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Operation Fire Magic – the starting gun for Rheinmetall special effects pyrotechnics

Forty years ago, on the night of 17/18 October 1977, the GSG 9 carried out Operation Fire Magic. At the airport in Mogadishu, the elite German police unit stormed the Lufthansa jet “Landshut”, which had been hijacked by terrorists five days earlier. The day before, on 16 October, the terrorists had murdered the captain of the “Landshut”, Jürgen Schumann, during a stopover in Aden. Led by their commander, Ulrich K. Wegener, the GSG 9 freed all 86 passengers unharmed during the successful commando operation in Mogadishu. Three of the four terrorists were killed; one police officer and one member of the Lufthansa crew suffered minor injuries.

Operation Fire Magic was the starting gun for the development of Rheinmetall’s current array of special effects pyrotechnics. Seconds before the start of the operation, two members of the British military’s crack Special Air Service supporting the GSG 9 assault force set off stun grenades to distract the terrorists. The use of these special effects munitions made a vital contribution to the successful outcome of the mission. Soon after Operation Fire Magic, German special operations units approached Nico, a pyrotechnic company in Trittau in Schleswig-Holstein, now known as Rheinmetall Waffe Munition. The company was tasked with developing munitions intended specifically for special operations. Its R&D efforts resulted in flash-bang grenades that have been steadily perfected during the intervening decades.

Today Rheinmetall is one of the world’s leading makers of special effects munitions. The Group’s extensive array of products encompasses single and multiple bang grenades as well as enhanced flash-bang versions featuring bottom-top venting (BTV) technology. They are safe to handle, highly reliable and extremely precise. Rheinmetall also supplies a wide array of 40mm munitions, including distraction devices and marking rounds. Moreover, the Düsseldorf-based Group is currently developing a special 40mm round designed for opening doors and windows from a safe distance.

Rheinmetall works constantly to perfect its product range, making it a trusted partner of law enforcement agencies tasked with fighting organized crime and terrorism around the globe. The Group’s Public Security product portfolio extends to every relevant capabilities category: reconnaissance and surveillance; command and control; cyber security; kinetics; force protection; and tactical mobility.

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