

Ecuador, Venezuela deploy troops

by UPI

CARACAS, Venezuela -- Venezuela and Ecuador have sent troops to their borders with Colombia following the killing of a Colombian rebel leader, El Universal reported Monday. Officials in each country have also ordered the expulsion of Colombian diplomats. Colombian leftist rebel leader Raul Reyes was killed by Colombian forces about a mile inside Ecuadorian territory over the weekend, prompting both Ecuadorian and Venezuela to say it was a violation of Ecuador's sovereignty. Colombian officials said it was a necessary move in the country's fight against terrorism. Bogota considers the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, a terrorist organization. In his weekly radio show Sunday, Venezuelan leader Hugo Chavez said the killing of Reyes was a cowardly act on the part of the Colombian government. He also said if Colombia violated Venezuelan territory he would consider it an act of war. Chavez, in recent weeks, has negotiated the release of six hostages being held by FARC. FARC has been fighting Colombian forces for decades. Colombian rebel groups have been accused of crossing the dense jungle border between Colombia and Venezuela while outrunning government forces and receiving aid from Chavez, an allegation he denies.

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