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Breakthrough in air defence: Rheinmetall successful with Skynex in Italy

Italy wants to purchase four systems valued nearly €280m

The Italian Army has decided to introduce Skynex air defence systems from Rheinmetall. The order to supply a first system worth a total of €73m has now been placed at Rheinmetall Italia S.p.A., Rome. The contract includes an option to supply three additional systems worth €204m.

A Skynex system consists of a sensor and tracking unit for air surveillance, a control station as a command-and-control centre and four 35mm firing units. Skynex systems are designed to counter threats from missiles, artillery and mortars, as well as drones and loitering munitions – both for national defence and for the protection of contingents in operational areas.

The scheduled delivery of the pilot system is to be completed during Q2/2026, while three follow-up systems, as option, could be contractualized within 2027. The distribution package includes the appropriate ammunition, training and maintenance services as well as spare parts.

Italy is the first NATO member state to opt for Rheinmetall's Skynex technology Skynex technology including the Revolver Gun Mk3 35mm. The successful order is thus an important corner stone in Rheinmetall's strategy of establishing a new standard in the field of cannon-based air defence for international armed forces. NATO member Romania also recently opted for Skynex in combination with another type of gun already in service there (GDF-009 twin guns). Skynex air defence systems are already proving their quality to the Ukrainian armed forces in the harsh conditions of war, protecting people and property from airborne threats.

Rheinmetall is also promisingly positioned in Italy in the field of heavy combat vehicles. Together with its partner company Leonardo, Rheinmetall is expecting large-volume orders to equip the Italian armed forces with combat vehicles, namely the Italian main battle tank (MBT) and the Lynx armored infantry combat system (AICS).

Rheinmetall already has a strong presence in Italy and generates sales of around €1bn with three subsidiaries – including Rheinmetall Italia – and a total of around 1,500 employees at five locations.

► Key facts

- Strategically important customer in the NATO area: Italy introduces Skynex air defence system
- First system ordered valued €73m
- Option for three additional systems worth €204m
- Rheinmetall well positioned in Italy

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The Skynex Air Defence System

Skynex is a cannon-based air defence system and is therefore especially suitable for close-range protection where guided weapons cannot operate effectively. The 35mm Revolver Gun Mk3 cannons have a cadence of 1,000 rounds per minute and a range of up to 4 kilometres. The system uses programmable Ahead ammunition that is resistant to electronic countermeasures and ensures precise target engagement. In terms of cost-effectiveness, the ammunition is significantly more efficient than comparable missile-based systems.

Operational successes in the Ukraine underline the efficiency with which the cannon-based air defence system can defend against air targets - especially cruise missiles and drones.

Skynex is based on the concept of separating the airspace surveillance from the effectors. Italy has opted for the configuration with the XTAR 3D radar from Rheinmetall, which can monitor the airspace in a radius of up to 50 km.

Thanks to its existing modularity, the required resources can be connected to the command-and-control network depending on the mission. Skynex offers great autonomy in terms of sensors and effectors, as to integrating a wide range of modern air defence systems into the system. The only requirement is the presence of a dedicated tracking unit.

In addition to individual sensors and effectors, existing air defence systems such as Rheinmetall's Skyshield and Skyguard families can also be integrated into the new architecture as firing units. The detected air situation is displayed in a remote command-and-control centre on a map with the sensors and effectors positioned in the field, thus easing a target assignment to the air defence assets connected to the system.

More on the functionality of Skynex here: [Link](#)