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Abstract: This article deals with the rescue of two cheetah cubs in the village of Gode, Ethiopia, by U.S soldiers. These two cubs have been bought by a restaurant-keeper from poachers.

Cet article concerne le sauvetage de deux jeunes guépards orphelins dans le village de Gode en Ethiopie, par des soldats américains. Ces deux jeunes avaient été achetés à des braconniers par le responsable d'un restaurant.

U.S. Troops Find Abused Cheetah Cubs

By ANTHONY MITCHELL
Associated Press Writer

GODE, Ethiopia

U.S. troops found two cheetah cubs _ one of them blinded _ being forced to fight each other for the amusement of jeering children in this dusty, forgotten village.

The soldiers of the U.S. counterterrorism task force for the Horn of Africa were in the region carrying out humanitarian work when they came across the three-month-old cheetahs "performing" at a restaurant run by Mohamed Hudle. The Djibouti-based task force provides intelligence-gathering help to countries in the region, tries to bolster cooperation and border protection, and mounts humanitarian projects aimed at improving the U.S. military's image among Muslims.

The troops provided medical treatment to the blinded cub, fed them both and tried to persuade Mohamed to hand them over to wildlife officials. They contacted U.S.-based cheetah experts as well as Ethiopian authorities.

U.S. military officials refused to discuss the animal rights turn their hearts and minds campaign took in Gode. But Befekadu Refera, an official of the Environmental Protection Agency in the capital, Addis Ababa, confirmed the U.S. military had contacted his agency about the cubs and even offered to fly the pair to Addis Ababa, 684 miles away for care.

The cheetah is endangered because of loss of habitat, poaching and other factors, according to the international Cheetah Conservation Fund.

In Gode Wednesday, the rescue appeared to have hit a snag.

"I don't see why I should hand them over," Mohamed said. "When I was younger I looked after goats and camels, so I know what animals need."

Mohamed said he would only give up the cheetahs if he was paid \$1,000 for each cub _ 10 times the average income in this impoverished Horn of Africa nation with an estimated 77 million people.

His 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.

Mohamed, 43, said he bought the cubs from poachers and he does not know what happened to the mother. The poachers had kicked the female cub in the face, blinding the animal, he said.

Keeping wild animals is illegal without a special license, but Ethiopia's wildlife laws are rarely enforced. Mohamed also has a hawk with a broken wing and three scrawny baby ostriches.

Deputy Wildlife Minister Ahmed Nisir has sent officials to try to secure the

cheetahs' release and a government vet is expected to visit Saturday.

"Unless these cubs are properly looked after and cared for they will soon die," said Befekadu of the Environmental Protection Agency.

If they are brought to the capital, Befekadu said, they would be cared for on the large grounds of the National Palace, home to several Abyssinian lions rescued by former Emperor Haile Selassie.

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