

# Exercise Garuda VIII

## Indo–French Air Combat Training



**E**xercise Garuda VIII, the eighth iteration of the bilateral Indo–French air combat training exercise, was conducted at Base Aérienne 118 Mont–de–Marsan, France, from 16–27 November 2025. This biennial exercise represented the continuation of a 22 year partnership between the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the French Air and Space Force (FASF). Approximately 500 airmen from both nations were brought together to conduct complex tactical air operations in a challenging operational environment. Mont–de–Marsan was selected due to its optimal location near the Atlantic coast and extensive infrastructure. For the exercise, India deployed six Su–30MKI fighters of 15 Squadron from Sirsa Air Force Station in northwestern India to southern France, where the FASF operates the Dassault Rafale.

### Historical context and strategic framework

The exercise was opened by Air Division General Julien Sabéné, representing the FASF, who highlighted the historical context of Franco–Indian military aviation

cooperation. His address acknowledged the long–standing operational relationship between the two air forces, noting the shared aircraft inventories that have defined this partnership over decades—including Jaguars, Mirage 2000s, and the Rafale. The exercise design enabled two weeks of intensive interaction between the Indian Su–30MKI and French Rafale platforms, supplemented by additional French assets including tankers, transport aircraft, and helicopters deployed from eight different French airbases. As General Sabéné noted, “Having about 500 airmen from our two air forces training side by side” was intended to build operational bonds through shared tactical challenges that transcend theoretical cooperation and forge practical interoperability. The French commander concluded his opening remarks by acknowledging the extensive planning required and extending recognition to airbase commander Colonel Sergeti and his staff.

Ambassador Singla, Ambassador of India to France, provided the diplomatic framework contextualising Exercise Garuda VIII within the broader Indo–French bilateral relationship. His remarks at the exercise