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Future Soldier on the march: Rheinmetall hands over “Gladius” soldier system to the Bundeswehr

Rheinmetall formally transferred its new IdZ-ES future soldier system to the German Bundeswehr on 7 March 2013. Short for “Infanterist der Zukunft – Erweitertes System” or “Future Soldier – Expanded System”, IdZ-ES is also known as the “Gladius”. The handover ceremony coincided with the 10th Armoured Division’s traditional “International Division Skiing Championship” at Ruhpolding in Upper Bavaria. Bodo Garbe, member of the Executive Board of Rheinmetall Defence, symbolically handed over the Gladius to Lieutenant-General Bruno Kasdorf, Chief of Staff of the German Army, and Harald Stein, President of the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw).

“The new IdZ-ES is an original, comprehensive, innovative solution. For the first time ever, it proved possible to implement an entirely new design for a soldier system and get it to the troops. Thanks to Gladius, as we call it at Rheinmetall, German infantrymen can now play an active role in network-enabled warfare”, declared Bodo Garbe at the official handover ceremony for the system in Inzell, Germany.

Mr Garbe went on to note that “the availability and flow of information on the battlefield are at least as important as firepower, protection and mobility. IdZ-ES automatically furnishes each soldier with this information in near real time.” Praising the system’s technical features and the excellent cooperation between the Bundeswehr and the defence industry, Mr Garbe also pointed out that Rheinmetall had completed the project on time and on budget, “not something that can be taken for granted in complex defence projects.”

The Düsseldorf, Germany-based Rheinmetall Group was awarded the contract to develop the IdZ-ES expanded system in 2006. The German government ordered a first lot of thirty systems in 2012, which Rheinmetall is currently delivering according to plan. (Each system is designed to equip a 10-man section.) The troops now have until June 2013 to practise using the new systems before deploying to Afghanistan.

Rheinmetall received a follow-up order in January 2013 to supply a further sixty systems. This order is worth €84 million and encompasses equipment for 60 infantry sections, i.e. 600 soldiers. Delivery will take place in two lots of thirty systems each, the first in mid 2013, the second at the end of the year. This ensures that the next two Bundeswehr contingents to deploy to Afghanistan will receive the new equipment in time to familiarize themselves with it.

Gladius gives the Bundeswehr the world's most advanced soldier system. Fielding it is a major step in the process of improving the equipment of infantry forces in future deployed operations, thus enhancing the survivability of the individual soldier.

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