

Arms Build-up in South America: Venezuela Gives Ecuador Six Mirage 50 Jets

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QUITO — Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa announced September 28 he will receive six Mirage 50 jets “in good condition” donated by Venezuela, amid concerns of a South American arms race.

“Venezuela wants to give us six Mirage jets ... we are going to accept them,” Correa said in the northern town of Ibarra.

Correa added that the country was discussing the purchase of a further 12 jets from South Africa and 24 Super Tucano fighters from Brazil, as well as radar systems and helicopters.

It is just the latest sign of a military build up in South America and what the United States has warned could become an arms race.

Venezuela, led by leftist President Hugo Chavez, recently announced a \$2.2 billion from Russia to buy weapons.

The purchases have come as tensions have grown between Ecuador, its Venezuelan ally and Colombia over support of leftist Colombian rebels and Bogota’s agreement to allow the United States to use Colombian military bases.

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