

Brazil moves to combat 'crack epidemic'

December 7 2011

The Brazilian government on Wednesday launched a war on what it called a "crack epidemic", including medical treatment for addicts and a crackdown on trafficking, particularly in border areas.

"We are facing a crack epidemic in our country," [Health Minister Alexandre Padilha](#), flanked by President Dilma Rousseff and other officials, said in Brasilia.

Between 2003 and 2011, the number of cases of "chemical dependency" in Brazil has increased tenfold, hitting groups and regions which previously had not been affected, Padilha added, without giving further details.

The government reacted with a \$2.2 billion plan focusing on prevention, care and repression, said Rousseff.

The plan involves medical care for addicts, a [crackdown](#) on cocaine trafficking from the border areas to the cities and a legal reform to quickly destroy confiscated drugs to prevent their diversion, officials said.

There will be "repression without complacency" said Rousseff, recalling the deployment of 6,500 troops since November 23 in the border areas to combat drug and arms trafficking.

A [defense ministry](#) official recently told AFP that the governments of neighboring Bolivia, Peru and Paraguay were given advance notice of

the troop deployment.

Brazil, with a population of 191 million, shares borders with Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, Colombia, Suriname, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela as well as with [French Guiana](#).

A study by the National Confederation of Municipalities showed that crack has replaced [alcohol consumption](#) in most Brazilian cities and towns due to "the easy access to the drug and the low cost," less than five reals or \$2.85.

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