

Early Bird 28 Jan – 3 Feb 2012

SECURITY AND SAFETY

Number of people freezing to death in Eastern Europe increases – So far 43 people have died in the Ukraine (2 Feb, 2012) The extreme cold weather in Europe is causing the death of more and more people. The situation in the Ukraine is dramatic. With temperatures of minus 30 degrees Celsius (-19 degrees Fahrenheit) 13 more people died thus the number increasing to at least 43 within a week. In other countries people were also freezing to death, among those many homeless people. In many countries, including Germany, the freeze up is supposed to get worse.

The ice does not carry yet – Bavarian Red Cross warns (BRK) – of mortal danger (2 Feb, 2012) In spite of the freezing weather frozen ponds and lakes pose mortal danger. On many lakes and ponds the ice is still too thin to carry people warns the Chairman of the German Life Guard Service, Bernhard Scheckenbach. To carry a person who weighs 75 kg the ice has to be at least 10 cm thick. If there are several people on the ice the ice has to be at least 15 cm thick. The BRK warns not to take unnecessary risks.

440 new guards for Bavarian's court buildings – after deadly shots at a district attorney in Dachau, controls in court buildings will be increased (1 Feb 2012) As a reaction to the violent death of a district attorney in Dachau beginning of January, the Bavarian State Government wants to increase security by stricter controls in the 215 court buildings in Bavaria.

Tragedy on A 3 – A busted tire sent a 40 ton truck into a spin on A 3 (28 Jan, 2012) Two police officers were killed in an accident on A3 West of Würzburg. A 23- and a 25 year-old police officer from the riot police team Würzburg were killed on their way home from a mission when at approximately 7:30 p.m. the left front tire of a truck burst. Between Wertheim and Helmstadt the truck, loaded with 27 tons of cement crushed down the median barrier. Then the tank fell on the driver's side of a police van transporting three male and one female police officer, according to police spokesman Michael Zimmer. The police car was crashed like a tin can. The 23 year old driver and a two years older police officer, who was sitting behind him were killed. The truck slid another 150 meters and landed in a ditch. A driver from Duisburg could prevent a head on collision by steering his car into the median barrier. He and his front seat passenger escaped with no more than a scare.

Hundreds of colleagues attended the memorial service for the two young police officers who were killed in a tragic traffic accident on A 3. (2 Feb, 2012)

Four deadly work related accidents according to trade control (28 Jan, 2012) The work places in Lower Franconia were relatively safe in the past year. The trade control office of the government of Lower Franconia reported four work related accident with lethal consequences. In 2010, eight deadly accidents occurred. Three of the four deadly accidents occurred on construction sites. The fourth accident occurred in a plant for high pressure equipment – where a metal barrel exploded because of improper cutting (open) methods.

LEADERS AND POLITICS

The history of the military garrison city Schweinfurt (3 Feb, 2012)

1934: Decision was made to build a garrison in Schweinfurt; city and hospital foundation surrendered 14,000 square meters to the “Deutsche Reich”, without compensation.

1935: Another 14,000 square meters were surrendered for the “Schiesshaus” (restaurant) and the Brönnhof (shooting ranges)

1936: The first Panzerbrigade (armor brigade) of the “Wehrmacht” moves into the new caserne in Niederwerrner Strasse

Starting in 1950: After World War II the Americans use the property – the U.S. Army first only takes over the shooting ranges “Brönnhof” .

1951: The U.S. Army takes over the Panzerkaserne and calls it “Ledward Barracks”

1953: The housing area “Askren Manor” is built on mostly agricultural ground that was confiscated.

1954: The tank road is built.

Starting 1987: Kessler field and the housing area Yorktown Village are built.

2012: Decision has been made that the U.S. garrison Schweinfurt will be closed.

The path into deadly despair – Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and suicide thoughts: In spite of warning signs the Iranian asylum seeker was not allowed to move to his sister. (2 Feb, 2012)

Four days after the suicide of a 29-year old asylum seeker from Iran in a communal accommodation there is complete bewilderment how the 29-year old man could have gotten into such a devastated situation. Even though, as researched by the newspaper staff, there were warning signs months ago. The young man wanted to move to his sister who lives in Cologne; however, was denied to move. His companions agree that he inwardly disintegrated because of the barracks like character of the accommodation and his uncertain asylum perspective. Homes for asylum seekers are criticized – More refugees in 2011. After the death of Mohammad Rahsepar the criticism of the forced placement into communal accommodations has intensified. The “circle of friends” for foreign refugees in Lower Franconia states: “Refugees are not welcome, their integration is not wanted. Therefore they are forced to live in former barracks and are robbed of any personal responsibility.” They demand free access to barracks area without access controls, free to attend German language classes and psychological care. Also the system of giving them “food packages” should be changed. The law that asylum seekers cannot move out of the accommodations needs to be ratified and also single people should be allowed to leave the communal accommodations after a year. On Wednesday the government of Lower Franconia has announced the number of asylum seekers in Lower Franconia. There were 18% more people seeking asylum in 2011 than the year before. The capacities of the 14 communal accommodations are filled and the government is desperately looking for buildings for 30 – 40 people.

After suicide body of Iranian shall be taken back to Iran (1 Feb 2012) After the suicide of an Iranian in a communal accommodation for asylum seekers in Würzburg last Sunday night. His sister who is residing in Cologne came to look at the room her brother was living in - a former U.S. Army barracks. She wants that the body be sent to Iran. She said: “My brother was so devastated – he wanted to go back to Iran to see our parents and his son once more.” For that he would have accepted the punishment of the Iranian regime. Therefore it would be in his interest that his body is returned to Iran – his parents and his son are waiting for him.

Bad News from the district but not in regards to the Americans – Lord Mayor Remele expects to find out details concerning the drawdown on Thursday (1 Feb, 2012) The city council meeting on Tuesday was record breaking short, stated Lord Mayor Remele. The first action was the swearing in of Otto Wirth's successor in the city council, Reimund Maier. Maier is public affairs officer for the dean's office Schweinfurt-City, Secretary of St. Michael Parish and an independent publisher.

At the end of the meeting Remele made a remark concerning the plans of the U.S. Army. The city has been bombarded with questions from the media since the report in the "Süddeutsche" newspaper published last Saturday - where the drawdown was described as being final. However; he can still not make a concrete statement – the same applies to the responsible officials in the Bavarian State Chancellery and in the Ministry of Defense, who he had consulted. Lord Mayor Remele referred to the meeting on Thursday, where he and other Lord Mayors will meet with the LTG Mark Hertling, Commanding General, U.S. Army, Europe. Nevertheless Remele stated that he thinks that a drawdown of the 172nd and 170th Infantry Brigades from Germany is most likely and therefore Schweinfurt could also be affected.

A place to make contacts and a fashion show – Ball of the Schweinfurt Harmony Association (31 Jan, 2012) From Bavarian Secretary of State Gerhard Eck to the Commander of the U.S. Army Garrison Schweinfurt, LTC Michael D. Runey, from Lord Mayor Sebastian Petzold to Decan Oliver Bruckmann, from Mayor Kathi Petersen to the former member of the Bavarian Parliament Hans Gerhard Stockinger – as far as the eye could see there faces of prominent citizens at the "Ball of the Harmony" (Association). The 10th ball on the "Maininsel" with almost 300 guests was breaking records and on the contrary to other events under the category "to see and to be seen" it had something special: Everyone stayed far past midnight. The joy of dancing and the social exchange bring members and guests together once a year to the ball of the Schweinfurt Harmony Association, the largest ball event in Schweinfurt.

Prisoners of detention facility in Würzburg went on hunger strike – 72 prisoners demand better living conditions (28 Jan, 2012) Last Monday 72 prisoners of the detention facility in Würzburg went on a hunger strike; 65 of them are still on strike as confirmed by Susanne Quadbeck, deputy spokesperson of the Justice Department in Munich. According the Justice Department the prisoners are striking for better living conditions. "They want pillows instead of wedge-shaped bolsters, quilts instead of wool blankets; and things like that. There is a list of 15 demands which the prisoners presented to the prison management two weeks ago. The prison management stated they will not be extorted by the prisoners. However; the prison director Robert Hutter will talk to the spokesperson of the "shared responsibility of prisoners" body next week. Furthermore he stated that it is possible that he will grant some of the demands made; however; he will not make any changes that have consequences on security.

Life goes on without U.S. Soldiers – Drawdown involves risks and chances for Schweinfurt (28 Jan, 2012) It has been barely six weeks since Lord Mayor Remele praised the civilian employees of the USAG Schweinfurt by calling them "our ambassadors" in the U.S. Army. Remele also expressed his hope that when deciding which garrisons will remain open that the excellent German-American relations here in Schweinfurt may play a role. The decision of the U.S. government to drawdown heavy combat brigade teams from Europe, has budgetary as well

as strategic reasons. No matter how good the relations between the citizens and “their” Americans may have been for many years, they will not play a role when it comes to decisions concerning the U.S. Army garrisons. What would this mean for the city and county of Schweinfurt? The loss of buying power would be kept in bounce since a considerable part of the Soldiers have been deployed during the past years, and during that time were not spending any money here. What they and their families need the bought in the American stores. It is a different story in the housing market. Of the approximately 12,000 Americans (including family members) the majority lives in communities in the county of Schweinfurt, where house owners built houses just for the Americans. The house owners would lose rent income for which they would not be compensated. Furthermore, a large part of the U.S. installations such as Conn Barracks with the airfield, and probably some contaminated sites, are located in the area of the county. So far there is no concept what the area could be used for. The city of Schweinfurt could use the area of Ledward Barracks to create building lots for young families, which they would like to bring to Schweinfurt and have been trying for years, in order to improve the social and demographic structure of Schweinfurt.

ECONOMY

The unemployment rates for January 2012 (1 Feb, 2012) The unemployment rate in January is the lowest in 20 years. Rates are as follows: Germany 7.3%, Bavaria 4.2%, Lower Franconia 3.7%, Schweinfurt 4%, Würzburg 3.5%.

Germany is the most globalized country (28 Jan, 2012) The German economy is becoming more and more global. Among the seven largest industrial nations Germany is the nation with the most global networks. Worldwide Germany is number 14. According to consulting company Ernst & Young, Germany is mostly globalized in the branches “technology exchange” as well as “candor for free movement of goods and services”. In the first study in 1995 Germany was on place 17.

WEATHER:

Cold wave reaches Europe – the peak is expected on Friday in Germany (31 Jan, 2012) With icy winds coming from Siberia the temperatures in Germany will go down to below freezing. From East to West the cold wave will eventually cover all of Germany. The German Weather Service is expecting freezing temperatures until the weekend. The wind blowing from the East makes the freezing temperatures feel even colder. The cold wave has reached the Czech Republic where lowest temperatures of minus 20.9 degree Celsius (-5.8 F) were measured on Monday morning.