

14 September 2021

**Rheinmetall and RBSL at DSEI 2021:**

## **First smoothbore weapons enter production ahead of schedule for Challenger 3 upgrade programme**

Two Rheinmetall 120mm smoothbore L55A1 weapons for testing and trialling have now entered production, ahead of schedule, at Rheinmetall's Unterlöss facility. The weapon is a key component to the Challenger 3 upgrade programme, which aims to deliver the most capable tank in NATO.

Steel has been cut to form the gun barrel, the breechblock encasing the firing mechanism, and the weapon mounts attaching the gun to the turret.

Following production, the smoothbore guns will be integrated, tested and validated before delivery to Rheinmetall BAE Systems Land (RBSL) in the UK for integration with the new digital turret.

As announced in May 2021, RBSL will be transforming 148 Challenger 2 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) into the new Challenger 3 configuration for the British Army.



The latest Rheinmetall 120mm smoothbore is a key capability upgrade. The gun is state-of-the-art, firing world-class Kinetic Energy tank rounds and the latest programmable High Explosive multipurpose ammunition. Performance is also optimised with the latest gun and fire control system technology.

The smoothbore gun fires the most advanced, high-performance penetrators, bringing assured lethality to the UK. This element of the Challenger 3 upgrade also ensures UK interoperability with other NATO users.

Challenger 3's upgraded lethality sits alongside a new armour system that provides the highest standards of protection for the crew, with work underway to incorporate Active Protection Systems.

Challenger 3 will also receive improved long-range Commander and Gunner primary sights with automatic detection and tracking, plus integrated day and night thermal modes of operation.

**Colonel Will Waugh, Armour Main Battle Tank Programme Director for the British Army, said:**

"This is another and early step forward on the path to delivering a genuinely world-class MBT for the British Army. Pairing the tried and tested L55A1 smoothbore gun with the latest kinetic energy ammunition and programmable secondary natures will give CR3 a step change in the lethality over CR2.



### **▶ Key facts**

- ▶ New Challenger 3 upgrade includes digital turret and tried-and-test 120mm smoothbore gun.
- ▶ Two smoothbore guns have entered production ahead of schedule at Rheinmetall's Kassel plant.
- ▶ The 120mm smoothbore gun is state-of-the-art, firing multi-purpose and programmable ammunition.

### **▶ Contacts**

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### **▶ Social Media**

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“The move to a smoothbore gun brings the UK in line with its principal NATO allies increasing our interoperability and ensuring access to the latest ammunition natures. This will future-proof CR3’s lethality against the full range of threats until its OSD.”

**John Abunassar, CEO of Rheinmetall’s Vehicle Systems Division, said:**

“The technology and design of the Rheinmetall 120mm smoothbore gun offers a complete uplift in capability and a plethora of benefits, from interoperability on the global stage, to enhanced Kinetic Energy and programmable ammunition.

“The system is tried-and-tested and Rheinmetall is proud to have started production on the first two guns ahead of schedule to ensure a strong and positive start to Challenger 3 production.”

**Notes to editors**

The accompanying images illustrate phases throughout the smoothbore gun production process.

The gun barrel is shown after the ‘autofrettage’ process (a cold metal forming technique), before mechanical processing. The second image demonstrates how the finished gun will look, after the manufacturing process is completed and integrated with the wider weapon system.