

Scientific Journal of

Applied Social and Clinical Science

ISSN 2764-2216

vol. 5, n. 12, 2025

... **ARTICLE 3**

Data de Aceite: 21/11/2025

MOUNTED POLICING IN SANTARÉM, PARÁ: AN ANALYSIS OF THE ROLE OF THE CAVALRY IN OVERT POLICING, CRIME PREVENTION, EVENT CONTROL, AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH IN THE AMAZON



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Abstract: Mounted policing is a strategic alternative for crowd control at large events and places with large gatherings of people. In this way, the Military Police carries out its activities to combat and prevent crime through the dynamic exercise of police power with the use of discretionary power against abuses of individual rights to the detriment of the community. To this end, the corporation uses its resources to maintain order. Thus, Ostensive Mounted Policing emerges as one of the policing modalities exercised by the Military Police of the State of Pará, with the characteristics and properties essential for employment on horseback, whether in policing missions or in civil disturbance control operations. This paper reports on the circumstances in which mounted policing is essential both preventively and for crowd control during Military Police Operations, demonstrating its great importance in preserving public order in Santarém, Pará.

Keywords: Public Safety, Mounted Policing, Military Police, Santarém - Pará

Introduction

Mounted policing is a form of complementary policing, as an ostensive police activity with great preventive capacity, but which also has repressive characteristics as an excellent riot squad. The characteristics of mounted policing give it a unique position in the planning and execution of ostensive policing (BACHUR, 2023). In actions to maintain public order and security, particularly in densely populated urban areas, horse patrols are undoubtedly a major strategic element employed by the Military Police of the State of Pará to reduce crime

rates in situations where the sense of public safety has been shaken and to maintain public order in special situations.

The Cavalry of the 2nd BME (2nd Special Missions Battalion) of the Military Police of the State of Pará plays a strategic role in Santarém, acting with animals trained for urban and difficult-to-access environments, acting in an ostensive and strategic manner, standing out in the policing of large events. The presence of mounted troops at soccer fields, popular demonstrations, and cultural festivities, such as Sairé, ensures crowd control and the maintenance of public order (AGENCIA PARÁ, 2023). In addition, horses allow for the coverage of large areas and places that are difficult to access, such as alleys and flooded areas, where motorized or foot patrols encounter difficulties. Another important factor is the psychological effect and visibility: the presence of police on horseback creates a greater sense of security, commands respect, and facilitates closer contact with the population, contributing to a positive image of the police.

Methodology

The methodology used to prepare this article was bibliographic research, which has been a widely used procedure in exploratory-descriptive works, delimiting the universe in the areas of operation of Mounted Policing in the State of Pará and other articles with similarities to the proposal presented here, in order to observe and compare results. *On-site* observation and experience as members of the troop were fundamental in guiding the conclusions.

Results and Discussion

Environmentally positive, low-cost, and effective for public safety, the use of horses in combating crime is a reality in Santarém, Pará. In a strategic and humane manner, the entire process of handling offered to the animals follows environmental specifications free of pollutants. This is a form of strategic policing, especially at large events, such as soccer fields and civil disturbance control. The cavalry plays a decisive role in maintaining public order. Among its characteristics are ostentation, field of vision, psychological effect, repressive power, flexibility, and economy of personnel. For BACHUR (2023), mounted policing is an ostensive process that exclusively uses horses as a means of transportation. This process, which employs animals, offers better mobility, greater presence, and provides an excellent view of the environment, given the position of the rider and, above all, the psychological effect caused by the horse, aiming to maintain public order through its routine use or to restore it through repressive actions or civil disturbance control actions (MINAS GERAIS, 1981, p. 137). The cavalry's action strategies in Santarém involve:

- Daily training of animals: Horses receive handling, bathing, and veterinary care, as well as specific training to deal with situations such as civil disturbances.
- Selection of areas of operation: Mounted policing is directed to locations indicated by analyses of criminal incidents and specific times of greatest risk.
- Support in special missions: Horses assist in mounted riot control opera-

tions and repossession activities, increasing the efficiency of the police force.

This type of ostensive policing is, in fact, a process that uses horses as a means of transportation in order to meet the basic security needs inherent to any member of society (GUIMARÃES apud RODRIGUES; ZARONTONELLI, 1994); “Mounted policing is efficient and effective in the field of public safety, in such a way that it has led to a significant reduction in crime rates due to its eminently preventive action” (GUIMARÃES apud RODRIGUES; ZARONTONELLI, 1994, p.19). In Santarém, the presence of mounted police in areas considered to have high crime rates has been fundamental to reducing crimes such as theft, robbery, and homicide, according to residents’ reports, and communities in general feel safer with cavalry patrols.

In repossession operations in Santarém, the use of horses gives mounted police officers a wider field of vision. The presence of the animal, the first level of mounted force, allows police officers to see and be seen from a distance. With law enforcement officers standing at an average height of 2.0 meters above the ground, it is possible to ensure greater visibility. BACHUR (2023) reports that another important factor is the horse’s ability to quickly cover a large policing area, and if necessary, this mobility can be increased by trotting and, exceptionally, galloping, depending on the terrain. This results in considerable savings in manpower to cover larger areas with large crowds of people. This mobility has proven effective in the use of mounted platoons at large events, where there is a large concentration of people and the use of a deterrent force is necessary.

SARTÓRIO (2005) states that because the animal does not depend on standard access routes to move around, it can be used on any terrain, including those where it is difficult for vehicles or even people on foot to move around. They can be employed in any area, moving easily to a wide variety of locations without getting stuck in traffic jams or large crowds, where police officers on foot would easily disappear among the local public. The psychological factor is also one of the most important characteristics of this type of policing. Because the animal is strong, it commands respect from people, and its presence is a factor in the greater success of preventive and repressive actions. Despite the respect it commands, it does not scare away children and good people, who approach the pair (horse and rider) out of curiosity and sympathy for the animal, which is docile and atypical in the modern city setting.

In the state of Pará, the Military Police uses horses in its Cavalry as human and environmental resources with environmentally friendly practices: the animals are fed with feed and their manure can be reused in community gardens, avoiding polluting waste. This approach reinforces the humanized aspect of policing and contributes to social and therapeutic programs, such as equine therapy, benefiting children and adults with special needs. For a medium-sized city in the interior of the Amazon, the potential benefits of the horse-mounted troop in Santarém include contributing to crime prevention (SWINDELL, 2007, p. 3), through community policing, increasing the population’s sense of security, and strengthening community relations (ROTH, 1998, p. 718). Other potential benefits include the visibility of the military and the ability of

citizens to see them for longer periods of time and over a larger area (SWINDELL, 2007, p. 10), the patrol radius, which is greater than that of foot patrols and more environmentally friendly and economical than motorized patrols (SWINDELL, 2007, p. 10), the ability to reach places inaccessible to vehicles, and the empathy it generates in citizens while also demonstrating strength.

Conclusions

The horse herd in Santarém currently numbers 29 horses, comprising the strategic policing service in the interior of the state. The police officers who work with these animals are highly trained and form a bond of trust that is essential for safe and effective operations. Mounted Policing in Santarém has proven capable of carrying out the entire process of ostensive policing within communities, whether supporting foot patrols to preserve public safety through preventive action or being supported in restoring order through repressive action, used as a tactical alternative in controlling civil disturbances. We conclude that the cavalry in Santarém combines mobility, flexibility, and community presence, reinforcing security at events, in public areas, and in areas that are difficult to access, while promoting environmentally sustainable and humanized policing.

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