US–Japan joint military exercise 'Keen Sword 27' (19–29 Oct 2026) – seven partner nations also take part

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News

Japan's Self-Defense Forces (JSDF) and US forces began the bilateral exercise 'Keen Sword 27' on 19 Oct 2026; it runs to 29 Oct. Japan fields about 45,000 personnel, 6,100 vehicles, 40 vessels and 260 aircraft; the US about 11,000 troops. Seven partners – Australia, Canada, France, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand and the Philippines – take part; South Korea and the UK are observers. Main areas: the south-western island chain from Kyushu to near Taiwan (incl. Okinawa), the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea. US Marines have taken the NMESIS anti-ship missile system to Yonaguni, Japan's westernmost island, for the first time.

Key facts

Dates	19 – 29 Oct 2026
Exercise controllers	Adm. Tateki Tawara (JSDF Joint Operations Command); Adm. Stephen Koehler (US Pacific Fleet)
Japan's share	About 45,000 personnel, 6,100 vehicles, 40 vessels, 260 aircraft
US share	About 11,000 troops; carrier USS Theodore Roosevelt

Partners	Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Netherlands, New Zealand, Philippines; observers: South Korea, UK
History	Since FY1985; field and command-post exercises alternate; this is the 18th field training exercise

Background

- Japan's Constitution (in force from 3 May 1947) – Article 9 renounces war and war potential. Hence Japan's forces are called the 'Self-Defense Forces' (1954). Japan's parliament is the 'National Diet'.
- Alliance: under the 1960 US–Japan Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security, US forces are stationed in Japan; Yokosuka is home of the US 7th Fleet.
- Geography: the Nansei (Ryukyu) island chain runs from Kyushu towards Taiwan; its westernmost island, Yonaguni, is about 110 km from Taiwan. The East China Sea and Taiwan Strait are among the world's tense sea zones.
- India–Japan: 'Dharma Guardian' – bilateral army exercise (7th edition from 24 Feb 2026, Chaubattia, Uttarakhand). JIMEX – naval exercise. 'Malabar' – began in 1992 between India and the US; Japan became a permanent member in 2015, Australia joined from 2020.

Tamil Nadu link: the exercise has no direct Tamil Nadu link. But Japan–Tamil Nadu ties are strong – Phase I of Chennai Metro Rail was built with loan assistance from the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

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