

► VEHICLE SYSTEMS

20 January 2026

Challenger 3 reaches key milestone with first-ever crewed live firing trials

Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) has successfully completed the first crewed live firing of Challenger 3 – a significant step towards delivery of the British Army’s next-generation Main Battle Tank.

The latest trials, held at a MOD Training Centre, marked the first UK firing of a newly developed Main Battle Tank in more than 30 years.

Part of the progressive assurance of the tank’s capabilities and systems before it enters service, the trial followed a carefully phased programme, beginning with remote operation before progressing to crewed firing by Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land personnel.



Challenger 3 is equipped with the 120mm smoothbore L55A1 cannon manufactured by Rheinmetall. It fires the latest kinetic energy anti-tank rounds and programmable multipurpose ammunition.

Rebecca Richards, Managing Director of Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land, said: “This is a hugely significant achievement for the Challenger 3 programme and a testament to the skill and dedication of the teams delivering it.

“Firing the vehicle first remotely and then with a crew in the turret reflects the enormous amount of work that has gone into ensuring the design is safe, robust and ready.

“This shows just how far the programme has progressed and marks a proud moment for UK armoured vehicle development.”

Army Senior Responsible Owner, Mark Colley, said: “This milestone reflects the benefits of the close collaboration between the Ministry of Defence and industry. The successful crewed firing of Challenger 3 demonstrates tangible progress in delivering the modernised, Main Battle Tank the British Army needs.”

► Key facts

- Challenger 3 has successfully completed crewed live firing trials
- Rounds fired with L55A1 smoothbore cannon
- Visit us at International Armoured Vehicle Conference from 20 – 22 January 2026 in Farnborough

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Following this milestone, the tank will undergo further trials, as it moves towards operational service as the centrepiece of the British Army's modernisation programme.

The vehicles, designed and produced by RBSL from its Telford (UK) factory, are a leading example of advanced military vehicle production. They show great collaboration between Britain, her allies and respected vehicle systems suppliers across the UK and Europe.

Notes for editors:

Challenger 3 will deliver a step change in lethality, survivability and digital integration. 148 modernised tanks will be delivered to the British Army.

Challenger 3 is being produced by Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land under an £800+ million contract, creating highly skilled roles, with 300 jobs within RBSL and an additional 450 jobs across the UK.

The contract attracted a £40 million inward investment in Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land's Telford facility, utilising a European supply chain, the majority being skilled UK-based SMEs spread throughout the UK, from the West Midlands, Glasgow, Newcastle upon Tyne to the Isle of Wight.