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STATUS OF FORCES AGREEMENT (SOFA)- Germany

1. A FEW WORDS ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

This pamphlet is intended to provide important facts about the Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) between the United States and Germany. To protect yourself, you must know what rights you have as an American.

2. IMPORTANT FACTS TO KNOW ABOUT THE SOFA WITH ITALY

The legal status of Americans stationed in Germany is governed by special international agreements including the NATO Status of Forces Agreement. People stationed at overseas bases or posts must remember that German laws apply to them, too. Whether German authorities exercise their right of jurisdiction depends on the circumstances of the case. Below are circumstances in which you and/or your family may be subject to German laws.

1. Active duty members and their dependants are subject to German criminal law consequences including jail and substantial fines. Military members are still subject to the UCMJ. Dependents and civilians are subject to U.S. federal criminal law under the MEJA.
2. Value Added Tax (VAT) is a consumption tax on the market value added to a product or service at each stage of its manufacture or distribution. Military members are allowed partial VAT exemptions. The legal office in Germany has instructions on how to claim the VAT exemption, further, there is a special VAT office which hands out VAT forms.
3. Members stationed in Germany have access to licensed German attorneys at major bases, for example at Ramstein AFB.

The information provided in this document is meant for the sole use of Active Duty service members, retirees, their families, and those individuals eligible for legal assistance. The information is general in nature and meant only to provide a brief overview of various legal matters. Rights and responsibility vary widely according to the particular set of circumstances in each case. Laws can vary across states, services, and civilian jurisdictions and laws are changed from time to time. Do not rely upon the general restatements of background information presented here without discussing your specific situation with a legal professional.