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Caracas, Wednesday July 05 , 2006

Daily News

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CHÁVEZ SUGGESTS DEFENSE FORCE FOR MERCOSUR

President Hugo Chávez Wednesday suggested that the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) should have its own defense body.

Chávez' comments came ahead of a military parade in Caracas to commemorate the 195th anniversary of Venezuelan independence from Spain.

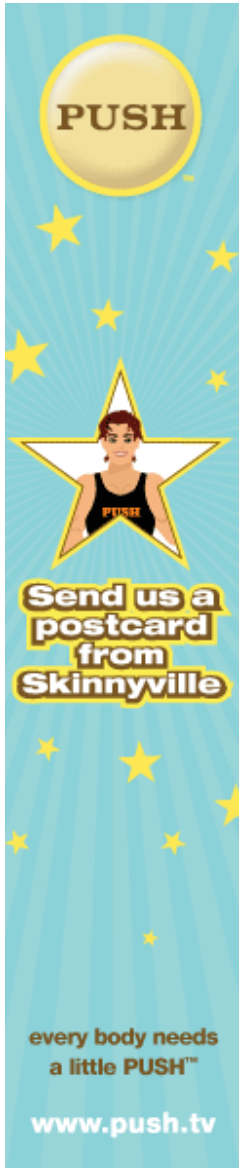
"The day should come when Mercosur has a defense organization, where we are to merge the armed forces of our countries and where we are to devise our own security, sovereignty and defense strategy," he said.

"Let us be free! Venezuela has decided to be free and not to depend on any foreign axis of power. South America has chosen to be free. The closer the freer!"

Regarding the United States weapon purchase ban on Venezuela, Chávez said "the Armed Force is regaining operational capacity, particularly now, when the world's most powerful warplanes, (Russian) Sukhoi-30s, have flown over the Venezuelan sky."

He urged to strengthen the unity between the people and the military, and thanked the Presidents of Argentina, Néstor Kirchner; Bolivia, Evo Morales; and Paraguay, Nicanor Duarte, for their attendance to the military parade of the Independence Day.

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