

08 February 2013

Bundeswehr fields new Gladius soldier system – €84 million order for 60 more systems placed with Rheinmetall

Moves by the German Bundeswehr to equip its infantry forces with the state-of-the-art Gladius soldier system are gathering pace. In January 2013, the Düsseldorf, Germany-based Rheinmetall Group was awarded an order to supply a further sixty systems. The procurement programme began in 2012 with an initial order of thirty systems, enough to equip 300 troops.

This follow-up order is worth €84 million, and encompasses equipment for 60 infantry sections with a total of 600 soldiers.

Delivery of the new systems will take place in two lots consisting of thirty systems each, the first one in the middle of 2013, another at the end of the year. This will ensure that the next two contingents of Bundeswehr troops due to deploy to Afghanistan will receive the new equipment well in advance.

As planned, the Bundeswehr is currently taking delivery of the thirty Gladius systems it ordered in 2012. The troops will have until June 2013 to train with the new system before going to Afghanistan.

Developed by Rheinmetall and originally known as “Infanterist der Zukunft (IdZ 2)” or “Future Soldier”, Gladius is the most advanced system of its kind anywhere. Its introduction is a major step forward for the Bundeswehr, which will significantly improve the overall operational effectiveness of German infantry units while simultaneously enhancing the survivability of individual soldiers.

An expanded set of capabilities

Gladius substantially exceeds the capabilities of previous infantry systems used by the Bundeswehr, especially with regard to networkability, command and control, and combat effectiveness. Reflecting the heightened requirements profile of the user as well as incorporating knowledge gained during comprehensive testing and in the field, Gladius is essentially a new, highly advanced system.

A prominent feature of the Gladius system is the holistic design approach that takes full account of the complex operational requirements levied on modern soldier systems. Gladius is intended first and foremost to bring the 10-man infantry section and its vehicle into the network-enabled operational loop. This network, consisting of reconnaissance, command and control components, and weapons, enables rapid

exchange of information as well as shared situational awareness as the basis for planning and conducting operations.

The individual soldier receives all relevant data concerning the tactical situation, the position of friendly forces, the mission, and system status. It includes a GPS and an inertial navigation system as well as a magnetic compass, facilitating reliable orientation on the ground.

Improved ergonomics and superb protection

Equally impressive are the system's ergonomic features, especially with regard to weight reduction, miniaturization and improved integration of individual components. The modular battle dress uniform, body armour and harness system provide excellent protection from detection in the visual and infrared spectrum as well as from the weather – even in extreme climate zones – and especially from biological and chemical agents. Flame-retardant equipment and vector protection round out the system's high level of protection. The system is integrated into an "electronic backbone" that contains the radio, core computer, batteries and GPS module.

More than just the sum of its parts, the Gladius system puts Bundeswehr infantrymen on the global cutting edge, placing them ahead of their peers in terms of networking capabilities, command and control, and operational efficiency.

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