

## ► WEAPON AND AMMUNITION

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### Ceremonial opening of new ammunition factory:

## Turning point at Rheinmetall-speed

Rheinmetall has taken Europe's largest ammunition factory in Lower Saxony into operation in order to meet the urgent needs of the armed forces in Europe. The technology group has invested almost €500 million in the construction of the production facility at the Rheinmetall site in Unterlues (Celle district), which was completed in a record time of just 15 months.

The presence of many dignitaries from Germany and abroad highlighted the importance of the occasion. Guests present were Vice-Chancellor and Federal Minister of Finance Lars Klingbeil, Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius, NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte and General Carsten Breuer, Chief of Defence of the German Armed Forces. The highest-ranking guest was

Rumen Radev, President of Bulgaria. Olaf Lies, Minister-President of Lower-Saxony, also attended the ceremony, as did many other high-ranking persons, including guests from the United States of America, Latvia and Lithuania.



In future, up to 350,000 artillery shells are to be produced annually in Unterlues at the new Lower-Saxony plant (*Werk Niedersachsen*), which covers an area of around 30,000 m<sup>2</sup>. The first 25,000 rounds are to be produced before the end of this year. Next year, 140,000 rounds are scheduled for delivery, with full capacity to be reached in 2027. In addition to that, the production of engines for artillery rockets is planned for the year 2026. Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger: "After having accelerated the production to the maximum until 2027 and then being at full capacity, the *Werk Niedersachsen* will be the largest ammunition plant in Europe, if not the world".

In total, this will create up to 500 jobs – 350 at the plant in Lower-Saxony and a further 150 in the rocket engine production, which is still under development. Hundreds of more jobs will thus be created in areas such as supplementary services and suppliers.

The supply of ammunition is essential for restoring the defence capabilities of Germany and its European allies. Rheinmetall takes on the responsibility as a leading manufacturer and is investing at large-scale at various locations. Most recently, in the summer of 2023, the Düsseldorf-based group spent around €1.2 billion on the acquisition of Spanish manufacturer Expal Systems. Rheinmetall plans to produce a total of around 1.5 million artillery shells per year from 2027 onwards throughout its production network, which also includes sites in Spain and South Africa.

## ► Keyfacts

- New Lower-Saxony plant: will in the future be the largest ammunition factory in Europe
- Rheinmetall-speed: construction work of only 15 months
- Investment of nearly €500 million
- Around 500 jobs to be created

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The urgency of the defence alliance's need for ammunition was underscored in Unterlues by a major order from NATO member Romania, which was placed just before the inauguration ceremony began. Radu-Dinel Miruță, Romania's Minister of Economy, and Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall AG, signed a Letter of Intent which is the basis for the next steps. Together with partners, Rheinmetall plans to invest around €550 million in the new plant in Romania.

#### **Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius: "Your success means security for our country"**

The politicians praised the importance of the plant for Germany and Europe: "We are herewith investing in our security", emphasised Federal Finance Minister Lars Klingbeil in his speech. The Vice-Chancellor also reiterated: "This plant indicates that we are taking action".

Federal Minister of Defence Boris Pistorius addressed Rheinmetall and the defence industry as a whole: "We want you to be successful, because your success means security for our country". And then continued: "You, the industry, deliver what is important: speed and substance". He also categorized Germany's efforts to increase arms production for the armed forces massively in the context of alliance policy: "NATO must become more European so that it can remain transatlantic".

NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte emphasised in his speech: "Strong and successful is exactly what Rheinmetall is". He cast a warning glance at the massive armament efforts in Russia and China: "Their military build-up points in a clear direction: they are preparing for long-term confrontation and competition – with us".

Rheinmetall CEO Armin Papperger accented: "From the groundbreaking to production in just 15 months – that's a real turning point at Rheinmetall speed". Since the ground-breaking ceremony in February 2024 and in just over a year of construction work, Rheinmetall has created the possibility to independently meet the requirements of the German Armed Forces from national production in the future and, if required, to guarantee independent deliveries to partner countries. "Our new national production facility is setting standards and will, above all, ensure the supply of the German Armed Forces". Rheinmetall is not limiting itself to Germany when it comes to building such plants: "This means that we can also erect comparable plants in other NATO-countries within a very short time, thus creating a pan-European defence ecosystem", Papperger emphasised. "For example, we have already launched specific projects in Lithuania and the United Kingdom, with more to follow".

#### **Rheinmetall in Unterlues**

The traditional site in Unterlues, which Rheinmetall has been operating in the Suedheide region since 1899, is currently the Group's largest worldwide with 3,200 employees. Two companies are based here: Rheinmetall Landsystems GmbH and Rheinmetall Weapon and Munition GmbH. Unterlues is also an important location for Rheinmetall IT Solutions GmbH. Alongside the ammunition production, the site's activities also focus on the development and manufacture of weapon systems. At the same time, Rheinmetall maintains its competence centre for the development, construction and support of tracked vehicles here.

The company owns an area that covers a total area of about 60 square kilometres which is largely used as a firing and testing range. Nevertheless, large parts of it are also used for forestry.