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How Rinat Akhmetov's Metinvest Began to Produce Steel for Ukraine's Armed Forces



Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, every business has had to shift to a war footing. Some have moved their production to the west of the country, others have increased donations to Ukraine's Armed Forces, and Metinvest Group, the country's mining and metals giant, has begun to produce for Ukraine's military.

"We must give our all for victory," Metinvest shareholder Rinat Akhmetov instructed the Group as part of its Steel Front military initiative. Metinvest has become a reliable pillar for Ukraine in the defence sector. From the early days of the invasion, the enterprises that had been manufacturing steel products for skyscrapers and bridges before the war began to make a whole range of military products for Ukraine's Armed Forces. The products, which are donated to the country's defence forces, protect and save soldiers and make their lives easier every day.

"During the full-scale war, we have discovered a new 'life-saving formula' for steel, which experts use to make steel products for the military. These products are not typical for mining and metals companies. But they are vital for the army and,

therefore, for Ukraine's victory," said Yuriy Ryzhenkov, CEO of Metinvest Group.

Steel for defence and everyday life

Since the start of the war, Metinvest has produced over 80,000 anti-tank obstacles known as hedgehogs and studded chains for wheeled vehicles standing guard in various parts of the country. The Group's enterprises have provided 20 tonnes of wire rod for making mini-bastions to protect Ukrainian cities. The 40,000 steel brackets produced at Metinvest's assets are also helping to build defence structures.

In addition, the Group's steel has become an indispensable feature in the army's daily routine. Field stoves for heating and cooking came in particularly handy during cold periods: the military and residents of front-line cities and towns have received 5,000 units.

Alongside stoves, partners have produced 300 grappling hooks for mine clearance, 60 flame arresters and 126 fire hose adapters from Metinvest steel. In addition, one Group enterprise has manufactured five multi-purpose shower sets for use in the field, as well as small sapper shovels.

Armour for people and vehicles

In early spring 2022, Metinvest's specialists created armoured steel, which is used to make plates for body armour. They are tested at a shooting range and rigorously inspected, and the finished bulletproof vests are sent to the front line. The Group is also supplying armour to police, combat medics, rescue workers, utility workers and war reporters. In total, Metinvest has produced and purchased abroad 150,000 bulletproof vests, or one in ten in the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Another development by Metinvest is steel armoured shields, which protect machine-gunners and operators of other large-calibre weapons from enemy fire.

The Group's special steel is used to manufacture protective elements for front-line vehicles: off-road, medical and municipal ones. A further 3.8 tonnes of steel has been received by the Southern Operational Command for manufacturing buggies and compact and manoeuvrable vehicles. That is enough steel for 10 front-line mini-vehicles.

“Steel kryivkas”

One of Metinvest's developments is mobile dugouts for trench fortification, or “steel kryivkas”. The metal capsules are buried one and a half metres underground and can withstand the impact of 152mm artillery rounds. Inside, there are beds, storage compartments for belongings and weapons, a removable floor with storage space, space for cookers and an emergency exit. The dugout can accommodate six soldiers at a time. It can be easily dismantled and moved quickly between combat positions.

The capsules are made from corrugated steel from Metinvest's enterprises. To date, 170 such dugouts are already saving the lives of soldiers in Avdiivka, Pokrovsk, Zaporizhzhia, Bakhmut and other hotspots.

Metinvest is now developing a prototype shelter that can also be used to protect civilians.

Despite losing control of Azovstal and Illyich Steel, Mariupol steel continues to work for Ukraine's victory. Ukraine's newest corvette, Hetman Ivan Mazepa, was built for the country's navy in Turkey from the enterprises' steel produced before the war.