

SWEDISH MILITARY PISTOLS & REVOLVERS

m/1863 to m/88

By Marc Gorelick

Sweden has a well-earned reputation for military innovation going back to the era of King Gustavus Adolphus. This brilliant commander transformed not only the era's battle tactics, but also the construction and use of artillery. However, by the middle of the 19th century Sweden, like many nations, found itself in a rut, with its armed forces equipped with obsolete weapons. Sweden recognized this and embarked on a modernization program. This resulted in Sweden being the 2nd country (after Denmark) to adopt the Remington Rolling Block (Model 1867) as its standard longarm on May 8th 1867.

Nowhere, however, was Swedish firearms obsolescence more evident than in the case of pistols. By the 1860's other western countries had adopted revolvers as their standard side arm. However, the Swedish cavalry was still equipped with Model 1850 single shot percussion muzzleloading pistols. Each trooper had one .71 caliber smoothbore "Flankorpistol" loaded with six 9mm lead balls, and one .58 caliber rifled "Studsarpistol."



Swedish m/1850 cavalry pistol

Model 1863 (m/1863 and M/1863)

In 1858 the French Navy formally adopted the Lefauchaux's M1854 revolver as the Pistolet-Revolver Model 1858. The new French naval revolver was an open-top, single action, 6-shot, 12mm revolver that fired Lefauchaux pinfire cartridges. In 1863 Sweden followed suit and took its first hesitant steps towards modernizing its military handguns when it purchased 2,000 Lefauchaux Model 1858 pinfire revolvers from Eugene Gabriel Lefauchaux in Paris. Sweden designated them the m/1863. Of these, 1,065 were issued to the Swedish artillery as the m/1863 and 890 went to the Swedish navy as the M/1863. These revolvers had the same profile and specifications as the French navy model. Interestingly, the initial order specified only 100 rounds per gun, a very small amount for any military that expects to fight. The 11mm pinfire cartridge had a 12.8 gram lead bullet and .8 grams of powder. Of the m/1863 revolvers that went

to the artillery, only a few were actually issued to officers. The vast majority were put into storage and never issued. The naval revolvers appear to have seen more service than the artillery revolvers.



Swedish Navy M/1863 Lefauchaux revolver. Photo courtesy of Tim Prince, College Hill Arsenal

Note on Swedish small arms designations: *The Swedish Army used a lower case “m” to designate model numbers while the Swedish Navy used an upper case “M.”*

Sweden was still taking hesitant steps towards adopting the revolver. Despite the evidence of the American Civil War that military technology was undergoing a generational transformation, many of the world’s militaries were wedded to the old ways. This was either because of conservative distrust of the new in place of the tried and true, or because of frugal budgets – a lack of funds to purchase whole new weapons systems on a large scale without some overriding compelling reason.

And, according to A.W.F. Taylerson, a noted English firearms authority, “Issue revolvers were disliked on two counts in the armies of Europe, as a weapon too complicated for satisfactory use by private soldiers, also as a temptation to N.C.O.s and officers to seek opportunity for its use. The reasoning went that such personnel were likely to forget their *raison d’etre*, of commanding and directing troops, in favor of personal combat and wastage of ammunition.”

Model 1871 (m/1871 and M/1871)

King Charles XV of Sweden recognized the unpreparedness of the Swedish army to fight a modern war and the need for modernization. He issued a decree on April 24, 1866 for the testing of Lefauchaux pinfire revolvers for the cavalry. In 1867 a new order was given to test another revolver made by Auguste Francotte of Liège, Belgium.

Sweden conducted further tests and on April 19, 1871, the Swedish military adopted a new, 11mm centerfire pistol designated as the Model 1871 or m/1871 (also known as the Lefauchaux – Francotte). It was a development of the Lefauchaux that was designed by a Swede, August Hagstrom (1817-1901) and August Francotte.



Swedish m/1871

Like the m/1863, the m/1871 was a single action revolver in the Lefauchaux style. The overall length is 12.09 inches with a 6 inch barrel. The cylinder held six rounds. It fired an 11mm centerfire cartridge that had .85 grams of powder propelling a 13.2 gram bullet.

On April 25, 1871 the first order was placed with August Francotte of Liege, Belgium for 4,000 revolvers. A second order for 2,000 more was placed in 1872. Francotte produced a total of between 6,684 and 7,000 m/1871 revolvers for Sweden. Another 400 to 520 revolvers were manufactured by Husqvarna Vapenfabrik. The majority of the Husqvarna produced revolvers went to the navy but some were sold on the civilian market and the Royal Post Office also used them.

These revolvers were initially used to arm those in the artillery who had not received the earlier M1863 pistols. The guns were subsequently issued to the infantry for those officers and NCOs who were allowed sidearms. By 1879, some of the Swedish cavalry units were receiving the new M1871 revolvers and were finally discarding their incredibly obsolete single shot, muzzle loading m/1850 pistols.

Model 1863-79 (m/63-79)

Due to the widespread adoption of the new 11mm centerfire revolver cartridge, in 1879 the Swedish military ordered all of the older m/1863 Lefauchaux pinfire revolvers be turned in for alteration to fire the 11mm centerfire cartridge. The modifications included the addition of a centerfire firing pin on the hammer and milling a firing pin channel in the frame. Additionally,

the rear edge of the each of the chambers in the cylinder was milled to accept the rim of the new cartridge. The newly modified revolvers were designated as Model 1863/79 or m/63-79. This wholesale recall and modification of the Model 1863 revolvers means that today, finding an original pinfire, unmodified m/1863 revolver is extremely difficult, considering only about 1,955 to 2,000 M1863 revolvers were obtained in the first place.



Swedish m/1863-79; an m/1863 pinfire altered to fire 11mm centerfire cartridges

Like the m/1863, the single action m/63-79 was 12 inches long with a 6.2 inch, 4-groove barrel although a few with barrels of 4.5 inches have been observed. It used the same 11x17mm cartridge as the m/1871.

Model 1884 (M/1884) Navy Revolver

The Swedish Navy wanted a more robust revolver that would meet its requirements, and in 1884 ordered a French designed revolver which it adopted as the Revolver M/1884 för Flottan. It departed from the single-action system, instead using a Chamelot-Delvigne double action system and, in fact, was based on the popular Chamelot-Delvigne French Model 1873 which had been adopted by the French Army as its standard service revolver (Model 1873 for NCOs and the slightly different Model 1874 for officers.)

The Chamelot-Delvigne was one of the most successful 19th century military revolvers. Over 350,000 were produced for both domestic and foreign contracts by the French government arsenal Manufacture d'Armes de Saint-Étienne (MAS). It remained in French military service through World War 1, was issued to French reserve units in 1940 and was issued to the French National Police and gendarmerie until 1962. Versions were adopted by Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Italy, Monaco, Greece and Switzerland as the Model 1872 Revolver. The MAS arsenal, in addition to its government production, did have the authority to engage in foreign commercial contracts, however, not directly. Such sales contracts could only be made through

French domestic representatives or agents.

On March 7, 1884 the Swedish Government, on behalf of the Swedish Navy, ordered a total of 1,000 revolvers through two different French contracting agents. The first lot of 300 revolvers was ordered through the firm of Sutterlin-Lippman & Cie. The remaining 700 revolvers of the 1,000 revolver contract were ordered through the firm of Henry. The Swedish revolvers are individually marked for which agents had managed the respective order.



Swedish M/1884 Navy Revolver

The M/1884 is a solid-frame, side-ejection, double-action gun. The cylinder had a side-loading gate which pulled straight to the rear. Cleaning and disassembly were easy as the cylinder pin doubled as a screwdriver and all-purpose tool. It is the only tool necessary for field stripping by the service member.

The six-shot revolver is 9.5 inches long with a 4.5 inch long, 4 groove, half round/half octagon barrel. It fired the same 11x17mm centerfire cartridge as the earlier Swedish pistols.

Model 1887 (m/1887)

In 1884 Sweden established an arms commission with the object of modernizing its weapons and ammunition. One of the results of the commission was to change the caliber of Sweden's Remington Rolling Block rifles from 12.17x42mm to 8x58mm Danish Krag and the introduction of the m/1889 rifle. The commission was also tasked with selecting a new double action revolver in a modern caliber. The commission studied the Austrian Gasser-Kropatschek, the Belgian / Norwegian Model 1883 Nagant in 9mm, and the Swiss Schmidt 7.5mm issue

revolvers, as well as a Swedish Husqvarna design and a Warnant design in 9mm. The commission concluded that the best design would combine the Nagant design with the 7.5 mm cartridge of the Swiss Schmidt revolver. Thirty revolvers were ordered to be made up for trials and the result was the Nagant designed Revolver m/1887 chambered in 7.5mm.



Swedish m/1887 made by Nagant

After a few minor modifications were made in the design the firm of E & M Nagant of Liege, Belgium was commissioned to manufacture the m/1887 revolver. Nagant produced and delivered 2,600 revolvers to the Swedish Army and 480 to the Swedish Navy. The m/1887 was initially intended for officers who had to purchase their own sidearms. NCOs were issued revolvers at no cost. However, many more revolvers were needed. The revolver was also adopted by the Norwegian Army and Navy as the Model 1887/93. (Norway and Sweden were united at that time and were trying to rationalize their armaments.) It also began being issued to Swedish Army enlisted men. In 1897 Husqvarna started manufacturing the m/1887 and produced 14,084 revolvers for the military until 1905. Husqvarna also made some for private sale.

Soon after the m/1887 was adopted a weakness was discovered. The cylinder could be turned while the hammer was down, potentially putting the gun out of battery. In 1888 Swedish Lieutenant T.F. Törnell patented an improvement using additional cylinder notches to ensure positive lockup to block the cylinder from turning with the hammer down. The Swedish government approved the improvement in 1893 but it was never formally adopted and only a few weapons were equipped with Törnell's improvement.

The Army m/1887 and Navy M/1887 is a 6-shot double action revolver. There is a side gate on the right side behind the cylinder for loading and unloading. It fired 7.5x22mm ammunition, first the m/87 black powder cartridge and then the m/98 smokeless round with a 195 grain bullet. The revolver is 9.33 inches long with a 4.5 inch long, 4 groove, part round, part octagon barrel and it weighs 1.76 pounds unloaded.



Swedish m/1887 made by Husqvarna. Photo Courtesy of Olof Janson, Gothia Arms Historical Society

The m/1887 remained in Swedish service for many years. During World War 1 it was issued to Landstorm army units and during the Second World War it was carried by some home guard units. After the war a number were converted to fire .32ACP cartridges and were used in training military and police dogs. During the 1950s a Swedish para-military unit called the Verkskyddet was issued refurbished m/1887s for guarding institutions like the post office, railways, power plants, bridges ferries and major factories. Norway used them until 1940.

Model 1907 (m/07) Pistol (FN Browning Model 1903)

By the turn of the century many European nations were seriously upgrading their armed forces. Sweden convened a military commission in 1904 to recommend a replacement for the m/1887 revolver as the standard front line sidearm for the Swedish armed forces. Instead of a revolver, the commission was interested in a modern semi-automatic pistol. Eight pistols were examined: the Luger Model 1900 in 7.65mm Luger, the Browning Model 1900 in 7.65mmACP, a Colt-Browning pistol in 9.5mm, a Mannlicher pistol in 7.63mm, a Mannlicher carbine-pistol in 7.36mm, the Swedish designed Hamilton pistol in 6.5mm Bergmann, the FN Browning Model 1903 in 9mm long, and the Hungarian Frommer Model 1901 pistol in 8mm Roth.

The contest boiled down to two pistols, the Luger 1900 and the Browning Model 1903 made by Fabrique National d'Armes de Guerre (FN) in Herstal, Belgium. The commission's final report indicated that the Luger was the superior gun in terms of fit and precision but that the Browning was a more reliable weapon and better suited for the cold climate of Sweden. After changes were made in the Browning design – the extractor and safety were strengthened, different sights, and a lanyard ring was added at the bottom of the grip – the Browning was accepted as the Pistol m/07 on December 16, 1907. The Navy designation was M/07. (*Note: Swedish arms designations had changed in 1895. The full official designation of weapons were now the caliber, type and last two digits of the year. This system was to last until 1958.*)

John Moses Browning visited FN for the first time in 1902, bringing with him the first prototype for the 1903. Basically it was an improved Model 1900 in 9mm Browning Long (9x20mm) and was very similar to the Colt Model 1903. Probably the first military sale that FN made for this pistol was to Sweden.



Swedish Pistol m/07 FN manufacture,

The m/07 is a relatively low-powered blowback operated pistol of standard size. It has a good grip and balance for a military pistol with an internal hammer and detachable seven-round magazine. It has an ordinary thumb-safety and a grip-safety which is rather heavy to press, and the slide stop holds the slide open after the last round is fired. The grip safety also serves as a cocking indicator since it projects rearward when the hammer is cocked. Like many European pistols, the m/07 has the magazine release at the bottom of the grip.

Fabrique National produced the first 10,000 pistols. All were inspected and stamped by Carl Gustafs Stads gun factory in Eskilstuna, Sweden for the Swedish Royal Army before acceptance. Sweden wisely purchased a manufacturing license from FN. When Germany invaded Belgium in 1914 FN ceased production of the m/07. Sweden started tooling up and in 1917 Husqvarna

Vapenfabrik started production of the m/07 for both the military and the Swedish civilian market. Between 1917 and 1943, when production ceased, Husqvarna produced 89,231 military pistols and 4,729 civilian guns.



Swedish Pistol m/07 Husqvarna manufacture,

The Pistol m/07 is 8 inches long with a 5 inch long barrel and weighs 33.9 ounces. The Swedish 9x20mm Browning Long military cartridge is 1.1 inches long, with a 110 grain bullet.



The Browning pistol was the standard first line sidearm of the Swedish military until the adoption of the m/40 (Lahti L-35) in 1940. It was then designated substitute standard. It had a brief resurgence in the 1960's when it was pressed into service when the Lahti's bolts started cracking due to the use of a more powerful 9mm cartridge. Many were converted to .380 and imported into the United States.

*Swedish m/07 Husqvarna manufacture
Photo Swedish Air Force Museum*

Model 1939 (m/39) Pistol (Walther P-38)

With Europe getting closer to war, Sweden looked to supplement and eventually replace the Browning m/07 as the standard sidearm. In 1939 Sweden purchased about 1,500 P-38 pistols

from Walther in Germany. These were the commercial HP model and were purchased through the Stockholm dealer Widforss. They were manufactured in Walther's Zella-Melhis factory and will have the normal Walther HP markings and proof marks of a crown over "N" or eagle over "N" as well as "H" prefix serial numbers. Swedish military m/39 pistols will sometimes be unit marked. It is estimated that out of the 1,500 or so m/39 pistols only about 500 were unit marked.



Pistol m/39. Walther HP (commercial version of the P-38).

The m/39 is a double action/single action semiautomatic pistol that is short recoil operated and fires from a locked breech by means of an external hammer. It is chambered for 9x19mm Parabellum, has a 5 inch long barrel and an overall length of 8.5 inches. It takes an 8-round magazine, has the early checkered grips and high gloss blue finish.

Germany had adopted the P-38 as its standard sidearm in 1938. When Britain and France declared war on Germany in response to that country's invasion of Poland, Germany cancelled all further orders from Sweden and devoted P-38 production to supplying its own army. Because Germany also would not sell a license to Sweden for production of the pistol, Sweden had to quickly find a replacement for the cancelled Walther contract.

Swedish Lahti Model 40 (m/40) Pistol

Aimo Johannes Lahti was probably Finland's greatest small arms designer. A Finnish Army armorer, he was responsible for the Automaattikivääri Lahti-Saloranta Malli26 (m/26) Light Machine Gun, the Suomi m/26 sub-machine gun, the L-39 20mm anti-tank rifle, and of course the L-35 Lahti pistol. In 1929, while assigned to the State Rifle Factory (VKT) he was ordered

to develop a new semiautomatic pistol for the Finnish Army and the result was the Lahti L-35 pistol.

The Swedish government had adopted the Walther P-38 to replace the aging m/07 Browning pistols but with the onset of World War 2 Germany stopped exporting the pistols to Sweden and would not license production by Sweden. Swedish volunteers had been fighting in Finland against the Soviets and reported favorably about the Lahti pistol. After quickly studying available sidearms, in 1940 Sweden chose the 9mm Finnish Lahti L-35 as the best suited to meet its requirements and adopted it as the Pistol m/40. Sweden then acquired a license to produce the m/40. A company called Rosenfors Bruk was initially supposed to produce the pistol but it couldn't and the contract was passed to Husqvarna Vapenfabriks. From 1942 through 1946 Husqvarna manufactured 83,000-85,000 m/40s, the vast majority for the Swedish military.

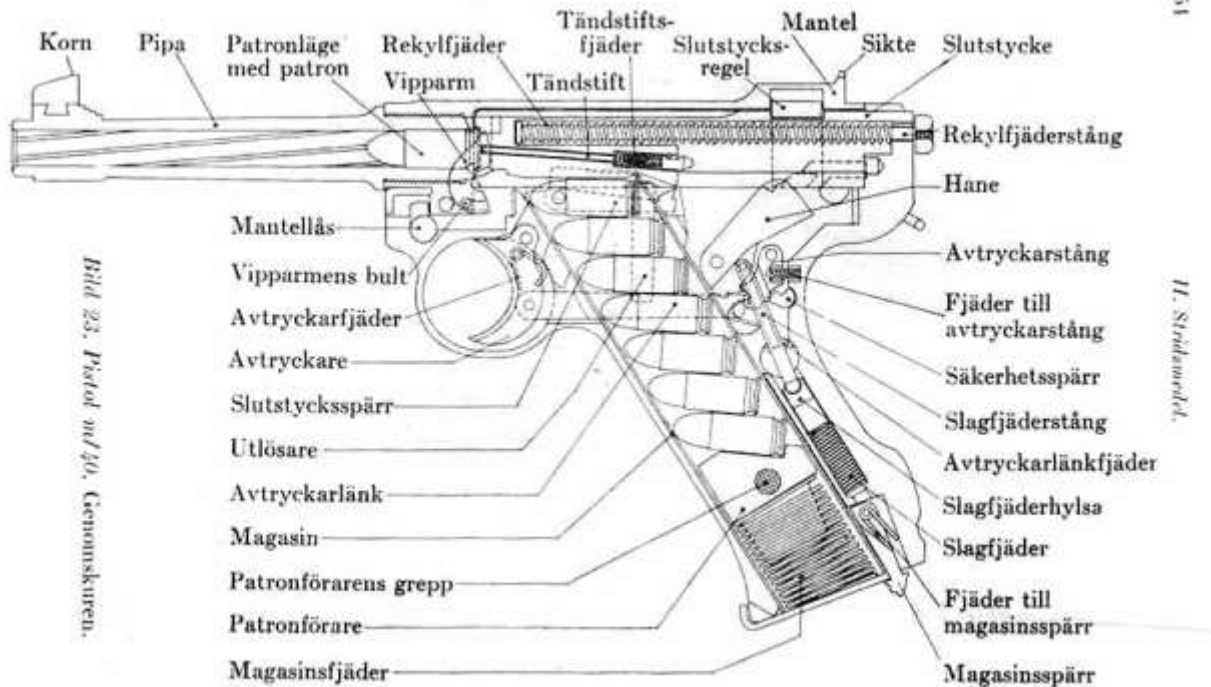


Swedish m/40 Lahti pistol.

The m/40, like the L-35 is a large, heavy, chunky service pistol that outwardly resembles the Luger 08. It was designed to function in a harsh environment and extreme cold, and has an enviable reputation for reliability. There are several minor differences between the m/40 and its Finnish parent. For instance, the m/40 has a slightly longer barrel, a larger trigger guard, a higher front sight and no loaded chamber indicator. The grip is also cut for a shoulder stock although none were made. Husqvarna also made a number of minor modifications during its production run.

It is a locked breech, short recoil design with numerous innovative features. It is single action with a concealed internal hammer and is well sealed from dirt and snow. The bolt and barrel extension are interlocked by a vertically movable locking lug, which is cammed out of engagement when hitting the frame after short recoil. Unusual in a pistol was the addition of a

bolt accelerator. Bolt accelerators are more commonly found in machine guns to increase the rate of fire. The Lahti's bolt accelerator was to ensure the performance of the pistol in Nordic arctic conditions. When the accelerator was struck by the barrel when the gun was fired it imparted an accelerating motion to the breechblock as it moved to the rear.



*Schematic drawing of pistol m/1940 from the Soldatinstruktion för infanteriet 1944 (Swedish infantry manual 1944). The part named “Vipparm” is the accelerator.
Courtesy of Olof Janson, Gothia Arms Historical Society*

Although it was expensive to manufacture the Lahti design was extremely sound. However, it appears that the Swedish m/40 had problems that the Finnish L-35 did not have. Finns allege that the Swedish pistol was the product of inferior workmanship, fit and finish. Certainly, the Finnish L-35's exterior showed better machining and polishing than the Swedish m/40. But even more critical, the slides and frames of the Swedish pistols were made of inferior molybdenum steel instead of the nickel steel alloy that Husqvarna wanted to use. Only the barrels were made of nickel steel alloy. Apparently, nickel steel alloy was in short supply and earmarked for other war material. It was originally intended that the low pressure m/39 cartridge would be used in the m/40. Instead the Swedes used the higher pressure m/39B steel jacketed ammunition that was intended for submachine guns. The result was the Swedish Lahti could not stand the higher pressures and cracks would appear in the slides with the occasional catastrophic failure. The Swedish Army estimated that the service life of an m/40 was 3,000 rounds using the m/39B ammunition. This problem of cracked slides persisted throughout the service life of the pistol.

The m/40 Lahti is chambered for the 9x19mm Parabellum. It is 9.5 inches long, 5.7 inches high and weighs a hefty 44.5 ounces empty. The 4.75 inch long barrel has six grooves with a 1:10 right hand twist. The magazine holds 8 rounds.

The Lahti remained the standard sidearm in Swedish army service until replaced by the m/88 pistol in 1988. The navy never adopted the Lahti, instead sticking with their m/07 Brownings. During World War 2 several hundred so-called "Neutral Pistols" were made without identifying markings and were provided to resistance groups in German-occupied countries like Norway. A number of Lahtis were made for the civilian market and after the war the Danish police ordered 10,000.

Model 58 Revolver (m/58) (Smith & Wesson Models 10 & 12)



The Swedish Air Force adopted the Smith & Wesson Model 12 Military and Police Airweight as a personal sidearm for its air crews. This was a .38 Special, double action revolver built on the round butt K frame. It is similar to the Model 10 Military and Police but has a short action KA alloy frame instead of the model 10's steel frame. The Swedish Air Force purchased 1,500 Model 12's from Smith & Wesson in 1958 and designated them as the Revolver m/58. Chambered in .38 Special they have blue finish, 2 inch barrels, steel cylinders and have the standard production Airweight markings and three small crowns stamped on the frame.

Left – Revolver m/58. Photo private collection.

In addition to the m/58, the Swedish military purchased a small number of Smith & Wesson .38 Special Model 10 revolvers. These were designated as the m/58B, a Model 10 with a 4 inch barrel that was issued to Air Force and military police, and the m/58C, a Model 10 with a 6 inch barrel that was used for training/target practice. According to one Swedish source, there was also a m/58D which had a 2 inch barrel and Pachmyr Compac grips. The m/58 is no longer in Swedish service.

Model 88 (Pistol m/88) (Glock 17 & 19)

Towards the end of the Lahti's service in the 1980's, the Swedish military was, to all intents and purposes, without a modern, effective sidearm. As fewer and fewer Lahtis remained in service, Swedish officers were even armed with the Browning m/07. There was also an erroneous belief among some in the army that a handgun was unnecessary; that the submachine gun or assault rifle could replace the handgun. However, wiser heads saw the need for a modern pistol and after conducting trials from 1983 to 1985 the Swedish Army adopted the Glock 17 in 1988 and designated it as the Pistol m/88.

The Glock 17 or m/88, chambered for the 9x19mm cartridge, is a striker-fired, short recoil, locked breech semi-automatic pistol using a modified Colt-Browning tilting barrel system. It incorporated many innovative design features which result in ease and safety of operation, simple function, outstanding ruggedness, reliability and durability, low maintenance, light weight, and a self-cocking, constant double action (Safe Action) trigger. It does not have a

conventional manual safety but rather a trigger safety so that when the trigger is pulled correctly three different safeties are disengaged and then reengage after each shot. The Glock was first adopted by the Austrian Army as the 9mm P80 in 1982 and then by more than 45 countries' militaries and police forces. Sweden purchased the Glock 17 Gen 2 which was introduced in 1988.



Swedish m/88 Pistol (Glock 17 Gen 2) Photo - Glock

The m/88 is 7.28 inches long with a 4.5 inch long barrel. It weighs 21.91 ounces empty and 31.41 ounces with a fully loaded magazine. The magazine hold 17 rounds.



In 1990 the Swedish Air Force adopted the Glock 19 (Gen 2) as the Pistol m/88B to replace the Smith & Wesson m/58 as aircrew personal defense weapon. The Glock 19, or m/88B, is a smaller and more compact version of the Glock 17. It fires the same ammunition and except for its smaller dimensions it is the same basic design as the Glock 17 and most parts are interchangeable.

Swedish m/88B Pistol (Glock 19 Gen 2). Photo Courtesy of Olof Janson, Gothia Arms Historical Society

The m/88B is 6.85 inches long with a 4.02 inch long barrel. It weighs 20.99 ounces empty and 29.54 ounces with a full magazine. The magazine holds 15 rounds.

The Swedish Army purchased additional Glock 17s in order to meet growing international commitments, such as being part of the peacekeeping force in Bosnia. These Glock 17s were a newer generation and were designated the m/88C. They have an accessory rail in front of the trigger guard, slightly better grip design and tritium sights. The Air Force also purchased additional Glock 19s. The main difference between these and the older pistols is that they had tritium sights. However, they were given the separate designation of m/88D.

The Army purchased additional Glock 17s which were issued to the Home Guard. Designated as the m/88C2, these were a 3rd generation with an improved frame and grip, an additional cross pin above the trigger, and a reshaped extractor that serves as a loaded chamber indicator.

The m/88 family of pistols (m/88, m/88B, m/88C, m88D, and m/88C2) are the current sidearms of the Swedish military.



Swedish soldiers assigned to KFOR in the Balkans. Note the two officers in the center have Glock m/88 pistols. The holsters are Swedish army issue Bianchi International UM 84/92. This versatile holster can be carried right or left side, high or low, with or without extension loop, either on a belt or a battle vest.

Photo courtesy of Olof Janson, Gothia Arms Historical Society