S.Korea, US plan preparatory drills next week

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South Korea and the US plan to kick off preliminary military drills next week ahead of their major combined exercise later this month, informed sources said on Tuesday.  
  
The allies are set to begin the four-day South Korea-led crisis management drills on Tuesday in the run-up to the Ulchi Freedom Shied (UFS) exercise set to run from August 22-September 1, Yonhap News Agency quoted the sources as saying.  
  
Led by South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff, the drills are designed to practice a set of procedures to respond to possible pre-war crisis scenarios.  
  
They are a computer simulation training based on the allies' wartime contingency plans.  
  
The UFS involves two parts -- the first on repelling attacks and defending the greater Seoul area, and the other on counterattack operations.  
  
The upcoming exercise comes as the allies are striving to strengthen combined defence through measures, including expanding and publicising training programs, amid concerns the North could escalate tensions by conducting a nuclear test or other provocative acts.

Meanwhile, North Korea last week condemned US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi's visit to the inter-Korean truce village of Panmunjom.  
  
In a statement, Jo Yong-sam, director general of the Foreign Ministry's press and information department, also criticized Pelosi for talking about "strong and expanded deterrent" against threats from North Korea during her trip to South Korea last week.  
  
She made a two-day visit here from Wednesday following a trip to Taiwan. She had talks with National Assembly Speaker Kim Jin-pyo and a phone call with President Yoon Suk-yeol.  
  
Pelosi then visited the Joint Security Area of Panmunjom inside the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ).  
  
It demonstrates the "hostile policy of the current U.S. administration towards the DPRK", the North's official said in the statement carried by Pyongyang's state-run Korean Central News Agency.  
  
Pelosi, who is "the worst destroyer of international peace and stability had incited the atmosphere of confrontation with Russia during her visit to Ukraine in April, and incurred the wrath of the Chinese people for her recent junket to Taiwan", Jo said.  
  
He warned that it "would be a fatal mistake for her to think that she can go scot-free in the Korean Peninsula. The US will have to pay dearly for all the sources of trouble spawned by her wherever she went".