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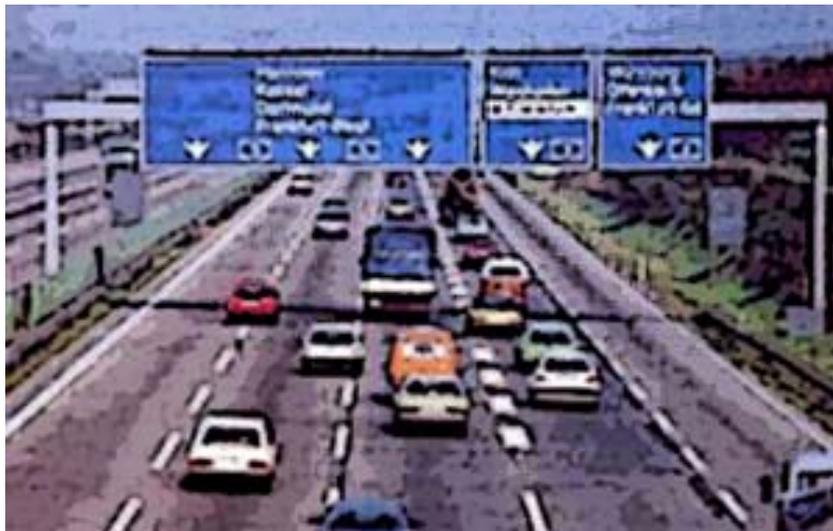
U.S. Army Europe officials define laws regarding common vehicle modifications prohibited in Germany

By Robert Szostek

U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal Public Affairs Office

MANNHEIM, Germany -- Members of the U.S. forces community who register vehicles in Germany should be aware of laws regarding modifications such as window tinting and wheel spinners, say U.S. Army Europe Office of the Provost Marshal officials.

Don't add tinted foils to the front windshield or front driver and passenger door windows of your vehicles, officials warn, because this so-called after-market tinting is not allowed in Germany. Replacing plain front windows with tinted panes is also prohibited.



This policy was restored in 2006 after the agreement with Germany on the use of German license plates was concluded, OPM officials explained, adding that Germany does not have any exceptions for tinting these windows.

“Our vehicle inspectors see this time after time,” said Dan Saavedra, policy advisor at the USAREUR Vehicle Registry. “Unfortunately, vehicle owners have to remove foils, whether they are tinted or not, from the windshield or the driver and front passenger side windows before their vehicle can pass inspection.”

However, tinting that is a factory-manufactured part of the window is good to go for all windows if it is original configuration for the vehicle, officials said. All vehicles made in the United States or with U.S. specifications conform to German and U.S. legal requirements.

Tinted foils on the rear windows of a vehicle are authorized and not a problem.

OPM officials said their goal is to get vehicle owners to meet the requirement by voluntary compliance with the law.

Saavedra pointed out that the U.S. forces in Germany signed an agreement with the German government in 2006 on the use of German license plates as a force protection measure. About 75 percent of USAREUR-plated privately owned vehicles have the German plates now, he added.

“This is good for us because it makes American POVs blend in with the German and other European cars on the road that much more,” Saavedra explained.

He went on to say that German police may stop vehicles that have tinted front windows, especially if the vehicle bears the new German license plates.

Saavedra said in Germany it is also illegal to cover a license plate with any kind of tinted or clear glass, foil or similar materials. The fine for this offense is 50 euro.

Wheel spinners -- wheel covers or hub caps that spin even if the wheel comes to rest -- are also not legal in Germany because of safety concerns. Lights in a vehicle’s wheel wells or grill are banned as well.

He also stated that the maximum noise level for exhaust systems on all cars, vans and motorcycles is 95 decibels, with no variance allowed. Vehicle inspection points can measure a vehicle’s noise level to ensure it is in compliance.

Saavedra advised vehicle owners to call the registry’s customer service office at 386-7280 or 0621-718-7280 to find out more about vehicle accessories that may be prohibited in Germany.



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