

► VEHICLE SYSTEMS

21 March 2024

Multi-billion-euro contract for Rheinmetall: The “Heavy Weapon Carrier for the Infantry” provides the Army's medium forces with firepower and rapid mobility

The German Bundeswehr has commissioned Rheinmetall to supply the "Schwerer Waffenträger Infanterie (Heavy Weapon Carrier for the Infantry)". Following the Budget Committee of the German Bundestag approved the proposal on 20 March 2024, the contract was signed today on 21 March 2024. The German Federal Armed Forces (Bundeswehr) will procure up to 123 vehicles “Schwerer Waffenträger Infanterie”. The contract is worth around €2.7 billion, which also includes service and maintenance. Delivery is scheduled to begin in 2025.

The Heavy Weapon Carrier for the Infantry serves as a replacement for the Wiesel (“weasel”) tracked vehicle for direct tactical fire support of infantry units. It is also a core element of the German Army's new force category, the "medium forces" are able to rapidly deploy over long distances and thus contribute to credible national and alliance defence.



The Heavy Weapon Carrier for the Infantry is based on the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle (CRV), the wheeled armoured reconnaissance vehicle of the Australian Defence Force, also supplied by Rheinmetall. This is the proven 8x8 combat vehicle with an armoured reconnaissance mission module including the two-person Lance turret. The main weapon is the Rheinmetall MK30-2 ABM automatic cannon, which is also installed in the German Puma infantry fighting vehicle. In addition, the multi-role guided missile system (“mehrrollenfähiges leichtes Lenkflugkörpersystem” or MELLs), which enables the Heavy Weapon Carrier for the Infantry to provide anti-tank defence, is also fitted.

Armin Papperger, Chairman of the Executive Board of Rheinmetall AG: "We are very proud to have been selected to supply the Schwerer Waffenträger Infanterie, an essential element of the German Army's new force category, the 'medium forces'. In order to be able to provide the Army with the required combat vehicles as quickly as possible, we are integrating not only our German but also the Australian sites in our Rheinmetall network."

The vehicles earmarked for the Bundeswehr will use production capacities at Rheinmetall's state-of-the-art Military Vehicle Centre of Excellence (MILVEHCOE) in Redbank, south-east Queensland - together with the Combat Reconnaissance Vehicles produced for the Australian Defence Forces.

► Key facts

- German Federal Armed Forces commissions Rheinmetall to supply the heavy infantry weapon carrier
- Boxer 8x8 with Lance turret; main weapon 30mm automatic cannon
- Up to 123 vehicles; delivery from 2025; order value around €2.7 billion
- Production to include MILVEHCOE in Australia
- High manoeuvrability and firepower for the German Army's new "medium forces"

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Comprehensive German-Australian cooperation on this programme was initiated in 2023. In July 2023, Federal Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese agreed a corresponding agreement in principle in Berlin on the fringes of a visit to Germany. A declaration of cooperation had previously been signed in Canberra on 23 March 2023 by the Australian Minister for Defence Industry, Pat Conroy MP, and the German Parliamentary State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of Defence, Thomas Hitschler. This lays the foundation for further contractual arrangements between the Australian and German Ministries of Defence and Rheinmetall.

John Abunassar, head of Rheinmetall's Vehicle Systems Division, emphasised the similarities between the Australian and planned German Boxer vehicles and the trust that both allies place in Rheinmetall. "The Bundeswehr Boxers, some of which are to be built at MILVEHCOE, are based on the design of the successful Australian Boxer wheeled armoured reconnaissance vehicle. This would be one of the largest Australian defence exports in the country's history and supports Rheinmetall's goal to further develop the capabilities of the Australian defence industry and integrate it into the company's global supply chains."

"Rheinmetall has more than 900 employees in Australia, high-tech capabilities and an established manufacturing facility in Redbank that produces vehicles, armour and electronics. Our Australian and global supply chain will grow and bring further prosperity to small and medium sized businesses as we secure new orders to complement existing export programmes. We welcome the close defence industry partnership between Australia and Germany as the two nations work together to enhance global security," added Nathan Poyner, Managing Director of Rheinmetall Defence Australia.

The Boxer is a modern 8x8 armoured vehicle that is in service or under procurement with various armed forces around the world. The Boxer provides increased safety and protection for crews and has a high level of firepower and mobility for prolonged peacekeeping operations as well as near-peer conflict.

In Australia, Rheinmetall is the largest supplier of military vehicles to the country's armed forces. In addition to the 211 Boxer vehicles delivered as part of the Land 400 Phase 2 project - 133 of them in the CRV variant with the crewed Lance turret - the company also supports the Australian Defence Force's HX fleet, which comprises over 2,900 vehicles. Rheinmetall also provides the Multi-Ammunition Soft-Kill System to the Royal Australian Navy, manages training systems for Defence and has delivered more than 200 HX Trucks to the New Zealand Defence Force.