Thai air force favours Swedish Gripen fighter jets over F-16s

AFP- Thailand wants to renew its fleet of combat aircraft with Gripen fighter jets, the air force said, favouring the Swedish-made planes over American F-16s.
A procurement committee weighed the choice for 10 months before deciding the JAS 39 Gripen E/F was the most suitable, the Royal Thai Air Force said in a statement issued Tuesday.

“We have considered this purchase very carefully so that we can make the most out of it to defend our country for at least another 30 years,” it said.

The Gripen “can respond to the Thai air force’s strategic principles and collaborate with other security forces”, the statement added.

Lockheed Martin’s latest F-16s are still under consideration, with the final decision resting with the Thai government.

The Gripens would replace F-16 A/B jets bought in the late 1980s.

No details were given on how many Gripens Thailand might buy, but reports in specialist defence media outlets earlier this year suggested the kingdom was eyeing around a dozen.

Thailand currently operates 11 older Gripens as well as dozens of F-16s.

Gripen manufacturer Saab welcomed the statement.

“We can confirm the fact that the Thai Air Force has publicly confirmed that they would like to purchase the Gripen. This is a very positive news for Saab and Sweden,” Mattias Radstrom,

press manager for Saab, told AFP.

“At this stage, there is no contract or order. We are looking forward to continuing the discussion with the Thai Air Force and the Thai authorities.”

AFP