



# ***Customs News Release***

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**Customs Queries**  
**DSN 370-4983 or 4984**  
**Civ: xx49-6221-574983**

**Customs PAO**  
UNIT 29351, APO AE 09014-9351  
Tel: DSN 370-4961 Civ: xx49-6221-574961

*Release POVS02 for release in March 12*

## **Save tax on imported vehicles**

*By Robert Szostek, USEUCOM Customs PAO*

Heidelberg, Germany - U.S. personnel stationed overseas can ship vehicles to the United States free of federal tax and duty. This exemption means big savings if you meet three conditions. You must take physical possession of the vehicle prior to shipment, have valid PCS orders and import it for personal use. However, the exemption does not free you from state taxation.

“Most people who miss out on the exemption do not take physical possession of the vehicle before shipment,” said Tim Sellman, acting director of the European Command's Customs and Border Clearance Agency. “If you have a car shipped directly from the factory, you risk having to pay the 2.5 percent federal import duty,” he added.

Registering a vehicle is the best way to show possession, but you can also prove it by simply putting a copy of your movement orders in the glove compartment.

Second, you must have a set of official change of station orders in hand before shipping a vehicle. The exemption is not for people on extended leave or temporary duty.

Third, the vehicle must be for your personal use or for use by immediate family members. “If you had six dependents of driving age,” Sellman explained, “you could justify importing seven vehicles duty-free; one for each of them and one for yourself.” However, it is illegal to use the exemption to import vehicles for third parties or in order to sell them.

People importing vehicles as part of a PCS can save federal duties and taxes, but state taxes on imported vehicles can be high. You can obtain state tax information from the relevant department of motor vehicles and Internet links to these can be found at [http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/rmv/stateside\\_dmvs.htm](http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/rmv/stateside_dmvs.htm).

Call a military customs office to find out more about federal customs exemptions or your local transportation office to learn about shipping procedures and fees.



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## **Internet delivers facts for car shippers**

*By Robert Szostek, USEUCOM Customs PAO*

Heidelberg, Germany - U.S. personnel overseas can find facts about shipping vehicles to the United States on the Internet. The listed links are on the Military Customs Web site at [www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/cars.htm](http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/cars.htm).

- The U.S. Bureau of Customs and Border Protection offers tips on converting foreign vehicles to U.S. emission and safety standards, washing requirements to prevent spreading bugs and diseases stateside and tells you how to import a vehicle without paying duty.
- For people with vehicles not built to U.S. safety specifications, the site has links to the latest list of registered importers that can do U.S. safety conversions, the list of models that can be converted, details on importing Canadian standard vehicles, and the HS-7 Declaration Form required for vehicle imports.
- The Environmental Protection Agency also has a link listing the Automotive Imports Facts Manual, Independent Commercial Importer List, a "What's New?" section, Approved Canadian Vehicles and the EPA 3520-1 Declaration Form.
- The Department of Agriculture link explains why high standards of cleanliness are necessary for vehicles shipped stateside.

More customs information is available at the Military Customs Online page at [www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/uscustoms.htm](http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/uscustoms.htm) or call any military customs office for more information.



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**Release POVS09 for release in March 12**

## **Don't lose money with overseas car conversion**

*By Robert Szostek, USEUCOM Customs PAO*

Heidelberg, Germany – Americans in Europe must beware of European car dealers who offer to convert cars or motorcycles to U.S. standards. You stand to lose a lot of money if you try to ship a vehicle “converted” in Europe to the States.

The Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) only accept work done by licensed companies in the United States, not the work of individuals or overseas companies. U.S. Customs can easily check vehicle identification numbers to detect phony conversions.

“It is tempting to try to save some money by doing work here in Europe,” said Tim Sellman, acting director of the U.S. European Command’s Customs and Border Clearance Agency. But overseas conversions are not licensed by U.S. agencies. However, vehicles rebuilt by the original European manufacturer to U.S. specifications can be imported with the proper documents.

Under EPA regulations, nonconforming vehicles less than 21 years old may only enter the United States through an independent commercial importer. These vehicles must be tested and adapted to the emission standards in effect at the time of production. Vehicles that are 21 years old or older do not require EPA tests or conversions.

DOT requires shippers of nonconforming vehicles to sign a contract with a registered import company that must certify in advance that it can convert the model to U.S. safety standards. The owner must also post a bond for one and a half times the vehicle’s dutiable value. “Vehicles over 25 years old do not need conversion to U.S. safety, bumper and theft prevention standards,” Sellman added.

“Shipping, paperwork and conversions cost between \$6,500 and \$25,000 per vehicle.” he added.

Get the “Importing a Car” pamphlet from a military customs office for more information on shipping foreign vehicles. Or consult the military customs Web site at [www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/cars.htm](http://www.hqusareur.army.mil/opm/cars.htm).



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## **DOT code a must for tires headed stateside**

*By Robert Szostek, USEUCOM Customs PAO*

Heidelberg, Germany – Tires shipped stateside must meet U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) standards, whether fitted to vehicles or not. So if you replace tires on the POV you own or buy a used vehicle, you should check the tires for the DOT code if you intend shipping that POV to the States at a later date.

“The letters ‘DOT’ and an identification code of up to 11 numbers and letters on the sidewall show that Department of Transportation standards are met,” said Tim Sellman, acting director of the European Command’s Customs and Border Clearance Agency. He added that you should check both sides of each tire because the DOT number is sometimes only on one side.

Sellman also advises people buying vehicles directly from stateside dealers to make sure they are buying the U.S. market version. An export version may not necessarily be equipped with DOT-standard equipment and could be barred from import if you try to ship it stateside later.

For more information on buying tires, consult the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration Web site at [www.nhtsa.gov/Vehicle+Safety/Tires](http://www.nhtsa.gov/Vehicle+Safety/Tires) or try out the Rubber Manufacturers Association page for tire safety tips at [www.rma.org/tire\\_safety/](http://www.rma.org/tire_safety/).