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Australia, France Bolster Defence Ties in Talisman Sabre

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Australian and French soldiers celebrated a historic milestone during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025 in Townsville, marking the first participation of mainland French Armed Forces in the multinational military exercise.

In the Townsville Field Training Area, Queensland, Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel and French Armed Forces forged a significant military partnership during Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025, held from July 13 to August 4, 2025, as reported by Mirage News. This 11th iteration of the biennial exercise, the largest to date with over 40,000 personnel from 19 nations, saw the historic inclusion of mainland French troops, specifically from the French Marine Corps' 21st Regiment and the 3rd Division, integrated into Australia's 3rd Brigade. The collaboration, a first for mainland French forces in the

exercise, underscored a deepening defence relationship between the two nations, according to the Australian Department of Defence.

Captain Antoine Lefeuvre, Company Commander of the French 21st Regiment, described the exercise as a landmark event, emphasizing its scale and integration. “It was a remarkable experience due to the exercise’s magnitude and the Australian command’s welcoming approach,” Lefeuvre told Mirage News, noting his troops’ full embedding within Australian battalions. The exercise, spanning Queensland, the Northern Territory, and Papua New Guinea, included amphibious landings, air operations, and the first live firing of Australia’s M142 High Mobility Artillery Rocket System (HIMARS), per GlobalSecurity.org. French paratroopers also joined a long-distance Joint Force Entry Operation with U.S. and German forces, deploying 335 paratroopers to Charters Towers.

Brigadier Andrew McLennan, Australian 3rd Brigade commander, highlighted the strategic importance of the partnership, crediting years of planning. “The integration of French forces under Australian command exceeded expectations,” McLennan said, expressing ambitions for further joint exercises, including in mainland France, as reported by Mirage News. The exercise, which concluded in Lae, Papua New Guinea, on August 4, 2025, also featured a Joint Personnel Recovery activity with PNG forces, showcasing regional cooperation. Critics argue such large-scale exercises strain local resources, but proponents, including Vice Admiral Justin Jones, emphasized their role in ensuring Indo-Pacific stability, per the Australian Department of Defence. This milestone sets the stage for enhanced Australia-France defence collaboration.