not considered military occupation. [the criticism of Alemão being a military occupation is misplaced, when South Zone is not considered so]. Still in some places the concentration is 1 policemen per 17 inhabitants (1:17) which is high, but that is because of territorial difficulties.

**Use of rifles**

The BOPE hopes that once you go in and settle the territory you can get rid of the number of policemen. Yes, violence ensues when the police have rifles. Rifles is a gun for special forces. Police, however, only began using rifles as a result of the druglords using rifles [now where did the druglords get the rifles??]. In 1999, there were no rifles used by the police, not even by the BOPE. The police used pistols and other weapons. A regular gun can shoot up to 100 meters and has poor aim, but a rifle can
do 300-400 meters and has great aim. Land disputes between the three drug factions led to the use of heavier guns. Today rifles are not used in the South Zone, with the exception of Rocinha [and other unpacified favelas, as well?]. The amount of violence is not ideal, but the rifles still exist.

[A little confused about the connections in this section] There is a different discourse between the communities and the researchers and academics. During the time of “druglord courts,” the druglord decided if someone would live or die, and often a person would be tortured during the process [?]. Another difference: diabetes and hypertension has decreased in favela communities. There have always been schools, but now the kids can get to school safely and perform better since they are getting a full night’s rest, instead of their sleep interrupted by gunshots.

*General battalion knowledge and training:*

A battalion was started in 1978. The goal was to be like a SWAT unit. Also planned to work on hostage rescue. The reality of Rio later transformed the battalion. At some point they were trained with navy seals and went to other military units around the world and trained with them. There are 430 BOPE.

They have 3 courses:
1) 1 week: fast training; police from all different units
2) 5 weeks: 200 signed up, 30 went through, 17 finished
3) 5 months: sniper technique, combat, first aid, urban confrontation, mountain and jungle training, parachute training; open to all policemen and military police. **For one of the sessions, only 3 finished.**

For the current session, over 300 signed up (but it’s not finished yet so they don’t know how many passed).

BOPE enters through working in police force first (usually 2-3 years and then beginning the training). The training is all volunteer [?]

[some individual in the BOPE] has a Masters in Anthropology and wrote his thesis on special operations in Rio. His studies influenced his training, and he sees his work through an anthropological point of view

In the BOPE: **constant evaluation. Always looking for the best performance. “A mission given is a mission accomplished.”** They get the missions that the other police do not want to do, and the BOPE love the challenge.

*From BOPE Rodrigo*

BOPE is pacifying their police units: “get closer to the community”; BOPE is not necessarily what you see; BOPE is just looking for peace.

History of Battalion

Why was it created?

Rebellion in jail close by in 1974. The director of the jail died, there was no specialized unit in the military police, and there was no unit similar to SWAT.

Amêndola developed a manual based on military forces. He was afraid he was going to show secrets of the regular military police, but he was told not to worry because the info would not be misused. After the program was approved (or the manual, i.e.) NuCOE was founded and it was the first special ops. force.