The Race for Tanks: How Poland Aims to Dominate Europe by 2030

Published on 04/08/2025

In recent years, Warsaw has been rebuilding its armored force at a pace not seen in Europe since the end of the Cold War. The agreement signed on August 1, 2025, with the South Korean company Hyundai Rotem for the purchase of 180 new K2 tanks has cemented this commitment: upon completion of deliveries, Poland is expected to deploy about **1,100 tanks**, more than the combined total of those in the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy. Only Turkey and Greece will maintain larger fleets.

A Billion-Euro Contract with South Korea

The contract with Hyundai Rotem, valued at over **6 billion euros**, includes 180 K2 tanks in the K2GF variant (116 units produced in South Korea) and K2PL (64 units). After the production of the first three K2PLs in Korea, the construction of the subsequent 61 will be transferred to the Bumar-Łabędy factory in Gliwice, allowing for the revival of Poland's industrial capacity in the armored sector. In addition to the tanks, **81 support vehicles**, logistical training, a

comprehensive assistance and repair package, and the **technology transfer clause** are planned.

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The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Władysław Kosiniak-Kamysz called the agreement “a great step for the security of our homeland and our arms industry” and emphasized that “it initiates the process of restoring tank production in Poland.” Warsaw had already ordered an initial batch of 180 K2s in 2022, and the framework agreement allows for the purchase of up to **1,000 tanks** of this type, which could become the main battle tank of the Polish ground forces.

Numbers Compared: Poland vs Western Europe

According to the daily **Rzeczpospolita**, after signing the new contract, Poland will have about **950 modern tanks** by 2030, divided into **360 South Korean K2s**, **366 American M1 Abrams**, and **235 German Leopard 2s**. Adding the approximately **150 PT-91 Twardy** of national production from the 1990s, the total exceeds **1,100 tanks**.

Meanwhile, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Italy together have fewer than **950 operational tanks**, according to **Global Firepower** data cited by the Polish press, and only Berlin is planning a significant expansion of its armored fleet. The table below summarizes the expected situation for 2030:

Country/Group	Expected Tanks (2030)	Source	Note
Poland	≈ **1,100** total (950 modern)	Rzeczpospolita/Notes from Poland	Combination of K2 (360), Abrams (366), Leopard 2 (235), and PT-91 (150)notesfrompoland.com
Germany, France, UK, Italy (total)	< **950**	Global Firepower	Smaller and partly obsolete fleets notesfrompoland.com
Turkey	**2,238**	Euronews	Numerous older generation vehicles euronews.com
Greece	**1,344**	Euronews	Mixed fleet of Leopard 2 and old T-72 euronews.com

The figures show that Poland will surpass the armies of the major Western European powers in terms of armored fleet size. Only Turkey and Greece will maintain larger arsenals, although largely composed of older generation vehicles.

Behind the Spending: War in Ukraine and National Security

The main motivation for the enhancement lies in Warsaw's proximity to the conflict in Ukraine and tensions with Belarus. Since 2022, the Polish government has drastically increased the defense budget, dedicating **4.7% of GDP** in 2025, the highest share among NATO countries, and planning to rise to **5%** the following year. Poland aims to create **six armored divisions**, while Germany and France deploy two and the United Kingdom only one; Washington sees Warsaw as a “model ally” and, in addition to the South Korean K2s, has provided **Abrams, Apache helicopters, HIMARS launchers, and Patriot systems**.

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The agreement with Seoul also includes a **technology transfer clause** that will allow the Polish industry to start local production from 2028, strengthening national capacity and reducing dependence on imports. This strategy is part of a broader effort to build an Eastern European military industrial hub and promote Poland's technological sovereignty.

Implications for European Balance

The rapid expansion of Poland's armored forces alters the military balance of the continent. Countries like Germany, France, or Italy are primarily investing in air and naval capabilities, while Warsaw focuses resources on land dominance, deemed crucial to counter a potential Russian advance. The stated goal of Minister Kosiniak-Kamysz is to build “a strong, secure, and prosperous Poland” to honor the memory of the Warsaw Uprising, which he referenced during the signing ceremony.

With over a thousand modern tanks, a defense budget approaching 5% of GDP, and advanced industrial cooperation agreements with South Korea and the United States, Poland is thus positioning itself to become the **leading armored force in Europe**. This role could strengthen NATO's eastern flank but at the same time push other European countries to reassess their land deterrence capabilities, initiating a new era of rearmament on the continent.

News link: https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2025/08/02/by-2030-poland-will-have-more-tanks-than-the-uk-germany-france-and-italy-combined#:~:text=The%20signing%20of%20the%20agreement,lives%20while%20fighting%20in%20it