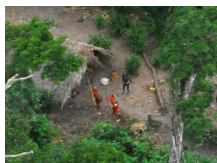


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By: Gabriel Gache, Science News Editor



Two tribe members stand ready to attack the plane passing over them
Associated Press

[One of Earth's Last Uncontacted Tribes Photographed in the Peruvian Rainforest](#)

Anthropologists call for immediate action to protect these tribes from outside interference

These unbelievable pictures taken from an airplane flying over the rainforest separating Brazil from Peru show the members of what is considered to be one of the last uncontacted tribes on Earth. Painted in red, two men with their heads partially shaved stand ready to attack with longbows the unknown object passing above their heads, while a woman painted in black stands behind the two. Unnecessary aggression? Hardly! This may in fact be the first time when they see an airplane, and it is believed that these people never had any contact with the outside modern world. And hopefully, they never will. Their society, language, eating habits, paints and construction skills may never be fully understood, but maybe it's better that we don't try to, otherwise disaster is sure to follow. "We did the overflight to show their houses, to show they are there, to show they exist. This is very important because there are some who doubt their existence," said uncontacted tribe expert Jose Carlos dos Reis Meirelles Junior. Meirelles reveals that he was even injured once by an arrow fired by a member of one of the tribes, although this motivated him to fight even harder for the rights of these people who seem to show a population number increase and are in perfect health condition. The position of the authorities regarding uncontacted tribes is very clear; however, that of illegal loggers is not. As more and more of the rainforest falls victim to logging, these tribes are further pushed towards the Brazilian side where they will eventually come in conflict with other uncontacted tribes. "What is happening in this region of Peru is a monumental crime against the natural world, the tribes, the fauna and is further testimony to the complete irrationality with which we, the 'civilised' ones, treat the world", said Meirelles. Currently there are only a few hundred people living in tribes across the world, people who never had any contact with modern society. They know nothing of us and we know nothing of them, except for a few short encounters. Most of these tribes are located in the South American jungles, New Guinea and on a remote island in the Indian Ocean, known as North Sentinel, and they also expressed aggression when contact attempts were made. And the reaction is understandable. If history has taught us anything, that is that indigenous tribes must be left alone, otherwise people, usually the members of the tribes, might get hurt. And even if there is no conflict between them and the modern world, other dangers lurking around could affect their lives. Disease is one of them; even a common cold could wipe out a whole tribe, since their immune system is not used to fight such viral infections. "These tribes represent the incredible diversity of humankind. Unless we want to condemn yet more of the earth's peoples to extinction, we must respect their choice. Any contact they have with outsiders must happen in their own time and on their own terms. Normally you can tell who tribes are by their language, how they wear their hair, how they adorn their bodies and so on, but in this case the photos don't allow us to get close enough to see", said Miriam Ross of Survival International. "When anthropologists first overflew the area, they saw women and children in the open and no one appeared to be painted. It was only when the plane returned a few hours later that they saw these individuals covered head-to-toe in red. Tribes in the Amazon paint themselves for all kinds of different reasons - one of which includes when they feel threatened or are aggressive", Ross added. They must have thought that the airplane is a spirit of a large bird, says Ross. The jungle is their home, their source of food and culture, and they could not possibly live anywhere other than in the jungle. After all, we might be talking about more than 10,000 years with no outside contact. "These pictures are further evidence that uncontacted tribes

really do exist. The world needs to wake up to this, and ensure that their territory is protected in accordance with international law. Otherwise, they will soon be made extinct", Ross concluded.