

# Venezuela and Guyana to Improve Alerts After Border Incursion

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CARACAS, [Venezuela](#) — [Guyana](#) and Venezuela agreed on Tuesday to establish ways to prevent Venezuelan military activities in Guyanese territory, after reports that Venezuelan soldiers had entered Guyana in November and destroyed two gold-mining dredges.

The move is intended to relieve new tension between the countries. President [Hugo Chávez](#)'s government had previously sought to smooth over a long-simmering territorial dispute with shipments of subsidized oil to Guyana. Venezuela still claims about two-thirds of Guyana's territory, in the gold- and timber-rich Essequibo region.

"We have agreed to set up some mechanisms that would not only address this particular issue but try to prohibit other similar incidents from occurring," Rudy Insanally, Guyana's foreign minister, said in Georgetown, the Guyanese capital, after meeting with Venezuelan officials, according to Agence France-Presse.

The details of the agreement remained unclear on Tuesday.

The tension involves the region around the Cuyuni River, a porous area claimed by Guyana and Venezuela that is rife with illegal mining. Guyana's military says 36 Venezuelan soldiers entered the area last month, using helicopters and C-4 explosives to blow up the dredges.

A spokeswoman for Vice Adm. Elías Daniels, director of the special office for Guyana in the Venezuelan Foreign Ministry, said he was unavailable for comment on Tuesday. Officials here said this month that they would issue a report on the incident.

Guyana, with a population of less than a million, has been seeking to lure foreign investment, particularly from Russia, despite the Venezuelan claim. The dispute seems to be viewed as a minor irritant in Venezuela, which has a population of 27 million, but in Georgetown it is considered a major development.

Anger erupted there after a self-congratulatory statement last month from Venezuela's embassy about the delivery of 16,000 barrels of subsidized fuel; the shipment was announced shortly after reports surfaced of the military incursion.

"The reality is that we are being treated with utter contempt by an infinitely larger and wealthier neighbor whose head of state never tires of expatiating on the bullying tactics of the U.S., but is apparently blind to those of his own armed forces," the newspaper The Stabroek News, in Georgetown, said in an editorial.

Relations between the nations had improved in recent years, with Mr. Chávez moving away from vociferous claims he made early in his presidency to Guyanese territory. But Venezuela's reluctance to withdraw its claim still irks Guyana.

The dispute is rooted in an 1899 accord in Paris that established Venezuela's boundaries with Guyana, then a British colony. A letter by Severo Mallet-Prevost, who represented Venezuela in the talks, was published in 1949 suggesting the deal was void because it involved a secret deal between Britain and Russia.

Several Venezuelan leaders have pressed ahead with the territorial claim. National maps here still describe the disputed land as a "reclamation zone."