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Abstract: This article about the rescue of two orphaned cheetah cubs in Cope, Ethiopia by US soldiers, with the help of the CCF is an example of the illegal trade in live wild endangered cats.

Cet article sur le sauvetage de deux jeunes guépards orphelins à Cope en Ethiopie par des soldats américains avec l'aide du CCF est un exemple du trafic illégal des félins vivants menacés.

A HAPPY THANKSGIVING FOR TWO CHEETAH CUBS IN ETHIOPIA **Cheetah Conservation Fund Collaborates With Ethiopian and US Authorities**

Goda, Ethiopia- Two orphaned cheetahs tied to the ground by an 8 inch rope were confiscated today, and will be flown to Addis Ababa next Tuesday through the combined efforts of various people coordinated by the Cheetah Conservation Fund (CCF), a not-for profit organization dedicated to helping to save this endangered species for extinction. The Cheetah Conservation Fund, which is headquartered in Namibia and has organizations in the US and UK, is often contacted by people through out the world on cheetah-related issues. Dr. Laurie Marker, an American who founded CCF, says that, “Today is truly a great Thanksgiving for all – and in particular for these cheetah cubs. I can’t give enough thanks to all the many people who rallied together to assist these helpless cubs”.

The two cubs were reported to CCF by concerned representatives of the US military Civil Affairs unit in Gode, a semi-desert area along the border with Somalia, where they are providing humanitarian assistance to the inhabitants of the region as part of the Combined Joint Task Force/Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA). This area is afflicted with drought, ethnic conflict, food shortage and diseases.

The cubs were first seen in mid-October when a local hotel/bar owner brought the cubs to US military compound housing in Gode, asking the medical personnel to provide the cubs with medical treatment and give the cub with the infected eye an antibiotic. Over the next few weeks, the Civil Affairs team medical personnel continued to check on the cubs and it became apparent that the cubs were not getting adequate care, as their health was steadily deteriorating. According to an Associated Press wire, the hotel owner’s sons, 4-year-old Abraham and 2-year-old Nur, pulled the cubs' tails and dragged them around their sun-parched yard by ropes tied tightly to their necks. Other children followed, poking and teasing the frightened cats. When US personnel wanted to take possession of the cubs, the man offered to sell them up for 1000 birr each (about \$1200). Fearing that offering any amount of money for the cubs would encourage more poaching and further decimate the cheetah population, US military personnel were in a tough spot and therefore asked CCF to assist.

CCF representatives were able to coordinate a group of Ethiopian officials and concerned individuals helped by representatives in the US Embassy in Addis, the US military unit, and the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme. The US Ambassador asked the Commander of CJTF-HOA if the US military could facilitate the transportation of the cubs from Gode to Addis. The cubs were flown aboard a US military plane to Addis, where they will undergo medical treatment by the Ethiopian Wildlife Department. Gode is very remote and roads there are terrible, as are conditions in general. Driving to Addis would take at least two days of very rugged travel.

The cubs were being monitored by and reported to CCF on a daily basis; however the involvement of the Ethiopian Wildlife Dept was needed in order to take the cats into custody for medical care. Both cubs were in critical condition: the male had a severely infected eye that will need surgery and follow-up medical treatment. Both cubs were starving and being fed a diet of milk and cheese, not an appropriate diet for young cheetahs. As a carnivore, the cubs needed raw, lean meat, and the milk diet was causing the cubs to be suffering from severe diarrhoea and dehydration.

The cubs, estimated at approximately 5 months of age, were illegally purchased by the hotel owner who purchased the cubs at the local market (for 50 birr or \$6) because he was concerned about their health, since a third female sibling had already died. Later, the military personal learned that this man has sold cheetah cubs and other wildlife to wealthy buyers on the Saudi Peninsula. The man said that locals will capture cheetah cubs to sell at the market, however cheetah mothers run away if people approach, so she would not have been killed. There is a lot of illegal catching of young animals in Gode, particularly carnivores, said Dr. Zelealem Tefera of the Ethiopian Wolf Conservation Programme.

According to Marker, "Cheetahs are an endangered species, with less than 15,000 cheetahs left in the world. Legal trade of endangered species is controlled by the Convention on Trade of Endangered Species (CITES) – of which most of the world's countries are signatories. Regrettably, there is still illegal trade in live wild endangered cats and their fur and body parts. This is not the first instance of cheetah cubs being reported in illegal situations in northern Africa. Cheetahs, particularly cubs, are easy to capture. Fortunately, this time we were able to intervene before the cubs died or were moved to an untraceable situation."

Contingent upon a medical check-up and assurances that the cubs are healthy enough for air transport, the cubs will fly aboard a US military plane and will be taken to the Ethiopian National Palace in the capital, where they will be housed and given proper care.

For more information, contact the Cheetah Conservation Fund at +264 (0) 67) 306 225 or Email: ccfmail@iway.na. Postal address: P. O. Box 1755, Otjiwarongo, Namibia, or web: www.cheetah.org.

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Editor's notes:

- The **Cheetah Conservation Fund** is a Namibian non-profit trust dedicated to the long-term survival of the cheetah and its ecosystems. The Fund's activities include working actively with Namibian farmers, schools, and communities, as well as conducting international research on cheetah demographics, ecology, biology, and the human impacts affecting cheetah survival.
- If you would like to make a donation to support this and other efforts, or to sponsor a cheetah, please contact CCF at info@cheetah.org or go to our web page <https://www.cheetah.org/?nd=donate>
- If you would like more information on CCF's research and education work, please contact CCF at:

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Photo Captions - Photo Courtesy of Stuart Williams, PhD



Caption: Cheetah cubs rescued in Gode in Ethiopia.