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Brazil's Gripen E fighters participate in first multinational exercise outside Brazil

Six F-39E Gripen aircraft from the Brazilian Air Force took part in the multidomain exercise SALITRE 2026, marking the Brazilian fighter's first participation in a multinational operation outside Brazil. In Chile, six Brazilian Air Force fighters were carrying out air defence, escort and patrol missions alongside aircraft from five other countries.

Operating from Cerro Moreno Air Base in Antofagasta, Chile, the exercise brought together more than 1,500 military personnel from the participating countries and around 60 aircraft, which completed more than 250 flight hours across different missions on site.

Alongside aircraft from Chile, Argentina, Colombia, the United States and Paraguay, the Gripen fighters were carrying out air operations typical of conventional warfare, with air forces operating under a single command and in coalition. The aircraft conducted escort, sweep, combat air patrol and air defence missions, both within visual range (WVR) and beyond visual range (BVR), employing their electronic warfare suite and tactical systems such as the active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar and the infrared search and track (IRST) passive target search sensor.

"The participation of the F-39E Gripen in SALITRE 2026 represents another step in the evolution of the Gripen Programme in Brazil and reflects the steady progress of the aircraft's implementation in the Brazilian Air Force. By operating for the first time in a multinational exercise outside the country, Gripen reinforces interoperability among friendly air forces and contributes to defence cooperation in the region. For Saab, supporting the Brazilian Air Force at this stage reaffirms the value of a partnership built on a long-term vision, technology transfer and the development of strategic capabilities for Brazil," says Peter Dölling, Managing Director of Saab Brazil.

In air defence missions, the F-39E Gripen aircraft were responsible for protecting allied aircraft against the simulated opposing force.

"The situational awareness provided by Gripen E's systems and sensors allows a large volume of data to be fused and presented to the pilot in a simplified way, supporting the decision-making process. In addition, we gain superiority by sharing this information among the F-39E aircraft in our flight, maximising our

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chances of victory,” said Lieutenant Colonel Vítor Bombonato, Commander of the 1st Air Defence Group (1º GDA).

Preparation for SALITRE was carried out through exercises conducted just over a month ago in Brazil, with the participation of other Brazilian Air Force squadrons, as well as the creation of the Antofagasta scenario in the Gripen simulator in Anápolis.

“Even though this was the first time Brazilian pilots had flown in this region, when we arrived here, the environment felt very familiar from an operational perspective. Another highlight is Gripen E’s range. We could have flown directly from Anápolis to Antofagasta, covering this long distance without the need for in-flight refueling,” concluded Lieutenant Colonel Bombonato.

The Gripen fighters have completed more than 50 sorties and accumulated more than 100 flight hours, including the outbound and return ferry flights, with high availability rates.

Saab is a leading defence and security company with an enduring purpose, to help nations keep their people and society safe. Empowered by its 28,000 talented people, Saab constantly pushes the boundaries of technology to create a safer and more sustainable world. Saab designs, manufactures and maintains advanced systems in aeronautics, weapons, command and control, sensors and underwater systems. Saab is headquartered in Sweden. It has major operations all over the world and is part of the domestic defence capability of several nations.

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