

The New York Times

Green

A Blog About Energy and the Environment

FEBRUARY 3, 2011, 8:21 AM

Isolated Amazon Tribes Threatened by Logging, Groups Say

By *JOHN COLLINS RUDOLF*

Brazilian officials have [released](#) new aerial photographs of a highly isolated tribe living deep in the Amazon rainforest in a bid to draw attention to the threat posed to its existence by illegal logging in neighboring Peru.

This is the second time the tribe has been photographed by Brazil's Indian Affairs department. In 2008, images of tribe members shooting arrows at an airplane quickly circulated the globe and were characterized by some of the news media as evidence of a "lost" Amazon tribe, although the Brazilian authorities said they had long been aware of the presence of uncontacted tribes in the area.

Some advocates called the new images necessary to remind the world of the existence of highly isolated tribes in the region. For years, the Peruvian government has [denied their presence](#) on their side of the border and pushed ahead with oil exploration in remote jungles where some scientists say uncontacted tribes still exist.

"It is necessary to reaffirm that these peoples exist, so we support the use of images that prove these facts," said Marcos Apurina, an advocate for indigenous rights in Brazil, according to a statement by Survival International, which released the images of the tribe.

Other experts called further interference with the tribe unnecessary.

"I think enough is enough when it comes to photographing this particular group," said Chris Fagan, executive director of the [Upper Amazon Conservancy](#), a nonprofit group active in the region. "I think it's time to leave them alone and focus on the logging issue."

The people depicted in the photographs are assumed to be the descendants of tribes that fled deep into the forest to avoid the atrocities of a "rubber boom" in the region roughly a hundred years ago, when many native people were killed or forced into slavery to feed the Western appetite for rubber.

Conclusive proof that these isolated tribes are being directly impacted by illegal logging and other development is elusive, as many of the tribes violently resist contact by outsiders. But a series of overflights by the Upper Amazon Conservancy last year revealed illegal logging in

protected areas in Peru set aside for the tribes.

Stephen Corry, director of Survival International, said that logging in Peru was driving isolated tribes over the border into Brazil, leading to conflict over resources and territory with existing indigenous people in the area. "This area is now at real risk," Mr. Corry said in a statement.

Brazil recently banned the export of mahogany, leaving Peru one of a dwindling number of countries able to supply the world market with the highly sought-after wood, and driving loggers ever deeper into the forest to find commercially valuable trees.

"It's one of the rarest timber species left in the world," Mr. Fagan said. "It's extremely valuable, this stuff."