



Participação do Jorge Bitar Neto, proprietário da Helimarte Táxi Aéreo, no Programa Urban Planet, na rede CNN, no dia 08 de abril de 2010.

Tema: Rich fight Brazil's congestion with helicopters

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By **Rafael Romo**, CNN

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Sao Paulo, Brazil (CNN) -- Commuter battle lines in one of Brazil's biggest cities are drawn on the ground, underground and also, in the air.

In Sao Paulo's urban sprawl, 6 million vehicles compete for every meter of roadway, beneath the surface 6 million of the city's 20 million people get around in a subway system apparently designed for a much smaller city.

And in the air, the rich have adopted helicopters to slash commute times to just a few minutes.

Like a soldier about to go into battle, Anderson Silva is getting ready for a new day and another fight -- on the roadways.

He puts on his helmet, grabs his backpack, and hops on his bike, making it roar as he grips the throttle and twists it.

Silva works as a motorcycle messenger in Sao Paulo; a sprawling metropolis and a traffic nightmare.

"Traffic in [Sao Paulo](#) is very chaotic and there are many accidents every day," said Silva as he took off from a motorcycle storage lot located at the basement of a high-rise building in south central Sao Paulo.

To say that he risks his life doing his job every day is not an exaggeration. He zips between cars stuck in traffic, through spaces just big enough for him and his motorcycle, at high rates of speed.

People here call motorcycle messengers "cachorros locos," Portuguese for "mad dogs" and it's easy to see why. They ride their motorcycles on any portion of the road not big enough for a car, including shoulders, emergency lanes, and the space between cars in the middle of highways.

"I'm a little afraid, a little," said Silva with an uneasy smile. "I have already suffered [accidents](#). One of them was serious. I was out of commission for six months and had to undergo surgery."

Motorcycle messengers perform one of the most dangerous jobs in Sao Paulo -- one or two "cachorros locos" die every day.

But their services are always in high demand by all kinds of companies. Motorcycle messengers are seen as essential for transporting items quickly through the city's traffic-clogged streets.

Whatever the time, the chances of getting stuck in a traffic jam are good and it's not unusual for people to spend three or four hours driving to and from work.

Getting around underground is also a problem.

"All day is like this, crowded, very crowded; all day, every day," said Celso Prado, who uses the subway daily to get his downtown office.

Sao Paulo is making significant investments when it comes to public transportation. The subway system, which is 62 kilometers long (38 miles), is expected to be extended to 80 kilometers (50 miles) by the end of the year.

It can't come fast enough for Bruna Alvarez, a college student, who complained there was no option. She's thought about buying a car, but "the streets are very congested." Officials are also working to improve and maintain highways.

Sao Paulo University professor Jaime Waisman, an urban planner and transportation engineer, said the city is adding cars at a rate of 1,000 a day.

“All day is like this, crowded, very crowded”

--Celso Prado

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