



The MGCS Crisis - Opportunities for the Italian-German IMBT Tank Presented at Eurosatory 2026

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Two of Europe's largest defense giants are ready to publicly present their first jointly developed main battle tank (MBT). The debut marks a milestone for European armored warfare, driven by the urgent need of the Italian Army to replace its obsolete fleet of Ariete tanks, but today it assumes a continental strategic significance in light of the recent cracks in the Franco-German defense axis.

Developed by **Leonardo Rheinmetall Military Vehicles (LRMV)** — a 50/50 joint venture between Italy's Leonardo and Germany's Rheinmetall — the new Italian tank prototype (often referred to as **IMBT**) will make its public debut at **Eurosatory 2026**, the leading European land defense exhibition to be held from June 15 to 19 in Paris.

Key Points

- **Strategic Partnership:** LRMV was founded at the end of 2024 to lead the renewal of Italy's heavy armored vehicle fleet.
- **Advanced Protection Package:** The IMBT prototype is equipped with cutting-edge active defense and anti-drone systems to address asymmetric threats observed in Ukraine and the Middle East.
- **The Paris-Berlin Axis Crisis:** Recent statements by Rheinmetall's CEO confirm the risk of a stalemate for the Franco-German MGCS program.
- **Prospects for Germany:** With the downsizing of joint projects with France, the Italian-German IMBT is poised to become the true pillar of European armored defense.

The MGCS Project Crisis and the IMBT Opportunity

The decision to debut the IMBT prototype at Eurosatory in Paris is not coincidental and highlights the joint venture's explicit commercial ambitions at a historic moment of deep uncertainty for the European defense industry.

Just in these hours, the geopolitical landscape has undergone a significant shake-up. As reported by agency sources (Adnkronos/Afp), after Berlin threw in the towel by abandoning the FCAS (Future Combat Air System) fighter, another historic Franco-German project is at high risk: the **MGCS (Main Ground Combat System)**.

In an interview with the German weekly *Welt am Sonntag*, Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall, did not rule out that France might withdraw from the future tank project. According to Papperger, Paris is planning to drastically cut the budget, bringing it to less than half of the initial estimates.

"The risk is always present, but nothing has been decided. [...] When you have less money, you don't go faster, and we are already very slow."

— Armin Papperger, CEO of Rheinmetall

So far, the four companies involved (Knds France, Knds Germany, Rheinmetall, and Thales) have received just 25 million euros in about ten years, a figure described as "very little money" by Papperger himself.

In this context, the future of the IMBT is closely intertwined with the complex European balances. **If the MGCS project were to suffer an irreversible halt, extraordinary prospects would open up for Germany within the LRMV program.** The Rheinmetall-Leonardo industrial axis would immediately become Berlin's priority choice to ensure the continuity of heavy technological development. The IMBT would cease to be a solution primarily aimed at Italy to become a true European *Main Battle Tank*, offering the German industry an already operational and tested channel to capitalize on military exports.

Prototype Specifications and Multilayer Protection

Confirming the maturity of the IMBT project compared to the delays of the MGCS, there is the technological concreteness of the vehicle that will be exhibited in Paris. The prototype directly addresses the vulnerabilities of passive armor against modern threats such as anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and FPV (First-Person-View) drones.

The vehicle integrates a sophisticated multilayer survival package:

System	Manufacturer	Function and Key Features
StrikeShield APS	Rheinmetall	Active Protection System (Hard-kill): Detects and destroys incoming rockets and missiles near the vehicle; designed to minimize collateral damage to nearby infantry.
ROSY	Rheinmetall	Rapid Obscuring System: Instantly generates a smoke screen to create a visual and infrared concealment cloud, preventing the lock-on of enemy guided weapons.
Blaze 30 RWS	Leonardo	Remote Weapon Station: Armed station equipped with a 30 mm cannon , allowing the crew to take down drones and light targets while operating safely from inside the hull.

Operational Milestones: The Tangibility of the A2CS Program

Unlike the decades-long delays of the MGCS program, the LRMV joint venture has already demonstrated extraordinary execution speed. LRMV is simultaneously managing the **A2CS program**, which includes a family of combat armored vehicles based on the Lynx for the Italian

Army.

- **Rapid Deployment:** On January 27, 2026, LRMV delivered the first four **Lynx KF-41** vehicles to the Italian Armed Forces at Montelibretti.
- **Contract Execution:** This initial delivery is part of an order for 21 armored combat vehicles, demonstrating the company's ability to move from its founding in late 2024 to hardware delivery in less than 18 months.
- **Proven Platform:** The German-designed Lynx is already used by nations such as Hungary and Australia, providing a proven base for rapid production while the development of the heavier IMBT reaches the final prototyping stage.

With European governments pushed to rearm quickly and old programs hampered by cross-vetoes and budget cuts, the pragmatic synergy between Italy and Germany put in place by LRMV could prove to be the winning move to dominate the land defense market in the decades to come.