

GERMANY TO RECONSTRUCT ITS ARTILLERY? “THE FIRST STEP”

Bundeswehr has delivered the first Panzerhaubitze 2000 self propelled howitzer to Munster. The platforms which are to be delivered to the aforesaid facility will become a reinforcement of the artillery units of the German Army.

The authorities of Germany have decided to increase the number of PzH 2000 howitzers that would remain within the inventory of the Bundeswehr. The German Army is expected to have 101 platforms of this type at its disposal. Before the Ukrainian Crisis broke out, the Bundeswehr had been actively using less than 90 self-propelled howitzers.

The deliveries of the “reactivated” Panzerhaubitze 2000 vehicles are expected to be finalized in 2017. This will make it possible to create an additional battery in the 325th Artillery Battalion which remains the sole element of this type under the jurisdiction of the 1st Armoured Division. As we know, Germany also assumes that ultimate quantities of the Leopard 2 main battle tanks or Boxer armoured vehicles will be higher, in the latter case a relevant order regarding the procurement of those platforms has been placed back in 2015.

Initially, roughly 180 PzH 2000 self-propelled howitzers were manufactured for the Bundeswehr, nonetheless, within the scope of cuts, the number of these vehicles was being gradually limited. This was tied to disbanding of the individual units, i.e. 215th Artillery Battalion ceased to exist back in 2015. After Bundeswehr became a “professionalized” formation, 81 - 89 howitzers were to remain in the active service. Now, the above number is going to be a bit higher. Some of the surplus PzH 2000 platforms were transferred by the Germans to Lithuania and Croatia.

Increased number of the PzH 2000 vehicles in the active service shall be interpreted as a positive symptom, as Germany is making an attempt to adopt its capabilities to the changing security context, following the Russian aggression against Ukraine. Germany, periodically, had deployed the said self-propelled howitzers to Poland and Lithuania, within the framework of NATO exercises.

On the other hand, Berlin probably still has some surplus PzH 2000s at its disposal, and number of these systems, especially in the 1st Armoured Division which is still going to have only one (reinforced) artillery battalion within its structures, may still be insufficient, as compared to the emerging needs. The cuts also were implemented in case of the rocket artillery - only 38 MARS II launchers (modified MLRS platforms) are to remain in the active service. This is a number which is much lower, in comparison with the quantity that was originally acquired.

PzH 2000 self propelled howitzer is capable of destroying targets at distances of up to 40 kilometres. The cannon uses a barrel, the length of which is 52 calibres. The first systems of this type have been delivered back in 1998, SPHs of this variety have also been acquired by the Netherlands (here also a significant portion of those systems has been withdrawn), Italy, Greece, Qatar, Croatia and Lithuania

(in the two latter cases - the howitzers were acquired from Germany).

The Bundeswehr utilizes, among other ordnance, SMArt 155 anti-tank precision guided rounds with the PzH 2000 howitzers.