

HEADQUARTERS  
BERLIN COMMAND  
Office of the Provost Marshal  
APO 742, US FORCES

CHECKPOINT CHARLIE

1. On 13 Aug 61, the East German regime began taking action to seal off the Sector/Sector and Sector/Zonal borders of Berlin-East Germany and East Berlin-West Berlin. The reasons for this action were outlined in a notice from the East German Secretary of the Interior.

2. Prior to this action there were a total of 87 crossing points on the Sector/Sector border. Allied traffic was able to cross through any of these points without difficulty while West Berliners, West Germans, and other non-occupation personnel could also cross but were required to show VOPO their identification documents.

3. On 13 Aug 61, under the guise of protective action, all except 13 crossing points were completely sealed and VOPO personnel began to check those crossing at these points carefully. Traffic originating in East Germany or East Berlin was virtually halted. Traffic through these 13 crossing points continued without any significant difficulty until 24 Aug 61, when the East Germans closed seven of the existing crossing points and opened one new one, reducing the available crossing points to seven. Members of the Western Occupation and Diplomatic Corps and all foreigners were required to use the crossing point at Friedrich Strasse (American Sector).

4. Inhabitants of West Germany were restricted to crossing points at Bornholmer Strasse (French Sector) and Heinrich Heine Strasse (American Sector). West Berliners were limited to crossing points at Chaussee Strasse (French Sector), Invaliden Strasse (British Sector), Oberbaum Bruecke (American Sector), and Sonnen Allee (American Sector). In addition, the crossing point at Glienicke Bruecke (American Sector) was opened for use by West Berliners employed at Potsdam and for Diplomatic vehicles and those of the US Mission at Potsdam.

5. In order to obtain a record of the Allied traffic passing into East Berlin, Checkpoint CHARLIE was established at the Friedrich Strasse crossing point on 26 Aug 61. The checkpoint was initially manned by one NCO, one clerk and one telephone operator, with an MP alert squad standing by in case of emergency. With the exception of the clerk who was from the 287th MP Co, the personnel were from

the 6th US Infantry. Shortly after the checkpoint was established, control was turned over to the Provost Marshal, Berlin Command who is still responsible for the operation. A detailed officer is on duty daily from the Battle Groups and five military policemen are detailed for each shift. The checkpoint is manned 24 hours daily in three eight hour shifts. A log is maintained of all occupation-type traffic passing through the checkpoint. Tourists and non-occupation military persons on leave are serviced if they so desire. The officer in command of each shift is responsible for interviewing enlisted personnel and may deny passage to any he has reason to believe may cause an incident. Officers are not included in the category of personnel who may be refused entry to East Berlin by the Checkpoint Control Officer. All military traffic, pedestrian and vehicular is controlled and logged in and out of East Berlin.

6. It is interesting to note that when the checkpoint was initially placed in operation, the Military Police Duty Officer was instructed to escort the Soviet vehicle used to transport Soviet representatives of the Air Safety Center to its destination, the old Kommandatura building on Potsdamer Strasse, Berlin-Schoeneberg. The practice was initiated to protect the Soviet members from violence by irate West Berliners. The practice was discontinued on 30 Aug 61, at the direction of the G-3, Berlin Command after the Soviets protested. The same sort of protection was initiated to protect the Soviet bus transporting their personnel to the Soviet Memorial in the Tiergarten. The Soviet bus usually entered and departed West Berlin through the Friedrich Strasse Checkpoint, however, soon after the practice was initiated the bus began to use other checkpoints to enter and leave West Berlin to avoid the patrols assigned to cover the bus. The practice of attempting to furnish an escort to this bus was discontinued on 7 Sep 61. However, the British Military Police still follow the vehicle from the Soviet Memorial until it departs West Berlin. No attempt is or has been made to control routes taken to or from the Memorial by the Soviet bus.

7. In processing American military and USAREUR licensed vehicles, the Military Policeman stops the vehicle, examines the identity documents of all riders and issues the refusal of entry instructions to the driver or senior occupant and records the number of persons, their ID Card numbers, and the license number of the vehicle. The traveler then indicates his expected time of return to West Berlin which is recorded by the Military Policeman.

8. To give you an idea of the volume of Allied traffic crossing Friedrich Strasse, the following daily average figures are provided: