Three senior police generals arrested in Indonesia over illegal wiretapping

Peter Symonds
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Three senior Indonesian police generals were arrested on Tuesday on charges of illegal wiretapping that was conducted against President Prabowo Subianto himself, as well as other politicians and top officials. The arrests take place amid a deepening economic and political crisis in the country and an increasingly public rift between Prabowo and former president Joko Widodo.

Concerns that the arrests could potentially trigger protests and unrest were underscored by the dispatch of 20,000 troops to Jakarta. While the military declared the troop movement was "routine," the timing is hardly coincidental. It is unclear how many of the soldiers have been put on the streets.

The most senior of those arrested, General Listyo Sigit Prabowo, is closely aligned with Widodo. Listyo was the police chief in Surakarta while Widodo was the city's mayor. Listyo was appointed national police chief in 2021 as Widodo was serving his second term as president.

The National Police Legal Division head, Sonta Nasution, and Eko Hadi Santoso, a senior instructor at the National Police Education and Training Institute, were also detained. Yesterday a fourth suspect was named by the Criminal Investigation Agency (Bareskrim) as Slamet Uliandi, who heads the agency's Information and Communications Technology Division.

Police alleged that the accused conducted unauthorised surveillance of cabinet officials, politicians, journalists, civil society leaders and business executives in 2025–26 and then attempted to cover up their activity by deleting wiretap records. Slamet Uliandi served on the supervisory board of the Monitoring Centre, a wiretapping unit, and allegedly authorised the deletion of wiretap records.

Already the knives are out for Widodo. General Oegroseno, a former deputy national police chief, said on Wednesday that those investigating the wiretapping of Prabowo and other prominent politicians should "not hesitate to question a former president if necessary." Separately, the presidential palace declared the wiretaps should be viewed as an "act of treason" that could "endanger state interests and the safety of the nation's leadership, including the safety of the head of state."

On Thursday, 6,770 police and troops were deployed to secure a district court where Widodo had been called to testify in two defamation cases. The two defendants are accused of defamation and spreading false news by alleging that Widodo used a fake university diploma to fulfill the requirements for a candidate in presidential elections. Asked about the unrelated wiretapping by reporters, he brushed the question aside, saying: "We should all respect the ongoing legal process."

Widodo defeated Prabowo for the presidency in the 2014 and 2019 elections. However, as Prabowo challenged the outcome and his supporters took to the streets, Widodo reached an agreement with the notorious ex-general and installed him as defence minister in 2019. Unable to run for a third term, Widodo cut another sordid deal to tacitly support Prabowo in return for Prabowo choosing Widodo's son, Gibran Rakabuming Raka, as his vice-presidential running mate in the 2024 elections.

Widodo was accused of engineering a controversial court decision to allow Gibran to run for the vice-presidency even though he did not meet the minimum age requirement. Widodo's brother-in-law headed the court that made the decision.

That alliance of convenience has been unravelling since last year. From September 2025, Prabowo began to remove Widodo loyalists who had either been appointed to the new administration or retained their

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previous position. Sri Mulyani Indrawati, who ?served as Widodo's finance chief for eight years, was abruptly sacked last year in the wake of mass protests over a large increase in the monthly accommodation allowance paid to parliamentarians. Prabowo regarded Sri Mulyani, a former World Bank official, as an obstacle to his plans to boost government spending.

In response to this week's arrests, Prabowo feigned shock, declaring that he was "deeply, deeply disturbed" by the wiretapping allegations. In fact, the president has sought to remove Listyo Sigit Prabowo as national police chief at least four times over the past year. Last month, Listyo was finally moved out of the post to a position that was directly under Prabowo's thumb as his chief-of-staff.

According to an article by analyst Yohanes Sulaiman published yesterday by Asialink, Listyo attended a public event on October 1 at which Prabowo was speaking. Hours later, he was sworn in as chief-of-staff. His replacement Suyudi Ario Seto, the only candidate, was installed as the new national police chief, after passing his fit-and-proper test in around 30 minutes. Within 24 hours, Suyudi had reshuffled 78 generals and 10 mid-ranking officers. Since October 1, Suyudi has carried out five major rounds of transfers, most recently on Monday, the day before Listyo was arrested.

The vice-president—Widodo's son Gibran—is also under fire over accusations that he did not obtain a high school diploma—a requirement to stand for high office. In early October, the Constitutional Court dismissed a petition to disqualify him on a technicality, but stated it found no convincing evidence that he held a foreign high-school-equivalent diploma. On October 30, the Supreme Court reportedly annulled his educational certification, prompting calls for his resignation.

The political intrigues and fracturing of relations in ruling circles in Indonesia take place amid global economic and financial turmoil and an unfolding world war that threatens to escalate again as Trump prepares a new military onslaught on Iran.

While the growth rate for the Indonesian economy stood at 5.45 percent for the first three months of the year, its share market has taken a battering, falling by 40 percent since the beginning of the year. It fell by 12 percent late last month when the Morgan Stanley Capital Investment (MSCI) index warned that Indonesia could be demoted to "stand-alone status" over allegations of share market manipulation by a tight-knit group of super-wealthy oligarchs.

Prabowo himself is under political siege as his flagship school food program has been plagued by cost blowouts, high-level corruption and an estimated 50,000 cases of food poisoning. He has also faced a succession of protests over a range of issues, including the lack of funding for tertiary education, expanded military spending and the appointment of serving military officers to top civilian positions. He commands an overwhelming majority in parliament with an alliance of seven out of the eight parliamentary parties but several of his allies have begun to cautiously distance themselves from the president.

The arrest of the three police generals, particularly Widodo's ally Listyo, appears to mark a determined effort by Prabowo to tighten his grip over the state apparatus as his administration heads into deeply troubled waters.



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