# Moving to Germany!

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Updated 9 August 2010
Creating Your “Bible”

One of the most important steps in your move will be gathering all of the necessary documentation. It is usually best to have all of these in one place that is easily accessible, like a binder. This way, it can be easily transported with you around post and kept in your carry-on luggage when you travel.

Organization is key, so it is suggested that you create a table of contents for your binder, and keep all of your documents in document or presentation sleeves. (Pick up a package that has a flap or seal at the top for smaller documents that may slide around.)

Suggested Documents

- **Orders**
  - Make at least ten copies of the original orders and any amendments - go ahead and staple each set, making it easy to deliver or hand over when necessary

- **Identification & Copies**
  - Drivers License (Copy both Front & Back)
  - Passports (You should keep both your tourist and your government or no-fee passports here, as well as copy of each inside page)
  - Military ID & DEERS Card (Copy both Front & Back)

- **Vital Documents**
  - Birth Certificates (With copies of each)
  - Social Security Cards (With copies of each)

- **Marriage Documentation**
  - Marriage Certificate & License (If at all possible, order a couple of extra certified copies from the courthouse you were married at. Keep one extra copy with you, and keep another with any important documentation that you ship with your household goods - they are good to have!)

- **General Power of Attorney** (If applicable)

- **Special Power of Attorney** (If you have General POA, you may not see these as necessary - but for an OCONUS move, they can come in handy because different moving and shipping companies sometimes have special policies for international shipments. If you visit the JAG office or Adjutant General, they will be able to set these up for you - bring identification with you.)
  - Special POA - Household Goods Shipments (The service-member needs to fill one of these out for the spouse)
  - Special POA - Vehicle Shipment/Sales (Ensure that whoever the car is registered to fills this out for their spouse)
• **POV Shipping Documentation** (You should receive a document with POV Shipping Guidelines from the OCONUS briefing, but it can also be obtained by visiting Army Community Services or www.WhereismyPOV.com.)
  - (7) Copies of orders/amendments
  - Vehicle Title (Have the original with you, and at least one copy)
  - Certified Copy of Vehicle Title (Can be made at the Adjutant General or JAG office)
  - If vehicle is leased, have an approval letter for the leasing agent or lienholder
  - Vehicle Registration (with one photocopy)
  - When dropping off your vehicle, you will need copies of your driver’s license, the service-member’s Military ID, and a Power of Attorney - but you’ve got all of that in your binder already!

• **Household Good Shipping Documentation** (There will be three possible categories that you need to keep track of - this is the section where you store the confirmation documents when you schedule your pick-ups, and then also store your inventories after the pick up)
  - Storage
  - Unaccompanied Baggage
  - Household Goods

• **Exceptional Family Member Program - EFMP/Command Sponsorship**
  - Copy of Physical Exam
  - Copy of Form 5888
  - Copy of Concurrent Orders

• **Travel Documents** (These will be provided to you by the travel office after booking your flights and travel.)

• **Veterinary Records**
  - Rabies Certificate (Germany requires that the animal be vaccinated for Rabies between 1 year to 30 days prior to departure; it is recommended that the signature on the rabies certificate be in a color other than Black)
  - International Health Certificate (Must be obtained within 10 days of departure; can be obtained free with a copy of orders at post veterinarian; also recommended that signature be in a color other than Black)

• **Wills/Medical Power of Attorney** (If applicable)

• **US Billing Information** (Keep your last bill, or the contact information for any US companies or utilities with you so that you can keep up with any final payments while traveling.)

• **Address Book** (List of names, emails, phone numbers that you would like to have with you while traveling.)

**EFMP/Command Sponsorship**

The Exceptional Family Member Program (EFMP) is a program that the Army has in place to ensure that it can provide adequate health care services to service members and their dependents. Screening and registration in the EFMP program is mandatory for dependents that are accompanying their service member to an OCONUS assignment.
The service member’s orders will indicate whether they have permission to travel with dependents; if so, it is still necessary to obtain “command sponsorship,” which is direct approval from their new unit’s chain of command to bring their dependents with them. This approval process begins with the EFMP Screening process.

**Form 5888**

This form can be obtained by the service member by their personnel lead or the S-1 shop in their current unit. A copy of orders and an ID card will be necessary to obtain the form. The personnel lead or S-1 will set up the form, provide an initial signature, and then refer you to direct your dependent(s) to the EFMP office on post (usually located in or near the hospital/clinic).

**Physical**

When the spouse contacts the EFMP to make an appointment (appointments are typically required, and may be scheduled 3-4 weeks out - so start early), they will typically ask if the dependent(s) have had a physical in the last year. If the spouse has records of a physical within the last year, ensure that you have a copy available or can obtain one. If there has not been a physical in the last year, or records cannot be obtained, it will be necessary to get a physical prior to the Screening appointment. If you do need to schedule a physical with a TriCare doctor or at an on-post facility, make your appointment quickly! (You may need to push back your screening if you are unable to schedule your physical prior to your screening appointment.)

**Screening**

Once you have had obtained your physical records, or had a new physical, you are ready to attend your EFMP screening appointment. (Note: If you get a new physical at an on-post medical facility, you should not need to get a copy of the records. Usually, the EFMP can access them. It may not be a bad idea to request a copy for your own documentation though.) Remember to bring Form 5888 with you to the appointment. At the screening appointment, they will review your physical and discuss your medical history. They will determine whether you need to enroll in EFMP. If you do (and it can be for various reasons, including but not limited to - asthma, diabetes, depression, or any other acute conditions), they will guide you through the enrollment. If you do not need to be enrolled, they will simply sign your Form 5888.

**Command Sponsorship**

Once Form 5888 is signed, it need to be brought back to the personnel lead or the S-1 shop that initially provided the form. They will forward it to the chain of command within the service-member’s future unit, who will send back their approval (this can take anywhere from one hour to a week, it just depends on the unit). Once an approval is received by the personnel lead or S-1 shop, they will contact the service-member and provide them with an amendment to their orders that specifically state the dependent(s)
name(s). These are also called “concurrent orders,” and they should be attached to your documentation from this point forward.

Shipping Your Belongings

You will have the opportunity to set up three different types of shipments before your overseas move. These are your Storage, your Unaccompanied Baggage (UB), and your Household Goods (HHG).

Storage

When deciding what to leave behind, keep in mind that housing is not always spacious in on-post housing and that many European homes are much smaller. There are also no closets in German homes, only wardrobes, which are much more limited in their storage capacity. (Fun Fact: In Germany, home owners are taxed by room on their property taxes rather than just by total size - which is why they do build closets or pantries into their homes - they count as taxable rooms!)

A good rule of thumb when moving overseas is that if you are not currently looking at it, or using it, you may want to consider leaving it. The military will store your items at no cost to you while you are stationed overseas. (The weight of your storage will count towards your total weight allowance for the move.)

Unaccompanied Baggage (UB)

This is a smaller shipment of items that will be air-lifted overseas to arrive sooner than your HHG shipment. (Estimated ship time is 3-4 weeks.) Your weight allowance for UB is separate from your HHG, and it is also determined by rank and dependents. No furniture, large items, or liquids are permitted. The items in this shipment should be considered as a “survival package” - things you will need to hold you over in your new home while waiting for your HHG to arrive.

Recommended Items: Basic Kitchen Items (pots/panns, spatula, silverware, plates, cups, basic spices); Basic Linens (towels, pillows, sheets, blanket); Additional Clothes and Shoes; Pet Items; Small TV; DVD Player; DVDs; Game Console; Some Books; Trash Can; Board Games; Service-Member’s Uniforms (1-2); Folding/Camping Chairs; Basic Tools; Small Cleaning Items (broom, toilet brushes, rags); Basic Office Supplies (printer, paper, notebooks, small filing system)

Personal Note: We have heard that many families coming to Germany have experienced significant delays in delivery of UB - we ourselves have experienced this phenomenon. After 8 weeks in Germany, we received our HHG, and have been told that our UB has not left the States yet. Apparently, air shipment of the UB is dependent on available cargo capacity of US military flights, which can vary. It is up to you, but you may consider skipping the UB and shipping all of your items with HHG. If you do ship UB, and they miss their “deliver-by” date, you can file an inconvenience claim with the moving company for any
necessary expenses within reasonable means that you may incur (i.e., hotel cost, or linens/kitchen/living supplies). However, there is 50/50 chance that the claim will be approved - if the moving company claims that the fault lies within the military air cargo capacity, they can refute the claim and refuse to pay. We have not heard back about our claim yet.

**Household Goods (HHG)**

This is everything else! You should prepare for the move by unplugging all of your electronics and appliances (it is a good idea to keep your wires together or with the items), organizing items you would like to keep together, and doing a basic cleaning/dusting of your belongings.

Expect that your movers will take two days for your move; the first day will be packing boxes, the second day will be crating. (Overseas moves require this commitment from the moving companies, and they will usually not squeeze everything into one day.) It is not necessary to tip your movers, but it is always nice to have bottled water or soda available for them, as well as snacks or lunch. (An easy recommendation is to purchase cold cuts, vegetables, and bread - they can make sandwiches and you can let them use up the condiments you cannot bring with you. Chips or cookies are also nice to include. It is certainly not required, but it is always appreciated!)

An overseas move carries the inherent risk of damage to your items during shipping. It is a good idea to take a photo inventory of your home before the movers arrive. (Suggested photographs include: DVD Collection; Artwork; Furniture; Electronic (with serial numbers); kitchen appliances; clothing collections; instruments; etc)

You should also create an inventory of your electronics before the movers arrive. Make a list of items with their model numbers, serial numbers, and estimated cost. When your movers arrive, they will create a “High-Value” inventory form - ensure they have included all of your items, serial numbers, and values correctly.

**Shipping Your POV**

Shipping your personal vehicle overseas is handled by a contractor company, American Auto Logistics. Their website offers significant information in what you will need to prepare for shipping ([www.whereismypov.com](http://www.whereismypov.com)).

**Timeline**

Shipping a POV can take a significant amount of time - estimates range from six to twelve weeks. You will be bringing your vehicle to a Vehicle Processing Shipment (locations can be found at [https://www.whereismypov.com/locations.asp](https://www.whereismypov.com/locations.asp)). Their staff will be able to give you an estimated date of arrival for your vehicle during processing.

**Required Documents**
1. Proof of Entitlement: Seven copies of your official orders, including any amendments
2. Proof of Identity (official and valid photo-identification)
   i. Service Member - Military ID
   ii. Spouse - Military or Government ID (with copies of Service-Member’s ID, front and back)
3. Proof of Ownership, Registration and/or Title: It is strongly recommended that you always provide the Contractor with a legible copy of your Title for U.S. Customs or Host Nation Customs review/clearance purposes. These documents must be in the Service Member’s name as listed on their Orders. Also please note: If the vehicle is registered in a name other than Service Member, such as spouse’s maiden name, you must provide a copy of your Marriage Certificate.
4. If applicable, Lien Holder Shipment Authorization Letter: a letter from your Lien Holder authorizing the exportation of your vehicle. (Request letter on official company letterhead.)
5. If applicable, Lease Holder Shipment Authorization Letter: a letter from your Lease Holder authorizing the exportation of your vehicle. (Request letter on official company letterhead.)
6. Power of Attorney: If the vehicle is being turned into a VPC by someone other than the Service Member (e.g. Member’s spouse, relative, friend, etc.), the Agent must present a valid Power of Attorney that authorizes him/her to act on behalf of the Service Member. The POA must include the names of the Service Member and the appointed Agent, as well as the vehicle VIN.
7. Valid email address, destination address, notification address, and emergency contact information: This information is required so that they can contact you as soon as your vehicle has arrived at its destination and is available for pick-up.

Vehicle Preparation Checklist

• No more than 1/4 tank of fuel (gasoline or diesel)
• A complete set of keys (ignition, doors, trunk, gas cap & wheel locks)
• Make sure your vehicle is clean (includes all interior spaces and compartments, and all exterior and undercarriage areas)
• Make sure your vehicle is in safe operating condition. The vehicle must have fully functioning service and parking brakes, and no noticeable fluid leaks, and/or any major cracks in the windshield
• Your glove compartment, trunk, and all other storage spaces must be clean, empty, and free of trash, personal items, and house-hold goods. (Dry-vacuum all spaces, especially in-between and underneath seats)
• The following items can be left in your vehicle:
  - Hand tools, not to exceed $200 in value
  - Items such as jacks, tire irons, fire extinguishers, and jumper cables
  - One spare tire & two snow tires
  - Portable cribs, children’s car seats, strollers
  - Factory-installed and/or professionally installed after-market audio/video/navigation equipment inside the vehicle or trunk, including amplifiers, speakers, subwoofers,
CD changers, DVD players, and navigations systems (These items must be permanently installed or bolted to the vehicle)
- Thermos bottles, car cushions

• The following Items MUST BE REMOVED from in your vehicle:
  - Loose audio/video/navigation equipment
  - Accessories not permanently installed
  - Flammable, combustible, or hazardous substances, oils, paints, waxes
  - Any liquids or pressurized cans (propane tanks must be purged and certified by an authorized dealer)
  - Citizen Band radios

Vehicle Pick-Up (at PCS location)

In Germany, the service-member will be required to pass the USAEUR Driver’s Exam prior to picking up their POV. The service-member can borrow a driver’s manual during in-processing. (It may also be available through your current installation - check with ACS to find out if the manual or the drivers test is available before you PCS.)

You will need the following documents to pick up your POV:

1. Proof of Identity
2. Your copy of the Vehicle Inspection & Shipping Form (VISF) or Government Form DD788
3. Power of Attorney: If the vehicle is being picked up by someone other than the Service Member (e.g. Member's spouse, relative, friend, etc.), the Agent must present a valid Power of Attorney (POA) which authorizes them to act on behalf of the Service Member. The POA must include name of Service Member, name of appointed Agent, and vehicle VIN. A POA is not necessary if the Service Member has appointed an Agent on the VISF during turn-in processing. The Appointed Agents must also have proof of identity.
4. Vehicle Registration Documents and License Plates: Please be advised that Vehicle Processing Centers are not authorized to issue vehicle registration documents or license plate tags. Prior to your arrival at the Vehicle Processing Center, please make arrangements with your local US DMV or overseas local military registration office to ensure you operate your vehicle in compliance with all local safety and insurance requirements. (You will be required to visit the Registration Office to obtain temporary license plates before picking up your vehicle.)

Immediately after you pick up your vehicle, go to the PX to pick up your fuel card. Fuel is rationed here - after your car is registered, you go to the PX to pick up your Esso/Fuel card. We are allotted 400 L of gas per month (at the US prices on post, or at Esso gas stations). If you go over that amount, you have to pay the German economy price. Make sure you are both on the car’s registration, and that you BOTH get your names on the fuel card - they check ID strictly when you pay for the gas. (No more pay at the pump.) It is a good idea to “load” some money onto the fuel card - if you wind up at an Esso
station on the economy, you can only get the American prices by using your prepaid funds on the card. (We keep about $150 on it, just to be safe.)

Insurance Notes

Before you ship your POV, contact your vehicle insurance agency to inform them of your upcoming PCS and the shipment. Your insurance company will be able to inform you of your new insurance rate. Be prepared that the cost of insurance and the required coverage in Europe can be significantly more than in the US. You can request that during shipment, your vehicle be placed into “storage” or “shipping” status, which offers a reduced rate during ship time. (Keep in mind that at least 24 hours before picking up your vehicle, you must call your insurance company to inform them that you will be picking it up to have it removed from the “storage” or “shipping” status.) The registration office at your new installation will be required to verify your insurance coverage before releasing the vehicle to you.

Shipping Your Pet

Shipping your pet overseas can be one of the most stressful parts of a PCS! Keep in mind that while living in government housing overseas (which you are required to do if the housing is available), you will be limited to two pets. If you have more pets in your home right now, please make sure they all have someone to take care of them before you leave!

When booking your flights through the travel office, be sure to inform them that you will be traveling with pets, and what kind/size. They can note this while making your reservations to ensure that you do not encounter any lay-overs that might impede your pets’ travel. (For example, if you were to have a lay-over anywhere in London, there is significant likelihood that you would have to quarantine your pets there for 3-6 months at your own expense.) The travel office will work with you to find the most direct route to your new home.

Reservations

You will have to refer to the airline’s regulations for pet shipping once the reservations are made. It is recommended that you contact them immediately after the tickets are booked to reserve your animals’ place on the plane (be it in cargo or as a carry-on). You will be responsible for any costs associated with shipping your pet. Refer to the airline for respective costs.

Vaccinations & Veterinary Preparation

Every country has different requirements for vaccinations of animals coming into the country. For Germany, the animal must receive a rabies vaccination within a specific period of time: 1 year to 30 days prior to departure. (Keep in mind that even if you pet is
current on vaccinations by having received a 3-year vaccine that is still valid, they WILL need to receive the rabies vaccination within that time period, regardless.) Another note for Germany is that it is recommended that the Rabies Vaccination Certificate be signed in a color other than Black (ie, Blue). (This is to ensure that it is not a stamped certificate.)

You will also need to obtain an International Health Certificate (IHC) for each pet. This can be obtained at no charge from an on-post veterinarian. It needs to be filled out and signed within 10 days of departure. (This is a requirement of most airlines and countries.) It is recommended that if you have not taken your pet to the Veterinary Clinic on-post before, you should bring them in before their Health Certificate appointment. This way, you can get them in the system and ensure they have any documentation or medicine they need before their Health Certificate Appointment. (Note: Be sure your IHC is in the language of the destination country.)

**Departure Day**

Before you leave, ensure that you check with the airline’s requirements for crate dimensions and construction. When you check in, the airline will verify that you meet their requirements. If you do not, you may be required to purchase a crate from the airline in order to comply with their standards.

If you are shipping your pet in cargo, you will have to separate from the pet before entering security. This can be nerve-wracking and emotional, but there are measures you can take beforehand to reassure yourself of your pet’s well-being. You should consider attaching copies of your pets’ documentation to the top of their crates - this can include a copy of the Rabies Certificate, a copy of the International Health Certificate, and any relevant health information. You can also include a note in both English and the destination language (ie, German) that gives your pets’ name and your contact information.

Here is an example for a pet traveling to Germany:

This dog is Monica. She travels with her owners, Elizabeth and Peter George of Atlanta, Georgia to Frankfurt, Germany. They leave the United States on 21 June 2010 and arrive in Frankfurt on 22 June 2010 on Lufthansa Flight Number LH445. Once in Germany, they owners can be called at +001-512-940-7597 or +001-254-319-3895. Please take good care of this wonderful dog! (Enclosed are copies of her documentation and health certificates.)

Dieser Hund ist Monica. Sie reist mit ihren Eigentümern Elizabeth und Peter George von Atlanta, Georgia nach Frankfurt. Sie verlassen die USA am 21 Juni 2010 und kommen in Frankfurt am 22 Juni 2010 auf Lufthansa Flugnummer LH445 an. Nachdem in Deutschland, können die Eigentümer an +001 512 940 7597 oder +001 254 319 3895 gerufen werden. Bitte nehmen Sie gute Sorge diese wunderbar Hund! (Eingeschlossen sind Kopien von ihrer Dokumentation und Gesundheitsbescheinigungen.)
Arrival in Germany

When you arrive in Germany, you should have the original documentation for your pets accessible in your carry-on luggage. Be prepared to show this documentation while processing through customs.

If you have shipped your pets through cargo, you can ask a gate attendant where to pick up your pet. (“Wo hole ich meinen Hund ab?” - Where do I pick up my dog? “Wo hole ich meine Katze ab?” - Where do I pick up my cat?) They will arrive in the large cargo area of baggage claim in Frankfurt Airport.

After picking up your pet from large baggage and collecting your luggage, you will be checking in with a US Military representative in the baggage area. From this point, they will guide you through customs, direct you to a waiting area for military, provide you with instructions, and assign you to a bus for transportation to your installation. If you need to care for your pet or take them outside, you can ask these representative for guidance or directions. (Be sure to have a leash available - pets are welcome to be out of their kennels in the airport, but must be on leash.)

Arrival & In-Processing

As mentioned, when you arrive at Frankfurt, you will be met by a US military representative in the baggage area. You are likely not the only US military arriving, so you will probably have to wait for them to gather their entire group before moving on from baggage. (NOTE: They will need a copy of your orders on arrival.)

You will be taken to a waiting area reserved for the US military. You will be able to leave your luggage in an area assigned for your duty location. You may have to wait a few ours for your bus to depart. If so, you will be free to roam the airport. There is food, shopping, and a USO. (There are off-limits areas that include the casino and a sex shop.)

Return to the waiting area at the assigned time to gather your luggage. You will be guided to the bus loading area. (Note: Pets in large crates are required to be transported underneath the bus. Pets in carry-on crates may be exceptions, but it is dependent on the transportation provider.) You are required to take the bus to your installation.

When you arrive at your installation, you will be met by a unit representative or sponsor. (If you have a sponsor, you should try to make contact with them before arriving. Contact your current unit to arrange sponsorship.) They will transport you to the Tower Inn. (Note: At Grafenwohr, you will actually be arriving at Vilseck, which is approximately 25 minutes distance.)
In-processing will begin the next day at Vilseck at 0800. There is bus transportation from Grafenwohr to Vilseck. (The bus departs from the DFAC at Grafenwohr and arrives next to in-processing area at Vilseck.) You will be guided through in-processing. Be sure to inform your spouse when the Head Start class is (an introduction class to Germany and Bavaria) and when the USAEUR Driver’s Test is available for spouses.

Other Notes/Lessons Learned

- **SHIP EARLY - EVERYTHING!!!** If you decide to ship UB, set up that shipment 8-12 weeks ahead of your report date. If at all possible, set up your HHG shipment as early as possible. (You will likely receive housing long before your HHG arrive - you will be able to borrow furniture when you move in, but it’s much nicer to have your stuff arrive!) As for your POV - it REALLY is an “earlier the better” shipping scenario - we sent ours about 8 weeks early, and it arrived about 2 days ahead of us, which was really great. That meant that we could pick it up as soon as Peter passed the drivers test, which is part of Day 3 or 4 of in-processing. (Until we had the vehicle, he was having to take a bus to Vilseck for in-processing, and I was limited to where I could walk from the Inn on post. It kinda stunk. Having the car was way better!) Some people plan to pick up a car as soon as they arrive - we have only seen that work moderately well, and is usually a slower process than expected.

- Coming into Grafenwohr, it is best to stay at the Tower Inn when you arrive. ENSURE you have a reservation before arriving. In fact, CALL NOW. Let them know you have a pet, so they can reserve you a pet-friendly room. They may tell you there is already a waiting list - call them back every month until you know you have a room.

- Germany is a cash society - there are very few stores that accept credit cards or debit cards outside of the airport. We recommend going to a local bank and exchanging money before you leave. (Don’t do it at the airport - the exchange rate is horrific.) Bring at least 100 Euro with you - that will be plenty to eat and function on when you arrive. Most places on post will accept dollars and debit/credit cards.

- **Voltage** - you will have dual voltage on post. So if you live in government housing, or while you are in the port hotel, you are in good shape.

- There is no A/C in Germany. If you arrive in winter, you probably wouldn’t notice since every room has a heater. But, no A/C - we arrived in the summer, and there are a few miserable weeks!

- German homes have wardrobes which are pretty small - but you may have an extra room or basement where you can put up a temporary wardrobe or garment rack. The PX carries these, but often sells out. You may want to purchase one in the US and pack it with your HHG! That way, you immediately have a place to put all of your clothes!

- Cell phone plans in Germany are quite complicated, and you may be unsure as to how many minutes you will need. (German minutes are often charged differently based on whether you are calling another mobile phone on the same provider, a mobile phone on a different provider, or calling a land line.) It is a good idea to pick up a “pay as you go” phone after arriving. They are available in the PX from a company called Voda
Fone. These are a good item to have until you decide if you want to commit to a cell phone contract.

- If you are living on the economy, or using any German services (ie, cell phone), you will need to have a German bank account. You can opt to use the Service Credit Union, which is available on post, or a German bank (PostBank is very familiar with US military in Grafenwohr).

- Part of mandatory in-processing is a class called Head Start - it may not be made obvious, but service members are welcome to bring their spouses. It is a great class to learn more about travel, culture, language, and customs in our area. We found it to be a great experience for both of us!

- Totally random - buy a couple of toilet brushes and send them with your UB or HHG. The German toilets are different, and don't have a lot of water in them, so they require a lot of brushing out. Again, the PX has them - but they are all kind of mediocre and sometimes sell out.

Elizabeth George