



Swift Response 2025: the Folgore jumps into Lithuania

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On May 16, 2025, a massive joint airdrop operation took place as part of the multinational exercise *Swift Response 2025*, involving 1,650 paratroopers from five NATO nations, including Italy, Germany, France, the Netherlands, and the United States. The exercise took place at the Memel drop zone, located in the Gaiziunai training area in Lithuania.

Operation Objectives and Allied Participation

The main objective of this exercise was to train forces to rapidly project an entry force into a hostile area, without warning, testing the operational readiness of the troops in complex scenarios. The operation included the use of strategic and tactical transport aircraft such as the C130J and C17, with contributions from Italian and U.S. air forces. The exercise simulated a rapid intervention, a fundamental capability in NATO's collective defense operations.

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Swift Response 2025 is one of the main exercises of the broader *DEFENDER 25* program, involving U.S. forces and 29 allied and partner nations. From May 11 to June 24, 2025, the exercise takes place in a joint and multinational context, with tactical maneuvers and long-range operations aimed at strengthening NATO forces' operational readiness.

In the context of *Swift Response*, the participating troops tested their interoperability and airborne operation capabilities, such as simultaneous paratrooper drops in the territories of Lithuania, Finland, Norway, Sweden, and Latvia. In Lithuania, the operation also saw the integration of advanced medical capabilities with the setup of a field hospital in simulated CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear) risk conditions.

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The Folgore Paratroopers Brigade at the Heart of the Operation

One of the key forces in the success of *Swift Response 2025* was the participation of the Folgore Paratroopers Brigade, which played a crucial role in securing the drop zone and rapidly projecting forces. This operation confirmed the high level of technical and psychophysical preparation of the Italian troops, who acted in close cooperation with allied forces.

The *Folgore* is indeed one of the elite units of the Italian Army, highly specialized in airborne operations, capable of responding swiftly to crisis and emergency situations. Thanks to its proven experience and preparation, the Brigade played a fundamental role in ensuring the security and correct execution of the operation in Lithuania.

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Combined Operations and Power Projection

The exercise saw the integration of airborne operations with medical support and live fire. Combined air-ground operations, including long-range artillery exercises with the HIMARS system, highlighted NATO's ability to coordinate rapid responses to complex scenarios. The support of tactical and strategic aircraft, including the C-17 Globemaster III, allowed the insertion of parachuted forces and heavy equipment into hard-to-access areas, strengthening NATO's collective deterrence.

As stated by General Christopher Donahue, Commander of U.S. Forces in Europe and Africa, "Everything we demonstrate with our Allies and partners, we can replicate globally." The *Swift Response 2025* exercise underscored the importance of power projection on an international level, with the aim of strengthening deterrence posture and demonstrating the operational readiness of an alliance preparing to respond to any crisis or conflict. The ability to operate in different geographical areas, such as the Baltic and High North, is essential to ensure the region's security and stability.



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Conclusions

The *Swift Response 2025* exercise highlighted the effectiveness of multinational integration, air operations, and rapid force projection capabilities. The operations strengthened not only NATO's operational readiness but also the bonds between the paratrooper forces of Allied countries, cementing cooperation within the *airborne community*. Italy, with its Folgore Paratroopers Brigade, confirms itself as a key component in maintaining collective security and the ability to respond to emerging challenges in an increasingly complex international context.

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