

The Kurdish-Turkish Peace Process

Chronology and Implementation Analysis

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Background: The Kurdish Question in Turkey



The armed conflict between Turkey and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the efforts to resolve it are manifestations of one of the region's most intractable political problems. When the borders of the modern Middle East were drawn after World War I, Kurds were given no state of their own and no basic rights or opportunities for democratic participation in the states among which they were divided. This created the 'Kurdish question' – the issue of what sort of political future Kurds imagined for themselves and how they might achieve it under these conditions.

Nearly 25 million of the 60 million Kurds live within the borders of Turkey. Yet Turkey chose, from its founding days, to repress and deny Kurdish identity. The 1924 constitution established that all citizens of Turkey were Turks. Four major Kurdish rebellions took place in the first 20 years of the Republic. All were put down violently, with state forces committing serious abuses against Kurdish communities – including extrajudicial killings, mass displacement, the use of chemical weapons, and ethnic cleansing.

When the PKK took up arms against state targets 1984, it was illegal to use the Kurdish language or establish a Kurdish political party. The group's early efforts to organise peacefully had been met with arbitrary arrests, show trials, and torture.

Kurdish Rights in 1984



Identity

The state promoted a unitary Turkish national identity and did not recognise Kurds as a distinct national minority with collective rights. Kurdish identity was officially denied or marginalised.



Language

Law No. 2932 (October 1983) prohibited the use of languages other than those recognised by the state for certain forms of expression and dissemination. This particularly restricted Kurdish-language expression and publication.

	Publishing and media	Kurdish-language publishing was prohibited under Law No. 2932. Kurdish broadcasting was also heavily restricted.
	Political organisation	The 1982 Constitution and Political Parties Law No. 2820 restricted political activity based on ethnic identity and the promotion of non-Turkish languages and cultures. Advocacy of Kurdish cultural or political rights could result in prosecution or party closure.
	Names and place names	Policies of Turkification led to the replacement of many Kurdish village and town names with Turkish names. Kurdish personal names also faced administrative restrictions.
	Cultural expression	Kurdish cultural expression was constrained by restrictions on language, publications and political activity. The ability to organise publicly around Kurdish identity was limited.
	Citizenship and voting	Kurds formally held Turkish citizenship and, subject to the general rules applicable to citizens, could vote, stand for office and participate in public life. However, political mobilisation specifically around Kurdish identity faced serious legal constraints.

In a context of militarised assaults on Kurdish society, many Kurds saw no alternative to armed self-defence.

Once again, the state responded with disproportionate violence against civilian Kurds. As many as 4,000 villages were destroyed and over three million people were displaced. Thousands of enforced disappearances and more than 17,000 extrajudicial killings were recorded in the early 1990s. Until today, the ‘Saturday Mothers’, the mothers of those killed or disappeared, continue to gather in Istanbul every weekend to demand answers.

The Kurdish movement has always seen violence as a last resort. Since 1993, it has made several attempts to end the armed conflict and make it possible for the underlying political issues around Kurdish rights and democracy to be resolved on non-violent, political grounds.

The Turkey-PKK Peace Process: A History

Since Öcalan declared the first unilateral ceasefire in 1993, the PKK and Turkey have engaged in on-and-off negotiations. These have ranged from indirect contacts to public, formal peace processes. Practical steps, like ceasefires and political and ideological shifts, have typically been taken by the Kurdish side, with little reciprocal action on the part of the state. So far, no round of talks has led to a comprehensive agreement.

11 Ceasefires Declared by the PKK	3 Rounds of Indirect Talks	3 Direct Processes	0 Comprehensive Agreements
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Negotiations	Ceasefires	Legal and Institutional Reforms
1992 - 1998: Indirect State-Öcalan Talks The first indirect contacts between Turkey and Öcalan took place through Iraqi Kurdish mediation in 1992 and 1993. In 1996, the state sent written messages to Öcalan. In 1997 and 1998, state officials communicated with Öcalan through PKK officials in Turkish prisons and in Europe.	March - May 1993: The First Ceasefire As a result of these indirect contacts, Öcalan declared the PKK's first unilateral ceasefire and accepted the idea of a negotiated settlement within Turkey's existing borders.. The suspicious death of Turkish prime minister Turgut Ozal ended government negotiating efforts. The ceasefire ended in May 1993. December 1995 - May 1996: The Second Ceasefire Öcalan declared a unilateral ceasefire in an attempt to end Turkish operations against PKK forces in Iraqi Kurdistan. Hostilities resumed after an assassination attempt on Öcalan in Damascus. September 1998: The Third Ceasefire	
1999 - 2008: Direct State-Öcalan Talks Turkey captured Öcalan in 1999. State officials periodically met with him in prison from that time on. These included representatives of the military and the intelligence services.	August 1999 - June 2004: The Fourth Ceasefire From prison, Öcalan ordered a ceasefire and the withdrawal of guerrilla forces from Turkey to bolster chances of a political solution. The movement underwent an internal transformation. Conflict resumed on June 1, 2004 after prolonged state inaction on the Kurdish issue. August 2005 - October 2005: The Fifth Ceasefire October 2006 - The Sixth Ceasefire	

2008 - 2011: The ‘Oslo Process’

Official meetings between the state and Öcalan took place, alongside dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish officials in Europe. Öcalan proposed a ‘road map’ that state officials agreed to in theory, but that was not implemented in practice.

December 2008 - June 2010: The Seventh Ceasefire**August - September 2010: The Eighth Ceasefire****2012 - 2015: The ‘Imrali Process’**

The most substantial peace process was announced in late 2012. State officials and Kurdish delegations regularly met with Öcalan in prison. Kurdish delegations also engaged with senior PKK decision-makers in Qandil. Negotiations ended over Erdogan’s failure to secure Kurdish electoral support and concerns about Kurdish autonomy in Syria.

March 2013 - July 2015: The Ninth Ceasefire

This ceasefire was declared by Öcalan in a statement read out at Newroz, the Kurdish New Year, in 2013. Guerrillas began to withdraw from Turkey and return to Iraqi Kurdistan. The ceasefire lasted over two years and ended when Turkey bombed populated villages in the Qandil Mountains as the political process collapsed.

2015-2024: Turkey Abandons Dialogue

No known negotiations took place for ten years, despite efforts from international powers to revive talks in order to ease Turkish-Kurdish tensions in Syria and PKK signalling readiness to return to negotiations in 2019. Öcalan was denied access to the outside world, including family visits and legal visits, for years at a time during this period.

February - June 2023: The 10th Ceasefire

In response to the devastating February 2023 earthquakes in Turkey, the PKK declared a unilateral ceasefire. The declaration allegedly followed U.S. efforts to re-start negotiations, including requests for a ceasefire passed through the SDF to the PKK. The PKK extended the ceasefire to create a peaceful environment for the May 2023 elections. Conflict resumed in June 2023.

2024 - Present: The ‘Peace and Democratic Society’ Process**March 2025 - Present: The 11th Ceasefire**

In response to Öcalan’s call, the PKK declared a ceasefire on March 1, 2025. Disarmament efforts began formally on July 11, 2025.

August 2026: The ‘Framework Law’

The ‘Peace and Democratic Society Process’ in Depth

Phase Zero: Secret Talks and Staking Positions

2024

April: After 10 years of a failed military campaign by Turkey to eliminate Kurdish forces, Turkish officials began secret talks with jailed PKK founder and leader Abdullah Öcalan, in part influenced by the regional expansion of the Israel-Hamas war and following the defeat of the AKP in local elections.

October 10: A report in Al Monitor publicizes the talks.

October 22: Addressing the parliament, MHP leader Devlet Bahçeli calls for the “right to hope” for Abdullah Öcalan, for him to address the DEM Party in Parliament, and the PKK to end its armed struggle.

October 23: Öcalan received his first family visit in several years. In a meeting readout, he clarified that he had “the theoretical and practical power to pull this process from the ground of conflict and violence to the ground of law and politics.”

October 24: The KCK issued a statement affirming that it would follow Öcalan’s lead in any potential peace process.

December 28: A DEM Party delegation met with Öcalan in prison, his first engagement with Kurdish civilian political figures since 2015.

Phase One: Öcalan Speaks, the PKK Responds

2025

February 27: Öcalan issues the ‘Call for Peace and Democratic Society,’ calling on the PKK to end its armed struggle and dissolve and on the Turkish state to create a suitable “legal and political framework” for disarmament.

March 1: The PKK acknowledged Öcalan’s call and declared a unilateral ceasefire.

May 5-7: The PKK held its 12th Congress. It declared an end to the armed struggle and to ‘all activities under the PKK name.’

July 11: A symbolic number of guerilla fighters, 15 women and 15 men, burn their weapons in a ceremony in South Kurdistan (Iraq) as a commitment to peace.

Phase Two: Building the ‘Legal and Political Framework’

August: The Turkish Parliament forms the ‘National Solidarity, Democracy and Brotherhood Commission,’ tasked with making legal reforms relevant to the negotiation process.

October: The PKK declares that all guerrilla forces have been withdrawn from Turkish territory.

2025

November 16: The PKK announces further withdrawals from border regions.

November 24: A Commission delegation met with Öcalan, his first engagement with any Turkish parliamentary body.

February: The Commission released a final report based on engagement with Turkish officials, Turkish and Kurdish civil society groups, and Abdullah Öcalan.

August 10: The ‘Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration,’ or ‘Framework Law,’ a postponement of sentences for PKK guerrillas and political activists accused of PKK affiliation or support, passed the parliament by 468 to 88 votes.

2026

August 24: The first meeting of the Monitoring and Evaluation Board created by the law took place. The Board decided to establish four subcommittees: Judicial and Legal Affairs, Monitoring and Detection, Social Cohesion and Integration, and Disarmament and Strategic Coordination.

September 18: Cemil Bayık, Co-Chair of the KCK Executive Council, stated that the organisation would neither lay down its arms nor return to Türkiye unless Abdullah Öcalan was physically freed. He further argued that a sustainable peace required additional legal reforms and guarantees enabling former PKK members to participate in democratic political life.

Tracking Implementation

The ‘Peace and Democratic Society Process,’ like other Turkey-PKK peace talks before it, has not resulted in any formal bilateral agreements. Instead, unilateral declarations have formed the basis of negotiations. Furthermore, public statements are often intentionally vague and general in order to allow sensitive negotiations to progress with minimal backlash.

As a result, there are few measurable stipulations for observers to track. This implementation tracker is based on commitments made in the primary texts of the process so far: Abdullah Öcalan’s ‘Call for Peace and Democratic Society,’ the final declaration of the PKK’s 12th Congress, and the ‘Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration.’

Call for Peace and Democratic Society

Type: Unilateral Declaration | **Issued By:** Abdullah Öcalan | **Stipulations Addressed To:** PKK;
Government of Turkey

On February 27th, 2025, Abdullah Öcalan issued the 'Call for Peace and Democratic Society. In this unilateral declaration, he called on the PKK to dissolve and end its armed struggle. He also appended a note claiming that this would be impossible without a legal and political framework.

Stipulation: Formal Dissolution of the PKK				
Declaration Text: "As in the case with any modern community and party whose existence has not been abolished by force, convene your congress to integrate with the state and society voluntarily and make a decision; all groups must lay down their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself. "				
Implementing Party: PKK				
No Implementation	Implementation in progress, trending negative	Implementation in progress, no change	Implementation in progress, trending positive	Implemented

Key Developments: The PKK held its 12th Congress in May 2025. At this Congress, the group formally ended all activities under the PKK name and renounced armed struggle.

Stipulation: End of Armed Struggle				
Declaration Text: "As in the case with any modern community and party whose existence has not been abolished by force, convene your congress to integrate with the state and society voluntarily and make a decision; all groups must lay down their arms and the PKK must dissolve itself."				
Implementing Party: PKK				
No Implementation	Implementation in progress, trending negative	Implementation in progress, no change	Implementation in progress, trending positive	Implemented

Key Developments: The PKK declared a ceasefire in March 2025. In July 2025, a symbolic group of 15 women and 15 men guerrillas burned their weapons to mark the beginning of the disarmament process. The People's Defence Units (HPG) announced their full withdrawal from Turkish territory in October 2025, and additional withdrawals from strategic border regions in Iraqi Kurdistan were announced in November. In June 2026, Turkish sources reported that the state had confirmed PKK withdrawals from regions in the Gara and Metina regions of Iraqi Kurdistan, a total of 72 positions.

Stipulation: Legal and Political Framework				
Declaration Text: "Undoubtedly, the laying down of arms and the dissolution of the PKK in practice require the recognition of democratic politics and a legal framework. "				
Implementing Party: Government of Turkey				
No Implementation	Implementation in progress, trending negative	Implementation in progress, no change	Implementation in progress, trending positive	Implemented

Key Developments: The unilateral declaration did not explain what this framework should be. May 2025, Devlet Bahçeli called for the creation of a parliamentary commission to work on legislative reforms related to the process. Öcalan endorsed the idea in a July 2025 video message, his first such communication since his capture. Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan confirmed that such a commission would be created in a July 2025 statement following the PKK’s disarmament ceremony. The commission began its work in August 2025, met with Öcalan in November 2025, and released a final report in February 2026. In August 2026, the parliament passed the Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration, which provided a legal framework for disarmament. Relevant frameworks for democratic political participation of former militants and equal rights for Kurdish citizens have not been put forward and are still a key demand of the Kurdish side.

PKK 12th Congress Declaration

Type: Unilateral Declaration | **Issued by:** PKK | **Stipulations Addressed To:** PKK; Government of Turkey

The PKK’s 12th Congress Declaration confirmed the implementation of Öcalan’s calls for disarmament and dissolution. The group noted that Turkey would have to create conditions for Öcalan’s leadership of the process.

Stipulation: Role for Öcalan Declaration Text: “Implementing these decisions requires that Leader Apo lead and guide the process, that his right to democratic politics be recognized, and that solid, comprehensive legal guarantees be established.” Implementing Party: Government of Turkey				
No Implementation	Implementation in progress, trending negative	Implementation in progress, no change	Implementation in progress, trending positive	Implemented

While Öcalan has been allowed to meet with his relatives and legal team and with political delegations, an improvement on previous conditions of total isolation, he has not yet been given a defined role in the peace process. Nor has the government implemented relevant domestic and international legislation that could improve his prison conditions and lead to his eventual freedom. The ‘Framework Law’ amnesty provisions exclude Öcalan, against the explicit demands of the Kurdish movement for a comprehensive legislative framework that includes the PKK’s leadership and all PKK members.

Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration

Type: Legislation | **Issued by:** Grand National Assembly of Turkey | **Stipulations Addressed To:** Government of Turkey; individuals accused or convicted of certain PKK-related offenses

In August 2026, the Turkish Grand National Assembly passed the ‘Law on Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration (Law. No. 7595),’ or ‘Framework Law.’ The legislation establishes a postponement or suspension of sentences for PKK guerrillas and civilians jailed on PKK-related

charges once the Turkish state has verified the PKK's full disarmament and dissolution. An estimated 2,000 to 2,500 guerrilla fighters and 4,000 political prisoners are set to benefit from the law.

Official State Determination Of Disarmament Legislation Text: Law No. 7595, Article 1(1): "The purpose of this Law is to determine the procedures for suspending ongoing investigations and prosecutions and the enforcement of conviction judgments, together with other procedures to be carried out, following two steps. First, security institutions must determine that the PKK/KCK terrorist organization and every kind of formation connected with it has ended its de facto existence and surrendered all weapons and ammunition under its control. Second, a National Security Council Decision confirming that determination must be published in the Official Gazette." Implementing Party: Government of Turkey - National Security Council				
No Implementation	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	<i>Implemented</i>

Key Developments: The National Security Council (MGK) held its first meeting since the publication of the Framework Law on September 30. In a readout, the Council expressed commitment to the process.

Publication of National Security Council Decision on Disarmament Legislation Text: Law No. 7595, Article 1(1): "The purpose of this Law is to determine the procedures for suspending ongoing investigations and prosecutions and the enforcement of conviction judgments, together with other procedures to be carried out, following two steps. First, security institutions must determine that the PKK/KCK terrorist organization and every kind of formation connected with it has ended its de facto existence and surrendered all weapons and ammunition under its control. Second, a National Security Council Decision confirming that determination must be published in the Official Gazette. " Implementing Party: Government of Turkey - National Security Council				
No Implementation	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	<i>Implemented</i>

Key Developments: The MGK did not verify disarmament at its September 30 meeting, and thus the Framework Law did not go into effect. This postpones the potential implementation of the law until its next meeting, scheduled for late November. The rhetoric of the MGK statement continues to use the terms "terror-free Turkey" and "terror-free region", rather than the name originally chosen for the process by the parliamentary commission, "National Solidarity, Democracy and Brotherhood", or in the spirit of the title of the new law, "Strengthening National Solidarity and Social Integration."

Suspension of Investigations and Prosecutions Legislation Text: Law No. 7595, Articles 1(2) and 3 Implementing Party: Government of Turkey

No Implementation	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	<i>Implemented</i>
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Key Developments: DEM Party sources have that they expected approximately 4,000 political prisoners to benefit from the law.

Removal of Deprivation of Rights Resulting from Investigations, Prosecutions and Convictions Legislation Text: Law. No. 7595, Article 7(4) Implementing Party: Government of Turkey				
No Implementation	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	<i>Implemented</i>

Formation of Monitoring and Evaluation Council Legislation Text: Law No. 7595, Article 7(1): “The implementation of the activities under this Law is monitored and evaluated, following the Law’s publication in the Official Gazette, by a Council chaired by the Vice President. Its members are the Ministers of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior and National Defense, the Secretary General of the Presidency, the Head of the National Intelligence Organization, and the Secretary General of the National Security Council.” Implementing Party: Government of Turkey				
<i>No Implementation</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	Implemented

Key Developments: On August 24, the Monitoring and Evaluation Council created by Article 7 of the law met for the first time. It created four sub-committees: Judicial and Legal Affairs, Monitoring and Detection, Social Cohesion and Integration, and Disarmament and Strategic Coordination. On the 17th of September, Presidential Advisor Mehmet Uçum stated Öcalan be given a role in the Disarmament and Strategic Coordination Subcommittee, tasked with overseeing the disarmament and returns process.¹ He has not yet been given such a role, and remains imprisoned under conditions of isolation and the deprivation of his rights, where contact with the outside world is allowed only at the discretion of the state.

Establishment of Monitoring Commission in Parliament Legislation Text: Law No. 7595, Article 7(5): “The Speaker’s Office of the TBMM establishes a Monitoring Commission to monitor the activities under this Law. The Monitoring Commission monitors these activities and may make recommendations.” Implementing Party: Government of Turkey - Grand National Assembly of Turkey				
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¹ Demirören News Agency. (2026, September 17). *Cumhurbaşkanı Başdanışmanı Uçum: Öcalan'a komisyonda bir görev verilecektir* [Presidential Chief Adviser Uçum: Öcalan will be given a role in the commission]. DHA. <https://www.dha.com.tr/yerel-haberler/ankara/cumhurbaskani-basdanismani-ucum-ocalana-komis-2946453>

No Implementation	<i>Implementation in progress, trending negative</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, no change</i>	<i>Implementation in progress, trending positive</i>	<i>Implemented</i>
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Key Developments: On October 1, MHP Deputy Chairman Feti Yildiz said that he expected the parliamentary monitoring commission created under Article 7(5) to be established within ten days.²

Implementation Risk Factors
Risk Factor: The law will only be implemented once the MGK verifies that disarmament and dissolution are complete. This creates a situation where the implementation of the law passed by the parliament is at the discretion of the National Security Council (MGK). Sequencing issues may further arise as the law fails to provide a status or free working conditions for Abdullah Öcalan, the chief negotiator for the Kurdish side. The Kurdish movement has repeatedly stated that disarmament cannot happen without a change in Öcalan's conditions of imprisonment to allow him to play his role, and eventually his freedom. Risk Factor: The law excludes PKK founder and leader Abdullah Öcalan and senior members of the organization accused of crimes before 2005. The uncertain status of these critical individuals could create challenges to full implementation, and in essence the law only provides for partial and conditional returns. Further, those who return to Turkey must be able to participate within political processes. To prevent this risks creating barriers to genuine integration and the shift within the Kurdish movement to a strategy based in democratic politics. Risk Factor: Turkey has up until now refused the involvement of a third actor or international mediation. In the absence of international support or observation, domestic dynamics alone may prove insufficient to advance the necessary steps towards democratisation and reconciliation. The Turkish side continues to employ inflammatory rhetoric that does little to build public support for reconciliation or prepare Turkish society for the broader societal changes needed to address longstanding discrimination and entrenched biases. Over the past two years, the process has repeatedly been described as 'frozen', while legislative changes approved through the process have been only partially implemented. Risk Factor: While the framework law may facilitate the return of some former PKK fighters and the release of certain political prisoners, its scope excludes many imprisoned politicians who have been incarcerated amid the government's practice of detaining elected opposition officials and replacing them with state-appointed trustees. It also fails to address cases involving politicians whose release has been called for in multiple rulings by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). The lack of clarity regarding how the process will affect these cases, combined with the framework law's narrow scope and its failure to address broader reforms to anti-terrorism legislation, significantly limits its potential. By leaving these issues unresolved, the process risks further undermining public trust and deepening Turkey's democratic crisis.

² Mete, A. (2026, October 1). MHP'li Yıldız: İzleme Komisyonu'nun 10 gün içinde kurulacağını ümit ediyorum [MHP's Yıldız hopes the Monitoring Commission will be established within 10 days]. Demirören News Agency (DHA). <https://www.dha.com.tr/yerel-haberler/ankara/mhpli-yildiz-izleme-komisyonunun-10-gun-icin-2954695>

Key Actors

Abdullah Öcalan, founder and leader of the PKK; seen as lead negotiator by the Kurdish movement

Cemil Bayik, co-chair of the KCK

Bese Hozat, co-chair of the KCK

Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK),

Kurdistan Communities Union (KCK),

People's Defense Units (HPG) and Free Women's Units (YJA-STAR), the armed forces of the PKK

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, president of Turkey

Devlet Bahceli, leader of the Nationalist Action Party (MHP)

Pervin Buldan, DEM Party Van MP and Deputy Speaker of the Turkish Parliament., Imrali Delegation member

Sirri Sureyya Onder, Former DEM Party MP and Imrali Delegation member

Mithat Sancar — DEM Party MP for Şanlıurfa, Imrali Delegation member

Faik Özgür Erol — Lawyer with Asrın Law Office, Imrali Delegation member

Tuncer Bakirhan, co-chair of the DEM Party

Tulay Hatimogullari, co-chair of the DEM Party

Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), the Turkish parliament

National Solidarity, Democracy and Brotherhood Commission, the parliamentary commission tasked with recommending legal reforms related to the process.

Monitoring and Evaluation Council, government body created by the Framework Law to supervise disarmament; comprised of the Vice President, the Ministers of Justice, Foreign Affairs, Interior and National Defense, the Secretary General of the Presidency, the Head of the National Intelligence Organization, and the Secretary General of the National Security Council.

National Security Council (MGK), government body for coordination of security and defense issues; comprised of the President, as the chair, vice presidents, ministers of Justice, National Defense, the Interior and Foreign Affairs, the Chief of General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces, commanders of the Turkish Land, Naval and Air Forces.