
DOSSIER

Piripkura:

an indigenous territory being
DESTROYED FOR BEEF PRODUCTION



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Summary

This dossier demonstrates that, even during the worst moments of the Covid-19 pandemic, and despite the recent renewal of the Land Protection Order (Portaria de Restrição de Uso) and a Federal Court ruling, there was no halt or reduction in invasions and deforestation of the Piripkura Indigenous Territory (IT). In fact, they only increased.

Evidence recorded by satellite images and by an overflight show that the cattle ranches and invaders remain in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory, illegally exploiting the natural resources and carrying out commercial activities incompatible with the objectives of protecting and conserving an indigenous territory.

This situation requires urgent measures including inspection and control actions on the ground which are sufficiently robust to put a stop to illegal activities. The most urgent measure needed to safeguard indigenous lives is direct intervention to remove the invaders and prevent another genocide of an uncontacted indigenous people.

Introduction

Covering an area of 230,000 hectares, the Piripkura Indigenous Territory lies between the municipalities of Colniza and Rondolândia in the state of Mato Grosso. Cattle herds freely graze among the recently deforested pasture in the territory. From the overflight it was also possible to see an airstrip, roads, tractors and trucks – common elements of any ranch in the region.

However, the large ranches are spread out over ancestral land which is already occupied. It is the home of Tamandua and Baita, two uncontacted indigenous people. They are among the last known members of the Piripkura indigenous people. Survivors of a massacre by loggers in the 1980s, they face a fierce onslaught of land grabbing in their territory, an oasis of forest amidst the aridity of cattle ranching and monoculture, which should be protected by the state.

This dossier is a diagnosis, but mainly a denunciation of the escalation of invasions, deforestation and forest degradation that the Piripkura Indigenous Territory has been suffering, and which reached an unprecedented level in the last two years. The slashing and burning of vegetation advanced unchecked during the Covid-19 pandemic, coinciding with the imminent end of the Land Protection Order, a legal mechanism that was supposed

to protect the territory and the group of uncontacted indigenous people who live there. However, both regulations and the work of the government's National Indian Foundation (FUNAI) failed to provide protection, and in fact favored invaders and socio-environmental crimes.

The environmental degradation recorded in this territory through satellite images and an overflight carried out at the end of October (25.10.2021), provides evidence of the human rights violations to which these people are subjected. Baita and Tamuandua, the only two known uncontacted Piripkura, live with the threat of the reduction of their territory with the connivance of the state, and in addition, are at risk of Covid-19 infection due to the continued presence of illegal loggers and workers from ranches located in the indigenous territory.

The Piripkura Indigenous Territory is being rapidly transformed into an immense pasture for cattle herds. The measures taken by the Brazilian state to contain the invasion are ineffective and insufficient. The panorama presented in this dossier proves the speed of destruction and warns that if it is not stopped now, the Piripkura Indigenous Territory could lose all its vegetation in a few years. No house, no food, no identity: what will become of the Piripkura?

In this complaint, civil society and indigenous and indigenous organizations set out definitive measures to press the State to take urgent action in the face of negligence and non-compliance with the legal regulations and judicial decisions that should protect the territory. Throu-

ghout 2021, the group of organizations has been working for the Piripkura's right to exist and to guarantee the protection of three other Indigenous Territories where uncontacted peoples live and whose protection orders are about to expire.

This dossier is part of the “Uncontacted or Destroyed” campaign, coordinated by COIAB (Coordinating Body of Indigenous Organizations of the Brazilian Amazon) and OPI (Observatory for the Human Rights of Uncontacted and Recently Contacted Indigenous Peoples), which warns of the risks facing four uncontacted indigenous peoples living in four indigenous territories if the federal government does not take legal action to protect their territories.

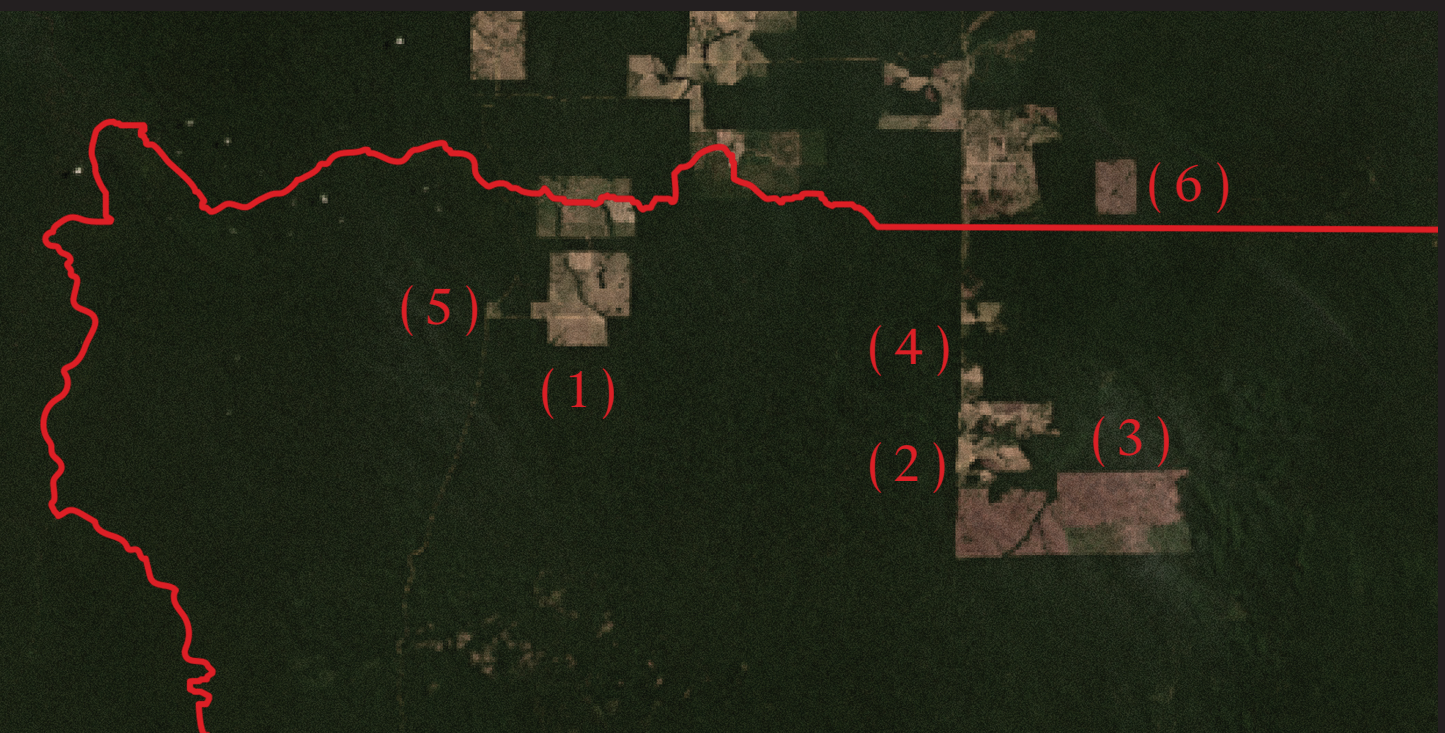
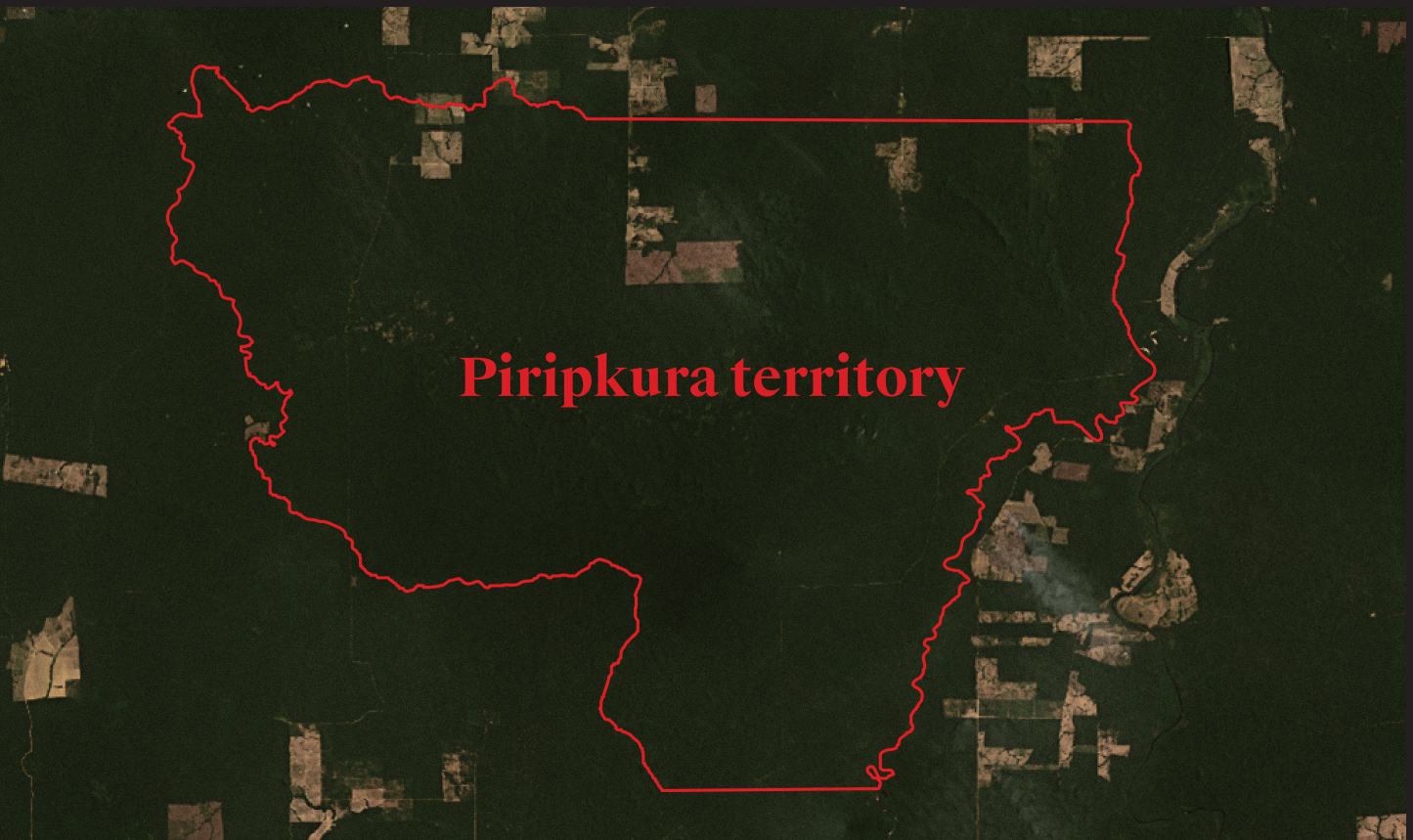
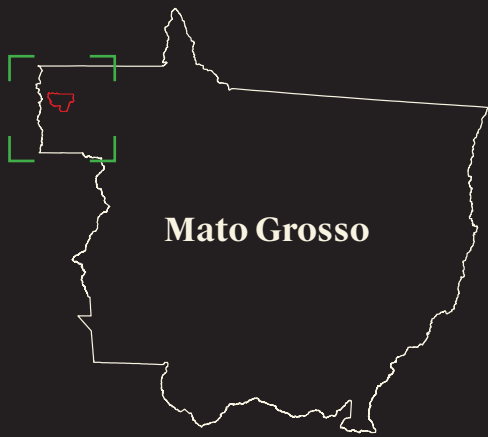
In January 2022, three Indigenous Territories, Pirititi in Roraima state, Jacareúba/Katawixi in Amazonas state and Ituna/Itatá in Pará state which are home to different uncontacted peoples, might no longer be protected, as the legal mechanism that guarantees their survival, the Land Protection Orders (LPOs), will expire. The Piripkura Territory's LPO expires soon after, in March 2022.

The campaign is collecting signatures through a petition to put pressure on FUNAI to renew the Land Protection Orders and move forward with the process of definitive demarcation of these territories.

Sign the petition here.

Key Points

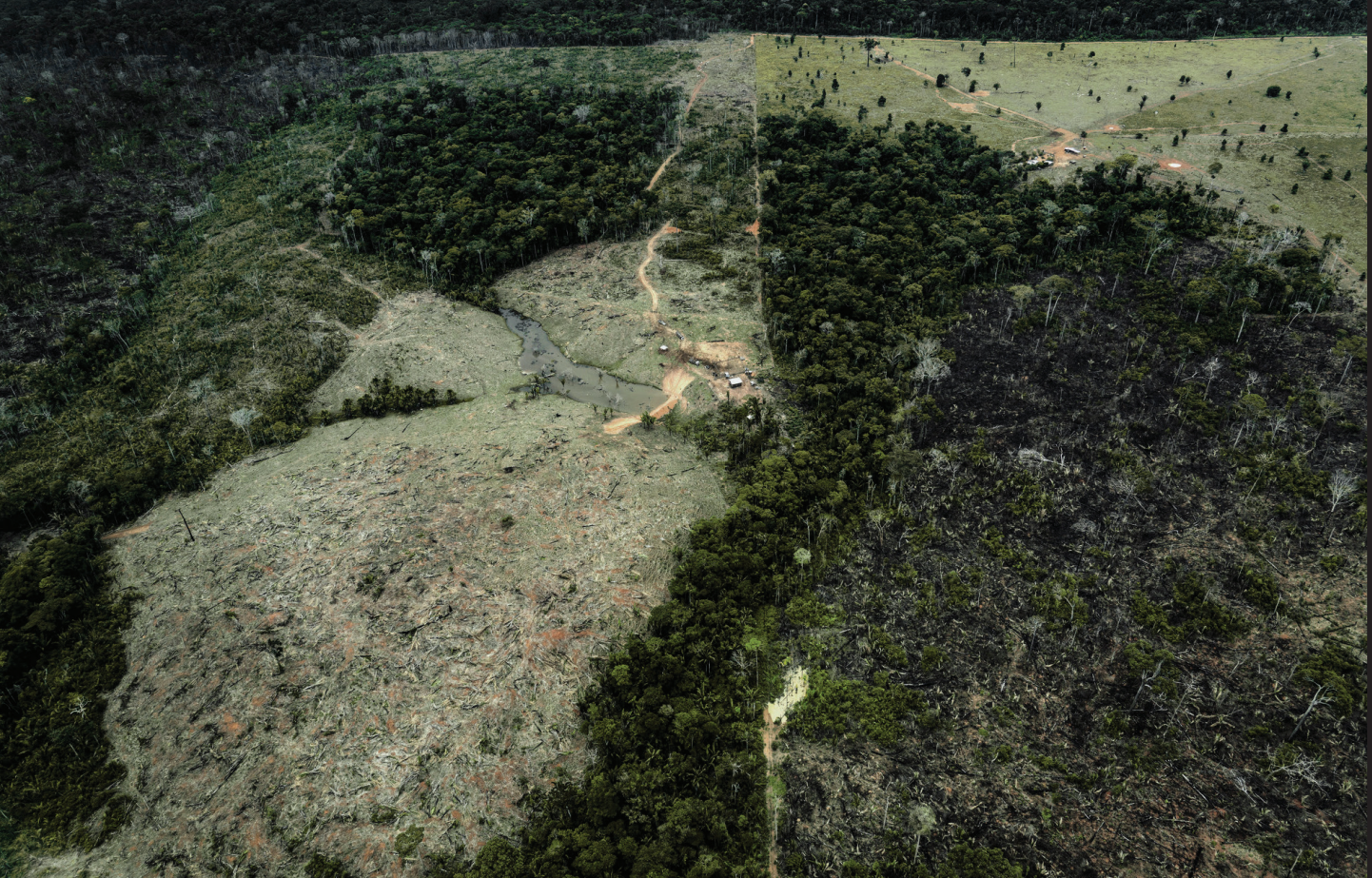
- The overflight was carried out on October 25, 2021 and confirmed the destruction recorded in satellite images. Deforested areas, signs of burning of vegetation and ranches in full operation with investments in infrastructure for illegal livestock activities were verified. The movement of trucks, the occupation of houses, the good condition of the pasture and the presence of cattle herds during the flyover show that the ranches installed in the Indigenous Territory are not at a standstill, but rather they are exploiting the natural resources and carrying out commercial activities;
- The images show that, despite the regulations provided by the Land Protection Orders and court decisions for the demarcation of the Indigenous Territory ordering an immediate halt of invasive activities, there is evidence of fully active ranches within the Piripkura Indigenous Territory, as well as indications that the invaders carried out new deforestation in the area even after the court order to protect the indigenous people was made;





POINT (1) Ranches inside the Piripkura indigenous territory with buildings, fences, pasturelands, cow barns, access roads and landing strips.



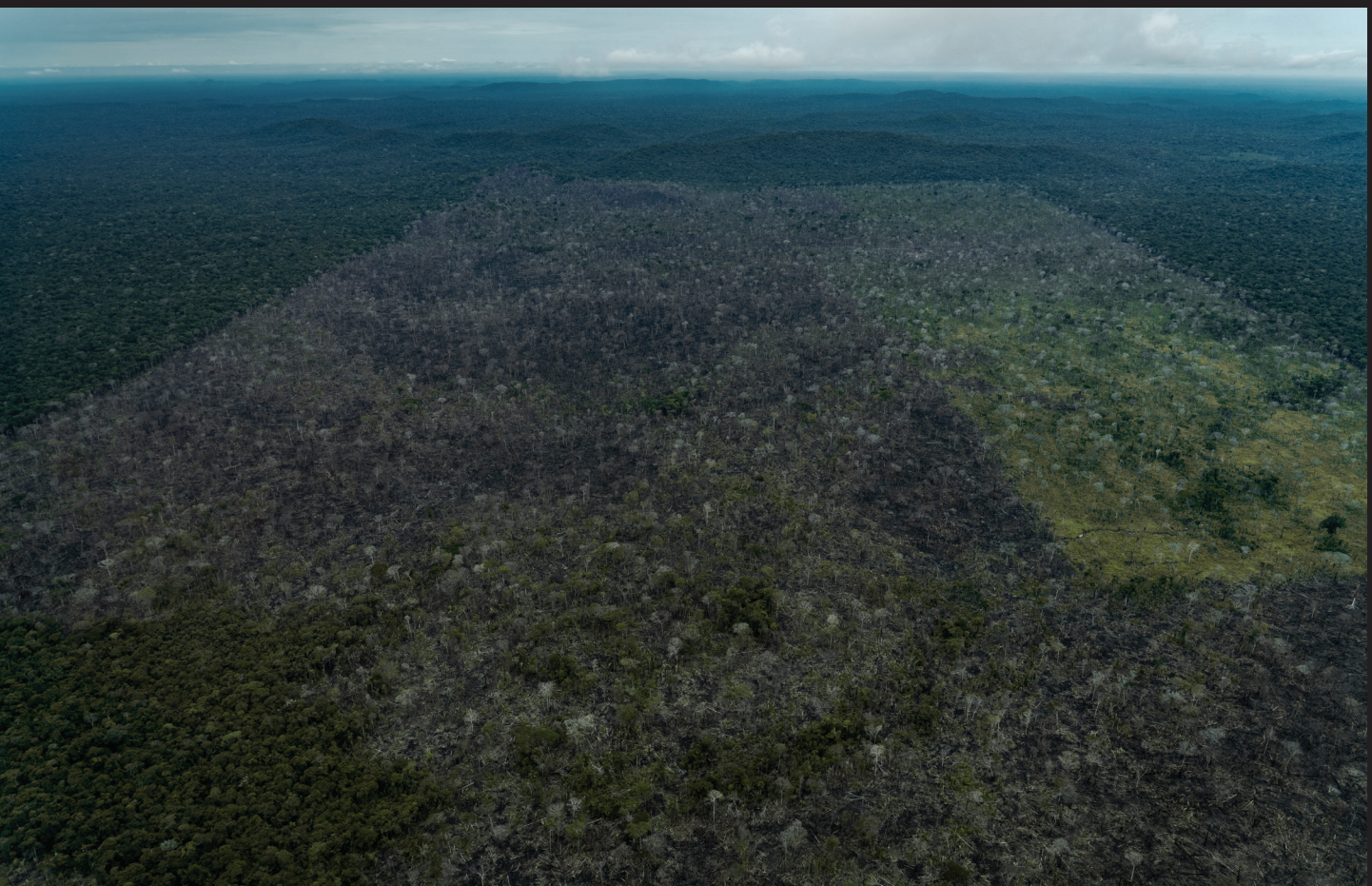


POINT (2) Trucks and bulldozers in operation, and small water troughs, fences, cattle transport infrastructure, cow barns and electricity lines being installed in recently occupied ranch land inside the indigenous territory.





POINT (3) The overflight found that a vast area of 2,361 hectares was deforested in 2020 and 2021, and found evidence of fires and pastureland.





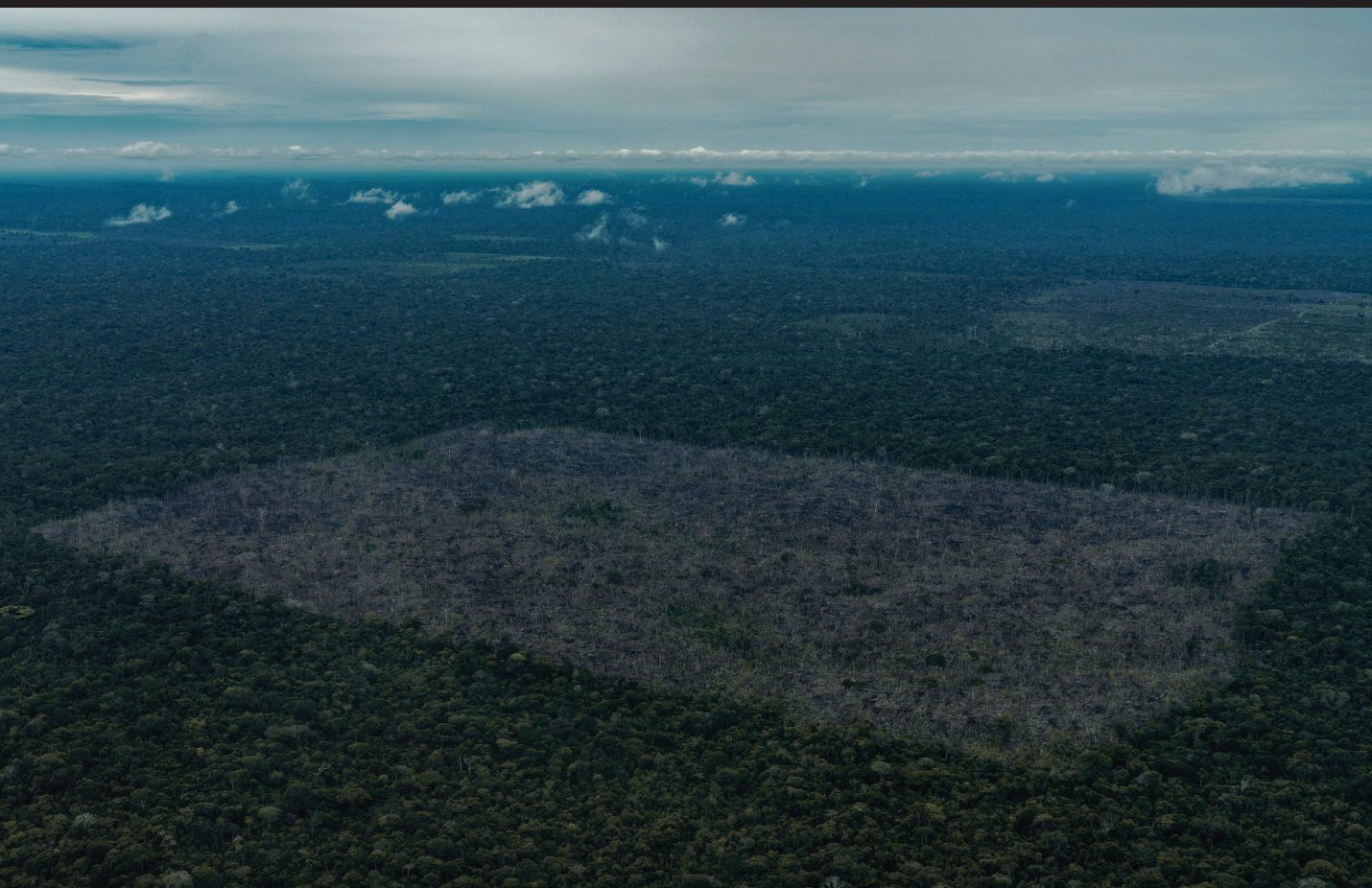
POINT (4) Roads used for transporting cattle and illegally felled wood are in a good state of repair. This indicates that they are being frequently used for commercial activity.



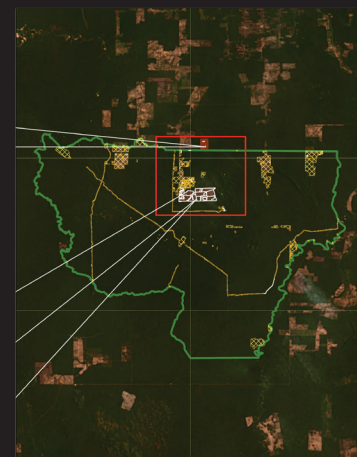
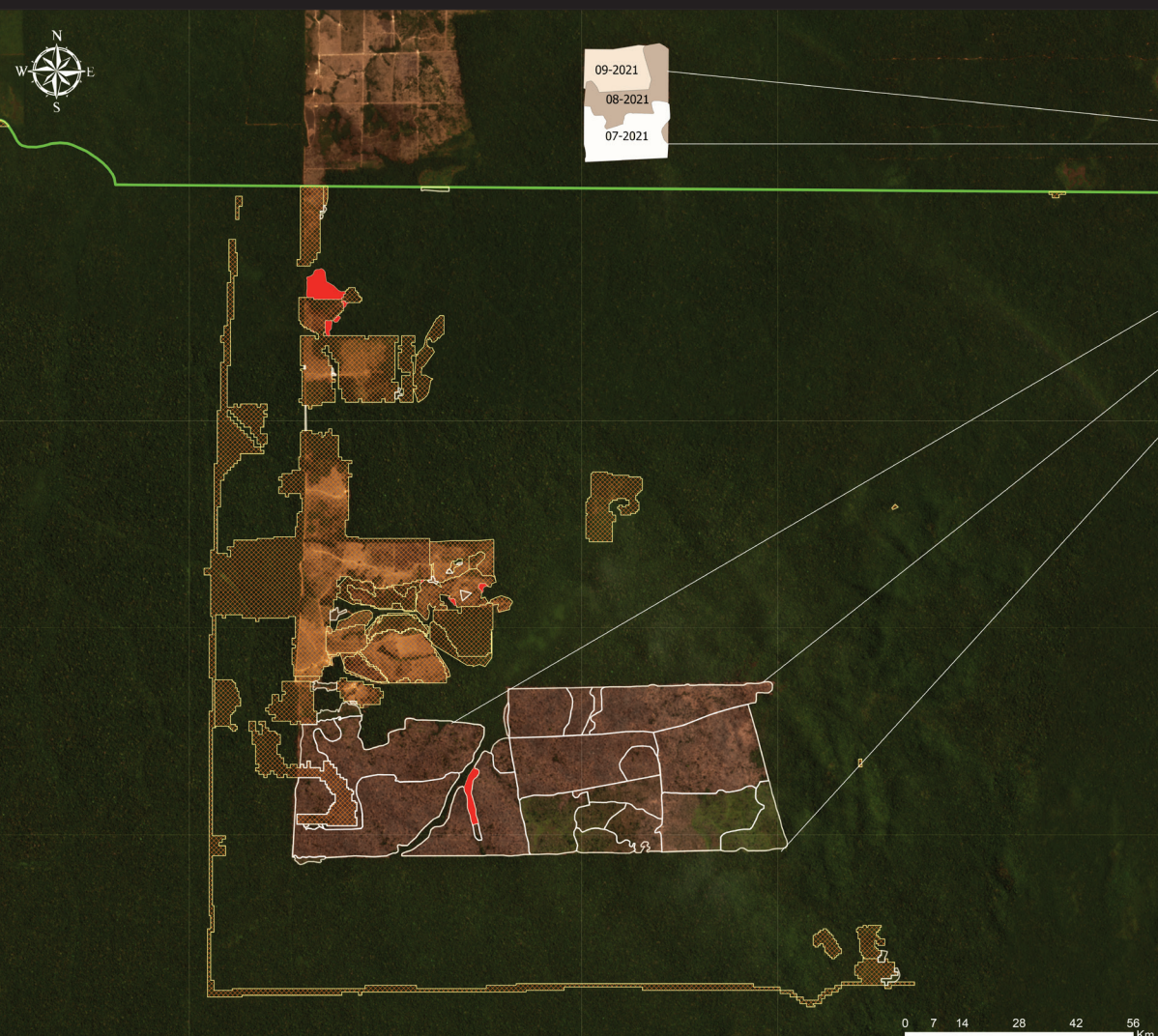


POINT (5) Land deforested between July and September 2021, less than 500 meters from the border of the territory. This deforested area now covers more than 303 hectares.





POINT (6) Pastureland in areas deforested before 2020 is now being expanded. There are signs of fires and of the felling of trees and vegetation.



Deforestation near the IT = 303ha

83.55

98.03

122.3

Deforestation in September = 41.6ha

Total deforested in 13 months = 2,361ha

Accumulated deforestation - PRODES

Piripkura Indigenous Territory

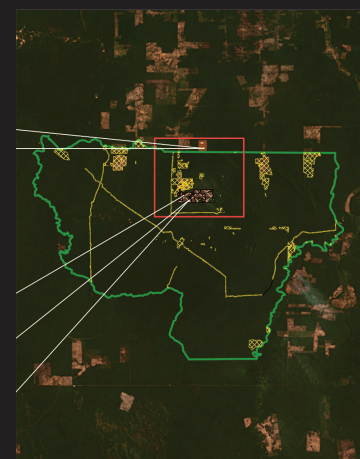
Data: PRODES/INPE

Instituto Socioambiental/ISA

Image: PLANET 09/2021

By October 2021, accumulated deforestation of 12,426 hectares was registered in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory, which is equivalent to more than 7 million felled trees. In the last two years (2020 and 2021), 2,361.50 hectares were deforested.

IMAGE 1 Deforestation in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory. A vast area was destroyed in 2020 and 2021. Source: SIRAD/ISA



Deforestation near the IT = 303ha

83.55

98.03

122.3

Deforestation September = 41.6ha

Deforestation May = 6.2ha

Deforestation April = 286.5ha

Deforestation March = 518.8ha

Deforestation February = 31.4ha

Deforestation January = 375ha

Accumulated deforestation 2020 = 1102ha

Accumulated deforestation- PRODES

Piripkura Indigenous Territory

IMAGE 2 Deforestation in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory. A vast area was destroyed in 2020 and 2021. Source: SIRAD/ISA

- IBAMA (the Brazilian Institute of Environment and Natural Resources) carried out an inspection operation between June 22 and 25, 2021, which resulted in the seizure of equipment and fines. After a short pause in the destruction, new deforestation began less than 500 meters from the Indigenous Territory's boundaries and has already reached 303.80 hectares (Image 2). In addition, new branches of illegal deforestation have spread towards the interior of the Indigenous Territory;
- With the beginning of the dry season, fires also took over the Indigenous Territory. Between 12/07/2021 and 27/09/2021, fires degraded 4,153.2 hectares (Image 3) of the Piripkura Indigenous Territory. Image 4 shows an image from the Sentinel-2 satellite, taken on 20.08.2021, showing illegal fires in the Indigenous Territory;

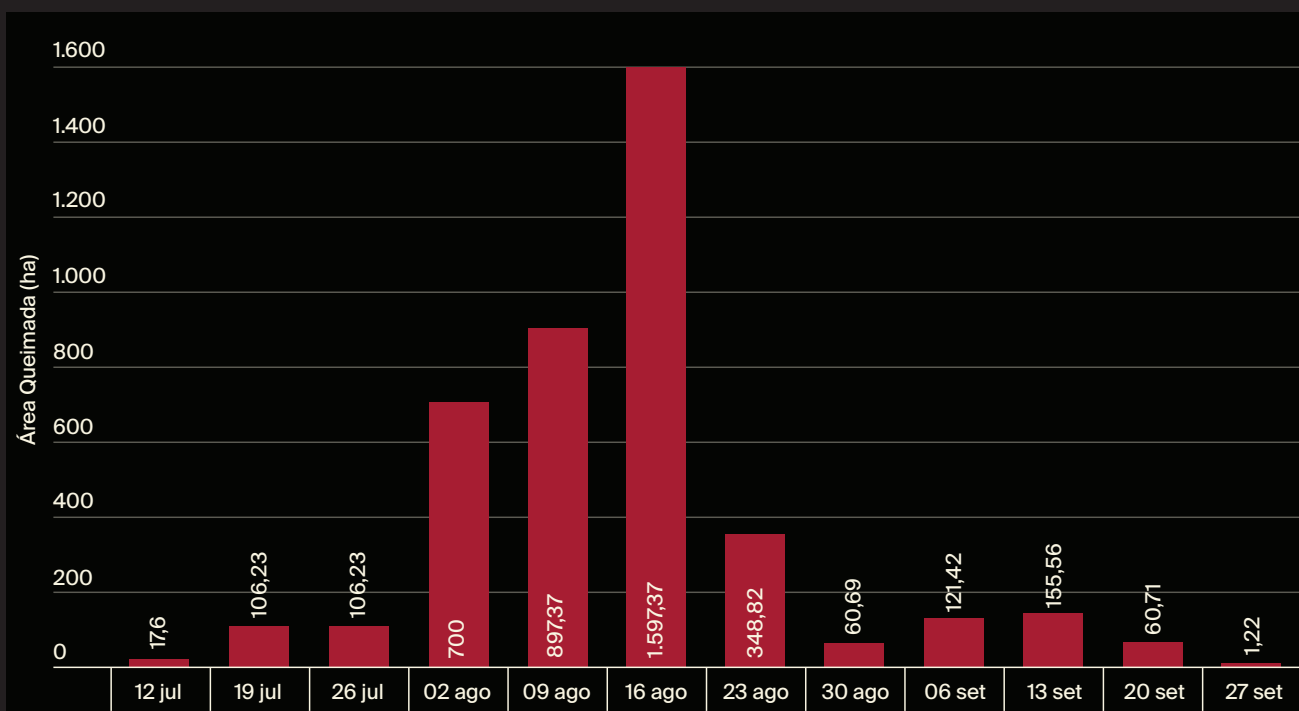


IMAGE 3 Burned area in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory between 12.07.2021 and 27.09.2021. Source: VIIRS Amazon Dashboard/GFED.

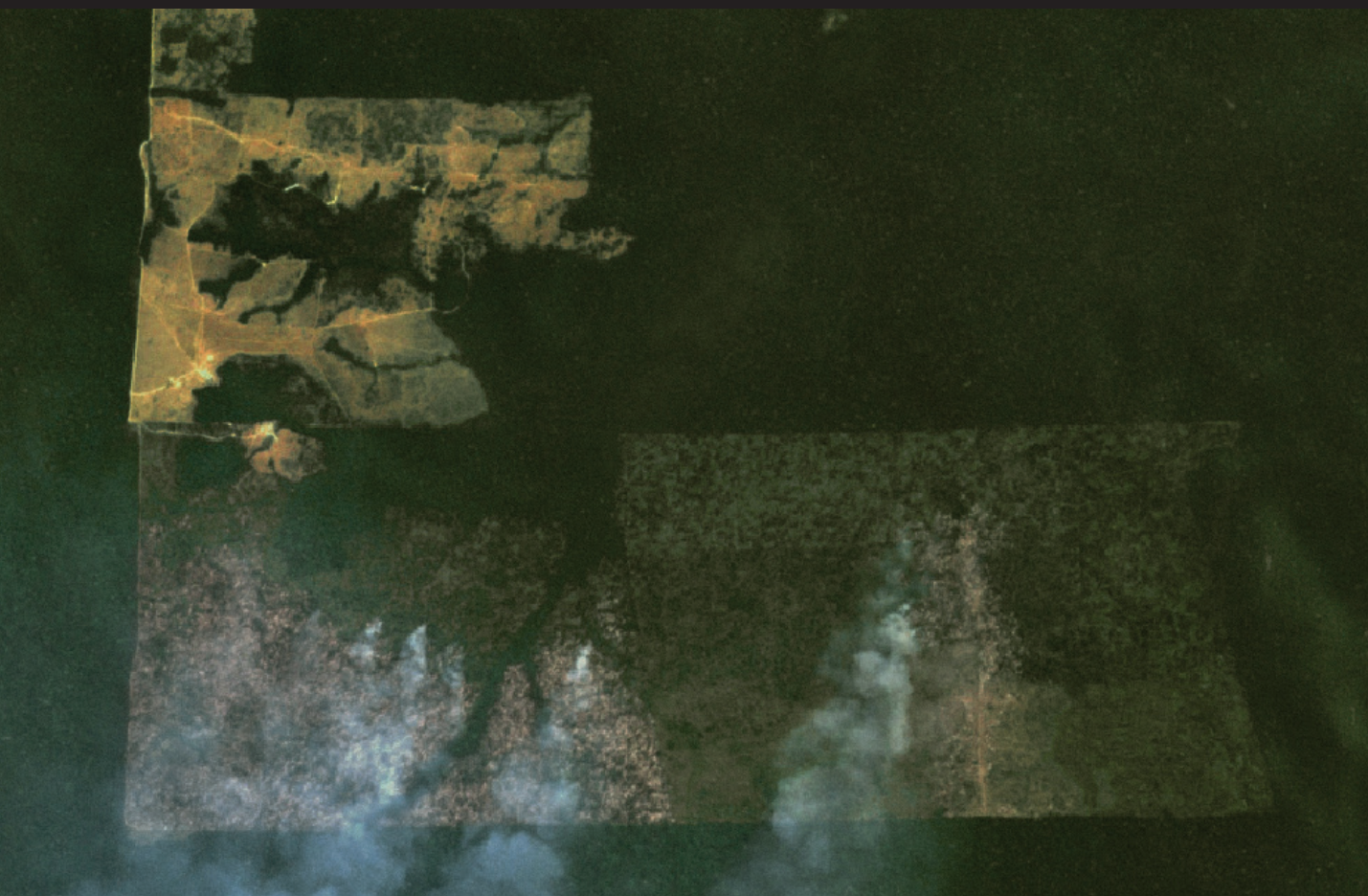


IMAGE 4 Sentinel-2 satellite image from 20.08.2021 showing fires in the area of recent deforestation in the Piripkura territory. Source: Sentinel-2.

After the fires recorded between the months of July and September 2021, the huge deforested area inside the Piripkura Indigenous Territory, which contained about 1.3 million trees, was totally degraded, ready for the planting of pasture. (Image 5);



IMAGE 5 Area deforested between August 2020 and July 2021, and burned between July and September 2021, to create pasture land.
Source: Imagens Planet (SIRAD/ISA).

It is worth noting that the deforestation and fires described in this dossier are located very close to two regions where the group of uncontacted indigenous people in the territory takes refuge; that is the deforested area in Figure 8 which crosses the Igarapé das Panelas and is located 2.5 kilometres away from the headwaters of Igarapé Duelo (Image 6);



IMAGE 6 The deforested and burned areas in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory are very close to the areas where the uncontacted Piripkura take refuge (Igarapé das Panelas and Igarapé Duelo). Source: Imagem Planet

- More evidence of the invaders' expectations and speculation about the setback in the regulations and protection of the Piripkura Indigenous Territory is shown in the escalating number of irregular registrations in the Rural Environmental Registry (CAR) regarding the interior of the territory. According to the survey carried out by Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN) on the CAR and the Forest Management Plans in the region of the Piripkura Indigenous Territory, there are 15 ranches actively operating within the Indigenous Territory;

- The analysis of ranches registered in the Mato Grosso System of Rural Environmental Registration (SIMCAR/MT) and in the Land Management System (SIGEF) of the Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (INCRA) recorded, in 2021, a total of 131,870 hectares in properties that represent the irregular occupation within the Indigenous Territory. This race for irregular registrations in the Piripkura Indigenous Territory shows an increase of 182% in the overlapping area, when compared to data of December 2019.

STATEMENTS

ELIAS BIGIO

Former Coordinator of the Brazilian government's Uncontacted and Recently Contacted Indians Department (CGIIRC - FUNAI) and current President of Operação Amazônia Nativa (OPAN)

“ There are many interests that oppose indigenous peoples' right to demarcation of their land; this is the case of the Piripkura. Not demarcating the land increasingly places these Indians in an even more vulnerable situation. Now, their indigenous territory has been re-invaded by ranchers and loggers, despite being an area under embargo. The invaders are feeling empowered to do what they're doing, and they're destroying public property.”

“ Despite all the pressure, the Piripkura people adopted a survival strategy. This people resisted, and kept their language and their culture.”

RITA PIRIPKURA

Rita is a Piripkura indigenous person and sister of Baita. After surviving successive massacres, she came into regular contact with outsiders. She now lives in the Karipuna Indigenous Territory and fights for the rights of her uncontacted relatives.

“Some days ago, Aripã [Rita’s husband] asked me if I was angry. I told him no, but that I was worried. Worried about my two uncontacted relatives out there in the forest. Pakyi [Baita] is my brother and Tamandua is my nephew. There’s no more FUNAI here [in the Karipuna Territory] or back home [in the Piripkura Territory], there’s no more FUNAI. The forest belongs to the Indians, but the white man comes and cuts everything down, to log the timber and graze cattle. They are finishing off all the forest. They are people who cut everything down to put up fences and big gates.”

CONTACT FOR
INTERVIEWS:

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By March 2022, four indigenous territories home to uncontacted indigenous peoples could be opened up for destruction. Join the campaign for the survival of these peoples, and the protection of their lands!

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