Rheinmetall Wins Major Contract: Austria Orders State-Of-The-Art Air Defence System For €532 Million

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- **Rheinmetall wins €532 million order to upgrade Austria's 35mm air defence systems**
- **Skyguard Next Generation results from modernizing existing guns**
- **Project runs for 48 months starting in Feb 2024**
- **Contract includes spare parts, training and 35mm Ahead ammunition**

The Austrian defence ministry has contracted with Rheinmetall to carry out a comprehensive modernization of its existing Skyguard air defence systems. In the presence of Austrian minister of defence Klaudia Tanner, the two parties have now signed the contract for Project *Skyguard Next Generation* in Vienna. For Rheinmetall the order represents sales of €532 million (without value added tax), which can already be booked as an incoming order in December 2023. The contract encompasses a project period of 48 months starting in February 2024.

On behalf of Austria, a neighbouring nation and close partner of Germany, Rheinmetall will be conducting one of the most ambitious air defence projects in Europe. For the Austrian Army, the undertaking is an important step in its "Mission Forward" rearmament programme to revamp the country's armed forces.

Armin Papperger, chairman of the executive board of Rheinmetall AG, welcomed the news: "We're delighted by this important market win for Skynex technology. In this flagship project, Austria is at the absolute forefront of antiaircraft and counter-drone defence in Europe. This major order also highlights Rheinmetall's key role in reequipping the armed forces of Europe in response to new threats. Our solutions for stationary and mobile air defence are part of this."

Skyguard Next Generation belongs to the Skynex family of products from Rheinmetall Air Defence, the global leader in close-range air defence technology. The order package for Austria comprises a total of seven tactical units, each consisting of four 35mm guns, a sensor unit for monitoring airspace and a command post. In the process, twenty-eight 35mm guns currently in the customer's inventory will be upgraded to the latest state of the art. The contract also includes spare parts, training support and 35mm ammunition. A contractually agreed option for ordering an additional tactical unit exists as well.

In the words of Oliver Dürr, CEO of Rheinmetall Air Defence AG in Zürich, "We greatly appreciate the trust of our friends and partners in Austria. The Austrian Army's decision in favour of *Skyguard Next Generation* is more than just a quantum leap – it opens the door to a whole dimension in antiaircraft and counter-drone capabilities."

Austria is getting a custom-built, pathbreaking solution for close-range air defence. "The order is a significant gain for our company", declares Dürr, "and especially for our Zürich plant, which is responsible for carrying out the project, where it will make a decisive contribution to capacity utilization."

The *Skyguard Next Generation* system is based on existing weapons systems owned by the Austrian Army. As part of a service life extension programme, its existing 35mm Oerlikon twin guns will be completely modernized and linked to a high-performance target tracking capability and Rheinmetall's Skymaster command system.

Extraordinarily high-precision sensors make it possible to detect and identify aerial targets at an early stage. The command system lets the operator build up a local picture, evaluate the threat situation and, in close coordination with high-echelon elements, open fire. Guided missiles can also be incorporated into the system.

The complete system is highly mobile, assuring maximum efficiency during military planning. The guns can be dismounted and/or operated remotely, keeping troops well out of harm's way while simultaneously improving combat effectiveness.

Rheinmetall's Skynex

Cannon-based air defence solutions from the "Skynex" family of products are especially appropriate for short-range operations, where guided missiles cannot be used effectively. The Skynex system encompasses airspace surveillance, a weapon engagement centre, and effectors. Featuring a rate of fire of 1,000 rounds per minute and a maximum effective range of up to 4,000 metres, Oerlikon rapid-fire

automatic cannon serve as the effectors

The success of the ageing 35mm Gepard antiaircraft tank in Ukraine underscores the effectiveness of cannon-based in countering aerial targets – especially cruise missiles and drones – and the continuing relevance of this capability today in close-range air defence.

Compared with the Gepard, however, Skynex offers a generational leap in terms of sensor technology as well as the possibility of networked application of multiple tactical units and inclusion in higher-echelon command and control systems. Moreover, using Rheinmetall's programmable 35mm Ahead ammunition gives Skynex a unique edge when it comes to successfully combatting aerial targets.

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