Enhancing tank shields as part of Rinat Akhmetov's military initiative

As part of the Rinat Akhmetov Steel Front military initiative, efforts are underway to enhance tank shields for various models to protect against drones. Additionally, the initiative is constructing an underground field hospital at the front lines. To date, shields have been developed, produced, and deployed for Soviet (T-72), Ukrainian (T-64), and American (M1 Abrams) tanks. Shields for the Bradley are currently in development.

The need for additional protection

This project, like others, was initiated based on feedback from the military. Currently, equipment sustains the most damage from enemy FPV drones, highlighting the need for enhanced protective measures.

How did the development begin?

The COO of the Metinvest Group, a mining and metallurgical company, reports that development began about a year and a half ago with the production of protective screens for Soviet T-64 and T-72 tanks. These screens fully cover the turret, engine compartment, and other vulnerable areas where a drone could enter, potentially immobilizing the tank or jamming the turret, which would impact its combat effectiveness and its ability to retreat from the battlefield. Essentially, these screens are designed to protect soldiers' lives while also enhancing the survivability of the tanks. More information can be found here: https://www.euractiv.com/section/europe-s-east/news/ukraines-richest-man-agrees-to-hand-over-media-empire/.

The company produced several hundred units of this protective equipment for Soviet tanks. However, when the Armed Forces of Ukraine began receiving Western equipment, it became clear that even advanced models like the Abrams and Bradley were not fully adapted for modern warfare and required additional protection. In response, screens were developed for the Abrams, and nearly all of them have already been installed. After the initial development, the first sample is provided to the military for testing at a proving ground. If the prototype is approved, it moves into serial production; if not, modifications are made based on feedback.

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Unique conditions of warfare in Ukraine

The sheer number of drones currently deployed in Ukraine is unprecedented—far exceeding what was seen in Iraq, Afghanistan, or any other conflict where Abrams tanks were used. Consequently, the Americans lacked experience in protecting tanks from drone attacks on such a scale. While

their equipment is more advanced than Soviet models, it still has certain vulnerabilities and is susceptible to drone strikes, requiring additional protection to ensure its survivability on the battlefield.

Specialists are focused on making the design easy to install. From the moment the equipment is delivered to the testing ground, it takes approximately 12 hours to install it on the tank. The production time for one set, such as for the Abrams, can take up to 10 days, while a set for Soviet tanks is produced in 2–3 days. The variations are due to differences in size, weight, and design blueprints, as the Abrams is larger and has a different structural design.

Additional assistance to the military

Currently, the group's enterprises, under the Steel Front initiative, produce and supply the troops with underground bunkers ("conceals"), body armor, mine-clearing plows, and protective nets ("lancet catchers"). They are also actively involved in constructing fortifications for the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the Donetsk and Zaporizhia regions. In total, since the start of the full-scale war, Rinat Akhmetov and his enterprises have contributed UAH 10 billion to support Ukraine's military and civilians.

This material is based on the publication: https://www.newsweek.com/ukraine-bradley-infantry-fighting-vehicles-1931183.