

# *Philippines, U.S. Launch Military Drills; Filipinos Protest Troop Deal*

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Manila, May 7 (RHC)-- More than 5,000 U.S. and Filipino soldiers have launched two weeks of joint military drills in the Philippines. The annual drills opened one week after the unveiling of a 10-year agreement to revive the U.S. military presence in the Philippines.

Activists protested the deal outside the Filipino army headquarters. One of the organizers of the protests said that U.S. forces can use Philippine facilities, rent free, tax free -- "turning the whole place into a military base." She noted that even private defense contractors are given tax perks.

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