

Customs News Release

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Holiday Season without Customs Worries

By Astrid Glockner, Customs Translator/Operations Specialist, Customs Executive Agency

WIESBADEN, Germany – Holiday season is approaching fast! Nowadays, it is so easy to find the perfect gifts online and have them shipped to Germany.

If you receive gifts in your APO mailbox, please make sure that these items are not restricted or prohibited. German law and US Forces regulations prohibit many items from being imported into the country. The reason for these import restrictions is based in German law on the protection of the environment and human health, children and youth, industrial property rights, as well as public safety or the democratic order.

Things you can order online or by mail order, or relatives and friends send to you could be banned items under these laws. Banned items include, for example, controlled substances, medication, vitamins and nutritional supplements, unauthorized fireworks, cultural assets, food and feed containing meat or milk, plants, plant parts, fruits and seeds, animals (including products from endangered species), weapons and/or ammunition without the necessary German license, and counterfeits of trademarked products and pirate copies (this list is non-exhaustive).

Furthermore, the import through military mail of rationed items, such as certain alcoholic beverages, cigarettes (including e-cigarettes and vaping products) and other tobacco products, coffee, and coffee products (this list is non-exhaustive) is prohibited.

Please see AEAR 550-175 Section 1-6 for detailed information on prohibited and restricted items.

If items are shipped to you using APO or a commercial carrier, USPS provides valuable information on mailings to Germany at https://pe.usps.com/text/imm/fh_011.htm. More information is available at: https://www.zoll.de/EN/Private-individuals/Postal_consignments_internet_order/Shipments-from-a-non-EU-country/Restrictions/restrictions_node.html or from your local Customs office. Please also bear in mind that gifts need to be personal and in non-commercial quantities.

When importing gifts from outside of the EU into Germany by an international parcel service, there is a potential of saving money. When entering the shipping options, please ensure you select that you will be clearing the goods through customs yourself. Otherwise, the carrier will automatically handle the import, and you will have to pay customs duties and import taxes. These customs duties and taxes are not refundable! After making the Self Clearance then proceed to your military customs office servicing your garrison to obtain AEA Form 550-175A (Import Certificate). For Final customs clearance, you will have to travel to the German customs office where the parcel is being held.

Keep your festive spirits high and avoid unpleasant surprises! Make sure that you don't receive prohibited items in your APO mailbox and use AEA Form 550-175A for savings when shipping with an international parcel service.