



By: TA | AP Brief

US, South Korea and Japan to hold trilateral military drill



South Korea, the U.S. and Japan will go ahead with a trilateral **military drill** next month to better deal with North Korean nuclear threats, officials in Seoul said Friday, a day after North Korea vowed to retaliate against what it called U.S. hostilities.

The development further dims prospects for an early resumption of diplomacy between North Korea and the U.S., despite President Donald Trump's recent decision to **scale back** a major bilateral military drill with South Korea in an apparent goodwill gesture toward the North.

South Korea's military said in a statement the **Freedom Edge** exercise will start on Sept. 7 for a five-day run in the waters off South Korea's southern Jeju Island.

It said the exercise is defensive in nature and meant to respond to North Korean nuclear and missile threats as well as promote regional peace and stability.

North Korea has previously slammed the trilateral drill as a "reckless show of strength" that showed its adversaries' confrontational stance against it.

Pyongyang has also said the drill contained a U.S. intention to lay siege to China and exert pressure on Russia.

The Freedom Edge drill, a U.S.-South Korea-Japan exercise, was launched in 2024. It's designed to increase the sophistication of previous exercises with simultaneous air and naval drills geared toward improving joint ballistic missile defense, anti-submarine warfare, surveillance and other skills and capabilities.

North Korea's threat

Last week, the U.S. and South Korean militaries ended their annual Ulchi Freedom Shield exercise six days earlier than originally planned, after Trump said he had ordered the Pentagon to "**substantially reduce**" the drill that North Korea views as an invasion

rehearsal.

Trump cited what he described as a good relationship with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

But **North Korea rebuffed** Trump's overture, saying just shortening the drill won't change its "provocative, aggressive nature."

North Korea launched about 10 short-range ballistic missiles toward the sea, apparently delivering on its previous threat to respond to the U.S.-South Korean drill.

Pyongyang has previously said it won't resume diplomacy with the U.S. unless it drops its demand for a North Korean denuclearization as a precondition for talks.

Since his **earlier diplomacy** with Trump collapsed in 2019, Kim has boosted his military and diplomatic credentials by enlarging his nuclear arsenal and aligning with Russia over its war against Ukraine.

With greater leverage now, experts say Kim would likely aim to win big U.S. concessions like an international recognition of North Korea as a nuclear state and sweeping sanctions relief in return for a partial surrender of his nuclear arsenal.

On Thursday, North Korea's Foreign Ministry accused the U.S. of engaging in "a series of hostile moves" targeting the North, including a possible sale of air-to-air missiles and related equipment to South Korea.

It said North Korea "will make a serious, immediate and powerful response to the hostile acts in different spheres."