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## Press Release

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### Germany weapons law revisions may affect sports enthusiasts

HEIDELBERG, Germany – A recent revision of Germany weapons legislation may affect U.S. personnel owning firearms and knives, including paintball and softair guns.

The weapons legislation revision may require permits to own those items, and the revision also prescribes what owners are legally able to do with their weapons and knives, according to Rafael Wunsch, consultant for Installation Management Command-Europe Morale Welfare and Recreation Division's Business Branch - Hunting, Fishing, Sport Shooting, VAT, Volksfests Section.

Wunsch said all U.S. personnel – particularly those involved in weapons-related activities such as hunting, paintball, or target shooting – should be aware of the requirements and prohibitions contained in German weapons legislation. These include the following:

- A prohibition on carrying softair guns and other real firearm look-alikes in public (Softair guns are fired pellets using air, compressed gas or electricity. While made of plastic, they generally resemble real weapons.)
- A German “small-arms” permit requirement for starter/signal guns or devices
- A prohibition on nunchakus, throwing stars and switchblade or butterfly knives
- Folding knives that can be opened using only one hand or fixed-blade knives with a blade length of 4.72 inches or longer should only be carried when needed for activities such as gardening, hunting or camping. These types of knives may not be carried while shopping, strolling, or going out at night. Army in Europe Regulation 190-6 (Registration and Control of Privately Owned Firearms and Other Weapons in Germany) prohibits U.S. forces members from carrying knives with a blade length of 3” or longer, unless they are carried for an

approved and acceptable purpose such as hunting, gardening, or camping. “Actually, when going out, no knives or other weapons of any kind should be brought along,” said Wunsch. “There is no advantage to have those items while going out, but there are potentially massive legal disadvantages.”

- Paintball markers must bear a stamp in the form of the letter "F" surrounded by a Pentagon. Otherwise, the device will be considered a real firearm, which requires a permit.
- Paintball markers may not be carried in public, but only on approved paintball playing fields.
- Paintball markers and other firearms must be transported unloaded in the trunk of a car.
- Owning real firearms requires a German permit and they must be transported unloaded in a locked container in the trunk of a car.
- Storing real firearms or ammunition in quarters requires a permit. Storage must be in an approved weapons safe.

In addition to knowing the legal requirements and prohibitions of German law, Wunsch said personnel who own and use weapons or knives should exercise sound judgment. He offered several tips to weapons owners:

- Don't play paintball in the woods or parks – this is only authorized on approved paintball fields
- Don't take softair or other real firearm look-alikes out on the street or into the woods. Authorities could mistake them for real weapons, with devastating results.
- Don't take along weapons, such as one-hand-opening knives, fixed-blade knives 3 inches or longer, or similar items, when strolling through town or going out at night.
- Paintball markers without the "F" stamp should be sent back to the United States.
- Other potentially prohibited items should be properly disposed of or shipped back to the U.S.
- Take a look at AER190-6 for more weapons info and a list of prohibited items.

“Awareness of and familiarity with the German weapons legislation is important because weapons ownership and pursuit of related sporting activities for U.S. forces members is available in many areas,” said Wunsch. “The U.S. forces in Germany have an excellent hunting, fishing, and sport shooting program. We offer hunting courses, assist in finding hunting opportunities, conduct sport shooting events, offer fishing courses and trips, and offer many other activities for our personnel.”

The scope of programs is quite extensive, from fishing in a local pond to hunting wildebeest in Africa, he said.

“The important part is that U.S. personnel are familiarized with the rules of the host nation to stay out of trouble,” said Wunsch. “MWR has all the processes and procedures worked out with the host nation so we can help the Soldiers and civilians pursue their weapons-related hobbies or interests.”

For more information contact the hunting, fishing, sport shooting program management at DSN 370-3727 or civilian 06221-57-3727.

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