

Amid Indo-Pak strains, Russian forces arrive in Pakistan for first-ever joint military drill

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Islamabad: Russian forces on Friday arrived in Pakistan for its first ever joint military drill that begins on Saturday, a military spokesperson said.

â â â "A contingent of Russian ground forces arrived Pakistan for first ever Pak-Russian joint exercise," tweeted Lt Gen Asim Saleem Bajwa, the director-general of the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the media wing of the Pakistan Armed Forces.

The military exercise in which around 200 Russian army men are participating, was earlier reported to have been cancelled in the wake of the killing of 18 soldiers in the September 18 terror attack on an Indian army base in Jammu and Kashmir.

The two-week military drill named 'Friendship 2016' is the first between the two former Cold War rivals. It will continue till October 7, according to the Pakistan media.

Militaries of the two countries have not revealed much about the drill. But it is said to take place in "mountainous areas".

The exercise is a signal that Moscow and Islamabad are deepening their military cooperation.

"This obviously indicates a desire on both sides to broaden defense and military-technical cooperation," Pakistan's ambassador to Russia, Qazi Khalilullah, told a Russian news agency last week.

- (With IANS inputs)