

Ängelholms Flygmuseum

Saab *J35 Draken* ("the kite" or "the dragon")



Operational History

Although not designed to be a dogfighter, *the J 35 Draken proved to have good instantaneous turn capability and was a very capable fighter. The double-delta shape was so revolutionary that it warranted the only sub-scale test aircraft built in Sweden: the Saab 210, unofficially nicknamed "Lilldraken" (the little kite). The Saab 210 tested the concept of the double delta, first flying on 21 January 1952. The 210's successful*

testing results led to an order for three full-size Draken prototypes. The first prototype, not fitted with an afterburner, made its maiden flight on 25 October 1955.



**Saab 210 "Lilldraken"
(the little kite)**

It entered service in 1960 with the Swedish Air Force; 644 Saab Draken were built for Sweden as well as other European nations.

Sweden's Draken fleet came in *six different variants* while two Draken models were offered for export.

The early models were intended purely for air defence.

The last model built was the J 35F, the final variant to remain in Swedish service. These aircraft were retired in the 1990s and replaced by the Saab Gripen.

The J 35 Draken design underwent several upgrades. *The last was the J 35J version, in the late 1980s,* although by then, the Draken had been almost totally replaced by the Saab 37 Viggen in Swedish service. The J 35J was a service-life extension program since the delivery of the new Saab JAS 39 Gripen was still in the development stage and suffering from delivery delays. The extension program was to keep the Draken flying into the 2000s, but due to cutbacks and high maintenance costs the Draken was eventually phased

out.

The Swedish Drakens were officially retired in December 1998, although the type remains in limited numbers in both military and civilian versions.

Export customers included Denmark and Finland. In 1985, the Austrian Air Force purchased 24 J 35D s reconditioned by Saab, designated J 35Ö.

All Drakens are interceptors with limited air-to-ground capability, with the sole exception of the Danish

Drakens, which are strike aircraft capable of carry-ing AGM-12 Bullpup missiles, advanced "jammers", and increased internal and external fuel stores. The Danish Drakens are so far the heaviest of the series to have been in service. Danish F-35 aircraft were retired in 1993. Finland updated its 35XS fleet with new avionics, cockpit displays, navigational/attack systems and electronic countermeasures during the 1990s but finally retired the Draken in 2000.

Austria was the last country to operate the Draken in military service. They bought refurbished J 35D which was the last Austrian Air Force fighter with two internal cannons due to the restriction in the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 of not being allowed to carry air-to-air missiles. This restriction was dropped in 1993 due to airspace violations from the nearby Yugoslavian internal conflict on its southern border, AIM-9 Sidewinder missiles were purchased. These Drakens were retired in 2005, when

they were replaced by former Swiss Tigercats, while waiting for new Eurofighters.

In the United States, the National Test Pilot School (NTPS) owns six Drakens that were formerly in Danish service; of these, two TF-35XDs and one RF-35XD are operational, based at the Mojave Spaceport.