

US-Philippines Military Drills Begin Amid Protests Crisis



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MANILA: The Philippines and the United States on Monday launched their annual “Balikatan”

joint military exercises in Manila, amid rising fuel costs and public protests over economic

hardship.

The drills, involving more than 17,000 troops, also include forces from Australia, Canada, France,

Japan and New Zealand, and will continue until May 8.

Protesters gathered outside the Armed Forces headquarters, urging an end to the exercises and calling for the withdrawal of US troops. Activists warned that close alignment with Washington could heighten regional tensions.

The exercises come as the Philippines faces an energy crisis, with the government declaring a national emergency in March amid global supply disruptions linked to the Middle East conflict. Critics have also called on authorities to prioritise economic relief and address worsening living conditions, as public discontent grows over foreign military presence and domestic challenges.