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Rheinmetall develops Unmanned Sea Vehicle for German Navy – State-of-the-art robotics for enhanced Force Protection at sea

The German Navy has contracted with Rheinmetall Defence to retrofit and supply it with a robotic boat capable of carrying out a variety of missions. In developing the Unmanned Sea Vehicle (USV), Rheinmetall is transferring its tremendous expertise in the field of unmanned terrestrial vehicles to new maritime applications. The order is worth around €1.3 million.

Under a research and development contract awarded by Germany's Federal Office for Defence Technology and Procurement, Rheinmetall is integrating robotic components into a Watercat M8 fast attack boat made by Marine Alutech Oy Ab of Finland. Initially to be used for evaluation purposes, the boat will be capable of manned and unmanned operations.

In contemporary operations where the main threat is often asymmetric, the special capabilities of the USV mean that it can make a valuable contribution as a reconnaissance asset, carrying out sustained monitoring and/or interception of hostile speedboats. Equipped with appropriate mission modules, unmanned sea vehicles can conduct operations where deploying human beings is extremely hazardous, e.g. capturing drifting contact mines. The system thus makes a tangible contribution to force protection at sea.

Weighting just under two tons and measuring approximately eight metres in length, the boat has a top speed of 35 knots. It can operate in manned mode, autonomously, or in remote control mode, and also features automatic waypoint navigation. Moreover, the boat's comprehensive array of sensors significantly expands the surveillance coverage of the carrying vessel.

At a later stage, following sea trials, Rheinmetall hopes to supply the armed forces with several of this versatile craft.

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