

► DIGITAL SYSTEMS

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Rheinmetall, ERC System, and the State of North Rhine-Westphalia sign a memorandum of understanding regarding the potential establishment of a heavy-lift drone facility in North Rhine-Westphalia

Rheinmetall, ERC System, and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia have formed a strategic partnership at the ILA Berlin 2026. The goal is to lay the groundwork for the production of the Victor U250 heavy-lift drone in North Rhine-Westphalia.

The partners plan to jointly drive forward the market launch of the Victor U250 drone by establishing local production and supply chains. If successfully implemented, this will secure relevant high-tech industries in North Rhine-Westphalia and Germany for the long term. The initiative is expected to create hundreds of jobs by 2029.



The unmanned, hybrid-electric heavy-lift cargo drone Victor U250 is characterized in particular by a payload of up to 250 kilograms over 300 kilometers, an infrastructure-independent vertical takeoff with a high flight speed of 250 km/h, and a modular payload system. Rheinmetall is contributing its expertise as a certified aviation organization and as a provider of solutions for unmanned aerial systems. ERC is developing so-called vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) aircraft in Germany, currently primarily with hybrid-electric propulsion, for critical missions. They are used, among other things, in the following areas: military logistics, offshore and coastal logistics, disaster response, and medical personnel transport. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia is supporting the partners in exploring suitable funding opportunities and location options. Additionally, it plans to coordinate and assist with relevant approval and coordination procedures.

Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall: "With today's letter of intent, we are laying the foundation for the industrialization of a forward-looking unmanned aerial system in Germany. Ultimately, we aim to scale the Victor U250 heavy-lift drone technologically and industrially, ideally in collaboration with ERC and the state of North Rhine-Westphalia."

► Key facts

- Strategic partnership regarding the potential deployment of the Victor U250 hybrid-electric heavy-duty transport drone in North Rhine-Westphalia
- Plans are in place to establish a production facility and related supply chains in North Rhine-Westphalia
- The market launch and industrialization of the Victor U250 are to be advanced
- In the medium term, hundreds of new jobs are expected to be created

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Mona Neubaur, Deputy Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia: “ILA 2026 showcases how North Rhine-Westphalia is shaping the future: with strong research, innovative companies, and close European partnerships. We take our responsibility for Europe’s sovereignty seriously and are making a decisive contribution to the resilience of the region—in North Rhine-Westphalia, in Europe, and in space.”

Maximilian Oligschläger, Chief Commercial Officer at ERC: “The Victor U250 addresses key requirements for current and future logistics and transport missions in critical operations across defense, disaster response, and commercial logistics. The planned collaboration offers the opportunity to consistently bring together development, market launch, and industrial implementation in Germany.”

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Rudolf F. Schwarz, Chairman of the Executive Board and Owner of IABG: “The cooperation combines technological innovation with industrial implementation expertise to expand key strategic technologies and strengthen Germany’s sovereignty.”

About Rheinmetall AG

Rheinmetall AG is an integrated technology group headquartered in Düsseldorf. Founded in 1889, the company is a leading international systems provider in the defense industry, operating in the land, air, sea, and space sectors. Sustainability is an integral part of Rheinmetall’s strategy. With approximately 33,000 employees at some 180 locations worldwide, Rheinmetall has been listed on the DAX 40 since March 2023 and generated revenue of 9.9 billion euros in the 2025 fiscal year.

About ERC System GmbH

ERC System is a German technology company headquartered in Ottobrunn near Munich and a wholly owned subsidiary of Industrieanlagen-Betriebsgesellschaft mbH. ERC develops eVTOLs—electrically powered, vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) aircraft systems—currently primarily with hybrid-electric propulsion. The focus is on unmanned and manned product variants for various critical applications, particularly defense logistics as well as medical and passenger transport.

About Industrieanlagen-Betriebsgesellschaft mbH (IABG)

The owner-managed Industrieanlagen-Betriebsgesellschaft mbH, headquartered in Ottobrunn near Munich, is one of Europe’s leading independent technology companies. It supports public clients and industrial companies with analysis, simulation, testing, and validation services for complex systems and technologies. With scientific expertise, system understanding, and highly specialized testing infrastructure, IABG evaluates safety, performance, and reliability under real-world operating conditions.

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