

In Service of Korea's Defence

Saab's Role as a Sub-System Partner

Executive Summary

South Korea's 2026 defence budget of KRW 65.86 trillion (USD 44.7 billion) reflects a clear national priority: staying ahead technologically while building self-reliant defence capability. Within that budget, specific allocations – for missile defence, kill-chain strike capability, and surveillance and command systems – point to exactly the layer where sub-system technology matters most.

Saab brings an opportunity to combine one of the world's most advanced defense technology ecosystems with the strength and ambition of Korean industry. Through cooperation between Saab and Korea industries, advanced sensors, electronic warfare, weapon-locating radar, guided munitions and other critical technologies can be integrated with Korean platforms to create world-class defense capabilities - for Korea domestic and for the global market. By combining complementary strengths, the partnership can strengthen Korean and Swedish platforms, open new technological possibilities and further enhance their international export potential, in the areas where Korean industry and Saab sees the greatest strategic and commercial value.

This opportunity builds on a relationship that is already more than two decades strong. Saab has been a trusted technology partner in the Korean market for many years, providing a solid foundation of experience and confidence for a deeper and more ambitious industrial partnership.

This paper outlines the current state of Swedish-Korean cooperation, the opportunities ahead, and how Saab can complement Korea's advanced defence and industrial capabilities.

Swedish Impact on the South Korean Economy

Built on strength
Korea's defence industry has become a genuine export success story – the K9 Thunder howitzer, the Chunmoo MLRS, the K2 Black Panther tank, and ground-based air defence systems delivered worldwide all demonstrate world-class capability in large, complex platforms.

Saab's contribution sits at a complementary layer: sensors, radar, electronic warfare and combat management – the technologies that connect a platform into a fully networked system. Saab deliberately avoids offering platforms that would compete with Korea's national prime contractors (Hanwha, KAI, Hyundai Rotem, LIGNex1); the focus stays on this sub-system layer, in support of what Korean industry has already built.

A way of integrating systems quickly
Modern warfare increasingly depends on fusing sensors and effectors into a single, fast-reacting system – particularly for counter-drone and air-defence missions. Loke is a mobile, modular C-UAS concept developed and fielded in just 84 days. Combining Giraffe 1X, C2 and integrated effectors in an open architecture, it covers the full kill chain and can rapidly adapt to evolving threats - even while on the move.

Loke Counter-UAS concept

- Concept presented: February 2025
- First operational deployment: Malbork Air Base, Poland, April–September 2025, as part of Sweden's contribution to NATO base-defence operations core components
- **Giraffe 1X radar:** 360° scan once per second, total weight under 150 kg, includes a "Drone Tracker" function to distinguish UAVs from birds
- **Trackfire remote weapon station:** previously fielded on naval/amphibious platforms (e.g. Combat Boat 90), mountable with heavy or medium machine guns
- **Electronic-warfare components:** for signal detection and disruption
- Tested in the Baltic Trust 2025 NATO exercise (Latvia)
- Loke is operational with the Swedish Armed Forces, while the capability continues to be expanded and further developed.

This kind of rapid integration is one option Korea may find useful alongside its own air-defence and counter-drone programmes – including the systems funded under Korea's missile-defence and surveillance budget lines (see factbox below).



Rapid integration in connection to Korea's 2026 Budget

- Korea Air and Missile Defence (KAMD): KRW 1.81 trillion (USD 1.2 billion) – relevant to radar, missile-warning and air-defence sensor technology
- Surveillance, reconnaissance and command-and-control systems: KRW 1.05 trillion (USD 713 million) – relevant to sensor and combat-management sub-systems
- Kill Chain strike capability (incl. KF-21 initial production): KRW 5.26 trillion (USD 3.5 billion) – relevant to precision-guidance and self-protection sub-systems

Shared Economic Value
A partnership with Saab works in both directions:

- **Technology transfer** that supports Korean indigenous development – after the 2007 Arthur weapon-locating radar contract, Korean industry went on to develop its own follow-on generations.
- **Joint export potential –** Saab's Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB), part of an ongoing cooperation initiative with Hanwha for its launcher platform in Poland, demonstrates how Saab sub-systems and Korean platforms can be combined and jointly marketed to third countries.
- **Access to the European market,** where Saab's network can support Korean primes in positioning their own systems alongside Saab's.

Saab – Korea | Two decades of cooperation

2002: First sub-system deliveries for Korea's submarine fleet (Sirius electronic reconnaissance)

2007: Arthur weapon-locating radar, followed by technology transfer into Korean-developed follow-on generations

2013: System technology integrated into the Taurus cruise-missile programme

Since 2022: Giraffe 1X radar, missile-warning and self-protection systems delivered into Korean platforms

Saab in Korea

Saab in Brief
FY 2025

29,000

Employees
29,000 worldwide; operations in more than 30 countries

Net sales
SEK 79.1 billion, up 24%

+ 24%

Domains
Aeronautics, missiles & ground combat, naval & underwater systems, radar & sensors, command & control, electronic warfare

17%

R&D
SEK 10,528 million in 2024 – about 17% of net sales, reflecting term commitment to new technology

Order backlog
SEK 274.5 billion, roughly 3.5x annual sales

SEK 274.5 billion

Saab Industrial Cooperation Strategy

A way of working, not an add-on
For Saab, industrial cooperation is part of how the company has always approached international partnerships – technology transfer, joint further development and shared export opportunities, shaped around what each partner needs at a given time, rather than bolted onto a sales contract after the fact.

Co-development as one possible path
Where Korean industry identifies that a technology – sensors, electronic warfare, guided munitions – could move faster through cooperation, Saab can contribute mature, field-proven sub-systems while Korean industry leads on integration and local industrialisation. The GLSDB/Chunmoo model described above is one example on an initiative of how this can be implemented in practice and could equally apply to other platforms.

GLSDB | Chunmoo Cooperation with Hanwha Aerospace

- September 2025: Saab and Hanwha Aerospace signed a **Memorandum of Understanding** to explore integrating Saab's Ground-Launched Small Diameter Bomb (GLSDB) into the Chunmoo rocket artillery system
- GLSDB (developed jointly by Saab and Boeing): **range over 150 km,** accuracy within approx. 1-metre radius, launcher-independent (compatible with M270, HIMARS and Chunmoo-type launch pods)
- Chunmoo (Hanwha): **8×8 truck-mounted,** modular launch pods carrying 130mm, 227mm/239mm or a single 290mm round depending on configuration, already in service with South Korea, Poland, Saudi Arabia and the UAE

Saab in Korea

Export sovereignty: Technology without third-country restrictions
One aspect of Swedish defence technology that is often underappreciated in procurement discussions: Saab's systems are developed and exported under Swedish and EU export-control regulations, independent of US ITAR (International Traffic in Arms Regulations) re-export restrictions that apply to many US-origin components. For Korea, integrating Saab sub-systems can mean retaining fuller control over future re-export decisions – directly relevant to Korea's own ambitions to export finished platforms to Europe, the Middle East and beyond, without needing third-country re-export approval for every Saab-supplied component. (Export terms vary by system and should always be confirmed for the specific programme in question.)

Open architecture as a door to Europe
Open, interoperable sensor and combat-management architectures are increasingly expected by international buyers, alongside platform performance. Saab's systems are built on open, technology-agnostic architectures that prioritise integration over proprietary lock-in – relevant for Korean primes pursuing further export growth into European and NATO-aligned markets, building on the export track record.

Cooperation across Korean industry
Saab's industrial-cooperation approach spans Korea's prime contractors and shipbuilders such as Hanwha, LIG D&A, KAL (Korean Air), KAI, Hyundai Rotem, and the major shipyards – Hanwha Ocean, Hyundai Heavy Industries, Kangnam and SK Oceanplant. Across air, land, sea and underwater domains, this allows cooperation to develop gradually, programme by programme.

Saab's Footprint in Asia

Across the region, Saab works alongside governments and local industry as part of a shared effort - sharing knowledge, developing skills and building production and supply chains close to the customers. Independent Swedish technology gives partners the freedom to develop and sustain their own capabilities, on their own terms. The result is capability that stays.

Development Plans 2026+

Saab continues to invest in software-driven technologies, autonomy and AI-enabled capabilities.

Saab and Helsing integrated Centaur AI into Gripen E, demonstrating autonomous BVR combat and real-time decision support. The trials show how AI can rapidly enhance fighter capability through software.

The investments are backed by a strong 2025, with sales growing 24% to SEK 79.1 billion and a record order backlog.

Sweden's NATO membership adds a further point of alignment that may be useful as Korea continues to deepen its own interoperability with allied and partner forces.

Asia Case Studies

- Singapore: Combat Vehicle 90 / Light Mobility Vehicle integration, a long-standing sensor and platform-systems partnership
- Thailand: Combat-management and command-and-control integration for naval and air assets (9LV / C4I)
- Japan: Sirius Compact electronic-warfare sensor deployment, supporting an allied industry with its own strong self-reliance orientation

In each case, cooperation has worked best where Saab complemented the domestic prime contractor's own platform and direction, rather than positioning itself ahead of it.



Staying in dialogue

Continued presence at international and regional defence exhibitions remains a way to keep the dialogue with partners worldwide ongoing, transparent, and open to whatever direction industry and policymakers wish to take it.

Wherever Korea identifies a need, Saab is ready to support with field-proven sub-systems, technology and know-how – on Korea's terms and timeline, building on a partnership that has already lasted more than two decades.

Saab International Technology Korea Co., Ltd.
19 Fl, Heungkuk Life Insurance Building 68 Saemunan-ro
Jongno-gu
Seoul 03184
Republic of Korea

saab.com