Korea’s foreign investment environment may have undergone a liberalization in the late 1990s, but when it comes to aerospace manufacturer Pratt & Whitney’s footprint in Korea, the history goes way back.

The first combat aircraft flown by the Republic of Korea Air Force before the start of the Korean War had a Pratt & Whitney engine. In 1984, the Korean Air Force again chose Pratt & Whitney engines for their F16 fighter jets. In the 1990s, after winning another competition to build engines for 120 aircraft in Korea, the company set up a production line here as well as the office of Pratt & Whitney Military Engines Korea. Today, almost all Korean Air aircraft have a Pratt & Whitney engine, the exceptions being aircraft for which the company does not make an engine.

“We only have an office like this in very few countries,” said Bryant Jublou, Regional Director for Military Programs for Pratt & Whitney Military Engines Korea, about Pratt & Whitney’s military-focused units. “We have an office here because Korea is such an important customer for us.”

With 200 engines in Korea today, Pratt & Whitney Military Engines Korea works with partners Samsung Techwin and Korea Lest-Wax to build engines for the Korean Air Force, and to service the existing fleet. Its Seoul office is one of six worldwide dedicated to Pratt & Whitney’s military engines business.

The United States-based Pratt & Whitney designs, manufactures and services aircraft engines, industrial gas turbines, rocket engines and space propulsion systems. The USD 12.6 billion company has five business units — Commercial Engines and Global Services, P&W Rocketdyne, Power Systems, P&W Canada and Military Engines. It is the largest of parent company United Technologies Corporation’s seven businesses. Almost 8,500 Pratt & Whitney military engines are in service with 29 armed forces worldwide.

Pratt & Whitney Military Engines Korea’s investment journey was initially driven by a requirement to engage in offset, a built-in investment tool common in military contracts whereby the company sells products to the Korean government but is expected to buy products from Korea or invest in Korea, and to locally manufacture products. With the competition for 120 aircraft in the 1990s, about 100 engines were produced in Korea. Samsung did the aircraft and engine assembly.

“So those programs finished years ago, but the result of those programs is we now have very good suppliers,” said Jublou, adding that everything his company makes has a Samsung part. “We went from very few parts being produced here, very few engines. And now we have 200 engines.”

Earlier this year, Pratt & Whitney received a five-year, USD 300 million performance-based logistics contract from the Korean government to maintain more than 230 of the country’s F100 engines for F-15 and F-16 aircraft. Today, Pratt & Whitney Military Engines Korea is competing in Korea’s F-X III contest for 60 fighters.

The company’s growth and journey in Korea have helped expand the nation’s defense capabilities, as domestic companies are fully capable of manufacturing engines and taking care of their maintenance, repair and overhaul.

“We’ve established a capability in Samsung to produce military engines,” said Jublou. “And on the defense side, it’s helped to make the Korean Air Force self sufficient.”

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**Did you know?**

- Pratt & Whitney produced its first jet engines in 1948.
- Pratt & Whitney has entered into a contract with NASA to develop the J-2X engine for vehicles of the future.
- The company’s PurePower® engine is the first ultra high bypass turbofan jet engine.