



### Overview

The maintenance of public security and order is one of the most important tasks of any government. In the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundesrepublik Deutschland*) it is carried out by both Federal States (*Länder*) and the Federal Government (*Bund*). By Constitution (*Grundgesetz*) the police are under the jurisdiction of the Republic's 16 States; only in certain areas does the Constitution assign responsibility to the Federal Government.

Each state promulgates a law which lays down the organisation and duties of its police (*Landespolizeigesetz* or *Sicherheits- und Ordnungsgesetz*).

Although the State Police are regulated by sixteen different legislatures and are, in fact, different police services, there has been an increasing tendency toward standardisation of police activities nationwide. Concerns about terrorism and the growth of organized crime have strengthened the movement to centralise police procedures and operations. The idea of creating one single police code for the whole of Germany (*allgemeines Polizeigesetz*) came up in the 1960s but was never passed.

### Landespolizei – State Police of the Federal Republic of Germany

The *Landespolizei* can trace its origins to 19th century Germany when the various German kingdoms maintained separate police forces, the two largest of which were the Prussian Secret Police and the Bavarian State Police. When Germany united into a single country, under Otto von Bismarck, the various kingdoms and other state level police agencies maintained their *Landespolizei* forces. However as the increasing number of new laws and regulations made controlling urban life more complicated various towns and cities also established local (separate) police forces.

Under the Nazi regime, all German state and city forces were absorbed into the *Ordnungspolizei*, which existed from 1936 to 1945, as a division of SS "regular uniformed law enforcement".

After World War II, massive numbers of refugees and displaced persons, hunger and poverty characterised everyday life in Germany. Attacks by armed gangs, robbery, looting and black-marketing were commonplace. As the Allied military police could not cope with the escalating security situation, each of the occupying Allied Forces quickly permitted the formation of civilian police forces in Western Germany based on their own police structures and traditions. In all three Western zones (France, Great Britain, and the USA), the emphasis was to decentralise, demilitarise and democratise the police. Some restrictions were lifted as Cold War tensions grew leading to certain police functions becoming centralised rather than under local direction. The *Landespolizei* became the police force for the federal states in the West, whilst the Federal Border Guard (*Bundesgrenschutz - BGS*) became the Eastern border-based paramilitary force of the German Federal Republic.

At the same time East Germany created a unified national force in the form of the *Volkspolizei*, however this was disbanded and restructured as *Landespolizei* upon the reunification of Germany in 1991.



## Organisation

All state police forces are subordinate to their State Minister of the Interior. The internal structures of these police forces differ somewhat (which makes generalisation subject to local variation), but usually immediately subordinate to the interior ministries are the Regional Police Headquarters (called *Präsidium* in most states, *Landespolizeidirektion* in others). These RHQs direct operations over a wide area or in a big city and have administrative and supervisory functions. Under the RHQs, there are several District Police Headquarters (*Direktionen*) serving communities of 200,000 to 600,000 citizens. Subordinate to each *Direktion*, there are several local stations (*Inspektion* or *Wache*) or precincts (*Revier*) that are manned on a 24-hour basis, conducting day-to-day policing, and serve as points of contact for local citizens. Below this level, the *Polizeiposten* or *Tageswache* is a small community police office, operating at reduced office hours.



Many cities in Germany also maintain a Municipal Police Service (*Stadtpolizei*, *Städtischer Ordnungsdienst*, *Kommunaler Ordnungsdienst* or *Ordnungsamt*) that perform minor police-type functions. Duties and powers vary from city to city, and relate to the enforcement of city regulations, however in general they monitor city traffic and prevent actions that would lower the citizens' sense of security e.g. excessive public consumption of alcohol, public use of drugs, vandalism etc. The police authority (*Polizeibehörde*) of a municipality can transfer more tasks and responsibilities to its local police force, only if approved from the regional government (*Regierungspräsidium*).

## Operations

For the execution of police duties, the State Police are divided up into the following areas, which are more or less the same in all States.

- The **Patrol Service** (*Schutzpolizei* – “*Schupo*”) is concerned with prevention and public order, petty crime, traffic offences, community policing and education. These are the officers with whom the ordinary citizen will most likely come into contact.
- The **Detective Branch** (*Kriminalpolizei* – “*Kripo*”) is responsible for criminal investigations. For instance, if a family home is broken into, the *Schutzpolizei* will respond, secure the house, notify the owner, then hand the case over to the *Kriminalpolizei* for investigation.



- The **Criminal Investigations Department (CID)** (*Landeskriminalamt - LKA*) is the State-level investigation bureau, directly subordinate to the Ministry of the Interior, which conducts higher-level serious crime investigations, and coordinates investigations involving more than one RHQ (*Präsidium*). It is chiefly concerned with serious offences including organised and corporate crime, sexual offences, robbery, extortion, fraud, homicide, trafficking, and counterfeiting. The LKA also has special operations teams assigned to State Security, counter-terrorism, tactical response, forensics, surveillance, and crisis negotiation.
- **Formed Police Units** (*Bereitschaftspolizei - BePo*), and support units, provide support to the patrol service and the CID. Specially trained for crowd control, they are deployed as whole units (sections, platoons, companies) for mass demonstrations, major sporting events, international fairs, State visits, and natural disasters. Support groups include drivers, technical support, and divers. BePo is often used as a proving ground for trainees and graduates.
- **Auxiliary State Police** (*Wachpolizei - WaPol*) are an organizational support branch within several State Police. Their role and enforcement powers vary from State-to-State, but as “non-sworn” constables duties are generally restricted to site security, preventive measures, low-level intervention, and the provision of support to Police Officers. Their status is “Employee” (*Angestellte*) rather than “Civil Servant” (*Beamte*). Their training is limited to 3-6 months.
- **Traffic Police** (*Verkehrspolizei*) - Police branch specifically dedicated to traffic issue.
- The **Motorway Patrol / Highway Patrol** (*Autobahnpolizei*) facilitate and regulate the flow of traffic, help motorists whose vehicles have broken down on the *Autobahn* and rapidly respond to accidents. Vehicle safety checks and crime prevention are also part of their duties. Investigation sections probe crime at *rest stops*, and the movement of criminals, smugglers and traffickers on the *Autobahn* - often together with German Customs (*Zollamt*).
- The **Waterway Police** (*Wasserschutzpolizei - WSP*) control all traffic on waterways and monitor in particular the transport of dangerous goods.
- **Police Air Support** are flying units that can be deployed for tasks such as traffic surveillance and serve as a source of support for local police offices, with a view to both crime prevention and crime suppression.
- **Police Special Forces** (*Spezialeinheiten*)
  - **Tactical Response Team** (TRT) (*Spezialeinsatzkommandos - SEK*)
  - **Mobile Operations Unit** (*Mobile Einsatzkommandos - MEK*)
  - **Crisis Negotiation Team** (CNT) (*Verhandlungsgruppe – VG*)



Often attached to Regional HQs, Special Forces are organised and managed differently in the individual States.

In general they are used to deal with cases of very serious and violent crime (SEK), special surveillance, arrest and search measures (MEK), or hostage and suicide negotiation (VG).