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Multimillion-dollar order from America – Rheinmetall to supply ammunition for the F-35 stealth multirole fighter

In February 2017 Rheinmetall has booked an order from the US Air Force to supply ammunition for the F-35 stealth multirole fighter. The contract, worth over US\$6.5 million (6,1 € million), encompasses the supply of several ten thousand rounds in four lots. Delivery starts in December 2017.

The order is of major strategic significance to Rheinmetall for two reasons. For one thing, the US Air Force is currently procuring the F-35 on a large scale, with 1,200 planes on order. Numerous other nations have opted for the new aircraft as well, among them Denmark, the United Kingdom, Italy, Canada, the Netherlands, Turkey and Japan. For another, the ammunition selected – the new 25mm x 137 Frangible Armour Piercing (FAP) – complements Rheinmetall's existing array of high-performance aircraft ammunition, allowing the Düsseldorf, Germany-based Group to bring its full expertise to bear in the field of aircraft armament. This means that further major orders can be expected, especially since the first user nations are already ordering smaller amounts of this advanced ammunition for testing purposes.

The FAP round was specifically developed by Rheinmetall for, and in conjunction with, NATO air forces to provide the F-35 with superior lethality against modern Infantry Fighting Vehicles (IFVs) at extreme slant ranges while still remaining deadly against enemy aircraft in air-to-air engagements. The 25mm x 137 FAP is a true all-purpose cartridge that is already in service with the F-35s of two NATO nations.

Manufacture of the ammunition for the US Air Force will take place at Rheinmetall Switzerland. Rheinmetall intends to have the ammunition of possible follow-up contracts assembled in the USA by Rheinmetall Day & Zimmermann Munitions (RDZM), a joint venture that operates out of Rosslyn, Virginia. American Rheinmetall Munitions and Day&Zimmermann established the joint venture in autumn 2016. Other potential customers will be supplied from locations belonging to Rheinmetall Waffe Munition Schweiz AG.

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