



Bundeswehr successfully concludes laser weapon trials at sea

Schrobenhausen, Düsseldorf 22 September 2023 - Laser Weapon Demonstrator (LWD) trials onboard the German frigate *Sachsen* have successfully been completed, following on from the integration of the LWD in June 2022.

The High-Energy Laser Naval Demonstrator Working Group (or ARGE), consisting of MBDA Deutschland GmbH and Rheinmetall, is responsible for development and construction of the LWD, and for supporting the trials that were planned and organised by the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw).

During the trials, comprising six campaigns lasting nearly a year, the combat effectiveness of the LWD was proven in increasingly complex scenarios, under realistic operating conditions and against different target types. This included all LWD aspects: from detection and tracking (including highly agile targets); the interplay of sensors, command and weapon engagement systems, and effectors; possible rules of engagement; and of course the successful engagement of targets with a high-energy laser beam.

The LWD has performed more than a hundred test firings onboard the *Sachsen* and proved that a laser is capable of successfully engaging targets in a maritime environment. At the end of the trials, the LWD's capabilities were successfully demonstrated at two VIP days in front of high-ranking representatives of the Federal Office for Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support (BAAINBw), the Germany Navy and Army, as well as the Bundeswehr Office for Defence Planning (PlgABw), which also included shooting down a drone. Also, representatives of the British, Netherlands, and Norwegian Navy participated during the demonstration. The huge success of the test campaign was due to excellent co-operation between the BAAINBw and its subordinate detachments, the German Navy and especially the crew of the frigate *Sachsen*, and ARGE, the industry working group.

Following nearly a year of tests, the BAAINBw and the defence industry have gained valuable knowledge into the operational possibilities, performance capabilities and development potential of high-energy laser effectors. The demonstrator is currently undergoing detailed examination, after which it will be transferred to Bundeswehr Technical Centre 91 in Meppen. The test results and subsequent analysis will be used for minimizing risks in a possible next phase i.e. the development of an operational laser weapon system.

The prerequisites for the development of a first laser weapon have generally been set. Both companies have launched internal preparations for the development phase within their own field of responsibility.

Complementing gun-based systems and guided missiles, an operational laser weapon system lends itself particularly well to countering the threat from drones, drone swarms, speedboats and possibly missiles at close to very close range. In the future it could also undergo a performance upgrade for destroying supersonic missiles, rockets and mortar and artillery rounds.

About MBDA:

MBDA is a unique multi-national European group, a world-leader in the field of complex weapon systems, playing a key role in keeping nations safe. Created in the spirit of international co-operation, MBDA and its more than 14,000 employees work together to support the national sovereignty of France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK, and other allied countries worldwide. As an accelerator for innovation, MBDA is the only European group capable of designing and manufacturing complex weapons to meet the full range of current and future operational requirements of the three armed forces (land, sea and air). MBDA is owned by Airbus (37.5%), BAE Systems (37.5%) and Leonardo (25%).

About Rheinmetall:

A publicly traded company headquartered in Düsseldorf, Germany, Rheinmetall AG is an integrated technology group. Today it is leading exponent of the international defence industry as well as a driver of forward-looking technological and industrial innovation in the civil sector. Rheinmetall AG consists of five divisions: Vehicle Systems, Weapon and Ammunition, Electronic Solutions, Sensors and Actuators, and Materials and Trade. Based at 131 locations worldwide, the Group's 28,000 employees generated sales in 2022 of around €6.4 billion. Rheinmetall AG has been listed on Germany's DAX index of forty blue chip companies since March 2023. Rheinmetall Waffe Munition GmbH, a component of the Group's Weapon and Ammunition division, oversees Rheinmetall's high-energy laser activities.

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