

Interview with the Operational Coordinator of Operation *Acolhida* Major General Antonio Manoel de Barros.

Major General Antonio Manoel de Barros

Exército Brasileiro. Boa Vista, RR, Brasil.

Operational Coordinator of Operation "*Acolhida*",
between January 2020 to August 2021.

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Presentation

The increase in the migratory flow in Roraima in recent years, mostly composed of Venezuelans, led the Brazilian government to structure a federal response in the form of an inter-ministerial, interagency operation and with the collaboration of various sectors of civil society and even international organizations, the Operation *Acolhida*. Within this operation, the coordination of logistical support, management of resources and part of the processes was in charge of the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force, commanded by a general officer of the Brazilian Army.

In early January 2020, Major General Antonio Manoel de Barros replaced Major General Eduardo Pazuello as Operational Coordinator of Operation *Acolhida* and commander of FT Log Hum. He remained in this function until August 2021, when the command was passed to Major General Sérgio Schwingel. In addition to the command of hundreds of military, the coordination with the various actors that collaborate with the operation is also assigned to the position.

At that time, no one would have been able to imagine that, besides the challenges of consolidating Operation *Acolhida* and increasing numbers of internalizations, Gen Barros would also be responsible for managing a "crisis within a crisis", or the COVID-19 epidemic within the scope of welcoming Venezuelan refugees.

General Barros remained as the operational coordinator of *Acolhida* during the beginning, the intensification of the epidemic and the stabilization of the response with the efforts to adopt sanitary measures, the opening of targeted hospital beds and already in that year of the vaccination process.

It seems appropriate to us, in this dossier of the Meira Mattos Collection, to bring to the public an interview that was conducted with General Barros shortly before his departure from the position of director of the operation. In this conversation with us, General Barros talked about challenges and possibilities for Operation *Acolhida*.

In the field of challenge, in addition to the COVID-19 epidemic, Barros talks about the difficulties of increasing the number of internalized people, despite the efforts made during the health crisis not to interrupt this process. He also talks about the two other pillars of *Acolhida*: sheltering and border reordering.

In addition to these aspects in the strategic and political fields, General Barros analyzes the operational and tactical aspects of Operation *Acolhida* and Operation Controle, as well as the governance within the scope of *Acolhida* with regard to the relationship with other governmental and non-governmental agencies, in addition to United Nations bodies.

Finally, General Barros talks about the legacy of *Acolhida* to Brazil, to the Brazilian Army and its doctrine, and to the Venezuelan and Brazilian people. Moreover, he outlines important possibilities and new paths for the Operation.

Unprecedented in Brazil, the interview with Major General Barros is, undoubtedly, an extremely rich material for civilians and military, general public or academics, in short, for all Brazilians who want to know more about this humanitarian response conducted by the Brazilian Government since 2018. The interview is below, have a good reading.

Interviewer: Since 2018, Operation *Acolhida* has been developing actions within that tripod of border reordering, welcoming/sheltering, and internalization of Venezuelans. For you, what is the importance of Operation *Acolhida* in these three axes?

General Barros: Well, this is the face of Operation *Acolhida*, it is the essence of Operation *Acolhida*. This structure expresses well...I could even say how Operation *Acolhida* got organized, it is very interesting. Since I am a military, we plan how to do in military operations – not that it was with this idea, but it ended up reflecting. I will give an example, when there was the crisis in 2018, the first problem was to organize the border because the accumulation of people was very large and we did not have an adequate structure in the Brazilian state. So, the first effort was to organize the border. Well, in a second moment, almost simultaneously, we began to think about how we were going to welcome these people, because we had hundreds of people in Boa Vista in a really catastrophic situation, something Boa Vista had never done. And this required a lot of work and a lot of action. And here comes the focus, the idea, that we really had to get people out of here with internalization, and then internalization began to progress. The first year, to give you an idea, about 4,000 people came out of it. In the next year, there were more than 20 thousand people. So, this really shows the process that Operation *Acolhida* was developing, was maturing to give the answers,

and the very essence of Operation *Acolbida*. There is no way to talk about Operation *Acolbida* if we do not visualize these 3 axes.

Interviewer: The idea now is for us to deepen some of these axes that you highlight as the very essence of the Operation. First, with regard to sheltering, for those who know it, for those who have been abroad, it is clear that there are differences between the Operation *Acolbida* shelters and the so-called refugee camps that we see, mainly in Africa, in other continents, even in the Middle East, even in Europe, these refugee camps have very big differences. For you, what are the advantages of this sheltering model that Operation *Acolbida* has built over the years in relation to what has been developed in other parts of the world, mainly in Europe, the Middle East and Africa?

General Barros: First, the Brazilian solution begins there. It is already beginning for us, Brazilians, to look for a solution that really expresses our essence, whether through the laws and the formation of our own nationality, as we are as Brazilians. We are vehemently opposed to the situation in the refugee camps, we do not even admit this word. And why is that? The Shelter was precisely to provide people with dignified humanitarian treatment, evidently in a humanitarian crisis. And then I start talking about social protection, I do not know refugee camps personally, I have not visited, what I know is from reading, studying and so on. And I do not criticize the refugee camp either, let's make it very clear, every one builds the solution that is possible. But we rule it out, first by the level of social protection that is sought within this. So, imagine leaving people who do not know each other, couples of families sometimes with single parents, people who are sometimes already vulnerable, LGBTQIA+ also, women alone with children, alone teenagers, imagine this as a space for coexistence. So, when we were, the first thing is an effective for it not to be as large as in the refugee camp, because otherwise you cannot offer this social protection that we are talking about, which is already complex. Moreover, these shelters that allow the integration of the person with the local society. You put, for example, in an isolated space of the city, 5 or 10 thousand people who would be typical of a refugee camp, it does not make the slightest sense. So, there are up to 1,000, 1,500, more or less, generally speaking, within cities, seeking protection. I often say that in fact here many UN agencies have also had to learn a bit because when they offer a service in a refugee camp, basic services make a lot of difference. I was talking to the [incomprehensible word: 00:03:41 - Cut 2], for example, the washing problem, from the hygiene part, where it was talked about the need of hand washing and so on. Of course it is important, but when our children have diarrhea, the main factor is not that as it is in the refugee camp, which sometimes even has a problem with drinking water, our problem is not that, is another, is the malnutrition and doing a follow up with the children to gain weight. And this, in a refugee camp, is very difficult. And there have already been attempts to do this, to put shelters for 5,000, 10,000 people outside the

city, we do not accept it because of these characteristics. And there is also another aspect, even if it was wanted to do this, it would not work, because the Brazilian law does not oblige the person to stay in the shelter. So, you see, what attractive would we then have to put a "refugee camp" away from the city for 5,000, 10,000 people in isolation? What would be the attractive for these people to go there? What legal instrument would I have? Then, there is not the slightest possibility. And the essential factors were these: to provide quality, dignity, higher quality humanitarian treatment. And we understand that in the refugee camps this is not possible due to several aspects.

Interviewer: : In your first approach, you talked about the border reordering and the focus and essence of Operation *Acolhida*, then we addressed the issue of sheltering, and the third base of this structure of Operation *Acolhida* is precisely the internalization that are also some responses created by the Brazilian government and by Operation *Acolhida* itself with respect to the structure and dynamics of this migration process. It is a gateway to a remote place, not very dynamic in economic terms, and this strategy of internalization, as you also evaluated, which has been accelerating in recent years, recently passed the mark of 50 thousand internalized people. How do you evaluate the internalization?

General Barros: That is right, internalization is another solution, even when translating into English it does not make much sense within that. We had two decrees, a presidential decree that actually admits the crisis and another that composes the ministries committee and then the subcommittees came out within that. In fact, I am going to talk about the reorganization of this governance later, I think it is important and if I do not speak, please remind me, Gustavo. Well, within that, the Ministry of citizenship that was and is in the lead, either of the sheltering or of the internalization, but we are the ones who really conduct the whole process. That is why we can do this here, there is an institutional alignment, in addition to the strategies. And I have this authority as operational coordinator. I have three functions, as an effective military task force commander I could not do, but as operational coordinator of the civilian house, I can lead and adjust this, evidently within this alignment. And what happened, when we were in the first year that the citizenship had the *modus operandi* and the task force was not involved, if we look at the numbers. And I used to talk a lot with Pazuello about this, 18 passed, this was in 2019, that was the previous operational coordinator. And then the decision of the task force getting involved in internalization was made, because we had the responsibility to conduct a process, we did not have the exit valve which is internalization and we had a big problem, because there is no point in just building shelters, that is what is happening now, and that is where this whole task force structure was put. So, when we look at May 2019, we see that internalization is starting to increase a lot, and this was already the first very important milestone. And the modalities of internalization began to be seen, that is also very important, which is to reunite family reunion as it says it is doing; the social gathering that friends from shelter to shelter, that is, there are institutions that have another level of shelters. We talk about shelter, but in Brazil they are even considered a home if they are along with UN agencies; and the most important, which is the signaled job vacancy. Well, these four began to

provide a very great dynamism. And if you asked me what internalization is: internalization is the socioeconomic integration of the Venezuelan beneficiary by the other Brazilian municipalities with the social protection of life. So, it has to be strictly within the legality process. This took place in 2019, within that, it increased a lot, there were around 22 thousand, but how to sustain this? And then, at the beginning of 2020, we put in place a more adequate structure, called the Coordination Center for Internalization (CCI) here in Roraima, which coordinated all this, all these modules. And then we put several adjustment modules, such as the one we talked about, plus the logistics module, the audit module, for example, the communication module, and an important module for training and education. You see, these people had to be prepared for the job market. So, a physical structure was made and all these entities that worked in the internalization of civil society began to be included and there was no synergy within that, so this was sought within the same environment. And when we looked at Brazil, how to do it for Brazil too, then came the regional centers of internalization, a total of 12, which have the same geographic distribution as the military regions, because the army that handles the logistics at the end. So, in the military region, we managed to find a representative from each military region and we started a work to strengthen these [incomprehensible word: 00:05:47 - Cut 3], it took a year to do that. So, we had almost no representation, only the military, and now we have several civil society institutions. And now the citizenship puts a representative in every [incomprehensible word: 00:06:00 - Cut 3] within that. So, the [incomprehensible word: 00:06:04 - Cut 3], works this integration process regionally, oils the gears, links with the internalization coordination center. That is why, even with the pandemic, we managed to internalize another 19 people and then imagine what it was like to internalize during the pandemic. We had 3,000 in January and February, and then in March, which was the month of the pandemic, we went to 1,500, and then we went to a little more than a thousand within that. So, the internalization was in this crescent. Today, for example, when we talk about training and education, which was another step, we are working and uniting in three main axes: we have the literacy axis, the language content, literacy/language; the cultural adaptation, the second axis, which is much broader than that; and professional training itself. Today I have a specific Secretariat for training and education. So, you can see that, in addition to increasing quantity, we also increased quality. Right now, we are in a situation of flexibilization of the border and we have a bold goal of 2,500 people in July. What was the last advance of all this? The last advance, in terms of strategy, is that we are moving from the finalized job opening to the finalized job opening in companies, in other words, we made this contact in retail. We started with JBS, it was the first. We started by doing a direct connection work with companies and it is not true that, even with the economic crisis we are going through, of 14 million there are no jobs for these people, because many Brazilian jobs do not want it and it is also another very relevant factor in this aspect. Imagine that JBS has an annual plan of about 1,400 people per month, it needs to replace 1,400 people per month, for example, if it makes a direct connection here, we know what its demand is, we are able to make the selection, it reduces the cost for the company and we place this person wherever he or she goes. Of course there are several problems. Just yesterday we spoke with Jeep, Fiat, in the southern region of Brazil, precisely offering this. So, it was very simple in the evolution of internalization in the Brazilian solution,

in the solution that really is the solution. And in terms of general improvement, we also started looking at local integration, which is another problem, because many people do not want to leave here. So, within the internalization, we also pulled an aspect for the local internalization. In general, this is about internalization. And now it is at 53 thousand. We have already passed 53 thousand people now, Gustavo.

Interviewer: You have now mentioned this response to the internalization in the pandemic issue, which brought a series of challenges, a series of impacts for all areas. Undoubtedly, Operation *Acolbida* had a number of challenges with regard to the pandemic. What actions were developed by Operation *Acolbida* in the prevention and treatment of migrants and members of the Operation itself who were affected by the disease, by covid?

General Barros: Well, that is very interesting. I say covid is a crisis within another crisis. This pandemic came when we were already having a humanitarian crisis, and we created a protocol in January 2020 that was to identify and isolate. Let's remember that we did not have the tests and did not know much about it, I am talking about January 2020. I remember well that in March, precisely on March 17th, the first suspected case happened and there was no testing, we followed the protocol, this happened in the afternoon, and from Saturday to Sunday we isolated more than a thousand people. 600 people in Pacaraima, 300 people here and 100 people in Manaus, all who had contact with this supposed person. And then we put a covid office together with the agencies, and we started having 3 meetings daily. On Sunday, at 6 am, everyone was isolated, that was what we could do. There was no testing here in Roraima, I had to talk to the secretary of health, send a sample there to Manaus, he did it, made an exception for us and fortunately on Sunday afternoon it came out negative, but it turned on a light. We started to work hard, I had an average of 12, 13 thousand Venezuelans at that time in direct responsibility. Imagine if the first case of covid here in Roraima happened to be a Venezuelan one, how it would foster xenophobia, and we were very concerned about people not understanding that. We started to work hard and to carry out monitoring and isolation measures within what could be done, we made a very strict protocol and took hygiene measures within the shelters, that was what could be done. We removed the field hospital from the border and put it in Boa Vista because we understood that it was the best place to do it. But there were still many doubts because the local public system here was very deficient, extremely deficient, at that time there was even a lack of masks, an absence of alcohol gel. We started making masks together with the Venezuelans themselves, just imagine what we had to do. And then came a solution from *Acolbida*, an action that I had to take and that worried me a lot, the construction of the protection and care area. The care area would be a field hospital and the protection area an isolation area. And why don't we talk about the field hospital's isolation area? We talked here and we saw it, and when we talked about the isolation area, due to the experiences of agencies in other countries, people would even flee, in the case of Ebola and everything, the person felt confined

to death, so we put the protection area, but actually it was an isolation area for suspects and confirmed who did not need a hospital. And the care area, as we did not know how far we were going to be able to actually put a hospital up and running, there were many doubts in this regard. So, on the 17th and on the 21st the field hospital began to be set up and a month later we had 80 beds. And then we started building a much broader field hospital with a firm that was here, with civilians and so on. After a month there were 80 beds. And then came the first question, "Am I going to treat only Venezuelans or am I going to treat Brazilians too?", and I came to the conclusion that it was not possible to treat only Venezuelans because this would further distance Operation *Acolhida* from the population, even if it was not a responsibility. And we sought a partnership, a term of cooperation through the civil house, with the state, with the city hall and with the University, the University here. It was difficult because we knew that June would be the peak of the pandemic, we started to do parallel work raising this, and the first big difficulty I had was to talk about what would be the size of the care area. We thought of 1,200, given the prognosis of the pandemic. We worked hard and in May we closed 786 beds, space for 786, a herculean job with a company here. The city hall did its part, but the State did not honor its share of inputs, because we entered with structure, management and the material part, but the State had to put the personnel and inputs, and it did not honor this. Very difficult, and we were in May and it started to have a huge peak here, the HGR was in deplorable situations, and then with the Ministry of Health, we made a partnership with Sírío-Libanês, Itaú Bank, in which a contribution of input resources came in late May. On June 17, we opened the field hospital and began treating Brazilians and Venezuelans. I had numerous difficulties. On the same day, we had a doctors' strike here – and I would like to record this because this has to go down in history – there was a lack of doctors here and by a court decision, doctors without CRM could work within *Acolhida* and, at the opening day, local doctors abandoned their posts. Look at the difficulty we had. This is already history, that is why I can talk about it. But we moved on. Very difficult, but what matters is that, from June to December, we treated around 6,000 people in the care area, almost 6,000 people, and only 11% Venezuelans, the rest Brazilians. Our covid mortality rate was 3,2%, the field hospital in São Paulo 13%, there was an ICU inside the hospital. So, it worked out really well. Moreover, we also opened a UBS within the protection area in partnership with the city hall, and 7,000 people were treated there. From June to December, we had 13 thousand visits from the general population. We were unable to maintain it and in December we transitioned to the state government. So you can have an idea, we transferred over 220 thousand items to the state, such as a loan for it to work, and so on. Today it is a legacy. And here comes something very important, the structures remained as a legacy, evidently the state had to afford the rent and so on, but it got something ready. And today there is a maternity hospital and a covid back-up hospital. And where the protected area used to be, which was for 1,000 Venezuelans, today we have the Pricumã shelter dedicated to the health vulnerable, together with the health center that we are serving. Within all of this, the *Acolhida* health center emerged, which will be addressed in another conversation. We have improved this service, and it will be another great legacy that

I would like to talk about in another opportunity. We spent about 52 million, more or less, of Federal money within that and, as far as I know, it was the field hospital that most assisted people in Brazil and with the best results rate for the treatment of covid.

Interviewer: General, you mentioned the issue of governance. I want to ask a question regarding governance and especially highlight another Operation, together with Operation *Acolhida*, which is Operation Controle. Perhaps in this question you will be able to deepen the issue of governance and change, as you have already signaled in this issue of reorganization. But basically, to provide this humanitarian aid, the welcoming, the internalization and the security of the border, in addition to the reordering, the very security and monitoring of this border, that actually requires a great articulation with Operation Controle. That is, Operation *Acolhida* going hand in hand with Operation Controle, in addition to various government agencies and entities. You have already mentioned here several ministries that are part of it, civil society organizations, whether national or international, international organizations. How is this governance, this integration, and what are the main challenges? What are the main challenges of this articulation, this governance in favor of an integrated border security of Brazilians and this welcoming, this humanitarian aid?

General Barros: I will start here at the operational level and then I will go to the strategic and political. So, at the operational level, the first time I saw the design, I particularly thought it should be different, because we have Operation Controle carried out basically by the brigade here in Selva and we have that today [incomprehensible word: 00:01:57 - Cut 5] linked to the Amazon military command linked to the Ministry of Defense with its typical attributions of border security and we have Operation *Acolhida* with a humanitarian character. Of course they touch each other, and they touch each other particularly when we talk about intelligence because we are dealing with the same human material, with the same problems. I thought there should be a command in quadrant or Controle is under Operation *Acolhida* here and today I am totally against that initial idea of mine. Totally against and I will explain why: they are completely different actions, we cannot mix humanitarian action with trivial ostensible typical security of border strip, it will not work well within that. So, I work with legitimacy and legality. My legitimacy, for example, is reinforced when there are several UN institutions working with me and my legitimacy is reinforced when I take a person who is on the street and, even if they sneaked into the country, I do not leave them on the street to avoid collapsing even more, I can do this in terms of Operation *Acolhida* without breaking legality. Operation Controle does not have this purpose. Operation Controle is the security of the border strip, to maintain law and order within the border strip, not only with the brigade, but with all other mechanisms. So, I think this division is very good, it characterizes things very well. Well, of course, those who coordinate and control Operation Controle and Operation *Acolhida* must be in deep coordination and synergy. So, this

I think was also another design that was really good in terms of conduct, to be very specific. Many times people come to ask me, "General, what is being done to bar the unofficial, alternative ways of entry?", and I answer, "This is not my problem, who does this is Operation Controle, my problem is coordinated with Controle and providing a humanitarian solution". For example, it is already very easy within that, when we raise the level of political strategic governance, then we do have committees of ministers that are for macro crises and so on. We will see that in fact this decree is a conduct, it is a federal intervention in the state, in the conduct of the process, if we take a look at the decree, that is what it is. And we have the subcommittee on the border strip, the subcommittee on shelters, on welcoming, on internalization, on health. The operational coordinator is linked to the Civil House. The operational coordinator has the mission to conduct the actions and can connect with the local political authorities of government and state, with the city halls and so on, the operational coordinator can establish terms of cooperation. Of course they have to be linked to the subcommittees and so on. This has positive aspects, but the subcommittees sometimes also have to be very clear what their part is, their part is not management, their part is governance and when this gets mixed up, it causes a lot of distress to the operational coordinator. What is the future? The future is to have only one subcommittee, and this change is being proposed, a subcommittee, in which the operational coordinator is also part of this subcommittee, and no longer 4 or 5 subcommittees, and the council and minister is only triggered in the event of a serious crisis. And then there will be more agility to the political strategic processes, more focus on these subcommittees on governance rather than management, and more strength to the operational coordinator to accelerate the institutional alignments that are needed. Because the biggest challenge I have here is to make institutional alignments, with governmental and non-governmental institutions, in order to respond in a timely manner due to the crisis. So, things are very dynamic here and the operational coordinator has to look for this alignment and give this answer. This, Gustavo, is my main challenge in terms of leadership, in terms of governance and in terms of management.

Interviewer: General, we will now change the focus of the questions to the impacts that Operation *Acolhida* brought, or could bring, in relation to the Brazilian army's doctrine. How do you assess the impact of Operation *Acolhida* on the Brazilian army's doctrine regarding, mainly, actions of border ordering, humanitarian aid, civil-military relations, as you yourself put it, one of the great challenges in terms of governance? What teachings, practices, and actions could the *Acolhida* task force incorporate or have already incorporated into the army's doctrine? Is there a channel for dialogue with the army doctrine center?

General Barros: Yes, undoubtedly. The ground operations command, through its doctrine center, has already done some work on this last year. So, the civil affairs company, for example, is being built based on the experience of Operation *Acolhida*, evidently there are many particularities here. So, this civil affairs doctrine is being greatly strengthened now with Operation *Acolhida*. Yes, the army is taking advantage of this. When we talk about impacts, it is evident

that military operations, whatever their nature, always have the same foundations. You will only change some details in the middle of the planning, but the fundamentals are the same. This is not Haiti here, so if you want to do everything that was done in Haiti here, it will not work. We are in national territory, it is another type of target audience, it is another dynamic of governmental and non-governmental institutional relations, it is another type of exposure to public opinion, and so on. So, there is no point in saying that this is the same, of course Haiti has given a lot of subsidies and it is a success case. And we need to register Haiti in one way and we have to register Operation *Acolhida* in another way. Well, the teachings are the most diverse, so much is the way we do it and that is why recognition comes. The recognition is much more international than national in this aspect, because we have built a way. It is very interesting that many people come here to see how we are doing, for example, how you talked about shelters and not refugee camps, when talking of internalization, when talking of training and various other aspects that we are doing. So, yes, here is a success case, the army is attentive. I think there is a possibility of enormous amplitude for use. Yes, I am absolutely sure, that it is the doctrinal milestone that will improve the doctrines of the Armed Forces.

Interviewer: What are the legacies that Operation *Acolhida* has left for Brazil and for Roraima specifically? Which are the most important, what would you highlight in terms of legacy?

General Barros: We have tangible and intangible legacies. I say that the intangible is to create a methodology, a doctrine, on how to do this within this crisis, this makes us stronger. And this, strategically, I believe is very important because Brazil, due to its geostrategic position, will continue to be a destination for a migration crisis. The migration crisis has always occurred in the history of mankind, it has never ceased to occur, and it is now reaching South America more strongly. So, when we look at Brazil by the connections, by its position, when you look, despite all the problems, the size of our economy, when you look at the geographic diversity, when you look at the diversity of our formation – Look, the what is happening in São Paulo with Bolivians and so on – we are different. So, either we take advantage of this experience that we have and strengthen ourselves to give options in the migratory crisis, or society will suffer. The first intangible legacy is the use within that, because when we give this answer, Brazil has an advanced law in terms of migration, Brazil has mature institutions that can work in different groups, Brazil has a mixed nationality formation, these are all the aspects that lead us to be a reference for this century for that future within the migratory crisis. And that will be very clear if we know how to take advantage of all this experience. Because if I do not do this, in fact, it is not that I am not responding to a migration crisis, it is not just that, I am failing to protect my society because then I do not know who gets in, I do not have an immune barrier against diseases, for example, there are many cases of measles, which is a disease that existed in Brazil, vaccination is needed within that; I no longer know about the violence of trafficking, organized crime, use these people

in the big cities and more misery, more violence will arrive in the big cities. So, it is not just a matter of humanitarian character, it is also a matter of protecting our own society. When we go to tangible aspects, and the crisis shows this, we start to see the state of Roraima, a state with 600 thousand people, 700 thousand people, almost a neighborhood if we compared it to São Paulo, inside of the Amazon, strategic, and it becomes visible. So, we see that the economy of Roraima has benefited from the crisis in this aspect of job creation and so on, it has become the focus of the Federal Government for public policies. And of course some more concrete legacies, I just said today that the state is using the care area as their hospital, in record time in a crisis; we now have the *Acolhida* health center which was the result of the partnership with SÍrio-Libanês, through the leadership of the Ministry of Health, we are going to have a medical residency of SÍrio-Libanês here, the first time in the Amazon and we owe it to *Acolhida*, it will start now in August. A restructuring of the center with tomography has been established, with all the assistance part, because in Pacaraima there is no x-ray, so you can have an idea. So, we are going to have a health center in Pacaraima and a health center in Boa Vista. We have already attended more than 56 thousand visits from November so far, all the epidemiological control of covid testing is being done by the health center. So, the health center is already being and will be another very strong legacy within that. Well, I will stop here, talking about the economic aspects that the region has been benefiting from and the structure, in this case, linked to health, of course, which will already be for the State, in addition to learning, several universities here, for example, are doing several courses and taking the cases of Operation *Acolhida*.

Interviewer: And we wanted, let's say, also for you to reflect and bring your thoughts on the future of Operation *Acolhida*. What are your impressions? What are your expectations, in terms of the development of Operation *Acolhida* for this period of 2021 and for the coming years?

General Barros: Well, Operation *Acolhida* is always in a process of maturity, as we talked about. Improving, reinventing itself, as we had the APC, as the health center, as we talked about internalization. So, some aspects when we talk about it in a more holistic way, this crisis started in 2018 here, with two presidential decrees, we are in the third year going to the fourth. And the Armed Forces have over 600 military here, and there is no representation from other Ministries here, there is only one Ministry of Citizenship. So, what model do we want? Are the Armed Forces going to be taking care of a humanitarian crisis? This draws a lot of attention in the world, that is, you have the Armed Forces effectively taking care of a humanitarian crisis under the coordination of a general, they do not understand how we manage to do this, but that is where our positive side comes from. But the Armed Forces are not supposed to remain forever in a situation like this, as we have Operation Pipa, which has been distributing water for 20 years. In this aspect, the restructuring of Operation *Acolhida* is being worked on, without ever compromising Operation *Acolhida*. So, we are, for example, hiring people for positions that are not essential in the management, we are with trading floors in this sense, we think of a way

to do it, for us to leave 650 military troops to fall by half even now in December, without compromising the Operation in the first step: the creation of a management unit, see, I did not have a management unit here, they used army management units. So, the creation of a management unit that is being done; the relocation of the base, for us to remove the base from within a military structure, this is also being done on a trading floor, it will be in an area here in Boa Vista where we will put all agencies, all people in the same environment, but it is not going to be in the military area anymore, just for us to untie it within that; the improvement of internalization itself, as we were talking about and I passed very quickly, and that is very important; the consolidation of the health center that is being consolidated within that, within this governance. It has a CNPJ, it has a CNES which is its record. Integrated with the SUS to serve Brazilians as well, we are waiting for this to serve Brazilians within that legacy we talked about, which previously was only Venezuelans. Look at this, this has to consolidate; and the PID *Acolhida* in which it is actually every part of information technology with welcoming process that is very important. Look, before we used data from several partners, this cannot happen. We have to have a single database, this database has to be from the Brazilian state and the Brazilian government, and we started with something, warrant officer and I, behind *Acolhida*, something very simplistic. Now we are on another level as a database and we are implementing it. And why do we say PID *Acolhida*? Because it is not only a welcoming, it is digital identification of beneficiaries inside the shelters, tracking of these personnel, for example, the hospital care itself, everything digitized within that. So, PID *Acolhida* goes there. See, these are very important aspects that are providing a different appearance, I could talk about the demilitarization of Operation *Acolhida* in this sense without compromising. This is already happening and this will be consolidated a lot next year. The next step would be the transition of governance and this is more complicated, who takes the place of the General? Who takes the place of staff decision makers? We have a plan for this to involve the ministries, but that would be another step a little more complex and I do not think it will come out that soon, but at some point, it will have to. And all this without losing the quality of the Operation, see that it is a very big challenge. So, the tendency is to improve, restructure the Operation in these various aspects, reducing the military personnel within that and making a transition to contracted services, and in the second moment making a transition of governance. Would the final state be without military? Of course not, because as we have 12 ministries, the MD is part of it, so I would have to make a contribution, but it cannot be like we all are now, we are just military, conducting this whole Operation. So, this is the future. And why is Operation *Acolhida* working? There are three important factors, first, we have a legal basis within migration that is inclusive, not every country has this; second, institutional maturity of governments. See, the decree was in the previous government, the government was changed and Operation *Acolhida* was maintained, this is a governmental institutional maturity; and the third is our nationality, our formation of nationality, how we are as Brazilians. We are mixed, of course we have problems, so we are in essence a welcoming people. Our formation was that of miscegenation. So, when we go to the legal basis, to the basis of institutional maturity and in our essence of our nationality, is when we can build this solution that obviously

has to continue to be worked on, this is an extremely important aspect. Another aspect that I want to emphasize is the participation of the Armed Forces. Our Armed Forces exist to serve their people. Each armed force has a specificity, we are not English, German and American, we are Brazilian. And, fortunately, in the formation of our Armed Forces, in the strengthening of our nationality, particularly from the 19th century onwards, after the Paraguayan War, we have been molding ourselves within that. A very strong Portuguese legacy in which the Armed Forces did everything in the small country and that was out there in the world looking for advanced technology, but with a small armed force, they used the Armed Forces and the Church. We took this in a certain way and that is why we are very involved in national development, and why the Brazilian army has a strong arm, a friendly hand, this is our DNA, I am talking about the case of the army. And then specifically, when these crises come, the Armed Forces are called because we are a differential in terms of that. What is the big challenge? We do not replace institutions that have an obligation to do. So, Operation *Acolbida* is having this success for having these factors, but also for the state of readiness that we have in terms of the Armed Forces, but we also have to think a lot so that the Armed Forces are not replacing all the institutions that have obligations to do. The migration crisis is something that is happening and will continue happening here in the 21st century, involving our Brazil. That is what I had to say.

