



US Special Forces conduct HALO airborne operations in Indonesia: Washington strengthens Indo-Pacific presence

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US and Indonesian Special Forces jumped from high altitude as part of **Super Garuda Shield 2026**, the major multinational exercise underway in Indonesia that represents one of the most significant milestones in military cooperation between Washington and Jakarta.

The activity took place on **September 1st at Gatot Subroto air base, in Lampung province**, where operators from the Indonesian Armed Forces and the **U.S. Army Special Forces** conducted an infiltration airborne exercise using **high-altitude free fall** technique, followed by a simulated operation against enemy installations.

According to statements from the Indonesian Armed Forces, the activity aimed to increase operational readiness of units and simultaneously strengthen military cooperation between

Indonesia and the United States.

Special Forces in free fall

The airborne phase involved **13 operators from Indonesian elite units**, coming from three different components of the Armed Forces.

Among them were personnel from **Kopassus**, the Command of the Indonesian Army Special Forces, personnel from **Taifib**, the amphibious reconnaissance component of the Navy, and operators from **Korpasgat**, the specialized troops of the Indonesian Air Force.

Operating alongside them were personnel from the **U.S. Army Special Forces**, the Green Berets.

After infiltrating in free fall, the operators reached their respective target zones and immediately proceeded to the second phase of the exercise, simulating the **sabotage of enemy installations**.

The chief of the Indonesian Armed Forces information center, Major General Muhammad Nas, emphasized how the activity simultaneously represents a tool for operational training and "defense diplomacy", through the integration of units from partner countries.

Not just Special Forces: the 11th Airborne also deployed

Super Garuda Shield 2026 sees a parallel significant presence of conventional US airborne units.

Among these is the **1st Battalion, 501st Infantry Regiment**, belonging to the **2nd Infantry Brigade Combat Team (Airborne) of the 11th Airborne Division**, deployed in the same period at the **Baturaja Combat Training Center**.

The paratroopers of the 11th Airborne are conducting, alongside Indonesian, Australian, and Indian personnel, survival and movement activities in the jungle.

The distinction is important: the **11th Airborne Division does not belong to US Special Forces**, but represents a large conventional airborne unit of the U.S. Army, oriented toward rapid force projection and employment in particularly challenging environments.

Special Forces, on the other hand, belong to the component of **US Special Operations Forces** and carry out specialized missions, including unconventional warfare, special reconnaissance, and assistance to partner forces.

Super Garuda Shield grows

The 2026 edition of **Super Garuda Shield** involves, according to the Indonesian Armed Forces, **4,743 military personnel from 21 countries**.

Activities are distributed among Jakarta, Bandung, Lampung, South Sumatra, and North Kalimantan and comprise a total of twelve different training areas.

Beyond Special Forces operations and airborne activities, the program includes jungle training, cyber defense, land and naval operations, air mobility activities, and humanitarian assistance and disaster response scenarios.

Among participating countries are, in addition to Indonesia and the United States, Australia, Japan, South Korea, United Kingdom, France, Germany, Canada, India, Singapore, and various ASEAN countries.

The scope of the exercise shows how Super Garuda Shield has by now transcended the dimension of a simple bilateral activity between Washington and Jakarta, progressively transforming into an important multilateral military event in the Indo-Pacific.

Washington looks to the Indo-Pacific

The exercise's growth also occurs at a particularly significant moment for US-Indonesia relations.

Super Garuda Shield 2026 is indeed the first edition following the announcement, last April, of a new defense partnership between Washington and Jakarta, which includes US support for modernization of the Indonesian Armed Forces and personnel training.

The presence of Special Forces, paratroopers, air mobile units, and multinational components thus assumes a significance that goes beyond the single training event.

For Washington, Indonesia represents a particularly important partner because of its geographic position: the immense archipelago lies between the Indian Ocean and Pacific and is traversed or

flanked by some of Asia's major strategic maritime routes.

The strengthening of interoperability with Jakarta thus fits into the broader American strategy aimed at consolidating a network of partners capable of operating together in the Indo-Pacific.

Indonesia's balance between Washington and Beijing

The picture, however, is more complex than a simple alignment of Indonesia with the United States.

Jakarta continues in fact to pursue a traditionally non-aligned foreign policy and maintains important political, economic, and military relations also with **China**.

Precisely while cooperation with Washington is increasing, Indonesia continues therefore to cultivate relations also with Beijing.

This is one of the geopolitically most interesting elements of Super Garuda Shield: the United States is increasing the depth and complexity of military cooperation with one of Southeast Asia's strategically most important countries, without Jakarta however intending to renounce its autonomy in relations with great powers.

In this scenario, the high-altitude jump of American and Indonesian Special Forces represents a small but significant snapshot of a much broader phenomenon: **the growing military interoperability built by the United States with Indo-Pacific partners**.

Sources

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[Official photos and DVIDS information sheet](#)