



KAMARAJ IAS ACADEMY
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US and South Korea Launch 'Freedom Shield' Joint Military Exercise

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The United States and South Korea have launched the large-scale "Freedom Shield" joint military exercise to enhance their combined defence capabilities and preparedness against security threats, particularly from North Korea.

The exercise is scheduled to continue until 19 March 2026 on the Korean Peninsula.

The drills involve around 18,000 South Korean troops along with an undisclosed number of US military personnel. The exercise focuses on strengthening joint operational readiness, interoperability and coordinated defence strategies between the two allies.

The annual exercise is considered a defensive drill by the allies, but North Korea has repeatedly criticised it as a rehearsal for invasion, often responding with missile tests or military demonstrations.

US-South Korea Defence Alliance

The US-South Korea alliance began with the Mutual Defense Treaty of 1953, signed after the Korean War (1950-1953).

The United States maintains US Forces Korea (USFK) with tens of thousands of troops stationed in South Korea.

Korean Peninsula Security Context

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North Korea (DPRK) frequently conducts ballistic missile tests and nuclear weapons development, increasing tensions in the region.

Joint exercises such as Freedom Shield are intended to deter aggression and maintain regional stability.

Types of Training in Freedom Shield

Command-post simulations

Field training exercises

Joint air, land and naval operations

Cyber and multi-domain warfare training

Other Major US–South Korea Military Exercises

Ulchi Freedom Guardian

Foal Eagle

Max Thunder

These exercises are part of a broader strategy to strengthen security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.