



## BILSTEIN Partners with Defender Rally as Official Shock Absorber Partner for the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship

Essen/Ennepetal, 11 December 2025 — BILSTEIN is strengthening its long-standing relationship with Defender through a new partnership in one of the toughest arenas in global motorsport. As Official Shock Absorber Partner of the Defender Rally programme, BILSTEIN will support the team throughout the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC), beginning with the Dakar Rally in 2026. The collaboration brings together two brands driven by precision engineering and a shared commitment to performance under extreme conditions.

### A New Chapter in Off-Road Competition

With the move into the W2RC, BILSTEIN expands its motorsport heritage into a discipline defined by unforgiving terrain, long-distance endurance and technical resilience. The five-event global series — spanning deserts, rock fields and rugged landscapes — serves as a demanding testbed for BILSTEIN's latest suspension technologies.

“BILSTEIN is proud to be an active partner of Defender Rally during this extraordinary journey for the brand. Building on our long-standing partnership with Defender in Original Equipment, we bring our damping expertise and decades of engineering excellence to ensure that every detail is designed for ultimate performance under the most demanding and rough conditions. The Dakar Rally marks the beginning of the World Rally-Raid Championship and stands for challenge, innovation and endurance. Values that have defined BILSTEIN as a premium brand for generations,” says Hanno Luczak, Chief Technical Officer, thyssenkrupp Bilstein GmbH.

### Defender Dakar D7X-R: Developed for Extreme Environments

The Defender Dakar D7X-R competes in the new W2RC “Stock” category and is derived from the production Defender OCTA platform, featuring its robust D7x aluminum monocoque architecture, drivetrain and the 4.4-litre twin-turbo V8. Motorsport-specific enhancements prepare the vehicle for long-distance rally-raid stages, while the use of FIA-approved\* advanced sustainable fuel underscores the programme's forward-looking approach.

Central to the D7X-R's performance is its suspension, developed with BILSTEIN to meet the unique demands of rally-raid competition. This builds on the existing cooperation between both brands in Original Equipment applications.

### BILSTEIN Black Hawk Technology: Precision for Rally-Raid Demands

The Defender Dakar D7X-R is equipped with BILSTEIN's Black Hawk shock absorber system, engineered to deliver stable, predictable performance across rapidly changing surfaces—from deep sand to sharp gravel and heavy rock. The system's patented Zone Control CR triple-piston architecture allows precise tuning throughout the full range of suspension travel.

Key features include:

- **Jounce Cut-Off** hydraulic bump stop to manage extreme compression loads
- **Rebound Cut-Off** system to stabilize rebound travel and prevent top-out
- **Dual Speed Compression Adjuster** for separate high- and low-speed tuning
- **Large-capacity external reservoir** for efficient heat management under continuous load

“Every component in the Black Hawk system is engineered to deliver consistent performance where conditions change by the minute,” says Adam van der Ploeg, Design Engineer BILSTEIN UK. “The system has been refined through dedicated Defender Rally testing to meet the specific challenges of this vehicle and discipline.”

**Built on Partnership, Focused on the Future**

The BILSTEIN logo consists of the word "BILSTEIN" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font on a blue rectangular background.

The W2RC campaign deepens the collaboration between BILSTEIN and Defender, demonstrating how advanced engineering performs in real-world competition. For BILSTEIN, the partnership reflects a clear mission: developing technology that stands up to the toughest conditions motorsport can offer — and elevates what is possible for future production vehicles.

\*Complies with FIA regulations - FIA Appendix J, Article 266 - Energy Regulations for Competition Vehicles, Article 3 - Advanced Sustainable Fuel, 3.2 AS Petrol.

## Notes to Editors

### About BILSTEIN

BILSTEIN is part of thyssenkrupp AG and has its headquarters in Ennepetal, Germany. The company develops and produces suspensions, shock absorbers and springs for cars and vans and is one of the world's largest suppliers with an annual production of around 13 million shock absorbers. BILSTEIN is a technology leader and a global player with more than 4,100 employees at nine locations in six countries – including the UK, the USA, Romania, China and Mexico.

### About Defender

Defender embraces the impossible. Each member of the Defender family is purposefully designed, highly desirable and seriously durable. A modern-day hero that respects the past but at the same time anticipates the future. Available in 90, 110 and 130 body styles, with up to eight seats, each has a charisma of its own. As part of our vision of modern luxury by design, Defender 110 is available as an electric hybrid. Defender Hard Top means business, with 90 and 110 body styles for professional capability. The tough luxury Defender OCTA is the master of extreme performance – taking performance and capability to another level on and off-road. A beacon of liberty that can trace its roots back to the first Land Rover in 1948, Defender is a brand that supports humanitarian and conservation work with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Tusk Trust.

The Defender brand is underpinned by Land Rover – a mark of trust built on more than 75 years of expertise in technology and world-leading off-road capability. Defender is designed and engineered in the UK and sold in 121 countries. It belongs to the JLR house of brands alongside Range Rover, Discovery and Jaguar.

### Defender Rally

Defender embraces the impossible, and Defender Rally embodies this to the extreme, demonstrating the ultimate capability, reliability and endurance in the most challenging of environments.

In 2025 Defender became the official car partner of the Dakar Rally, the partnership set to continue in 2026, 2027 and 2028. From 2026, Defender will also compete in the FIA World Rally-Raid Championship (W2RC), entering the 'Stock' category – this being the first of a three-year programme.

Defender's capability is designed to take on the most challenging of conditions, with Dakar Rally being the ultimate test. The competition car retains the same tough, purpose-engineered D7x body architecture as the Defender, based on a lightweight aluminium monocoque construction to create a stiff body structure, in addition to featuring the 4.4-litre twin turbo V8 engine from Defender OCTA to provide exceptional driveability.

While Defender will not compete in Dakar until 2026, it played a key role at the 2025 rally as the event's official vehicle partner. A fleet of 20 Defenders supported the event, which began in Bisha, Saudi Arabia, and ended in Shubaytah, transporting race officials and VIP media. A



further six highly specialised Defender recce vehicles will be used by Dakar Rally organisers to plan the routes for the 2026, 2027 and 2028 events.

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