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Rheinmetall to supply the Bundeswehr with seven Fuchs/Fox armoured vehicles for clearing IEDs

€37 million order includes state-of-the-art manipulator technology

The German Bundeswehr has contracted with Rheinmetall to supply it with seven Fuchs/Fox armoured vehicles specially configured for detecting and identifying roadside bombs, mines, etc. This new Fuchs/Fox variant is called the KAI, short for its official Germany designation, "Kampfmittelaufklärung und –identifizierung". The order is worth around €37 million.

The vehicles reinforce the Bundeswehr's "Route Clearance System" for reconnoitring and neutralizing improvised explosive devices, or IEDs, from the safety of an armoured fighting compartment. A total of seven vehicles are to be delivered between November 2013 and November 2014.

In current and future peace enforcement and peacekeeping missions, IEDs will continue to pose a major threat to troops deployed in harm's way. Today, the Bundeswehr still relies on troops equipped with manual devices for keeping routes of march and lines of advance free from roadside bombs, etc. As a result, current EOD detection and clearing procedures are not only labour- and time-intensive but potentially dangerous.

Besides excellent crew protection, the Fuchs/Fox KAI features a multiple-joint, high-precision manipulator arm with a 10-metre reach and heavy lifting capacity. The manipulator arm makes it possible for EOD personnel to examine and identify unexploded ordnance and IEDs with extreme precision from a safe standoff without leaving the safety of the fighting compartment. Moreover, a special rescue platform can be used for evacuating personnel and equipment from the danger zone.

The Fuchs/Fox vehicle used for the KAI platform is the latest version of this tried and tested 6x6 wheeled vehicle, which occupies a prominent place in the Bundeswehr inventory. First fielded some thirty years ago, Rheinmetall has steadily upgraded the protection level and operational capabilities of this robust, reliable three-axle vehicle, adding modular protection features, a reinforced chassis and fragment-reducing spall liner in the interior of the fighting compartment.

In addition, the Fuchs/Fox 1A8 is equipped with highly effective anti-landmine and IED protection elements, special suspended seating that keeps the crew's feet off the floor of the hull, textile rifle holders and nets for securing all wall-mounted equipment.

As an option, the vehicles can also be outfitted with the Group's Active Defence System (ADS), which neutralizes incoming projectiles just before impact.

The Bundeswehr plans to deploy the Fuchs/Fox KAI in Afghanistan starting in the 4th quarter of 2014: even in a drawdown scenario there are numerous vehicle movements, and countering the threat from booby traps and roadside bombs will be as important as ever.

A high-tech system of systems

The Fuchs/Fox KAI adds a new dimension to the Bundeswehr's heavy mine-clearing capability, and is intended to reconnoitre danger zones that the Route Clearance System cannot reach. In addition, KAI will also be able to serve as a standalone EOD detection system for reconnoitring hotspots during convoy escort operations.

The Route Clearance System (RCP) consists of four vehicles: one for reconnaissance; one for clearing IEDs, mines, etc.; a control vehicle; and another used for transport.

Rheinmetall's remote control Wiesel detection vehicle, equipped with a newly developed dual sensor with integrated ground penetration radar and a metal detector, has the task in the GRCP of detecting landmines and IEDs on roads. The Fuchs/Fox 1A8 armoured transport vehicle serves as a mobile, highly protected control centre, equipped with operator interfaces as well as systems for evaluating the signals from the dual sensor.

Forming part of a separate order, the "Mini MineWolf" manipulator vehicle is used for the disposal of dangerous unexploded ordnance by remote control.

Depending on the specific mission, this approx. 10-tonne manipulator vehicle can be equipped with tools such as a robotic arm, tiller system or bulldozer blade. An integrated video system instantly transmits imagery back to the EOD specialists in the Fuchs/Fox operator vehicle, keeping them in the picture at all times.

Finally, a Multi FSA logistics vehicle made by Rheinmetall MAN Military Vehicles (RMMV) has the task of transporting the vehicles of the Route Clearance System.

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