

Chavez nationalizes ports, airports

by UPI

CARACAS, Venezuela -- Venezuela's military has taken over the country's ports and airports under a directive by President Hugo Chavez seen as a power grab by opponents.

The leftist leader's announcement Sunday came just days after Venezuela's Congress passed legislation allowing the central government to take over roads, ports and airports if state leaders don't do enough to maintain them, MercoPress reported Monday.

"We are going to take over ports and airports throughout the republic, whoever wants can oppose it, but it is the law of the republic," Chavez said during his weekly broadcast.

Ports Chavez singled out are in three states run by opposition leaders, Mercopress said.

"It's a question of national security," said Chavez, who indicated anyone who tries to prevent the nationalization move could be jailed.

Opposition leaders say the president is concentrating his power by using state resources to promote his political party and smothering the ability of opposition officials to carry out basic tasks.

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