

Venezuela recalls its ambassador to Peru

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LA PAZ, Bolivia - Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez said he will remove his ambassador to Peru in response to that country's decision to recall its ambassador to Venezuela after accusing Chavez of interfering in its presidential election.

"I have ordered the recall of our ambassador with much pain," Chavez said late Wednesday, according to Bolivian government news agency ABI.

"I don't believe it should have come to this, because a candidate there (in Peru) launched an aggression at me and I responded - I have the right," he added, referring to Peruvian presidential candidate Alan Garcia.

Garcia called Chavez and Bolivian President Evo Morales "spoiled children" and "historic losers" after they criticized Peru for signing a free trade deal with Washington.

Last week, Chavez described Garcia and current Peruvian President Alejandro Toledo as "crocodiles from the same water hole" - the remark which prompted Peru to remove its ambassador from Caracas.

Chavez has enthusiastically endorsed nationalist Peruvian presidential candidate Ollanta Humala in the June 4 runoff election against Garcia.

Chavez made the announcement after a meeting with Morales on the eve of a summit in Argentina to discuss Morales' recent nationalization of Bolivia's natural gas.