

Diplomats and Warriors: Interagency Cooperation in *Operation Torch*

by Russell McKelvey

The North African theater played an active role in the period prior to the U.S. entry into the war; its political trends were important to our policy-makers. The State Department had direct responsibility in the preparatory stage leading up to the invasion. It was directly concerned in the political decisions inevitably to be made during the military operations, and it will have to deal with the postwar political effects of this campaign.

– Robert D. Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*

Will you please tell me what in the hell the State Department has to do in an active theater of war?" asked an American major general during World War II.¹ Diplomat Robert Murphy's answer to that question may be as instructive today as it was eighty years ago, during another period when the United States (U.S.) government was innovating to integrate diplomatic and military power in competition and war. As the first major allied operation in World War II, numerous histories detail the alliance formation, political and military leaders, and the operational details of Torch. However, only a few studies highlight the crucial role of diplomats before, during, and after the operation.² This article analyzes American diplomat Robert D. Murphy's experiences prior to and during Operation Torch to better understand the interdependencies between diplomats and warriors in competition and conflict. Operation Torch underscores the need for close coordination between diplomacy and military operations across the competition continuum to consolidate gains at the strategic level. Murphy and his team shaped conditions in the North African

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theater by gathering intelligence, developing coalitions, negotiating military support, and supporting strategic and operational planning. During crisis and conflict, Murphy directly negotiated conflict termination, facilitated the transition from combat to cooperation, and mitigated political risks associated with unpopular but militarily necessary decisions. Analysis also illuminates how the military supported diplomatic operations, conducted military diplomacy, and achieved tactical conditions enabling diplomacy.

Well before America entered the war in December, 1941, Murphy worked as a Personal Representative of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and later as General Dwight D. Eisenhower's political advisor. During this period, America operated across the competition continuum cooperating with Britain; shifting between competition and conflict with French factions; and at various times in competition and conflict with Germany. Wes Gallagher, an Associated Press correspondent embedded with Eisenhower's command, captured this complexity, writing: "Not since the Middle Ages were military and political moves so closely tied together."³

Murphy Before America's Entry into World War II

At the outbreak of WWII, Murphy spent eight months in Paris shaping American policy during the Phony War. The rapid collapse of France to Nazi Germany in 1940 shocked the world, forcing French leaders to choose between continuing to fight or entering an armistice with Germany.⁴ On June 22, 1940, France opted for the latter, establishing Marshal Pétain's Vichy government.⁵ This created years of "painful choices of evils" in American policy decisions such as maintaining relations with Vichy while preventing Axis expansion into French North Africa.⁶

Murphy became Chargé d'Affaires to Vichy

after Ambassador Bullitt returned to America.⁷ His mission was to convince Vichy leaders that the war was not over, that America backed Britain despite its neutrality, and to prevent further French capitulation to Nazi demands. Roosevelt and Churchill hoped to deny the Axis access to the French Navy and North African colonies.⁸ British fears of the Axis gaining control led them to attack the French Fleet, causing over 1,000 casualties and prompting Pétain to sever diplomatic ties with Britain.⁹ This left America as Vichy's sole Allied contact with Murphy as the critical intermediary.

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In September 1940, Roosevelt saw strategic potential in North Africa after Murphy endorsed a report highlighting over 350,000 French forces there.¹⁰ A month later, Murphy met with Roosevelt and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The three discussed Vichy policy and developed the idea of bringing French North Africa, the French fleet, and a French Colonial Army back into the war on the Allies' side.¹¹

A month later, in October 1940, Murphy met with Roosevelt and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The three discussed Vichy policy and developed the idea of bringing French North Africa, the French fleet, and a French Colonial Army into the war on the Allies' side.¹² Roosevelt was interested in the economy and the attitudes of the French factions in North Africa.¹³ He also hoped to find a French leader, other than Charles De Gaulle, capable of rallying French forces behind the Allies.¹⁴ Roosevelt was aware that Vichy had appointed French five-star

General Maxime Weygand as Delegate General of French Africa, and he wanted to assess the extent of his authority, plans, and intentions.¹⁵ The President identified Murphy as his personal representative, increasing his authorities, and ordered him to circumvent State Department protocol and report directly to himself. Murphy's subsequent political reconnaissance mission revealed opportunities for cooperation with French leaders like General Weygand.

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Political Reconnaissance

Murphy arrived in Algiers mid-December 1940 and traveled to meet General Weygand in Dakar.¹⁶ The two discussed the precarious independent status of French Africa and its dependence on U.S. economic support. Weygand told Murphy that French forces in Africa were prepared to resist an Axis occupation expected in the spring of 1941.¹⁷ The French sought war materials such as equipment, petroleum, and arms, which Murphy could not offer. He could, however, offer them the purchase of American “non-strategic” materials using frozen French funds. He could also advocate for those goods to pass through the British blockade.¹⁸ The economic aid accord resulting from their negotiations became known as the Murphy-Weygand agreement. Although the aid was never fully delivered despite Murphy's relentless efforts, elements of the accord facilitated the expansion of consular services in French Africa, which became essential for gathering intelligence and shaping the political and military environments before Torch.¹⁹ The agreement also provided the basis for later economic and military aid agreements that brought the French back into the war.

William Leahy, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff,

wrote in his memoir that Murphy “succeeded in making a thorough survey of the political and economic factors involved and laid the groundwork for success in these areas.”²⁰ Murphy learned where the French hid the gold he helped evacuate from Paris during the early days of the war in 1940 and received assurances that neither the gold nor the French Fleet would fall into German hands. He also learned the French were hiding artillery and other war equipment in mountain hideouts to resist Italian or German occupiers.²¹ Murphy could not have known then, but the French intended to resist all invasions of French Africa, not just those of the Axis.²² Visiting the port at Dakar three months after the British-backed De Gaulle forces attacked, Murphy gained a deeper appreciation for the complex French politics at play. He was surprised to find less anti-British sentiment than expected with resentment directed at De Gaulle. These observations indicated that the French viewed North Africa as their most significant remaining source of power and that all parties should avoid hasty operations that may provoke further Nazi control.²³

In Casablanca, the German Consul General summoned Murphy, whom he knew from a past assignment. The consul was building a German team to replace the Italian-led Armistice Commission in North Africa. Their missions were to determine what resources the Nazis could extract from Morocco and to direct German intelligence efforts. The consul's aggravation that Hitler continued to ignore Africa seemed to confirm Roosevelt's assumption that the Führer was focused elsewhere.²⁴ Neither man knew that Hitler had already ordered an attack on Russia in the summer of 1941. Murphy then surveyed Morocco, Algiers, and French West Africa and was impressed that French administrators maintained “surprisingly firm control of their African colonies, despite defeat and chaos in France.”²⁵

On January 14, 1941 Murphy sent the report

on his survey to the White House.²⁶ According to Vaughn, “Murphy’s work was to be the basis of President Roosevelt’s North African policy and the first step in the planning of Operation Torch.”²⁷ Additionally, the Murphy-Weygand economic agreement became a major win for the Allies once Vichy and London signed it in February and March 1941. Murphy knew that British opposition to the agreement stemmed from Churchill’s mistrust of France and suspicion that French African administrators were pro-Nazi. The underlying concern was that U.S. goods intended for Africa would end up in Nazi hands.²⁸ Leveraging this knowledge, he negotiated with Weygand and Vichy to permit American officers to supervise the delivery of U.S. goods.²⁹ This laid the groundwork for selecting a group of vice consuls to inspect cargo in North Africa. Weygand further agreed to allow the consuls to “transmit coded messages, use diplomatic pouches, and employ diplomatic couriers.”³⁰ Murphy’s *12 Apostles*, as the consuls came to be known, became the “first organized U.S. overseas intelligence operation in World War II.”³¹

Despite promising opportunities for intelligence gathering in French Africa, implementation of Murphy’s plans stalled for five months due to interagency friction and bureaucratic challenges. Murphy lamented the lack of military and economic aid, citing recurring interference from U.S. agencies like the Treasury, which blocked the use of French funds for critical supplies.³² Recruiting vice-consuls proved equally difficult, as few State Department personnel had relevant expertise. Concerns about their safety led to complex arrangements involving commissioning civilians into reserve military service and paying them from the president’s emergency funding.³³ Additional delays arose when State Department personnel denied special passports, preventing full deployment until June 1941.³⁴ Despite persistent rumors of German intervention, a lack

of internal coordination and bureaucratic delays hindered progress.

Murphy returned to Algiers in February 1941, hoping to announce the approval of the Murphy-Weygand Agreement, but rumors of large numbers of Germans arriving in North Africa to take over administration of the colonies further delayed plans. These rumors, later revealed as German deception supporting Hitler’s invasion of Russia, further delayed aid packages that were intended to incentivize French and Arab cooperation for an Allied landing.³⁵ Hitler’s attack on Russia marked a political turning point, with General Weygand declaring, “Germany has lost the war!”³⁶ Murphy relayed this shift to Washington, prompting Roosevelt to tentatively offer military support to French Africa. Roosevelt’s instructions emphasized secrecy to avoid public leaks while signaling America’s move toward becoming active in the war.³⁷ Weygand welcomed the news, recognizing the growing U.S. commitment to the war effort.

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Intelligence Gathering and Covert Operations

Once the vice consuls arrived, Murphy deployed them to the political centers of French Africa: Algiers and Oran in Algeria, Casablanca in Morocco, and Tunis in Tunisia.³⁸ Vichy intelligence and the Armistice Commission quickly detected their presence, and Murphy forwarded an intercepted German intelligence report to Washington. It read “We can only congratulate ourselves on the selection of this group of enemy agents who will give us

no trouble. [Since] they are totally lacking in method, organization and discipline, the danger presented by their arrival in North Africa may be considered as nil.”³⁹

Despite this inauspicious beginning, Murphy’s twelve vice-consuls significantly contributed to Operation Torch’s success. Their primary mission was to collect information relevant to Allied political and military objectives, with planners in Washington and London using it to inform planning assumptions.⁴⁰ In their secondary mission, they served as clandestine operatives establishing contacts with anti-Nazi resistance groups and planning subversion activities to enable Torch.

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Murphy worked tirelessly to sustain the Murphy-Weygand Agreement despite significant challenges. In May 1941, General Weygand was recalled to France, likely due to his association with Murphy, as German intelligence had been intercepting their communications.⁴¹ Murphy continued his efforts, but progress stalled until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 shifted Allied priorities. Afterwards, strategic planning for an invasion of North Africa accelerated, and the Allies reinforced Murphy’s vice consuls with agents from the Coordinator of Information (COI), later the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).⁴² This support allowed Murphy to focus on diplomacy while intelligence officers handled espionage and resistance-building.

Murphy particularly respected and agent named Colonel William A. Eddy, who coordinated covert operations under Murphy’s oversight.⁴³ Despite his accolades for the OSS team in Africa, Murphy averted a near catastrophe thanks to close coordination between him and Eddy. The OSS was planning to pay a

pro-Allied Arab leader to oust a pro-German one. Once Eddy brought this to his attention, Murphy quickly intervened to avoid policy fratricide with his repeated reassurances that America had no intentions to disrupt French-Arab relations.⁴⁴

During this phase of competition, Murphy and his team contributed to diplomatic-military coordination in several ways. Initially Murphy helped Roosevelt identify and investigate opportunities in the theater. He negotiated military and economic aid to mitigate French resistance during the landings and set conditions to bring the French back into the Alliance and the war. He and the twelve Apostles conducted robust political and physical reconnaissance and assisted OSS operatives in shaping resistance and subversion activities. On at least one occasion, he also ensured that covert OSS plans did not violate U.S. policy principles and helped maintain a coherent strategic narrative.⁴⁵

Contributions to Strategic and Operational Planning

The Allied decision to open a second front in North Africa put to rest lingering debates about a cross-channel invasion. Planning for the campaign was to start at once with the final decision on execution delayed until mid-September.⁴⁶ Murphy was called to America to contribute to planning efforts of the War and State Departments. Arriving in Washington on August 30, 1942, he detected a more positive attitude about French Africa.⁴⁷

Murphy shared that many French officers still envisioned fighting in Europe in Spring 1943 and not any earlier in French Africa. According to Murphy, Marshall did not hide his “lack of enthusiasm” for the operation and repeatedly expressed his concern about sharing plans with any Frenchman or relying on French collaborators.⁴⁸ Marshall’s opinion never changed, and the resulting last-minute coordination caused “serious misunderstandings” with the French.⁴⁹

Murphy captured his views on the significant political factors in a document named *Elements for Consideration in the French North African Situation*. Murphy assessed that French factions would support an Allied intervention if: equipment and supply needs were met, Allied forces were sizable, restoration of the French Empire was guaranteed, Allies accepted French command of forces in North Africa, and the British and De Gaulle were not involved.⁵⁰

Murphy then flew to Hyde Park where he and the President discussed the problem of justifying the deployment of uninvited American troops into the empire of a neutral government. Eisenhower described this as “invading a neutral country to gain a friend.”⁵¹ They assumed that without Pétain’s support, the operation would meet at least some French resistance. Mitigating this risk required ensuring that Allied forces were sizeable enough to overpower the French forces in Africa and diplomatically convincing the French that their loyalty should be to France rather than Pétain.⁵² On the same day of this meeting, Roosevelt cabled Churchill with a final commitment of U.S. forces.

After receiving the President’s guidance, Murphy met with Torch’s other major planners. Admiral Leahy recalled the group discussed relevant French political personalities and which ones were likely to resist or support U.S. efforts.⁵³ Afterwards, General Marshall decided that Murphy should meet the planners in London.⁵⁴

To maintain secrecy, Murphy traveled to London disguised as Lt. Col. MacGowan and narrowly avoided exposure when a vice consul recognized him in Scotland.⁵⁵ At Eisenhower’s headquarters, Murphy spent the day in an “almost continuous conversation with the General and his planners.”⁵⁶ He also hand-delivered planning documents and a presidential directive, which he had helped draft.⁵⁷

Allied Forces Headquarters created a special staff section to provide political information

to Eisenhower and to draft plans relating to political aspects of the operation. This section also coordinated secret and special operations with propaganda operations to integrate military and political objectives.⁵⁸ Despite having experienced diplomatic staff, the section had inaccurate views of French North Africa, and Murphy worked to refine planning assumptions on logistics, weather, and conditions in cities like Algiers and Casablanca. Here, Murphy began to reflect on how little he knew about military matters, consoling himself in the knowledge that the “expedition to North Africa would require political as well as military strategy.”⁵⁹ This assertion was supported by Eisenhower, who later wrote that the operation was too risky on purely military grounds and that success depended on many political matters such as accurately predicting French and Spanish reactions to the landings. These matters dominated the remaining discussion in London.⁶⁰

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“Eisenhower listened with a horrified intentness,” as Murphy described the complications that could arise from various political factors.⁶¹ Murphy raised concerns about French loyalty to Pétain, French concern about insufficient U.S. forces, and the challenge of finding a credible French leader to support. Planners debated between Admiral Darlan, with legitimate Vichy authority, and General Giraud, leader of the resistance. Planners reached no decision, which complicated later Allied efforts.⁶² Discussions also addressed the timeline for notifying collaborators and administrative continuity in North Africa.⁶³

Murphy’s deep knowledge of the many

ethnic and administrative divisions in French Africa provided the contextual basis for making necessary planning assumptions. Structurally, the French colonies differed from French protectorates under independent Arab rule. Culturally, there were tribes of Arabs, Berbers, and native Africans loosely united by Islam. Additionally, almost 200,000 Europeans of various political, socio-economic, and national backgrounds moved to Africa after the outbreak of war. This cohort contained communists, Spanish Loyalists, European Jews, and Poles. Murphy later reflected:

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The more I learned, the more I realized what a potentially explosive area this was, and the more I was impressed by the skill with which the French administrators had retained control over these diverse and often hostile communities, even during years of French defeat and occupation. What would these mixed-up people do if French Africa should become a battleground? The answer, it seemed to me, was that only French administrators already familiar with the complexities of these variegated local situations could possibly maintain the order in French Africa which an Allied Expeditionary Force would require. This was a point which I particularly stressed when the time came for me to discuss the African expedition with its planners in Washington and London.⁶⁴

All agreed there should be no change to the civil administration of North Africa if possible.⁶⁵ Murphy's grasp of military matters and judgement gained General Eisenhower's confidence which may have influenced his next assignment.⁶⁶

Preparing for Operations and Becoming Eisenhower's Political Advisor

During another brief stop in Washington, Murphy clarified his authorities and received his final directive on September 22, 1942.⁶⁷ The directive separated Murphy from the State Department, appointing him as Roosevelt's personal representative and requiring close coordination with General Eisenhower. After the landings, Murphy would become the Head of Civil Affairs and Eisenhower's Advisor for Civil Affairs. Eisenhower believed that subversive activities, propaganda, and political warfare needed tight integration with military operations to avoid complications.⁶⁸ Murphy claimed he became "the first civilian in American history to serve on the inner staff of a military commander's headquarters in a war theater, with access to all military information."⁶⁹

This directive resolved debates between the generals, who wanted Murphy in a formal chain of command, and Murphy's desire to retain civilian status. The compromise allowed him to maintain two-way communication with Roosevelt while routing all messages through Eisenhower to ensure unity of command. It also outlined what Murphy could share with French contacts in the weeks leading up to D-Day. Before returning to North Africa, Murphy worked with OCI-OSS's Bill Donovan to secure radio transmitters for better communication with AFHQ which he smuggled into Africa in sealed diplomatic pouches.

Three weeks before the invasion, Murphy mobilized his network of French contacts spanning diverse political factions: royalists seeking a restored monarchy, De Gaullists advocating for a reformed republic, and supporters of the authoritarian Vichy regime. Beyond these groups were factions pushing for independent French Africa or improved local economic conditions.⁷⁰ Some groups were fifth-column entities willing to cooperate with

the Allies to undermine Vichy efforts. In Algiers, Murphy worked closely with the Group of Five resistance network and maintained contact with De Gaullist factions. Despite mutual distrust, both groups cooperated to counter Vichy loyalists and other French officers who were committed to resisting Allied forces.⁷¹

Searching for a French Leader

The key French leaders in North Africa were Admiral Darlan, representing the legitimate Vichy government, and the Group of Five, aligned with General Giraud. Both groups contacted Murphy upon his return to Algiers in October 1942, sensing American intervention was imminent. Admiral Darlan, Commander in Chief of all French forces, was viewed as a political opportunist, anti-British, and an enemy of De Gaulle.⁷² Allied planners initially dismissed him due to his unpredictability, but Darlan opened communications with Murphy through Delegate General Raymond Fenard. Fenard emphasized Darlan's willingness to collaborate and urged the Americans to view French African forces as a separate fighting unit capable of resisting Germany with adequate support.⁷³ Darlan's concerns included ensuring the quantity of Allied forces planned were sufficient to win, and that he could maintain the appearance of cooperation with Germany.⁷⁴

General Giraud was widely respected by both French and Arabs for his leadership and experience in Africa. Having escaped German captivity twice, he held no obligations to the Nazis.⁷⁵ Giraud communicated through Jacques Lemaigre-Dubriel of the Group of Five, setting conditions for his participation: an American-only operation, near-simultaneous landings in France, and French command over troops on French soil.⁷⁶ Giraud designated General Charles Emmanuel Mast as his representative in Algiers, who became the first French general officer to decisively commit to the Allies.

Murphy reported these meetings to

Roosevelt and Eisenhower the next day. He received a same-day response from Admiral Leahy on behalf of the President authorizing Murphy to make "any arrangement with Darlan which, in (Murphy's) judgement, might assist the military operations."⁷⁷ Further negotiations with Mast on behalf of Giraud continued.

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General Clark's Secret Mission

Murphy was key in organizing a secret mission for General Mark Clark and other planners to meet with French officers in North Africa in mid-October 1942, just weeks before the invasion.⁷⁸ On October 18, Clark received an urgent cable from Murphy, relayed through General Marshall, stating that General Mast had requested a senior officer delegation to consult on Allied invasion plans. This meeting offered hope that the French Army might cooperate and that a leader could emerge to unify French support.⁷⁹

Clark was accompanied by Brigadier General Lyman L. Lemnitzer (future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Colonel Julius C. Holmes (future Assistant Secretary of State).⁸⁰ The plan involved flying separately to Gibraltar and infiltrating via submarine through U-boat-patrolled waters to Cherchell, where Murphy would guide them ashore. The planners worried that if Mast knew about invasion planning, Hitler likely did, too. Reports from Vichy intelligence suggested Hitler had ordered French leaders to forcefully resist any invasion increased these concerns. Despite these concerns, Clark's party arrived undisturbed for the risky linkup on the beach. "Welcome to North Africa," Murphy called out in a hushed voice, and Clark answered

with an uncharacteristically stressed “I’m damned glad we made it.”⁸¹

The meeting began carefully as both parties determined the levels of sincerity and trust. Clark and Murphy communicated Allied strategy in very general terms, fully aware that the amphibious forces were already at sea. Their orders were to collect intelligence without revealing that the invasion was imminent or providing essential details.⁸² Clark and Murphy avoided revealing specifics on location and size, claiming a force size of 500,000 troops instead of the planned 112,000. Mast was impressed by the size of the invasion force and approved his officers to coordinate with the Americans. French officers provided the Americans with, “locations and strengths of French army and naval units; sites where gasoline, ammunition, and supplies were stored; details about which airports would be heavily defended and others on which paratroopers could land with less opposition.”⁸³

As the period shifted from competition to open conflict, Murphy aided the military by generating local support for Allied plans...

Clark broached the discussion of French leadership by posing the idea of shared leadership between Darlan and Giraud. Mast dismissed this at once arguing that Darlan was an opportunist and not needed for success of the operation.⁸⁴ When local police interrupted the collaboration Murphy and one of his vice consuls claimed they were American diplomats having a party. After the police left, Clark and team escaped to the beach and eventually returned to the *Seraph*. On October 24, a week after leaving Gibraltar, the Allied planners were picked up by a flying boat to ensure new information was included in the final plans.

Murphy’s role was pivotal in arranging

the meeting and facilitating collaboration with French officers.⁸⁵ Eisenhower credited it as an essential introduction to French leaders, while Clark noted the accuracy of the intelligence provided.⁸⁶ However, one key assumption proved false: General Giraud lacked the political influence to command French forces effectively. Despite this, Murphy continued coordination with Giraud and Mast in the weeks leading up to D-Day, ensuring continued diplomatic engagement to set conditions for military success. Giraud insisted he would not participate without a written guarantee that Eisenhower would place him in command within forty-eight hours of an invasion and that Allies would share more information about plans for intervention in France. Murphy replied with deliberately vague language that Eisenhower intended to establish French military command “as soon as possible,” but there was a need to keep American command during the early stages of the operation.⁸⁷ Murphy finally received permission to tell General Mast the planned day of the landings on his birthday, October 28.⁸⁸ For the next week, Murphy tried to act normal and continued to meet with those looking to gain American support for their interests.

As the period shifted from competition to open conflict, Murphy aided the military by generating local support for Allied plans, facilitating collaborative planning sessions, discussing command relationships, and setting conditions for the invasion. Diplomatically, he maintained a senior U.S. channel of communications for the Vichy government to approach Americans about cooperation. The military aided Murphy’s efforts by providing communications and logistics support and planning for a sizeable enough force to garner French cooperation.

Landings and Conflict Termination

Three hundred British and American ships moved toward their objectives on November

7, 1942. Deception plans convinced French, Spanish, and Axis forces that Malta was the destination. Murphy recalled “the time had come to test our two years of hopeful soundings and schemings...the French had it in their power to be an immense help or hindrance to our expedition.”⁸⁹ Around midnight a BBC broadcast rang out, “Allo Robert. Franklin Arrive,” marking the start of the landings.⁹⁰

Murphy had arranged for resistance forces to secure key infrastructure in Algiers while Clark and Mast negotiated surrender terms.⁹¹ The plan called for Giraud’s arrival on November 7 and British submarines to deliver military equipment to resistance forces. Giraud arrived three days later and “the political situation had drastically changed.”⁹² Giraud’s delayed arrival disrupted plans, leaving Murphy to negotiate directly with General Juin, who insisted on Darlan’s approval for cooperation. Murphy was surprised to learn that Darlan was in Algiers visiting his sick son.

Darlan joined them at Juin’s residence and met Murphy’s news with “complete and disagreeable surprise,” insisting that he needed Petain’s approval from Vichy.⁹³ During the negotiation, Murphy was arrested by French authorities and later released when Darlan directed him to contact American Major General Charles W. Ryder, whose East Task Force landed in Algiers. Despite initial resistance, Darlan eventually directed a local cease-fire in Algiers while allowing fighting to continue in Morocco and Oran. AFHQ credited Murphy’s groundwork with Mast and Juin for this outcome.⁹⁴

The unexpected arrival of Admiral Darlan presented a significant political challenge and military necessity required quick decisions.⁹⁵ Murphy made independent decisions until Clark arrived on November 9.⁹⁶ Murphy aptly described that Clark’s “immediate responsibility was the negotiation of an agreement with French authorities that was more political than military.”⁹⁷ Together, they negotiated with Darlan arguing that “the longer Darlan delayed

committing to the allies, the more costly the ensuing battle would become.”⁹⁸ Only after Clark threatened to arrest him, Darlan reluctantly issued orders for a general cease-fire across French Africa.⁹⁹ The order directed French forces to cease fighting against American and Allied forces, directed commanders in Algiers and Morocco to liaison with local American commanders, and reasserted Darlan’s authority

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in French Africa.¹⁰⁰ It further reiterated that the Americans would not change military or administrative arrangements.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, Giraud agreed to serve under Darlan if appointed Commander in Chief of French forces. The resulting “Darlan Deal,” reached through military diplomacy, ensured French cooperation, re-equipped French troops, and preserved administrative control in North Africa.

Neither Murphy nor Clark anticipated the deal would produce such significant backlash in domestic public opinion that it would require the involvement of Eisenhower, Stimson, and the President. They were focused on the pragmatic facts that fighting continued in Morocco and that Darlan was the only one with enough influence to enact a cease-fire.¹⁰² After Eisenhower traveled to Algiers to finalize the agreement, he took Murphy to Gibraltar to explain the agreement’s necessity to the Allied governments. Eisenhower’s letter to Washington, presumably based on Murphy’s draft, explained the decision, and promised to watch Admiral Darlan’s activities closely. Six weeks later, Darlan was assassinated after confiding potential successors to Murphy.

The Darlan Deal helped extend the cease-fire throughout French Africa and Tunisia and

underpinned the military aid program that brought the French back into the war. Darlan helped the Allies secure the civil and military support of Morocco, Dakar, and Tunisia, which were critical to logistically supporting fighting in North Africa and future Mediterranean campaigns. The only objective he failed to deliver was the French fleet.¹⁰³ As Operation Torch culminated and the Allies shifted their focus to Tunisia, Eisenhower awarded Murphy the Distinguished Service Medal and requested he serve as political advisor in Italy. Murphy continued working for military leaders through the end of the war and served in key roles during the occupation of Germany and the administration of the Marshall Plan.

Murphy mitigated risks by ensuring covert operations aligned with U.S. policy...

Analysis

In a lecture to the National War College after the war, Murphy remarked “Our African adventure proved the truism that political considerations can never be wholly separated from the military.”¹⁰⁴ His contributions before and during Operation Torch highlight the interplay between political and military considerations.

Before the Allies entered the war, Murphy shaped national policy that guided strategy and operational planning. As a diplomat in Vichy, he was part of an opportunity scanning system for Roosevelt. His reports identified an opportunity for the U.S. to cooperate with the French administration in North Africa, aid the British war effort, and possibly bring the French back into the war. As Roosevelt’s personal representative, he conducted political reconnaissance, to identify shared interests across local, U.S. and Allied aims. The Murphy-Weygand Agreement laid groundwork for future

cooperation by securing limited economic aid and intelligence access while avoiding German retaliation.

Additionally, Murphy built a robust political network for emerging cooperation that supported U.S. and British interests. Murphy’s team collected information that became useful to Torch’s operational planners. Murphy also deployed vice-consuls to build networks with anti-Nazi factions, shaping conditions for competition and conflict. Murphy mitigated risks by ensuring covert operations aligned with U.S. policy, such as halting an OSS plan that could have disrupted French-Arab relations.

Once America entered the war, it was simultaneously in conflict with the Axis Powers, in an ambiguous cooperation-conflict relationship with official French authorities, and in cooperation with the British and sub-national French factions inside and outside North Africa. This required close coordination of military and diplomatic activities. Once President Roosevelt ordered the U.S. military to plan Operation Torch, Murphy contributed to strategic planning in Washington and London, refining assumptions, assessing risks, and planning for conflict termination.¹⁰⁵ He worked to maintain multiple military end states—cooperation, coercion, or conflict with French forces—and prepared for transitions from U.S. military to French civilian leadership. He prepared for both military governance and civil affairs approaches, claiming that “Washington’s neglect of this phase of waging war created unnecessary difficulties.”¹⁰⁶ Murphy’s recommendation to rely on French administration of the colonies was ultimately successful.

Murphy facilitated early collaboration with French leaders, helping draft declarations of Allied intent, and conducted in-person diplomacy during the operation. Murphy contributed to meaningful discussions about French leadership, possible reactions of various actors, and their potential for resistance or support. He helped

the Allies draft pre-written declarations about national and military intentions for various political audiences. While some resistance coordination faltered, he maintained channels for Vichy leaders to explore cooperation, which became critical in negotiating cease-fires, managing leadership transitions, and consolidating gains at the strategic level.

Once the fighting ended, Murphy worked closely with Clark and Eisenhower to negotiate the agreements that brought French forces back into the war on the side of the Allies, accomplishing one of the primary strategic objectives of Torch. He also negotiated cooperation with the French to administer French North Africa and support the logistics required to continue the North Africa Campaign and future Mediterranean campaigns.¹⁰⁷ Murphy was a key contributor in securing the cooperation of Vichy French military leaders during the operation.”¹⁰⁸

Conclusion: Implications for the Interagency in Integrated Campaigning

Political-military alignment through close coordination between diplomatic and military instruments of power is increasingly critical as the U.S. adapts to modern competition and conflict. Interest-based strategies, strategic consolidation of gains, and effective implementation of military activities all require enhanced coordination between military leaders and diplomats. Several key implications from this case study are worth considering for improving interagency coordination during competition and early conflict phases.

Interagency coordination at the national level faces challenges, as evidenced by frictions during the Murphy-Weygand agreement, including conflicts with the Board of Economic Warfare and the Treasury Department. Coordination between national and theater-level policies is essential to avoid such issues. Today’s Political Advisors (POLADs) must ensure two-way

communication across military and diplomatic channels, as Murphy did, to remain effective across the competition continuum.

Conflict often creates tensions between long-term policy goals and immediate military necessities.

Murphy later reflected on the degree to which political factors dictate military strategy and may be permitted to compromise military effectiveness.¹⁰⁹ The opposite is also true in cases where military necessity may dictate actions that compromise political effectiveness. Conflict often creates tensions between long-term policy goals and immediate military necessities. Murphy’s role in Operation Torch demonstrated how dialogue between military and diplomatic actors can balance these priorities. His presence ensured effective communication with foreign leaders while helping Clark and Eisenhower weigh the consequences of political decisions. In today’s environment—marked by complex alliances, influence operations, and direct political outcomes from military actions—political expertise in military commands is essential.

The Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD) Exchange Program, modeled after Murphy’s work with Eisenhower, is a valuable tool but requires improvement.¹¹⁰ After WWII, Murphy argued for POLADS at the division level.¹¹¹ Commanders during the height of the Global War on Terrorism made similar recommendations. However, resources limit the State Department’s ability to provide sufficient POLADs to lower echelons despite growing demand from multinational operations and exercises like Olympic Defender, Defender Europe, or Pacific Pathways, which are critical to campaigning in strategic competition. The Interagency needs to explore options to meet this

requirement. DoD should advocate for increased State Department funding, fill all Military Advisor (MILAD) positions at the State Department, and explore training options for former MILADs or Civil Affairs personnel to address gaps.

Closing knowledge gaps between military officers and foreign service personnel is vital. “Diplomat warriors” must understand how military operations achieve diplomatic objectives, while “warrior diplomats” must grasp how diplomacy supports military efforts.¹¹² The Department of Defense must educate and train politically astute officers capable of navigating these intersections without engaging in partisan politics.¹¹³

Lessons from this 1941-1942 case study echo findings from a Global War on Terror report: interagency coordination suffers from inconsistent participation, policy gaps, resource constraints, and cultural differences.¹¹⁴ Addressing these challenges is crucial to avoid repeating past mistakes in future conflicts. **IAJ**

Notes

1 Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, eds., *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 13; Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, INC., 1964), 156.

2 Arthur Layton Funk, *The Politics of TORCH: The Allied Landing and the Algiers Putsch 1942* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1974); William F. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966); Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, United States Army in World War II, CMH Pub 11-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/civaff/index.htm>; Hal Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles: The Spies Who Paved the Way for the Invasion of North Africa* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2006); Meredith Hindley, *Destination Casablanca: Exile, Espionage, and the Battle for North Africa in World War II* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2017). Funk and Langer wrote specifically about the political aspects of Operation Torch. Funk wrote from the U.S. perspective and Langer was commissioned by the State Department and added French and German perspectives to his accounts. Coles and Weinberg edited an official documentary history of Army civil affairs with one chapter devoted to Torch. Vaughn and Hindley's accounts provide insight into Murphy's activities and politics but are generally focused on covert operations than conventional diplomatic-military relations.

3 Wes Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin: The Full Story of the American Coup in North Africa* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1943), 8.

4 “The Deputy Ambassador in France (Biddle) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General, Volume I - Office of the Historian, June 15, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v01/d219>.

5 Lorraine Boissoneault, “Was Vichy France a Puppet Government or a Willing Nazi Collaborator?,” Smithsonian Magazine, November 9, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/vichy-government-france-world-war-ii-willingly-collaborated-nazis-180967160/>.

6 Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*. Langer provides the best description of the reasoning behind this policy.

7 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 8. The Chargé d’Affaires is a diplomatic official who temporarily takes the place of an ambassador.

8 Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 542; William D. Leahy, *I Was There*, The American Military Experience (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1979), 443-46.

- 9 Robert Murphy, "Document 463 The Chargé in France (Murphy) to the Secretary of State," Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, July 29, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d463>; Robert Murphy, "D464 The Chargé in France (Murphy) to the Secretary of State," Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, August 7, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d464>; Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 23. Murphy states in *Diplomat Among Warriors* that French diplomat Baudouin was so angry "he even hinted the French Navy might cooperate with the Germans," but does not indicate he played a role in avoiding this. A search of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* from the time also lacks evidence for this claim.
- 10 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 30. Vaughn claims that Murphy endorsed the report offering that if France were to fight anywhere, "North Africa would be the place," however Murphy's memoir attributes the statement to the report's author Commander Hillenkoetter.
- 11 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 9; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 67–70.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 9; The Murphy Papers, "Letter from Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles to American Embassy Vichy," November 18, 1940.
- 14 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 31–33; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 70; "The Secretary of State to the Chargé in France (Matthews)," Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, December 2, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d703>. Murphy learned that Roosevelt was not fond of De Gaulle or the Free French after their failed raid in Dakar.
- 15 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 73.
- 16 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 36–41.
- 17 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 73.
- 18 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 37–39; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 82.
- 19 Leahy, *I Was There*, 21, 23, 29, 57, 71.
- 20 Leahy, *I Was There*, 21.
- 21 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 38.
- 22 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 37.
- 23 "The Minister in Portugal (Pell) to the Secretary of State," Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, January 14, 1941, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v02/d167>. This is Murphy's forwarded report.
- 24 Hindley, *Destination Casablanca*, 84–85.
- 25 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 80.
- 26 "The Minister in Portugal (Pell) to the Secretary of State."
- 27 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 41.
- 28 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 86.

- 29 Hindley, *Destination Casablanca*, 83.
- 30 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 39; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 90.
- 31 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 45.
- 32 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 86.
- 33 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 653; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 90.
- 34 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 804.
- 35 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 82-85.
- 36 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 85.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 813
- 39 The Murphy Papers, "Copy of Intercepted Confidential Report to Berlin, Declassified 3/21/13," n.d.; Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 841; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 91.
- 40 Leahy, *I Was There*; Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk: The Story of the War in the Mediterranean* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 72; Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*. Leahy's memoir states that "Everyone knew what they were up to," and Clark's memoir indicates that planners were impressed with the information provided reinforcing Funk's assertion of success.
- 41 "Robert Murphy Cable to Secretary of State Regarding General Weygand, with Attachments," Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, November 21, 1941, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/62378/robert-murphy-cable-to-secretary-of-state-regarding-general>.
- 42 George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1991), 24.
- 43 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.
- 44 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 92.
- 45 Ibid. Despite his accolades for the OSS team in Africa, Murphy averted a near catastrophe thanks to close coordination between him and Eddy. The OSS was planning to pay \$50,000 to a pro-Allied Arab leader to oust a pro-German one. Once Eddy brought this to his attention, Murphy quickly intervened to avoid policy fratricide resulting from his repeated reassurance to the French that America did not intend to disrupt French-Arab relations.
- 46 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 13.
- 47 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 100.
- 48 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 101.
- 49 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 101.
- 50 Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*, 311-12; Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.

- 51 Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 88.
- 52 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 101-102. Roosevelt's wartime policy was to avoid recognizing any entity as the Government of France until liberated French people could elect their own government. Murphy recalled this policy guided all his actions up to and after the landings.
- 53 Leahy, *I Was There*, 112.
- 54 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 32.
- 55 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 103. Marshall suggested Murphy be disguised, and because "nobody ever pays attention to a lieutenant colonel," he became Lt. Col. MacGowan.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 102; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 54.
- 58 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.
- 59 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 102.
- 60 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 88.
- 61 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 104.
- 62 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 117.
- 63 Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 103-10.
- 64 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 98.
- 65 Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 56.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Directive for Mr. Robert D. Murphy," September 22, 1942, Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
- 68 Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 55.
- 69 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 106.
- 70 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 102.
- 71 Murphy, 112. Nogues told Murphy he did not support intervention and would fight any foreign forces. The Vice Consuls coordinated with one of his subordinates Bouthard who agreed to arrest Nogues during the invasion, however Bouthard failed to accomplish this during the landings.
- 72 Leahy, *I Was There*, 113.
- 73 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 113.
- 74 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 114.
- 75 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 115.

- 76 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 116-117.
- 77 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 118.
- 78 William B. Breuer, *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa*, 1st ed (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985); L. James Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time* (Washington, DC: Brassey's Books, 1997).
- 79 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 68-90.
- 80 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 70.
- 81 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 75.
- 82 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 82.
- 83 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 76.
- 84 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 119; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 81.
- 85 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 81. Lemnitzer would recall that "the opportune time of the meeting was due to the persistent efforts of Murphy, whose vital part in bringing about the meeting was known only a few persons in the highest levels of American government."
- 86 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 88. General Clark later recalled that he was impressed by how closely the French plans were to Allied plans and that everything the French told Clarke's delegation "turned out to be accurate in every respect."
- 87 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 123.
- 88 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 120.
- 89 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 124.
- 90 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 124.
- 91 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 127.
- 92 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 126; Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 33.
- 93 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 129.
- 94 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 115. AFHQ's record of events at the end of D-Day recorded: "During the course of the night and in the early morning hours of November 8, operational reports began to come in that were encouraging in tone. As anticipated, the landings at Algiers met almost no opposition and the area was quickly occupied. This was largely due to the prior accomplishments of Mr. Murphy, working through General Mast of the French Army, and to the sympathy, even if cloaked in official antagonism, of General Alphonse Pierre Juin."
- 95 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 65.
- 96 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 136.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Charles R. Anderson, *Algeria-French Morocco*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, CMH

- 72-11 (Center of Military History, 2004), 4; Charles R. Anderson, *Tunisia*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, CMH 72-12 (Center of Military History, 2004).
- 99 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 67.
- 100 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 139.
- 101 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 69.
- 102 Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 543.
- 103 Carlo D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 1st ed (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co, 2002), 354.
- 104 Robert D. Murphy, "The Influence of Politics Upon Military Operations Operation Torch," January 13, 1954, 17, Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
- 105 Murphy contributed to interagency planning for conflict termination prior to the operation. His understanding of the interests of various actors helped planners develop multiple versions of negotiated military agreements for the two likely outcomes. He also reviewed official diplomatic notes for delivery on D-Day and notified various political and military leaders in person after the operation commenced.
- 106 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 79.
- 107 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 119; Murphy, "The Influence of Politics Upon Military Operations Operation Torch."
- 108 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 73.
- 109 Robert D. Murphy, "Political Factors in War: Text of Remarks Made to War College," January 7, 1952, Robert D. Murphy papers, box 23, folder 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
- 110 John D. Finney and Alphonse F. La Porta, "Maximizing the Value of the Political Advisor Function," *The Foreign Service Journal*, no. October 2008 (2008): 16-19.
- 111 Murphy, "Political Factors in War: Text of Remarks Made to War College," 8.
- 112 Howard K. Walker, "Diplomacy, Force and the Diplomat-Warrior," *The Foreign Service Journal*, no. September 1998 (1998): 40-43.
- 113 Risa Brooks, "The Real Threat to Civilian Control of the Military," *Foreign Affairs*, January 18, 2021, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/united-states/2021-01-18/real-threat-civilian-control-military>.
- 114 Joint and Coalition Operational Analysis Division, "Enduring Lessons from the Past Decade of Operations," Decade of War (Suffolk, VA: Joint Staff, June 15, 2012).