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Washington Summit on Ukraine

On August 18, 2025, a significant diplomatic meeting was held at the White House, involving U.S. President Donald Trump, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, and several top European leaders. The agenda focused on intensifying efforts to bring an end to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. This meeting followed Trump's earlier summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Alaska, where negotiations for a ceasefire had stalled. It also occurred shortly before a hurried visit from a European delegation to Washington.



The August 18 meeting was notable for a relatively more cordial tone between Trump and Zelenskyy compared to their strained interaction earlier in the year. Zelenskyy personally acknowledged the efforts of the U.S. first lady in humanitarian matters, such as securing the return of Ukrainian children detained in Russia. At the press conference, Trump reiterated his belief that Zelenskyy could end the war "immediately" and expressed optimism about achieving a settlement through direct talks involving Russia, Ukraine, and the United States. Zelenskyy expressed openness to any dialogue format that could promote peace, including a trilateral meeting with Putin and Trump.

A core focus of the meeting was future security guarantees for Ukraine. Trump pledged robust U.S. support for European efforts to bolster Ukraine's security, describing Europe as the "first line of defense" for Ukraine and promising significant assistance. While he suggested that the nature of U.S. involvement might not necessarily be NATO-led, he emphasized that the U.S. would remain actively involved, providing "good protection" to Ukraine. Trump marked a shift from his prior stance by downplaying the necessity of an immediate ceasefire before peace talks, contrasting sharply with his previous demands for rapid ceasefire and threats of sanctions against Russia in case of continued hostilities.

The meeting progressed from bilateral talks between Trump and Zelenskyy to a multilateral discussion including European leaders such as European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, and others. This diverse European delegation underscored the importance of unified Western support for Ukraine. They stressed the need for a ceasefire as a necessary step before any lasting peace deal could be reached. The European leaders emphasized prisoner exchanges and reiterated their backing of multilateral security guarantees involving Europe and the United States, with some vocal about deploying troops on the ground to ensure peace and deter future Russian aggression.

Key European figures displayed a mix of ideological spectrums—from more conservative to liberal—with all uniting in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and a peaceful resolution that does not reward Russian territorial gains. For instance, Macron strongly opposed any peace deal that entailed territorial concessions by

Ukraine, calling such moves "capitulation." Meanwhile, leaders like Finnish President Alexander Stubb and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, who were ideologically closer or more attuned to Trump, emphasized the shared commitment of "Team Europe" and "Team United States" towards Ukraine, highlighting transatlantic solidarity.

An important outcome of the meeting was Trump's announcement that he had initiated calls with Putin to facilitate a future summit between Putin and Zelenskyy, aiming for a direct negotiation. Zelenskyy was open to such dialogue provided Ukraine's sovereignty and security were not compromised, while European leaders expressed caution, emphasizing that Ukraine should not be diplomatically isolated in the process.

An agreement was reached on organizing a series of meetings, starting with a planned bilateral summit between Putin and Zelenskyy, followed by the trilateral meeting with Trump, and subsequent broader talks including European and regional stakeholders. The aim is to create a sustained diplomatic process to manage the conflict's resolution. Trump expressed confidence that a collective agreement could be reached to prevent further aggression, but acknowledged that any discussion on territory would ultimately be Ukraine's decision. This had particular resonance because of the substantial portions of Ukrainian territory currently under Russian control, especially after Ukraine's own counteroffensive reversed some Russian advances.

In relation to the trilateral summit on the Ukraine conflict, Russia has maintained an ambiguous yet cautious stance. Kremlin officials, including Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, have stressed the importance of a gradual and carefully staged negotiation process. They propose starting with expert-level talks rather than immediately moving to high-level summits. Although President Putin has expressed a willingness to engage in direct negotiations, this is complicated by his long-held belief that President Zelenskyy is illegitimate. Additionally, Russian internal messaging frames Ukraine as historically a part of Russia, which creates political and public resistance in Russia to the idea of meeting with Zelenskyy.

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung's Visit to Japan and the US

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung made an official visit to Japan and the United States from 23-26 August 2025. This was the first visit of President Myung for bilateral summits with the two close partner nations after coming to power in June 2025.



The previous administration in South Korea, led by Yoon Suk Yeol from 2022 to 2025, made significant strides in strengthening ties with Japan. Despite the historical tensions between South Korea and Japan, the Yoon administration played a pivotal role in fostering trilateral cooperation among Washington, Seoul, and Tokyo. Since June 2024, the three countries have been conducting a trilateral military exercise called "Freedom Edge," which

encompasses multiple domains, including maritime, air, underwater, and cyberspace. This unprecedented military collaboration aims to maintain peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region and counter the nuclear threats posed by North Korea.

The efforts to develop closer ties among these countries seem to be continuing under the current administration of Lee Jae Myung in South Korea. President Lee has characterized his foreign policy as “pragmatic diplomacy” and has expressed a desire to further strengthen relationships with both Japan and the United States.

President Lee Jae Myung went on a two-day visit to Japan in August. During his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, he emphasized the need for a stronger relationship between the two countries. President Lee referred to the bilateral ties between Seoul and Tokyo as “inseparable partners.”

The discussions between President Lee and Prime Minister Ishiba lasted three and a half hours, focusing mainly on South Korea's response to the tariffs imposed by the United States, as well as ways to enhance economic and security cooperation between South Korea and Japan. They also addressed common concerns, such as the challenges of an ageing population, low birth rates, disaster management, and cyber and nuclear threats from North Korea. Additionally, they discussed the deepening military alliance between Russia and North Korea during the summit. During his visit to the United States, President Lee Jae-myung focused on economic and security issues. The summit between Seoul and Washington took place against the backdrop of increasing pressure from the United States on South Korea to enhance its defense contributions. The second Donald Trump administration has been seeking support from South Korea to revive the American shipbuilding industry. In this context, South Korea's Lee administration has pledged to invest \$150 billion in the American shipbuilding sector, a project named “Make American Shipbuilding Great Again” (MASGA). Reportedly, this South Korean investment in American shipbuilding is being used as a bargaining chip to negotiate lower tariffs that the United States has imposed on South Korea. Earlier, in April 2025, the Donald Trump administration had enacted 25 percent “reciprocal tariffs” on goods imported from South Korea.

The Trump administration has also been pushing for the greater role of the United States-South Korea military alliance beyond the Korean Peninsula, and counter the emerging security challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, particularly China's rising military might.

Before his meeting with Donald Trump, South Korean President Lee Jae Myung expressed concerns about the challenges of accepting “strategic flexibility” within the United States-South Korea military alliance. He indicated that redefining the role of the approximately 28,500 American troops stationed in South Korea would be difficult. Additionally, it was reported that discussions regarding a nuclear agreement between Washington and Seoul might take place. South Korea has been seeking the right to reprocess spent fuel from its nuclear power plants, which is currently restricted under the existing nuclear agreement between the two nations.

During the talks between President Trump and President Lee, various issues were discussed, including trade, security, defense equipment, shipbuilding, energy, technology, and North Korea.

North Korea strongly criticized the meeting between President Lee Jae Myung and Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba, labeling President Lee as "a servant of the United States." In a commentary published in North Korean state media in August, the South Korea-Japan summit and President Lee's pro-Japan policies were condemned. North Korea has consistently opposed the trilateral military cooperation between the United States, Japan, and South Korea. Despite the second Trump administration's desire to revive talks with the Kim Jong-un regime in Pyongyang, North Korea's response has remained muted. The South Korean government under President Lee Jae Myung has also attempted to normalize relations with North Korea; however, inter-Korean relations remain strained.

Super Garuda Shield 2025- Indonesia's 'Largest Ever' Multinational Exercise

The 2025 iteration of the Super Garuda Shield exercise, co-hosted by the Indonesian National Armed Forces and the United States Indo-Pacific Command,



represents one of the most comprehensive demonstrations of multinational military cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. Since its founding in 2007 as a bilateral exercise between Indonesia and the United States, and its expansion in 2022 into a broader multilateral format, Super Garuda Shield has become a crucial platform for strengthening defence relationships, improving interoperability, and promoting collective

security in an increasingly contested strategic environment.

The 2025 edition, the largest to date, includes 6,500 troops from over a dozen countries, such as major Indo-Pacific and beyond-region partners like Australia, Japan, India, Singapore, South Korea, the United Kingdom, France, Canada, Germany, Brazil, and New Zealand, along with observers from several Asian nations. This increased participation demonstrates not only a wider network of partnerships but also a shared commitment to uphold sovereignty, maintain territorial integrity, and ensure freedom of navigation, particularly in light of rising geopolitical tensions.

Conducted over 11 days across multiple locations, including Jakarta, South Sumatra, and the Riau archipelago, the drills encompass a broad spectrum of operations. These range from large-scale land and amphibious operations to maritime security patrols, cyber defense simulations, humanitarian assistance missions, and combined live-fire exercises. Such diversity highlights the multidimensional nature of the challenges faced in the Indo-Pacific, where threats span conventional conflict, non-traditional security challenges, and grey-zone tactics designed to undermine order without triggering direct confrontation.

Indonesian commanders have emphasized that the exercise is not only a rehearsal of combat readiness but also a laboratory for developing doctrine, procedures, and human capabilities that allow diverse forces to coordinate smoothly under stress. By practicing standardized operating procedures, holding pre-exercise workshops, and building interoperable communication systems, the participating militaries are investing in their ability to act quickly, jointly, and effectively if crises arise.

The significance of the Super Garuda Shield lies not only in its operational scope but also in its broader strategic messaging. As unilateral attempts to change the regional status quo through coercion or intimidation become more frequent—especially in contested maritime areas like the South China Sea—this exercise serves as a collective refusal to let hegemonic practices undermine the principles of open seas and lawful navigation.

For Indonesia, this exercise holds significant importance on multiple levels. Firstly, it supports the modernization of the Indonesian military (TNI) and prepares it to defend the nation's vast archipelagic territory. Activities such as amphibious operations in the Riau Islands, urban warfare training in South Sumatra, and naval drills focused on gray-zone threats demonstrate Indonesia's strategic adaptation to its geography and its need to protect essential sea lanes. Additionally, by hosting and leading such a large-scale multinational drill, Indonesia aims to establish itself as a central player in regional security while maintaining its long-standing policy of non-alignment.

The exercise emphasizes that the Indo-Pacific region's maritime security and freedom of navigation are not just abstract concepts but essential needs. The sea lanes that traverse Southeast Asia are among the most heavily trafficked in the world, supporting global trade and economic stability. Any disruption caused by coercion, blockades, or attempts at hegemonic control over these routes would have far-reaching consequences beyond the region. By conducting joint operations in maritime spaces, Super Garuda Shield reinforces the idea that protecting open seas is a shared responsibility and that freedom of navigation is a non-negotiable principle of the regional order. The involvement of extra-regional powers such as the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and Canada further highlights that security in the Indo-Pacific is closely linked to global stability. Leaders from both Indonesia and the United States have remarked that the exercise serves as a "platform of trust" and a "bridge of friendship," emphasizing that its ultimate goal is to prevent conflict by showcasing preparedness and unity.

For Indonesia, the exercise enhances its role as a responsible stakeholder and a leader in shaping regional security discourse. Eventually, Super Garuda Shield 2025 embodies the strategic essence of contemporary Indo-Pacific security: unity against coercion, preparedness against uncertainty, and a collective affirmation that the right of free navigation is not a privilege granted by the powerful but a universal principle that underpins stability, sovereignty, and shared prosperity.