



Police hunt for chimps that attacked sightseers in Sierra Leone, killing one

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FREETOWN, Sierra Leone (AP) - Police hunted Monday for chimpanzees that escaped from a Sierra Leone preserve and mauled a group of American and local sightseers, killing one man and injuring four people.

The U.S. Embassy warned Americans against travelling to the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary, where the chimps escaped before Sunday's attack on a taxicab.

The Sierra Leonean driver died as the chimps ripped his body apart, and three Americans were treated at a hospital for minor injuries, said Oliver Somasa, a top police official.

Another Sierra Leonean man in the group had his hand amputated after the mauling, Somasa said. U.S. officials had no further comment. The Americans were in Sierra Leone to help build a new embassy building, Somasa said.

Armed police were searching Monday for 27 chimpanzees, Somasa said, while four others had already returned on their own accord to the reserve.

Somasa said it was unclear why the chimps attacked or how they were able to escape.

Chimpanzee attacks are unusual but not unprecedented.

Two chimps that escaped from their cages in a California sanctuary severely mauled a man in March 2005 before the man's son-in-law shot the animals to death.

Driver killed by chimpanzees in Sierra Leone

Freetown - A group of chimpanzees attacked and killed a Sierra Leonean driver on Sunday and injured two American visitors and one Canadian at a wildlife sanctuary in the West African nation, a police spokesperson said.

Paramilitary police and forest rangers were searching dense jungle to see if they could capture the chimpanzees after the attack at the Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary on the outskirts of Sierra Leone's capital Freetown.

"The driver was killed on the spot while the three surviving victims, the Americans and the Canadian, sustained serious wounds," Sergeant John Kamara, an officer at the Regent Police Post near the Tacugama reserve, told reporters.

No immediate reason for the attack was given but police said the large group of chimpanzees suddenly turned on the visitors to the sanctuary, biting and tearing at their clothes.

The driver killed was employed by the Tacugama reserve. The injured survivors, who worked for a construction company in Sierra Leone, were taken to a hospital in Freetown.

The Tacugama Chimpanzee Sanctuary was set up in 1995 to give shelter to orphaned and abandoned chimpanzees. It houses nearly 70 apes living in a semi-wild environment in which they have access to fenced enclosures of rainforest as well as large cages where they spend the night.

Police said they were anxious to capture the chimpanzees to stop them attacking local villagers or motorists using the nearby Regent-Hasting road.

REUTERS 

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Sierra Leone chimps kill driver, injure 3

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- REUTERS

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