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# World News: U.S., South Korea Cancel August Military Exercise

Lubold, Gordon; Gordon, Michael R . Wall Street Journal , Eastern edition; New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]19 June 2018: A.16.

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## FULL TEXT

WASHINGTON -- The Pentagon said Monday that it had agreed with South Korea to cancel an important military exercise that was scheduled for later this summer, in keeping with President Donald Trump's pledge to halt war games while talks are under way with North Korea.

Thousands of American and South Korean troops were expected to participate in the exercise, the American portion of which is called Freedom Guardian. Mr. Trump surprised the Pentagon and other administration aides by announcing after his summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week that he wanted to halt major maneuvers between the U.S. and South Korea, calling them expensive and provocative.

"Consistent with President Trump's commitment and in concert with our Republic of Korea ally, the United States military has suspended all planning for this August's defensive 'wargame,'" Pentagon chief spokeswoman Dana White said in a statement Monday. "We are still coordinating additional actions. No decisions on subsequent wargames have been made."

Ms. White indicated there would be a meeting at the Pentagon this week between Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton. "There is no impact on Pacific exercises outside of the Korean Peninsula," she said.

A spokesman for South Korea's defense ministry confirmed the decision, saying Seoul had agreed with Washington to suspend the August exercises.

Mr. Trump had pondered the prospect of halting such exercises after the suggestion was first made to him last summer by Russian President Vladimir Putin, according to U.S. officials. Both Russia and China are on the record as saying they would like the U.S. to freeze exercises, and North Korea has long complained about the maneuvers, calling them proof of U.S. "ambition for military confrontation" against North Korea in a commentary on May 29.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said one government official. "But it is a surprise to me that the United States would consider this an appealing point to concede on because it is 100% what Russia and China have been pushing on our senior leadership and we've pushed back and said that it's not appropriate."

But other administration officials cast the move as a way to advance diplomacy with Pyongyang following North Korea's decision earlier this year to unilaterally suspend nuclear and missile tests. Mr. Mattis and other officials have worked to dissuade Mr. Trump from removing the 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea and the president said in

Singapore that he had no immediate plans to withdraw them.

Exercises are considered an important aspect of the U.S.-South Korean relationship and help maintain military readiness, U.S. military officials have said. Officials are studying other ways to keep up the military's capabilities, such as smaller-scale exercises.

Credit: By Gordon Lubold and Michael R. Gordon

## DETAILS

<b>Subject:</b>	Military exercises; Presidents; Armed forces
<b>Location:</b>	North Korea Russia United States--US Singapore Korean Peninsula China South Korea
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