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Activists call for cancellation of U.S.-ROK military exercises In Korea

written by Nodutdol
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Actions across the U.S. ahead of the U.S.-ROK Freedom Shield exercises in Korea.

Nodutdol for Korean Community Development's "U.S. Out of Korea" campaign mobilized hundreds of people in New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Seattle to demand an end to U.S. militarization and escalation towards war.



UPDATE: Pocheon, South Korea, March 6 (Reuters) - South Korean fighter jets accidentally dropped eight bombs on a civilian district on Thursday, injuring 15 people and damaging houses and a church during military exercises in Pocheon, the Air Force and fire agency said. The fire agency said in a statement that 15 people were wounded, including two who were seriously hurt. Pocheon is about 40 kilometres (25 miles) northeast of Seoul, near the heavily militarized border with North Korea. "There was a sudden loud roar of a fighter jet, then an explosion rang out.. When I went to the scene, there were about four houses that were halved from the damage, people hurt," said Oh Moung-su, a 65-year-old resident. "Dusk and smoke rose into the sky, water gushed out of a pipe. People in a vehicle going to a construction site were injured - some of them couldn't even get out of the car. Another was outside the car covering his eye." South Korea's Air Force said eight 500-pound (225kg) Mk82 bombs from two KF-16 jets fell outside the shooting range during joint live-fire exercises. "We are sorry for the damage

caused by the abnormal drop accident, and we wish the injured a speedy recovery,” the Air Force said in a statement.

On March 1, the U.S. out of Korea campaign held rallies across New York City, San Francisco, Los Angeles and Seattle, bringing together hundreds of people in opposition to the upcoming Freedom Shield military exercises taking place between March 10 to March 19 in South Korea.

In **New York**, over 200 people gathered in Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, joined by Korean survivors of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima who shared the devastating impact of the U.S. nuclear bomb. Member of European Parliament Marc Botenga also spoke on the necessity of diverting resources away from militarism and war towards peace and international solidarity. Activists marched to the U.S. Mission to the UN building, where they shared a statement of support from progressive organizations in the Republic of Korea.

In **San Francisco**, 250 people gathered at the Comfort Women memorial, where a diverse program of cultural ceremony and drumming performances ensued. Speakers from BAYAN, Palestinian Youth Movement, and the Party for Socialism and Liberation highlighted the importance of international solidarity and the urgent need to remove U.S. military presence around the world.

In **Los Angeles**, 150 people took to the streets of Koreatown to demonstrate opposition against the upcoming Freedom Shield war games in Korea. The demonstration began with a slate of speakers and cultural performances at the Wilshire and Vermont Metro Station and ended with a march to the Republic of Korea (ROK) Consulate.

In **Seattle**, community members organized a vigil in front of the Republic of Korea Consulate in Seattle to commemorate and honor the life of Gil Won-Ok, a survivor of

Japanese sexual slavery and activist for comfort women's justice who passed away in February. They read testimonies from other comfort women, shared personal stories and migration histories, and reaffirmed the demand for the end of the U.S. military occupation of Korea.

As ROK President Yoon Suk Yeol faces his final impeachment hearing and President Trump continues to seek diplomacy with the DPRK, Korea's political future faces much uncertainty. In the midst of this, the annual Freedom Shield military exercises will be taking place in March. Freedom Shield is an important source of tension with the DPRK, and this year will grow by 70% from 10 combined firepower drills in 2024 to 17 drills this year. On March 1, ROK progressive organizations, trade unions, civil society groups, and political parties [mobilized a national protest raising a progressive agenda](#), including the demand to cancel the Freedom Shield military exercises.

Large-scale springtime U.S.-ROK military exercises have been held annually since 1976. These war games took on the name "Freedom Shield" under Biden in 2023, a year in which U.S.-DPRK relations entered their nadir and tensions within Korea and the region spiked. Last year, the Freedom Shield exercises reached a dangerous scale – evolving into a multilateral exercise involving the militaries of 12 countries, and double the number of exercises from the previous year. The participation of additional countries in Freedom Shield 2025 has yet to be announced.

Though the Trump administration has publicly indicated interest in reopening dialogue with the DPRK, activists say that the expansion of Freedom Shield, along with other military exercises like Polaris Hammer, demonstrates a lack of sincerity towards diplomacy. Organizers warn that the administration's recent joint statement with the Republic of Korea and Japan—reaffirming its commitment to the Japan-South Korea-U.S. trilateral security cooperation (JAKU.S.), and to strengthening the international sanctions regime against the DPRK—closely mirrors the Biden

administration's Korea policy, which intensified the tensions between the two Koreas.

In light of this, the U.S. Out of Korea campaign is calling for the cancellation of the Freedom Shield 25 military exercises, and the end of U.S. military aggression of all forms against the Korean people. [Over 100 U.S. organizations have endorsed a statement](#) calling on President Trump to abide by these demands.

Winter Oh, Nodutdol for Korean Community Development said, "While the South Korean people are locked in a battle for their democracy during President Yoon Seok Yeol's impeachment crisis, the Trump administration is moving forward with extremely aggressive war drills in Korea called Freedom Shield. This March 1, hundreds of thousands of people in South Korea mobilized against President Yoon and Freedom Shield. We stand in solidarity with the South Korean people's call to end all U.S.-South Korea joint military exercises, and we further demand an end to the U.S. military occupation in Korea."

Marc Botenga, Member of the European Parliament for Belgium said, "While, traditionally, some European countries participate in Freedom Shield, I believe European countries should not send forces that will escalate tensions on the other side of the world. They should concentrate on building peace, through diplomacy and disarmament. And there is already a lot to be done in this sense, both in Europe and its immediate neighbourhood."

Manolo de los Santos, Executive Director of The People's Forum said, "While Trump calls for peace, his rhetoric is overshadowed by war threats. The forthcoming U.S. War Games on the Korean Peninsula pose a grave risk not only to global peace but also to the sovereignty and dignity of the Korean people. On March 1st, we must unite in solidarity with the Korean people and their movements, affirming our commitment to peace and a future without occupation."

Ket Maarte of BAYAN Northeast said, “BAYAN stands in solidarity with our Korean comrades in their demands to cancel Freedom Shield 25 and remove U.S. military out of Korean land. It is a shame that the Philippines was one out of the 12 nations to participate in the U.S.-ROK exercises last year. But it is not surprising that our government is complicit in the ongoing militarism against the Korean working class. The Filipino people know all too well what it is like to have our land, sea, and people exploited for the interests of U.S. imperialism. It is imperative that we show our solidarity in the genuine liberation of the Korean and Filipino working class! Because if the U.S. falls in one, the U.S. falls in all.”

Source: [NODUTDOL](#)

