

## **Venezuela orders military exercises to counter foreign threats**

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**Caracas:** Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro ordered the military to hold military exercises within a week to counter foreign threats.

The decision came after former Colombian president Alvaro Uribe in an interview urged Venezuela's armed forces to take up arms against the state, Xinhua news agency reported.

"I have called for military exercises ... to prepare for the defense of our land, our children, our rights to peace," Maduro said on Saturday.

When talking about the situation in Venezuela, Uribe, now a Colombian senator, said the Venezuelan military should use their weapons to defend human rights and political freedom, rather than fighting for a dictatorship, local media reported.

Â Â Â **Maduro said Uribe's words were tantamount to foreign intervention in Venezuela.**

Venezuela's Armed Forces on Saturday issued a statement reaffirming their allegiance to the government, saying they categorically condemn "the systematic campaign orchestrated abroad to discredit and provoke Venezuela."

- IANS