

## Germany to Criminalize Smuggler Supply Chains in UK Migration Crackdown

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Germany is set to introduce legislation that will criminalize the facilitation of people-smuggling operations from its territory to the United Kingdom (UK), closing a long-standing legal loophole that previously allowed smugglers to use German storage facilities as staging areas for small boats used in Channel crossings.

The proposed law, championed by German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, will make it an offense to assist in the storage or supply of vessels intended for unauthorized migration across the English Channel. Expected to be enacted by the end of 2025, the law follows an agreement reached with UK officials last December. It aims to align German law with the UK's tougher stance on illegal migration.

Chancellor Merz announced the initiative during his first official visit to London since taking office. During the trip, he met with UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer and signed a bilateral friendship treaty, covering cooperation on defense, security, migration, and cultural exchange. Among the treaty's provisions is an agreement for visa-free school exchange programs and coordinated efforts to combat human trafficking.

As part of the migration package, Germany committed to tightening laws to better support UK efforts to dismantle smuggling networks. Merz stated that the strengthened legislation would specifically target the logistical and criminal supply chains used to facilitate illegal crossings, giving German prosecutors expanded authority to investigate storage facilities and disrupt operations linked to smuggling gangs.

British officials welcomed the proposed changes, describing them as a significant breakthrough in cross-border collaboration. The new law is seen as addressing a critical gap that previously allowed smugglers to operate with relative impunity within German borders.

In parallel, the treaty signed during Merz's visit also reinforces European defense integration. It includes plans for joint development of military equipment, including tanks, fighter jets, and long-range precision missiles. These initiatives reflect a broader effort by Europe's "E3"

powers, Germany, the United Kingdom, and France, to coordinate security and strategic interests in the post-Brexit era.

The proposed legislation is expected to gain wide political support in Berlin, fueled by cross-party concern over increasing migration pressures and Germany's unintended role as a logistical hub for trafficking operations. If passed, German authorities will be equipped with stronger legal tools to dismantle smuggler infrastructure before boats reach key departure points such as Calais.

In summary, Germany's move marks a significant tightening of migration controls and demonstrates deepening cooperation between European partners on security and border management.