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German law sets 'zero limit' on alcohol for drivers younger than 21

By Robert Szostek

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MANNHEIM, Germany -- Recently enacted German law now prohibits drivers who have not yet reached their 21st birthdays from having any alcohol in their blood system while driving in Germany. The laws include American drivers, either on or off U.S. military installations.



“These drivers will be subject to a fine if caught by German police and will have two points assessed on their licenses,” said Lt. Col. Lon Walker, chief of law enforcement operations at the U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal. The former 125 euro fine has doubled to 250 euro, he added.

In addition to the fine, USAREUR will suspend the driving privileges of any Soldier, civilian employee or family member under 21 years of age caught by German police operating a vehicle with alcohol in their bloodstream, PMO officials said. The ban will be 30 days for a first offense, 60 days for a second offense and 90 days for a third offense.

If military police officers catch anyone younger than 21 driving on a U.S. installation in Germany with alcohol in their blood, the license suspensions will be the only punishment, PMO officials said, but noted that those drivers may also be subject to drunk driving penalties.

Walker said a lack of experience makes younger drivers more likely to have accidents than older drivers. Adding alcohol into the mix compounds the problem, with one small glass of wine raising the odds of a crash sixfold. He added that “zero limits” for 17- to 20-year-olds are already in place in more than a dozen European countries, as well as in parts of the U.S., Canada and Australia.

Many other fines for driving offenses in Germany have been increased – some doubling – this year. More information on German driving penalties and fines can be found at the

German Federal Ministry of Transport, Building and Urban Affairs Web site at
www.bmvbs.de/en/Transport/Roads-,2120/Schedule-of-fines.htm.



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