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Rheinmetall celebrates its 125th anniversary:

Today the Group is a world leader in the security and mobility sectors

From an Imperial-era maker of munitions and cannon to a globe-spanning technology enterprise: throughout its 125-year corporate history, Rheinmetall has remained true to its defence engineering roots, while repeatedly branching out into other forward-looking industries, successfully striving for excellence there too, and positioning itself as a leader in markets around the world. Today, by focusing on security and mobility, the Group helps to meet two of modern humanity's basic needs.

The name Rheinmetall has long been associated with state-of-the-art defence and automotive technology. KSPG AG, the Group's automotive arm, is a globally renowned auto parts maker, supplying major international car manufacturers with a wide range of engine-related modules and systems. In the defence sector, Rheinmetall provides the armed forces of Germany, its NATO partners and other friendly nations with army technology as well as naval and air force solutions.

This year the company celebrates its 125th anniversary. Founded in 1889 as an *Aktiengesellschaft*, or joint stock company, it has been an AG ever since, and generally listed on the stock exchange. This is an almost unique success story, as very few companies in Germany – especially joint stock companies – are able to look back on such a long history. This is all the more remarkable given the way the company had to start over from scratch under difficult circumstances in 1918 and 1945 following the two World Wars.

A major employer with a global presence – and a bipartite corporate structure

Rheinmetall AG's Defence and Automotive units make it a significant employer, with a global workforce of around 25,000 at 34 locations worldwide, accounting for roughly 10,500 jobs in Germany alone. The Group has production facilities and sales units in numerous countries even outside Europe, stretching from Canada and the United States to Brazil, and from China and Australia to South Africa.

The Group's Automotive unit – KSPG AG – develops and produces pistons, cylinder housings and plain bearings, exhaust gas recirculation systems, solenoid valves and pumps as well as many other engine components for current and future vehicles. KSPG AG, previously known as Kolbenschmidt Pierburg AG, likewise has a rich heritage dating back over a century.

The product range of the Group's Defence arm encompasses a wide array of military trucks, tracked and wheeled armoured vehicles, medium- and large-calibre weapon systems and ammunition as well as turret, air defence and force protection systems. Rheinmetall Defence is also a leader in simulation technology, advanced soldier systems, sensor solutions and fire control technology.

It all started with a big ammunition order

Founded in 1889 by the former Hörder Bergwerks- und Hüttenverein (a mining and steel concern), Rheinmetall's sole initial purpose was to complete a major ammunition order awarded to the Hörder Verein by the German Reich. The partnership contract for the new company, known as "Rheinische Metallwaaren- und Maschinenfabrik Actiengesellschaft", was signed on 13 April 1889; its name was entered in the Commercial Register less than a month later on 7 May. The newly founded company began operations on 3 September 1889 in rented premises in Talstrasse in the Bilk district of Düsseldorf, producing ammunition for the "Gewehr 88", a widely used bolt-action rifle made by a number of German arms makers, including the Royal Prussian Rifle Factory in Spandau.

The spirit of invention drives success – after the Great War, a fresh start

Today Düsseldorf still plays host to Rheinmetall's corporate headquarters. The city's oldest existing joint stock corporation, it has written industrial history far beyond the Rhineland. In the process, the company quickly outgrew its role as a mere maker of rifle ammunition. It was Heinrich Ehrhardt – the inventive and enterprising Thuringian engineer who for many years stood at the company's helm and guided it to early greatness – who laid the groundwork for Rheinmetall's rise by helping to develop the recoiling cannon. This proved to be a turning point in the history of artillery technology, enabling the introduction of rapid-fire field guns.

By the end of the First World War, Rheinmetall had emerged as the Reich's second-largest producer (after Krupp) of heavy guns and ammunition for the German Army and Navy. After 1918 the company was forced to shift to civilian manufacturing, including locomotives, steam ploughs and office machines; starting in 1921, however, production of armaments recommenced.

The merger with Borsig, a longstanding Berlin locomotive manufacturer, led to the creation of Rheinmetall-Borsig AG and the establishment of a network of production facilities throughout the Reich. Rheinmetall-Borsig assumed a leading role in the German armaments industry, though quickly came under the total domination of the Nazis, who nationalized the Group, integrating it into the huge Reichswerke Hermann Göring conglomerate. During the final two years of the Second World War, many of its production facilities were destroyed. The occupation of Germany by the victorious Allies, the loss of former German territories in the east and not least the division of the country, led to the confiscation of numerous plants in what would become Poland and the German Democratic Republic, compounding the problems by a temporary ban on production and the freezing of its assets.

Rheinmetall equips the newly founded Bundeswehr; takeover of Kolbenschmidt and Pierburg

Following a less than stellar foray into civilian production in Düsseldorf after the war, and reprivatization through the sale of state-owned Rheinmetall shares to the Röchling Group as well as separation from Borsig in Berlin, in 1956 Rheinmetall was free to return to its traditional core competency: defence technology. And this is precisely what the German government had in mind. Along with control of Rheinmetall, the Röchling Group was given the express mission of establishing an efficient producer of defence technology equipment in Germany.

The company's contribution to arming the new Bundeswehr began with the production of infantry weapons: the MG 42/MG 3 machinegun and G3 assault rifle as well as a 20mm automatic cannon for the Bundeswehr's first infantry fighting vehicle. In 1964 Rheinmetall resumed cannon production, building on its long decades of experience.

A major milestone in Rheinmetall history was the company's participation in the Bundeswehr's tank programmes. In particular, its 120mm smoothbore tank gun set a new global standard for technical and tactical excellence – and still does in the Leopard 2A7.

Starting in the 1960s Rheinmetall began diversifying into civil industry, acquiring companies in the mechanical engineering and civil electronic sectors, among others. The takeover of Pierburg (in 1986) and Kolbenschmidt (1997) proved to be particularly significant: the two companies, united in KSPG AG, now form the Group's Automotive unit. After shedding its peripheral operations, since the beginning of the 21st century Rheinmetall has focused entirely on its two mainstays, Defence and Automotive.

High-tech products for protecting soldiers in harm's way

Rheinmetall products and services help to make sure that our men and women in uniform can perform their duties safely, even during deployed operations. For example, highly protected vehicles such as the Fuchs/Fox wheeled armoured transport vehicle and the Boxer multirole armoured fighting vehicle provide personnel with excellent protection from a wide range of symmetric and asymmetric threats. Gladius, the world's most advanced soldier system, is currently being introduced in Bundeswehr combat units. In a class of its own, Germany's ultramodern Puma infantry fighting vehicle will gradually replace the Marder, first fielded some forty years ago.

Rheinmetall's Mantis is a unique air defence system designed to protect military assets and civilian infrastructure alike from aerial threats, including rocket and mortar attacks. In the simulation and training domain, the Group's solutions ensure that military and civilian users are well prepared to handle highly complex systems safely and correctly – on land, at sea and in the air. For example, Rheinmetall operates one of the Bundeswehr's largest and most important training facilities, the German Army

Combat Training Centre in the Altmark region of Saxony-Anhalt, where up to 15,000 troops undergo training every year.

With a current annual budget of over €70 million, research and development is another area in which Rheinmetall makes a valuable contribution to ensuring the effectiveness of tomorrow's armed forces, ranging from force protection technology to the hardware necessary for achieving successful outcomes, underpinning a responsible approach to national and international security.

A driving force in automotive technology: the Group's quest for greater fuel efficiency and lower emissions

Modern combustion engines owe much of their high performance and efficiency and low environmental impact to Rheinmetall subsidiary KSPG. A proven development partner of major automakers the world over, KSPG has been successfully developing and perfecting engine technology for over a century, helping to reduce pollution and CO₂ emissions while boosting fuel efficiency, as well as enabling lower weight and increased performance.

Under the Kolbenschmidt brand name, the Group develops and produces pistons for cars and trucks as well as much larger pistons, together with engine blocks, cylinder heads, plain bearings, and structural components made of aluminium. The name Pierburg is synonymous with modules and systems for reducing emissions, plus solenoid valves, actuators and valve trains as well as oil, water and vacuum pumps for cars, trucks and off-road vehicles. Moreover, with its brand name Motorservice, KSPG operates a worldwide spare parts business, supplying its own and other companies' components in over 130 countries.

A new, thoroughly researched history of the company is now available

Those interested in learning more about the 125-year history of Rheinmetall may want to read *Rheinmetall. Vom Reiz, im Rheinland ein großes Werk zu errichten*, a new history of the company by historian Dr Christian Leitzbach. Published by Greven Verlag, it is now available from booksellers.

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