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the small world foundation

EXCITING EXPEDITION!!

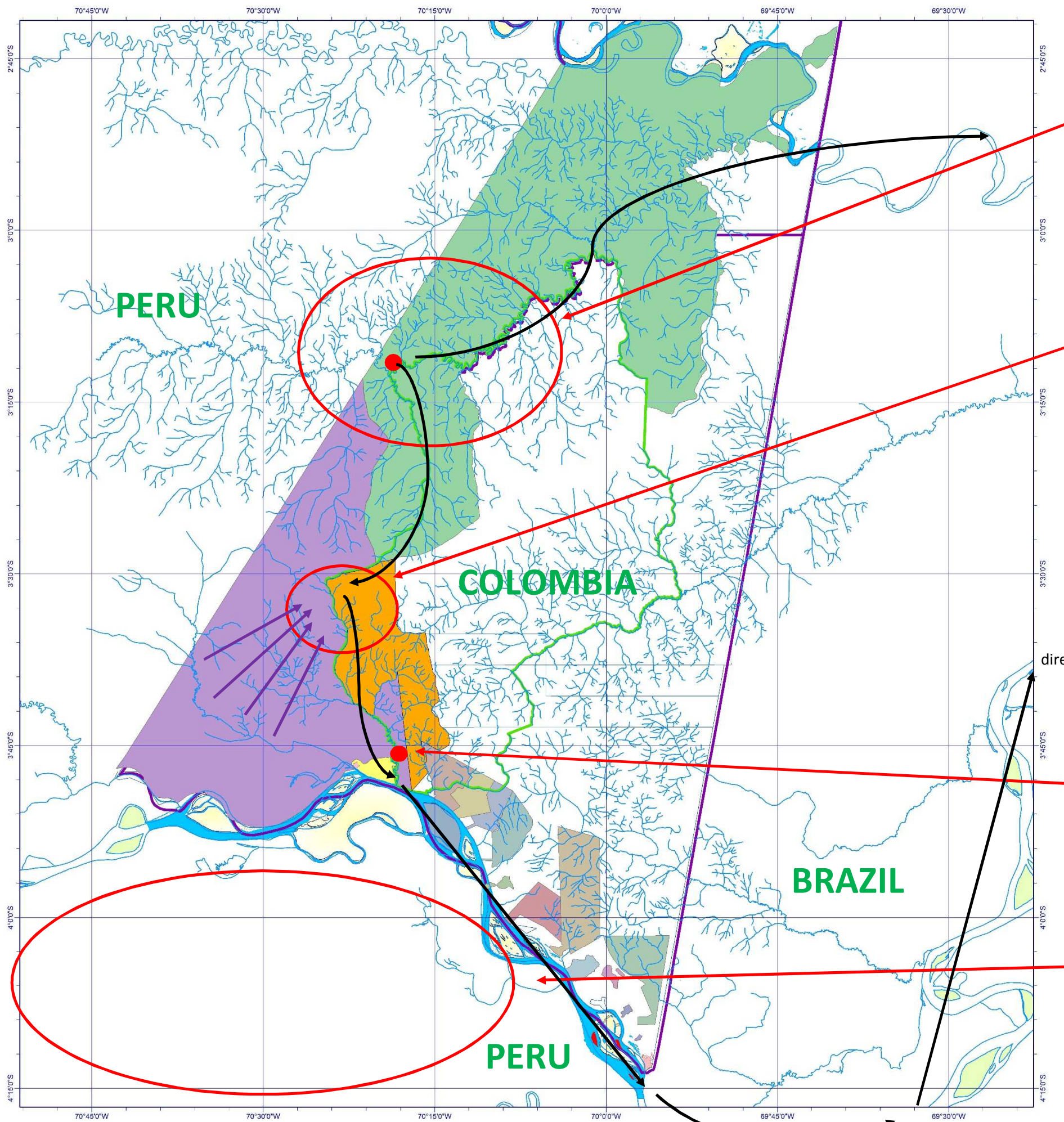
The second large expedition with San Martín's environmental guard was held in April. This guard is a group of people organised with the project "Control of natural resource use in the ancestral lands of San Martín de Amacayacu" supported by the Darrell Posey Small Grant of the International Society of Ethnobiology (www.ethnobiology.net). The destination this time was "Oropel" (check the map on the next page) because there were rumors about the presence of illegal plantations here. Together with an Amacayacu National Park representative, the guard was patrolling for four days. Before leaving they coordinated with the police (photo above left) about what to do in case of emergency.

Eventually, no plantations or mining activity was found around Oropel. However, this does not mean they do not exist: After all, the area is covered with a huge dense rain forest! The guard did find a lot of tracks indicating the regular presence of people: Old camp sites covered with plastic garbage, feathers and bullet shells. At one

location they found some people (photos right) who hid themselves for the guard. Not to incite any dangerous situations, there was no pursuit and just a little chat with the one person who had stayed. This man said they were fishing and looking for rotten trees for compost, but considering the circumstances they were probably active in drug transportation.

The only way for the guard to reach these far away destinations is with the aluminum boat of the Amacayacu National Park. The rivers were covered with fallen trees under which this boat could only just pass (photo above middle). The guard often had to cut out a path with a machete. These expeditions are important to obtain a clear view on the situation in the ancestral lands of San Martín de Amacayacu. All locations were marked with a GPS and can easily be found again later for a follow up. You can see a map on the next page which shows an overall view on the situation.





This circle marks the location of the community of Buenos Aires Cothué (red dot), the illegal gold diggers, coca and marihuana plantations, and laboratories for cocain production. Any control in this kind of areas is very hard because the border to another country is always close as a flight option for the illegal groups. Hardly ever a coordinated bi- or trinational operation is carried out. Corruption also plays an important role.

→ = drugs/gold transport routes

This circle marks "Oropel" and other locations where people are currently (because of the extremely high water levels) dropped off or collected on the way from or to van Buenos Aires. These people are mainly working in illegal activities. Illegal plantations were supposedly present around "Oropel". The circle has a diameter of about ±15km and consists largely of dense rainforest: Like looking for a needle in a haystack. The environmental guard's expedition also seemed to indicate that the people who travel through this area and stay overnight hunt and fish intensively here. People from other communities of the Tikuna Cocama Yagua indigenous reserve also seem to gain access to this area for hunting and fishing. People from San Martin hardly ever to this far away from the community for these activities.

→ = potential hunting routes



direction Manaus

San Martin de Amacayacu

The police sometimes detects a drug transport on the Amazon River. For example, these people were caught with 4,3kg of marihuana coming from San Martin de Amacayacu on February 16th. It is usually these small players of the drug game which end up in jail. Transport is just resumed with other small players.

Since Colombia has reduced coca plantations in its own country, these have just relocated to Peru. As a result, this whole scenario hast just come closer for communities such as San Martin de Amacayacu: Just south of the Amazon River! This circle marks the area where coca and marihuana has been intensively grown for years, and cocaine has been produced. The criminality that comes with this trade has many consequences, such as a large quantity of stolen boats in this area...

GET IT DONE BOAT STOLEN... :(

After many years of dragging this fantastic aluminum Get It Done boat (foto below right) on land after use and locking it to a massive post with a big fat chain, it happend anyway: In the night from April 5th to 6th the boat was stolen (without the engine). The chain had just been cut and no one heard or saw anything. A couple of days later there was some hope. The boat apparently had been spotted in a neighbouring community. After a long nightly search with the national coastguard and police nothing was found at the indicated location. This kind of boats is usually sunk in the extensive flooded forest and later disappear forever to Peru (on the other side of the Amazon River) to send drugs to Manaus (Brazil). The loss of this boat is a heavy blow for the community and for the environmental guard in particular because it was their main form of transport. Compared to a wooden boat, an aluminum boat is very light (faster with less fuel), low maintenance and lies very shallow so even at very low water levels navigation is easy. Especially this last aspect is of importance when the team goes far upriver, see front photos.



The other aluminum community boat, which was bought in 2003 with a project (photo above right almost stolen at the beginning of 2010 – newsletter 31!), has recently been welded for the second time by the SWF. Unfortunately, this boat is often in use for sick people's transport or by San Martin's leaders (*curaca* and companions), when they need to go to Leticia or Puerto Nariño moet for meetings etc. Aluminium boat value: €3500.

Would you like to support the Tikuna indigenous community of San Martin together with the Small World Foundation, and stay in touch about the local developments in this remote corner of Colombia?

Please transfer 15 euro yearly (or more!) to the following bank account in the Netherlands:

Account name: Stichting SMALL WORLD FOUNDATION
SWIFT/BIC Code: RABONL2U
IBAN code: NL28 RABO 0132 7262 03

Or check out the online contribution module on: www.smallworldfoundation.org/?page_id=68

Please DON'T FORGET TO INFORM US ABOUT YOUR NAME AND EMAIL ADDRESS!!
(heike_van_gils@hotmail.com)

The contributions will be spent exclusively on the development and realization of local initiatives in San Martin de Amacayacu in the Colombian Amazon. No wages are being paid to anyone. The expenses will be mentioned as much as possible in the newsletters. For alternative contributions, please contact Heike van Gils at: heike_van_gils@hotmail.com.

For more information about this initiative, please check the website:
www.smallworldfoundation.org.