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IAF Multinational Air Exercises: Tarang Shakti, Pitch Black, Red Flag and More

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A fighter pilot can train alone for years. But real wars are rarely fought alone. So air forces fly together in big practice battles, called exercises. India’s Air Force (IAF) now hosts its own and joins many abroad. This lesson sorts the main ones by place and partner.

IAF air exercises, at a glance

Four facts that clear up most exam questions

01
Tarang Shakti

India’s own multinational air exercise. First held in 2024.

02
Pitch Black

Australia’s night-flying exercise. The IAF first sent fighters in 2018.

03
Red Flag

The US Air Force’s big combat drill, in Nevada and Alaska.

04
Garuda

India-France air exercise. First held at Gwalior in 2003.



An IAF Su-30MKI, a French Rafale and an IAF Tejas fly together during Exercise Garuda VII at Jodhpur in 2022. Photo: Government of India, Wikimedia Commons (GODL-India).

Air exerciseA practice battle where air forces fly mock missions together.
BilateralBetween two countries only.
MultinationalMany countries take part at once.
InteroperabilityBeing able to work smoothly with another country's forces.
ObserverA country that watches but does not fly.

Why fly with other countries?

Must Know
Picture two football teams that have never met. Put them on one side, and they will trip over each other. Air forces face the same problem.

Each air force has its own radios, codes and habits. In a real crisis, they may need to fly side by side. So they practise first.

- Pilots learn how **partners plan and fight**.
- Ground crews swap **repair and maintenance** tips.
- Mock battles use a **Blue team** (friends) against a **Red team** (the enemy).
- Each exercise also builds **trust** between countries.

Exams love to ask one thing: **which exercise goes with which country?** The rest of this lesson sorts that out.

What is Tarang Shakti?

Current Affairs
For years, the IAF mostly travelled to other countries' exercises. Tarang Shakti changed that. It is the **IAF's own multinational air exercise**.

The first edition, 2024

The first Tarang Shakti was held in 2024. It was the first multinational air exercise India ever hosted. It ran in two phases (Wikipedia).

- Phase 1: **Sulur**, Tamil Nadu, in August 2024.
- Phase 2: **Jodhpur**, Rajasthan, from 30 August to 14 September 2024.

The second edition, 2026

Tarang Shakti 2026 runs from **26 September to 12 October 2026**. It is based at Air Force Station **Jodhpur** and nearby bases (Akashvani News).

- The 22 September announcement listed **eight** countries sending aircraft: Australia, Bangladesh, France, Germany, Greece, Sri Lanka,

the UAE and the USA.

- The Ministry of Defence report of 12 October 2026 names **seven** friendly foreign countries: Australia, Bangladesh, France, Germany, Sri Lanka, the UAE and the USA.
- **32** observer nations came as well.

> **Quick check 1.** Q1. True or False: Tarang Shakti is an exercise hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What is Pitch Black?

Must Know

Northern Australia is huge and almost empty. That makes it perfect for fighter jets. Here the Royal Australian Air Force hosts **Pitch Black**, every two years.

The name is a clue. The exercise stresses **flying at night**. It is held mainly from RAAF bases at **Darwin** and **Tindal** (PIB).

When did India join?

- For years, India only sent **observers**.
- In **2018**, the IAF flew there with fighters for the first time: four Su-30MKI jets.
- In **2026**, the IAF sent **Rafale** jets, with C-17 and IL-78 support aircraft.
- Pitch Black 2026 ran from **20 July to 7 August**. Air forces from over 20 nations took part.

Remember this: Pitch Black = Australia + night flying. “Pitch black” means very dark.

> **Quick check 2.** Q2. True or False: The IAF first took part in Pitch Black with fighter jets in 2018. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

What is Red Flag?

Good to Know
India and the USA practise air combat in two ways. One is a giant US event. The other is a two-country exercise.

Red Flag: the big US drill

Red Flag is run by the **US Air Force**. It began in 1975. Its home is **Nellis** Air Force Base in Nevada. A second version, **Red Flag-Alaska**, is held at Eielson Air Force Base (PIB).

- The IAF flew in Red Flag 2024 in **Alaska**, from 4 to 14 June.
- It sent **Rafale** jets.

- Singapore, the UK, the Netherlands and Germany also took part.

Cope India: India and the US alone

Cope India is a **bilateral** exercise between the IAF and the US Air Force. It is held in India. The first was at **Gwalior** in 2004 (PIB).

Cope India 2023 used three bases: Arjan Singh (Panagarh), Kalaikunda and Agra. Japanese aircrew came as observers.

> **Quick check 3.** Q3. True or False: Cope India is a multinational exercise held in Alaska. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Which are two-country exercises?

Must Know

Most IAF exercises are bilateral. Each has its own name. The easiest way to learn them is as pairs.

Exercise	Partner	Key fact
Garuda	France	First in 2003 at Gwalior. 8th edition in France, Nov 2025
Cope India	USA	First in 2004 at Gwalior
Indradhanush	UK	First in 2006 at Gwalior
Udara Shakti	Malaysia	2024 at Kuantan; 2026 also in Malaysia
Eastern Bridge	Oman	7th edition at Masirah, Sept 2024
Veer Guardian	Japan	2nd edition at Jodhpur, Sept 2026

Garuda: the oldest pair

Garuda is the IAF's exercise with the **French Air and Space Force**. The 8th edition, Garuda 25, was held at Mont-de-Marsan, France. It ran from 16 to 27 November 2025. The IAF flew Su-30MKI jets (PIB).

Udara Shakti and Veer Guardian

Udara Shakti is with the **Royal Malaysian Air Force**. In 2024, IAF Su-30MKI jets flew beside Malaysia's Su-30MKM jets at Kuantan (PIB).

Veer Guardian is with the **Japan Air Self-Defense Force**. In its 2026 edition at Jodhpur, the two air chiefs flew together in a Tejas formation. Japan's chief flew in a Tejas trainer.

> **Quick check 4.** Q4. True or False: Indradhanush is an air exercise between India and France. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Think it through, before reading on.** Why might India host Tarang Shakti, not just travel abroad?
>
> **Show the explanation**
>
> Hosting lets partners see Indian bases and Indian-made jets like the Tejas. It also makes India a leader, not just a guest.

Exam Angle

How have exams tested this?

> **Quick check 5.** Q5. True or False: Garuda Shakti is an exercise between Indian and Indonesian special forces. *(True or False?)*
>
> See answer ↓

Quick Q&A

Which country hosts Pitch Black?

Australia.

Where is Tarang Shakti 2026 based?

Air Force Station Jodhpur.

Garuda is with which country?

France.

Name the India-UK air exercise.

Indradhanush.

Name the India-Oman air exercise.

Eastern Bridge.

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MCQ on IAF Multinational Air Exercises

5 verified questions from this lesson.

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Practice MCQs

1. Consider the following statements about Exercise Tarang Shakti:

1. It is a multinational air exercise hosted by the Indian Air Force.

2. Its first edition was held in 2024.

3. Its 2026 edition is based at Air Force Station Sulur.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 1 only

C. 2 and 3 only

D. 1, 2 and 3

See answer ↓

2. Exercise Pitch Black, in which the Indian Air Force took part in July-August 2026, is hosted by which country?

A. Australia

B. United States

C. Malaysia

D. France

See answer ↓

3. Match the air exercise with India's partner country: A. Garuda B. Indradhanush C. Eastern Bridge D. Veer Guardian Partners: 1. United Kingdom 2. Japan 3. France 4. Oman

A. A-1, B-3, C-4, D-2

B. A-3, B-1, C-2, D-4

C. A-4, B-1, C-3, D-2

D. A-3, B-1, C-4, D-2

See answer ↓

4. In which year did the Indian Air Force first take part in Exercise Pitch Black with fighter aircraft?

A. 2014

B. 2008

C. 2022

D. 2018

See answer ↓

5. Assertion (A): Garuda Shakti is a bilateral air exercise between India and France. Reason (R): Exercise Garuda is held between the Indian Air Force and the French Air and Space Force.

Select the correct answer.

A. Both A and R are true, and R is the correct explanation of A

B. Both A and R are true, but R is not the correct explanation of A

C. A is false, but R is true

D. A is true, but R is false

See answer ↓

6. Exercise Pitch Black 2026, hosted by Australia, is what type of exercise?

A. Joint peacekeeping exercise

B. Multinational air combat exercise

C. Cyber defence exercise

D. Naval exercise

See answer ↓

7. How many Rafale fighter jets did India send to Exercise Pitch Black 2026?

A. 6

B. 8

C. 2

D. 4

See answer ↓

8. Exercise Udara Shakti 2026, in which the Indian Air Force took part in August 2026, is a bilateral air exercise with which country?

A. Australia

B. Malaysia

C. Singapore

D. Indonesia

See answer ↓

9. Where is the main venue of Tarang Shakti 2026, the IAF's multinational air exercise?

A. Air Force Station Hindan

B. Air Force Station Jamnagar

C. Air Force Station Jodhpur

D. Air Force Station Sulur

See answer ↓

10. 'Veer Guardian' is a bilateral air exercise between India and which country?

A. Australia

B. Japan

C. France

D. United States

See answer ↓

11. 'Garuda' is a joint air exercise between the Indian Air Force and?

A. Japan

B. France

C. Russia

D. Canada

See answer ↓

12. 'Red Flag' is the name of a joint air exercise India participates in, hosted by?

A. China

B. The USA

C. Japan

D. Saudi Arabia

See answer ↓

13. 'Indradhanush' is a bilateral air exercise between India and?

A. France

B. Israel

C. The UK

D. USA

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** Statements 1 and 2 are correct. Tarang Shakti is the IAF's own multinational air exercise, first held in 2024. Its 2026 edition is based at Air Force Station Jodhpur, not Sulur. Sulur hosted only the first phase of the 2024 edition. ↑ Q1
2. **A.** Pitch Black is hosted every two years by the Royal Australian Air Force in northern Australia. Its name reflects its focus on night flying. ↑ Q2
3. **D.** Garuda is with France, Indradhanush with the UK, Eastern Bridge with Oman, and Veer Guardian with Japan. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The IAF first flew in Pitch Black with fighters in 2018, sending four Su-30MKI jets. Earlier, it had attended only as an observer. ↑ Q4
5. **C.** A is false: Garuda Shakti is an India-Indonesia special forces exercise. R is true: Garuda, without 'Shakti', is the India-France air exercise. ↑ Q5
6. **B.** Pitch Black 2026 is a biennial multinational air combat exercise hosted by Australia, running 20 July to 7 August 2026. ↑ Q6
7. **D.** India's contingent included 4 Rafale fighter jets, 2 C-17 transport aircraft, and over 120 Air Warriors. ↑ Q7
8. **B.** Udara Shakti is held with the Royal Malaysian Air Force in Malaysia. Pitch Black, by contrast, is a multinational exercise hosted by Australia. ↑ Q8
9. **C.** Tarang Shakti 2026 is held at Air Force Station Jodhpur and nearby bases from 26 September to 12 October. ↑ Q9
10. **B.** Veer Guardian is the India-Japan air exercise. Its second edition was held at Jodhpur in September 2026. ↑ Q10
11. **B.** The Garuda exercise series is conducted with France. ↑ Q11
12. **B.** Red Flag is a major air combat exercise hosted by the United States. ↑ Q12
13. **C.** Indradhanush is a bilateral India-UK air exercise. ↑ Q13

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3
4. **False.** ↑ 4

5. **True.** ↑ 5

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