

# *UNASUR to Launch First Regional Defense School in Ecuador*

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Quito, April 3 (teleSUR-RHC)-- The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) regional integration bloc announced that it will open the first South American School of Defense (ESUDE) on April 17 to train military officers of the 12 member countries of the regional bloc.

In a meeting between UNASUR's Secretary-General Ernesto Samper and Argentine Defense Minister Agustin Rossi on Tuesday, the two officials discussed key agenda items leading up to the opening of the ESUDE.

"The launch of the ESUDE will create a network of academic military institutions and will develop training programs and integration among all of the armed forces within the region," Samper stated. The defense school is an initiative of the UNASUR Defense council, which was established in 2008 to ensure peace in South America, where regional conflicts can be resolved through diplomacy and non-interventionist methods.

"This project was an initiative launched by Argentina when Dr. Nilda Garre was defense minister and it seeks to foster common guidelines of training for all UNASUR country members," said Rossi.

The school will open courses designed for military personnel and civilians and will offer postgraduate degrees in a range of defense related issues. The UNASUR school is largely seen as an alternative to the U.S.-based School of the Americas (SOA), which in 2001 was renamed the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.

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