FUTURE ARTILLERY

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COLONEL STEPHAN SJÖBERG ON SWEDEN'S ARTILLERY TRANSFORMATION AND THE FUTURE OF MULTI-DOMAIN OPERATIONS





Defence iQ

Precision fires, deep strike capabilities, and the integration of intelligence, sensors, and effectors across domains are reshaping how land forces operate and how military leaders think about firepower. For Sweden, this transformation is particularly significant. Following years in which artillery capabilities were reduced, the Swedish Armed Forces are now rapidly rebuilding and modernising their fires capability as part of a broader shift in national defence posture and integration into NATO.

Ahead of Defence IQ's Future Artillery Conference, we spoke with Colonel Stephan Sjöberg, Chief of Artillery for the Swedish Armed Forces, about the lessons shaping Sweden's artillery resurgence, the growing importance of multi-domain operations, and the role of innovation, cooperation, and resilience in future fires capabilities.



Colonel Stephan Sjöberg

Chief of Artillery

Swedish Armed Forces

Colonel Stephan Gustav Sjöberg began his military career as a conscript squad leader in a high-readiness reconnaissance platoon and later served with UNIFIL in Lebanon (1992–1993) and in Bosnia (1996). After completing officer training, he served as a maintenance officer with the 10th Mechanised Brigade in Strängnäs (P10) from 1995 to 2003.

In 2003 he moved to the Joint Forces Command Intelligence Department (J2), working as an analyst at Swedish Armed Forces Headquarters. He later served as ISTAR coordinator for the Force Headquarters J2 during EUFOR RDC in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in 2010, he served as a staff officer to the Chief of Staff of the Swedish Armed Forces and later as Head of the Training Department at the Swedish Intelligence and Security Centre (2012–2014). From 2014 to 2017, he was a Military Advisor to the Swedish Ministry of Defence in the Department for Intelligence Coordination.

He was appointed Chief of Plans at Army Headquarters in Enköping in June 2020 and promoted to Colonel the same year. Since June 2023, he has commanded the Boden Artillery Regiment and serves as Inspector of the Swedish Artillery.



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You've had a diverse career spanning operations, intelligence, policy, and senior command. Looking back, what experiences have most shaped your current perspective as Chief of Artillery in the Swedish Armed Forces?

Thank you very much for this question and for the interview. Having a broad background that is not specifically rooted in artillery has given me the opportunity to take bits and pieces from different domains and apply them to the requirements and needs of the artillery.

Perhaps most influential was my previous position as Chief of Plans at Army Headquarters. That perspective gave me a very good understanding of the challenges facing artillery in comparison to the rest of the army. It also allowed me to help ensure that artillery develops together with, and within, the army - rather than as something separate alongside it.

Later, when we began focusing more closely on the main operations of the artillery, including deep operations, I realised that my intelligence background gave me a strong understanding of what we actually need to achieve. Intelligence is not just one single area - it consists of many different disciplines, each with its own challenges, advantages, and limitations.

When we take steps into deep operations, where cyberspace and electromagnetic activities are essential, I have been able to draw on both my experience and my network of contacts. In addition, understanding the policy and procurement perspective—especially the political side - is crucial for the development of artillery capabilities. We require many different systems, not only for short-range fires, and many of these systems, as we all know, are very expensive.

From a senior leadership viewpoint, how do you see the role of artillery changing in response to today's more complex and fast-moving security environment?

First of all, it is important to underline that Swedish artillery was actually reduced to zero for several years. We essentially had no artillery capability at all, except for mortars, which is not the same thing. During the era of international operations, artillery was simply not a focus.

That forms the starting point for the growth of artillery within the Swedish Army today. We have recently taken the first steps to adapt to the warfighting functions within the Swedish Army, moving toward the concept of fires. Fires, as you know, is broader than artillery alone.

Just after Christmas we conducted what I would describe as a larger land-domain tabletop discussion on land targeting, viewed through the perspective of multi-domain operations (MDO) and deep operations for the First Division of the Swedish Army. These discussions take place annually, but this year our aim was not necessarily to find answers, but rather to develop the right questions.



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We brought together a much broader range of actors, including intelligence specialists, cyber experts, IMINT, the Intelligence and Security Centre, and personnel from the electronic warfare domain. After seeing the results and the challenges identified, I am very confident that we are moving in the right direction. We will continue this shift in perspective within both Swedish artillery and the Swedish Army.

We may also be able to do more together with our Nordic neighbours through the Nordic Artillery Inspectors community. Most probably we can - and most probably we will.

One important observation is that land targeting very quickly becomes joint targeting, and joint targeting ultimately becomes multi-domain operations. I would also highlight the traditional balance between fire to manoeuvre and manoeuvre to fire, which is returning to focus given today's security challenges. At the same time, we must not overlook the rapid pace of capability development in this area.

Another point is the growing need to cooperate much more closely with the air defence function. We are currently examining the possibility of creating a model for a deep strike brigade, and within that work we will address the relationship between artillery and air defence. In Sweden, the IAMD concept is only just beginning to develop. We also touched upon this cooperation during the tabletop discussion I mentioned earlier.

Finally, the kill chains of today must adapt to a much more complex operational environment. On a battlefield degraded by electronic warfare, the need for intelligence, command and control, and effectors - including coordinated sensors - is crucial at every level. It may no longer be accurate to speak of a kill chain; instead, it is increasingly a kill web.

We are not yet fully aligned with all the requirements of the Alliance, but we have taken the initial steps and started the journey. By using the division and its capabilities, we are beginning to develop the ability to fight deep, while remaining fully aware that we must also address the corps level. I am very much looking forward to continuing this work within NATO and the Alliance.

Much of the discussion around future fires focuses on speed, adaptability and resilience. At a high level, what do these concepts mean to you when thinking about modern land forces?

This is a highly relevant question, although not an easy one to answer. I would focus on a few key areas.

First, speed. There is an urgent need to continue integrating artificial intelligence into the fires domain. This will affect both land and joint targeting, including areas such as sensor fusion. Automatic kill chains will also raise ethical questions - how much can we really automate, and where are the limits?

It is important to distinguish between what is theoretically possible within industry and research, and what capabilities actually exist within military units on the battlefield. These are not the same thing.



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Another challenge is that the processes for innovation and rapid capability development are simply too slow today. In the Nordic region we launched an innovation platform several years ago called Arctic Strike, where Nordic countries can test innovations together with industry, research agencies, procurement organisations, and academia - much faster than through traditional processes.

Regarding adaptability, one key challenge is how to fight on a transparent battlefield. This will require adaptive tactics, including targeting enemy sensors and countering the opponent's ISR. The goal is to establish sensor superiority in order to enable manoeuvre to fire.

The land domain will fuse very quickly with the joint domain - we see this happening all the time. A concrete example is the capability provided by SAR (synthetic aperture radar), which allows us to see through poor conditions.

Finally, resilience. Systems must remain resilient in the face of rapidly evolving threats. We are very aware of the pace of innovation in Russia and the strength of Russian electronic warfare capabilities. These realities must be considered across all levels and all systems.

For this reason, adopting a system-of-systems approach is essential.

Sweden has undergone significant change in its defence outlook in recent years. How has this broader strategic shift influenced the way land forces, including artillery, are prioritised and developed?

Sweden's integration into NATO has placed Sweden - and also Finland, together with our Nordic partners - in a historically unique situation. For the first time, we are operating under the same security umbrella, which enables cooperation in ways that were previously not possible.

For artillery in the Nordic region, this cooperation was already relatively well prepared through the Nordic Artillery Inspectors Forum, which dates back to the 1990s.

However, we have also moved from the era of international operations into a period defined by a clear military threat to European security, particularly in light of the war in Ukraine. The Swedish Armed Forces must therefore take major steps to become a relevant ally within the Alliance - starting from what I would describe as a relatively low baseline.

For artillery specifically, the 2024 Defence Bill outlines significant expansion. Wartime units will grow from two to nine, including the re-establishment of a second artillery regiment. Sweden has also donated Archer systems to Ukraine and provided system support to the UK for the Archer system.

It is important to emphasise that this transformation is not only about rebuilding previous capabilities - it is also about developing entirely new ones. These include cyber capabilities, electronic warfare across all levels, and space-related capabilities.

We are also examining new organisational concepts, such as dedicated deep strike units, which bring together capabilities in ways we have not previously used.

From my perspective, multi-domain operations (MDO) sit at the centre of this major transformation - not only for Sweden, but for the Alliance as a whole.

Having worked extensively in intelligence and planning roles, how important is good information and coordination in enabling effective military decision making at all levels?

The importance of vital, time-sensitive and accurate information - transformed into intelligence - is absolutely fundamental. I want to stress that very clearly: there are no alternatives to this.

In competition with our adversaries, good or bad intelligence may well determine who ultimately wins the fight.

However, we should not think of intelligence as a single function. In reality, it is highly complex and consists of many different disciplines, each contributing to the overall picture.

Modern conflicts highlight not just combat capability, but also endurance and sustainability. From your perspective, what are the key considerations leaders must keep in mind to ensure forces remain effective over time?

From my perspective, one of the most important factors is the ability to innovate and develop capabilities much faster than we do today. I mentioned this earlier, but it will remain crucial regardless of what future battlefields look like.

We can already observe this dynamic in Ukraine. A clear example is the balance between mass and quality. In artillery, I have the impression that the importance of mass is once again becoming widely recognised.

At the same time, new adversary capabilities - such as electronic warfare and cyber operations - must be considered carefully. Once again, capabilities such as SAR provide significant advantages.

International cooperation is increasingly central to defence planning. Based on your experience working with partners and allies, what makes multinational military collaboration successful in practice?

When different actors face the same challenge, cooperation tends to emerge naturally.

From a practical perspective, I believe it is important to begin with the low-hanging fruit rather than immediately tackling the most complicated aspects of cooperation. Many defence projects will last for decades, particularly in procurement.

For example, there is a significant difference between starting cooperation in the early conceptual phase of a programme and attempting to cooperate only at the point when systems are selected.

Within Nordic cooperation - particularly through the Nordic Artillery Inspectors Forum - we try to do as much as possible together within the Alliance and maintain a long-term perspective. There is also increasing interest in the Arctic and northern regions.

Key areas where international cooperation can be strengthened include procurement, shared defence planning, and the development of long-term strategic visions.

The Future Artillery Conference aims to bring together military leaders, industry and policy makers to explore these shared challenges. What would you say to senior decision makers who are considering whether this forum is worth their time?

Maintaining a continuous dialogue between artillery communities, armies, procurement agencies, industry and academia is crucial for the future - both in the short term and the long term.

Coming into artillery from outside the field, I was particularly impressed by how efficiently these different actors already cooperate: industry, procurement organisations, artillery units, and defence research agencies.

The Future Artillery conference provides a broad platform for this dialogue. However, we must always distinguish between what is theoretically possible within industry and research, and what capabilities actually exist within military forces.

Even so, having a forum where we can meet, exchange ideas, and discuss common challenges is absolutely vital for the future - both in the short and long term.



https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_equipment_of_the_Swedish_Armed_Forces#/media/File:Rheinmetall_48_HX_8x8_Trucks.jpg

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Are you ready for Future Artillery 2026?

The themes discussed by Colonel Sjöberg - from rebuilding artillery capabilities to integrating fires across multi-domain operations - will be explored in greater depth at Defence IQ's Future Artillery Conference.

Recognised as the world's largest indirect fires forum, the event brings together senior military leaders, defence industry experts, and policy stakeholders to examine the technologies, doctrines, and partnerships shaping the future of artillery.

Taking place 19–21 May 2026 at Novotel London West, London, the conference will provide a strategic platform to discuss emerging capabilities such as precision-guided munitions, autonomous systems, resilient logistics, and deep strike integration across allied forces.

Join the global fires community to exchange insights, strengthen collaboration, and explore the innovations driving the next generation of artillery capability.

MEET THE SPEAKERS:



Lieutenant General Simon Hamilton CBE

Deputy Chief Executive Officer
DE&S *Subject to final confirmation

Lieutenant General John Mead OBE

Deputy Commander
NATO Allied Joint Force Command Brunssum



Major General Andrii Malinovskiy

Chief of Artillery
Ukrainian Armed Forces

Brigadier General Steven Carpenter

Commander, 56th Artillery Command
US Army



Brigadier Mark Comer

Deputy Chief of Staff (DCOS) PLANS
Joint Support and Enabling Command (JSEC)



Brigadier Adam Fraser-Hitchen

Deputy Commander
3 UK Division
British Army

Brigadier General Olivier Coquet

Director Of The French Army Technical Branch
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Brigadier General Dimitrios Tagkalakis

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