

Customs News Release

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A Guide for Pink Card Holders

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WIESBADEN, Germany – In accordance with AEA Reg. 550-175, retired military personnel, their dependent spouses, widows/widowers, retired reservists, 100% disabled veterans, certain VHIC holders, unaccompanied dependents, and 20/20/20 former spouses are permitted to purchase items from sales facilities on U.S. bases and installations.

To qualify for shopping privileges, eligible individuals must first obtain AEA Form 550-175K from any local military customs office for status verification. Eligible individuals can only obtain this form if they intend to live in or visit Germany for 30 consecutive days or more. Widows and widowers of deceased military members must be residents of Germany.

Once obtained from the local U.S. military customs office, the AEA Form 550-175K must be presented to the German Customs office serving the area of residence for further processing and for issuance of the customs authorization (Form 0216) and the German Customs Certificate (Form 0217, also known as the “Pink Card”). The Pink Card and U.S. beneficiary ID allow eligible individuals to purchase non-rationed items for personal use and consumption at AAFES and DeCA sales facilities in Germany. The purchase of rationed items, such as alcohol, coffee, cigarettes, motor fuel, but also heating fuel, as well as making purchases for non-eligible individuals is not permitted.

Eligible individuals are responsible for keeping sales receipts for all purchases made by them and their dependents. The receipts must be presented to the local German Customs office for duty assessment no later than the fifth workday of the month following the purchase. Upon presentation of the receipts, German Customs will levy lump-sum duties based on the applicable euro exchange rate in the month when purchases were made. A 17.5% duty will be charged on each item costing less than the U.S. dollar equivalent of € 50. For each item costing more than € 50, German Customs will charge the respective tariff rate for that item plus the applicable value-added tax of either 19% or 7%.

Pink card holders must follow the guidance issued by the local German customs office when not making any purchases during a particular month or several months at U.S. sales facilities during their Pink Card’s validity period. The German Customs office may require individuals to confirm in writing that they made no purchases during the respective period.

German customs may conduct spot checks. For this purpose, Pink Card holders will be asked to sign a declaration that they have declared all of their purchases during a particular time period to German customs and agree to the transmission of their statements to U. S. military and German customs authorities for verification (Form 0214). German customs may deny or revoke a Pink Card if the individual denies signing the declaration.

The U.S. Forces are not the proponent of this process but are required by international agreement to provide information upon request by host nation authorities.

Suspected violations will be investigated by the U.S. Army Military Police and the investigative results be shared with German authorities in accordance with international agreements. If eligible individuals fail to meet their obligations, German Customs may temporarily withdraw the authorization and Pink Card, where applicable charge the owed taxes and duties, and even impose a tax fine. Like in the US, tax fraud is a criminal offense in Germany and, depending on its severity, even may result in a criminal indictment.

For a first offense, German Customs may confiscate the Pink Card and block the issuance of a new form 550-175K for six months; for a repeated offense, the authorization may be permanently revoked. Additionally, base access may be suspended by the Garrison commander for civilian misconduct. Suspension of base access and the suspension of the Pink Card are two separate procedures that may not necessarily overlap in time.

Deliberate abuse of the Pink Card system by a few individuals could endanger a privilege enjoyed by many hundreds of former service members and their dependents. Please make sure you abide by the rules.

In case of any questions, please email or call your local U.S. Forces customs field office.