

Brazil government identifies uncontacted tribe

June 22 2011, By JULIANA BARBASSA , Associated Press

(AP) -- The Brazilian government confirmed this week the existence of an uncontacted tribe in a southwestern area of the Amazon rain forest.

Three large clearings in the area had been identified by satellite, but the population's existence was only verified after airplane expeditions in April gathered more data, the National Indian Foundation said in a news release Monday.

The government agency, known by its Portuguese acronym Funai, uses airplanes to avoid disrupting isolated groups. Brazil has a policy of not contacting such tribes but working to prevent the invasion of their land to preserve their autonomy. Funai estimates 68 isolated populations live in the Amazon.

The most recently identified tribe, estimated at around 200 individuals, live in four large, straw-roofed buildings and grow corn, [bananas](#), peanuts and other crops. According to Funai, preliminary observation indicates the population likely belongs to the pano language group, which extends from the [Brazilian Amazon](#) into the Peruvian and Bolivian jungle.

The community is near the border with Peru in the massive Vale do Javari reservation, which is nearly the size of Portugal and is home to at least 14 uncontacted tribes.

"The work of identifying and protecting isolated groups is part of

Brazilian public policy," said the Funai coordinator for Vale do Javari, Fabricio Amorim, in a statement. "To confirm something like this takes years of methodical work."

The region has a constellation of uncontacted peoples considered the largest in the world, said Amorim. In addition to the 14 known groups, Funai has identified through [satellite images](#) or land excursions up to eight more tribes.

That adds up to a population of about 2,000 individuals in the reservation, Amorim said.

Their culture, and even their survival, is threatened by illegal fishing, hunting, logging and mining in the area, along with [deforestation](#) by farmers, missionary activity and [drug trafficking](#) along Brazil's borders, Amorim said.

Oil exploration in the Peruvian Amazon could also destabilize the region, he said.

In spite of the threats, most of Brazil's indigenous groups maintain their languages and traditions.

Many have long fought for control of land in which they've traditionally lived on. They won legal rights to reclaim that territory in Brazil's 1988 constitution, which declared that all indigenous ancestral lands be demarcated and turned over to tribes within five years.

So far, 11 percent of Brazilian territory and nearly 22 percent of the Amazon has been turned over to such groups.

©2011 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Citation: Brazil government identifies uncontacted tribe (2011, June 22) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-06-brazil-uncontacted-tribe.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.