

Military Confrontation in The Andes? Venezuela, Ecuador Ratchet Up Rhetoric Versus Colombia's Santos

By [Nathan Gill](#)

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Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and Ecuador's President Rafael Correa rejected what they called threatening statements by the frontrunner in Colombia's presidential race.

Chavez called Colombian presidential candidate Juan Manuel Santos a "clear threat" to Venezuela, Ecuador and Nicaragua, saying any Colombian "aggression" against allied nations would be taken as an attack on Venezuela.

Santos, responding in a televised debate on April 18 to the question of whether he would attack rebel groups in foreign territory, said he would "pursue terrorists wherever they are," according to Ecuadorean state news agency Andes.

Chavez in March 2008 ordered 10 tank battalions to the border with Colombia after that country's military attacked Colombian rebels in Ecuadorian territory, killing Raul Reyes, a leader of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. Ecuador responded by withdrawing its ambassador from Colombia and expelling his counterpart in Quito.

"I feel a profound sorrow for those who play emperor and would like to convert Latin America into the new Middle East," Ecuador's Correa said, according to a statement published last night on the president's Web site. "Next time they will find Ecuador much better prepared, we'll know how to defend ourselves."

-With assistance from Jose Orozco in Caracas. Editors: Robert Jameson, Harry Maurer

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