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## NEW GERMAN LAW GETS TOUGH ON DRINKING DRIVERS YOUNGER THAN 21

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**HEIDELBERG, Germany** -- German lawmakers have approved a new zero-tolerance law aimed at drinking drivers under 21 years old.

Beginning Aug. 1, drivers in Germany who have not yet reached their 21st birthdays are subject to a charge of driving under the influence if any level of alcohol is found in their blood while operating a motor vehicle. The same applies to beginning drivers with German driver's licenses, regardless of age, during the two-year probation period that comes with their new licenses.

Hans-Juergen Howoldt, foreign law branch attorney-advisor for the U.S. Army Europe Office of the Judge Advocate, said the main reason the law was enacted is because statistics in Germany show that more young adults are getting in serious accidents, and that many of those mishaps are related to alcohol.

"You only have to read the paper and see that inexperienced alcohol drinkers are underestimating the alcohol content found in German alcohol," said Howoldt.

The standard fine for offenses under the new law is 125 Euro, but according to the German catalog of administrative fines, the fine can be increased to 150 Euro if third parties are endangered by the violation, and up to 175 Euro if property is damaged. In some cases, the fine could be increased to 1,000 Euro, depending on the circumstances surrounding the offense.

If underage DUI offenders are caught with a blood alcohol level of .05 or higher -- the "standard" DUI threshold for drivers in Germany -- they face even stiffer penalties, said Howoldt. The fine would be 250 Euro and a potential one-month suspension of driving privileges for the first offense; 500 and a potential three-month suspension for the second, and 750 and up to a three-month suspension for the third violation.

Howoldt emphasized that anyone planning to drink alcoholic beverages should not drive, because there are misconceptions about the effects alcohol has on a person's body.

The new law doesn't yet apply to driving on military installations in Germany, but Tom Lorenzini, registrar with United States Army Europe Registry of Motor Vehicles, said it is common for military installations to adopt the laws of the host communities.

