

Beat: Politics

UNDER A BLAZING SUN: P.M LECORNU WELCOMES INDONESIA'S PRESIDENT SUBIANTO

WITH FULL MILITARY HONOURS IN INVALIDES

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USPA NEWS - A BRIEF BUT LOADED CEREMONY AT LES INVALIDES

Under an almost unreal May heat, edging towards 40 degrees in the courtyard of Les Invalides, France staged one of those short but dense ceremonies that say more than a long communiqué. At 3:30pm on Thursday 28 May 2026, Prime Minister Sebastien Lecornu personally welcomed Indonesian president Prabowo Subianto for the start of his state visit to France. Five minutes later, the time it took for the two men to reach the tribune, the protocol machine was already in motion: military honours, national anthems, Indonesia Raya followed by La Marseillaise (French Anthem) and, in between, the silent choreography of guards and flags under the blazing Parisian sky.

At 3:45 pm, the official sequence was over. But in that fifteen-minute window, Paris and Jakarta had ticked a number of symbolic boxes: the choice of Les Invalides, the heart of French military memory; the presence of the head of government rather than a simple representative; and the very visible emphasis on a relationship framed in terms of sovereignty, security and strategic balance in the Indo-Pacific.

INDONESIA AS A PIVOTAL PARTNER IN THE INDOPACIFIC

On his social media account, Sebastien Lecornu summarised the French reading of the moment: "Pleased to have welcomed Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto to Les Invalides as part of his State visit to France. A major strategic partner for France in the Indo-Pacific, Indonesia plays an essential role in a region where our compatriots live and where an ever-growing share of global balances is now concentrated. In an increasingly unstable international context, our two countries have chosen to strengthen a partnership based on common interests and a shared commitment to sovereignty, regional stability and security. Defence, economy, innovation, culture, education: France and Indonesia have much to build together."

Behind this carefully calibrated message lies a clear strategic bet. Indonesia is not only the largest country in South-East Asia; it is also, in French eyes, a crucial piece of the Indo-Pacific puzzle at a time when Paris is trying to rebuild its posture in the region after the AUKUS shock. The presence of high-level ministers in Prabowo's delegation foreign affairs, higher education and technology, investment and downstream industries signalled Jakarta's own priorities: defence ties, industrial partnerships, and access to French know-how in innovation and education.

As a former minister of the Armed Forces and a reserve colonel in the Gendarmerie, Sebastien Lecornu is known in Paris as one of the politicians who best masters the nuts and bolts of the defence apparatus, from doctrine to procurement. Around the Hôtel de Brienne, he built a reputation as an almost encyclopaedic figure on complex capability issues, able to discuss with generals on their own terms and then translate that into political arbitrations. For him, presiding over a military ceremony at Les Invalides alongside Indonesia's former general-turned-president is less a matter of protocol than a natural extension of a long-standing personal passion for the armed forces and strategic affairs. SOURCE: French Ministry of Defence

THE INDONESIAN NARRATIVE: HONOUR, SYMBOLS AND SECURITY

On the Indonesian side, the official communication insisted heavily on the ceremonial dimension. The presidential press bureau described a "state honour ceremony" held "with full military honours", stressing that the welcome at Les Invalides "reflected the high appreciation of the French Republic for President Prabowo's visit". The narrative dwelt on the sequence: salute to the flag, national anthems performed in solemn silence, then the introduction of each delegation, with Indonesian President Prabowo and Prime Minister Lecornu taking turns to present their ministers and advisers.

The description of the inspection of the guard also mattered. The Indonesian presidency emphasised that the head of state boarded an ACMAT command vehicle to review the troops the same type of vehicle used by President Macron during last year's Bastille Day parade. The message was clear: Indonesia's new president, a former general, was being treated in Paris with the full protocol usually

reserved for the closest partners.

A PROCESSION THROUGH PARIS UNDER 40 DEGREES CELCIUS

After Les Invalides, the state choreography continued towards the Elysée Palace (French Presidency), in a Paris suffocating under a heatwave. The Indonesian press highlighted the scale of the escort: a majestic motorcade accompanied by 146 mounted troops and 27 motorcycle officers, forming a moving guard of honor between Les Invalides and the presidential residence. For Jakarta, this was not just folklore. The presidential bureau framed the procession as “a symbol of the honour reserved for a friendly nation and a reflection of ever?closer, strategic bilateral relations between Indonesia and France”.

For anyone watching from the edge of the esplanade, the contrast was striking: a nearly imperial display of cavalry and steel, framed by burning stone façades and tourists sheltering in the shade. In a Europe shaken by war on its doorstep and climate extremes at home, this image of traditional military pomp under suffocating heat added an almost cinematic layer to the diplomatic script.

PRIME MINISTER SEBASTIEN LECORNU, THE SOLDIER?MINISTER TURNED HEAD OF GOVERNMENT

There was also something very personal in seeing Sebastien Lecornu orchestrate this military pageant. Before becoming prime minister in 2025, he had served as minister for the Overseas, then crucially as minister of the Armed Forces from 2022 to 2025. Few current European heads of government have such an intimate knowledge of their country’s military apparatus, from strategic dossiers to regimental life. For him, standing at Les Invalides shoulder to shoulder with Indonesia’s former general?turned?president was less a protocol constraint than a natural extension of his political trajectory.

PM Lecornu often presents himself as the heir to a Gaullist culture of sovereignty, marked in his own family story by a grandfather who was a member of the Resistance. His passage rue Saint?Dominique has left him with a very concrete sense of what defence, deterrence and partnerships mean in practice. In that light, the state honours for Prabowo were not only about sending signals to Jakarta or Beijing, but also about reaffirming, to a French public sometimes sceptical about military spending, that alliances in the Indo?Pacific are now a central pillar of national security.

BEYOND THE PARDE: WHAT FRANCE AND INDONESIA WANT

What remains, once the horses, uniforms and fanfares have disappeared from the Parisian stones? On paper, the agenda is dense: defence cooperation, industrial partnerships, arms contracts, energy and maritime security, education and cultural exchanges. Jakarta comes with a delegation including its foreign minister, the minister for higher education, science and technology, the minister for investment and downstream industries, and the Indonesian ambassador in Paris. Paris, for its part, is looking to deepen an already expanding defence relationship, while positioning itself as an alternative partner in sensitive sectors such as cyber, space and maritime surveillance.

But beyond the lists of MoUs and joint statements, the choreography at Les Invalides points to a deeper shift. In P.M Sebastien Lecornu’s words, France and Indonesia share “an attachment to sovereignty, regional stability and security” at a moment when global power balances are being redrawn in the Indo?Pacific. Under a crushing heatwave, for fifteen dense minutes, the courtyard of Les Invalides turned into a theatre where those new lines of force were made visible in the measured steps of two men, the echo of two anthems, and the unspoken understanding that, from now on, part of Europe’s security story will be written thousands of kilometres away, between the Indian and Pacific oceans.../

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Editorial program service of General News Agency:

UPA United Press Agency LTD

483 Green Lanes

UK, London N13NV 4BS

contact (at) unitedpressagency.com

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