

Chavez bids to be top regional arms buyer

Over the past year, President Hugo Chavez has changed Venezuela's national security doctrine from one based on regional threats – from Brazil, Guyana, and Colombia – to a core assumption that the U.S. plans to invade Venezuela to seize control of its petroleum and natural gas resources



Regional disputes: 1. With Colombia, over *Gulf of Venezuela*. 2. Brazil, over control of Venezuela's *Bolivar* and *Amazonas* states. 3. Guyana, over land west of *Essequibo River*

Venezuela Armed Forces

Army	34,000
Navy	18,300
Air Force	7,000
National Guard	23,000
Total Armed Forces	82,300
Defence budget 2003-04	\$1.1bn
Defence budget 2004-12	\$30.7bn
Average per year	\$3.8bn

Army: Purchase of up to 30 helicopter gunships, plus light armoured vehicles, artillery and transport helicopters

Navy: Over 130 new vessels including patrol ships and three submarines

Air Force: Up to 50 turboprop attack/trainer aircraft and 50 Russian Su-27 fighters

