



30.8.2014- A UN airplane returning from an aid mission had a chance to do even greater good as it transported two chimpanzees that spent the past year living behind a supermarket in Kinshasa to a permanent sanctuary in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo on its way back.

The United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission ( [MONUSCO](#) ) in DR Congo flew the chimpanzees directly from Kinshasa to Bukavu in a joint effort between the Congolese wildlife authority ( [ICCN](#) ), Gorilla Doctors, the Lwiro Centre for Primate Rehabilitation ( [CRPL](#) ), and the Great Apes Survival Partnership ( [GRASP](#) )

The U.N. support turned a 1,000-mile journey over extremely difficult roads into a smooth

three-hour flight.

The chimpanzees - a five-year old male nicknamed "Kin" and a three-year old female nicknamed "Shasa" - were confiscated following the intervention of DR Congo's Minister of Environment. They will join the 55 resident chimpanzees at the Lwiro Primate Rehabilitation Centre and be integrated into natural social groups.

"As always, GRASP is extremely grateful to the MONUSCO officials who made this transfer possible," said GRASP coordinator Doug Cress. "MONUSCO's willingness to offer its resources and expertise on behalf of endangered great apes underscores its deep commitment to protecting the Democratic Republic of Congo's natural heritage."

Kin arrived with injuries to his right hip, most likely sustained when captured from the wild by poachers.

"Having been in captivity for well over one year, these chimpanzees will require extensive rehabilitation," said Lwiro director Carmen Vidal. "They will be housed within our chimpanzee groups at the CRPL, once their one month quarantine period is completed. The CRPL also works in collaboration with the IUCN with regards to the Conservation Action Plan for the Kivu Landscape and as such has the long term goal of reintroduction of wildlife into their native habitat."

U.N. peacekeepers have operated in DR Congo since 1999, and the current force includes over 20,000 military, civilian and judicial personnel authorized to help stabilize the region.

The U.N. has previously airlifted orphaned gorillas and chimpanzees in Central Africa on behalf of GRASP's conservation initiatives, including an endangered Eastern Lowland gorilla on 27 May that had been orphaned by poachers. The 2013 GRASP report, *Stolen Apes*, estimated that a minimum of 2,972 great apes are lost from the wild each year in Africa and Asia through illicit activity.

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