

U.S. and South Korea to Begin Major Joint Military Drills Aug. 18

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The United States and South Korea will commence their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield military exercises this August 18, aimed at strengthening joint defence capabilities against North Korean threats amid ongoing regional tensions and extreme summer heat.

The two allies are set to conduct an 11-day training operation combining computer-simulated command-post exercises with field drills. Known as Ulchi Freedom Shield, the exercise is designed to improve operational readiness and coordination in response to North Korea's advancing military capabilities.

Due to an intense heatwave affecting the Korean Peninsula, 20 of the 40 scheduled field exercises will be postponed to September. Military officials maintain that the overall scale and strategic impact of the operation remain unchanged from previous years.

The exercise will include simulations of various threat scenarios, including a North Korean missile attack. However, officials have confirmed that nuclear-related drills are not part of this year's training. Defense authorities say the changes are a practical response to weather conditions rather than any political pressure.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that the adjustments were made to prioritise troop safety while preserving long-term operational effectiveness. A spokesperson stressed that the decision was based on maintaining year-round readiness under realistic conditions.

While some members of South Korea's current government have suggested the delay might help ease tensions with Pyongyang, security analysts remain cautious. They argue North Korea has consistently opposed joint drills between the US and South Korea, regardless of scale or intent, often using them as justification for its military build-up.

Ulchi Freedom Shield is one of two major joint military exercises held annually by South Korea and the United States. It follows a series of

smaller training events earlier in the summer and comes at a time when geopolitical uncertainty in the Indo-Pacific continues to grow.

Officials from both countries reaffirm that the exercises are defensive and remain essential to maintaining regional stability. They emphasized that the drills prepare forces for a range of contingencies while reinforcing the strength and unity of the long-standing military alliance.