

Photos released to protect endangered Amazonians

January 31 2011



Undated handout picture released by Survival International of what they say are uncontacted Indians seen from a Brazilian government's observation aircraft in the Brazilian Amazon forest, near the border with Peru. Brazil has allowed the release of rare photographs of Amazonian natives to bring attention to the plight of indigenous people who rights groups say are faced with possible extinction.

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The astonishing images, showing curious adults and children peering skyward with their faces dyed reddish-orange and toting bows, arrows

and spears, were taken by Brazil's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI).

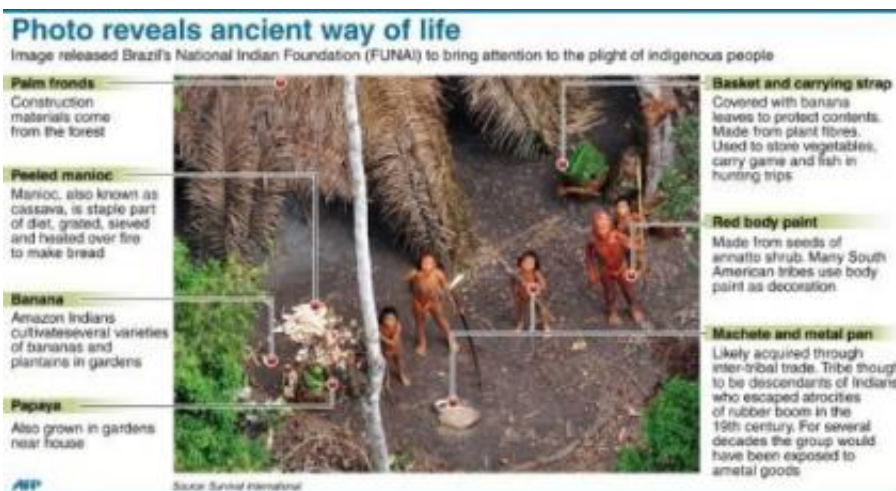
Rights group Survival International, which accompanied the government agency on the overflight near the Brazil-Peru border, said their baskets were full of papaya and manioc grown in a communal garden.

"Illegal loggers will destroy this indigenous people. It is essential that the Peruvian government stop them before it is too late," warned Survival's director Stephen Corry.

FUNAI has released similar photographs in the past and acknowledged that Peruvian loggers are sending some natives fleeing across the border to less-affected rainforests in [Brazil](#).

The coordinator of Brazil's [Amazon](#) Indian organization COIAB, Marcos Apurina, said he hoped the images would draw attention to the plight of the indigenous peoples and encourage their protection.

"It is necessary to reaffirm that these peoples exist, so we support the use of images that prove these facts. These peoples have had their most fundamental rights, particularly their right to life, ignored -- it is therefore crucial that we protect them," he said.



Graphic on an Amazonian tribe featured in a set of photographs released by Brazil to bring attention to the plight of indigenous people struggling to survive as logging threatens their way of life.

FUNAI says there are 67 tribes in Brazil that do not have sustained contact with the outside world. Some are often referred to as "uncontacted" tribes even though they have some kind of, albeit limited, contacts.

A year ago, rights groups sent a letter to then president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva voicing concern that the very survival of indigenous groups was under threat.

Brazil's latest census counted more than 500,000 indigenous people among more than 190 million Brazilians. Millions in the country, however, have some indigenous ancestry.

Most indigenous people in the Americas descend from Asian people who crossed a land bridge from Siberia, an estimated 13,000-17,000 years ago. One notable exception: the indigenous people on Chile's Easter island, in the Pacific, are ethnic (Rapa Nui) Polynesians.

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