The defendant Wilhelm Keitel, after a long military career, was made a Major General on 1 April 1934 and in 1935 was put in charge of the Wehrmachtsamt, the most important planning agency in the then Reich War Ministry.

On 2 February 1938, Hitler dissolved the Reich War Ministry and established the Supreme Command of the Armed Forces (OKW) with Hitler as Supreme Commander and the defendant as its Chief. He held both of these positions until the collapse of the Nazi state.

As Chief of the OKW, the defendant was responsible to Hitler for the smooth functioning of the Supreme Command and the coordination of the three services under its jurisdiction. These three services were:

1. The Supreme Army Command (OKW) under Hitler;
2. The Supreme Navy Command (OKM) under the defendant Raeder until 30 January 1943 and from then on under the defendant Dönitz;
3. The Supreme Airforce Command under the defendant Goering.

The military powers of the defendant Keitel as Chief of the OKW were by no means confined to coordination. He exercised direct command functions within and outside Germany. His OKW was not only responsible for the planning of military strategy centered in the Wehrmacht Führungsstab (Armed Forces Operations Staff), but had a number of direct common functions operating independently of the services. The Allgemeines Wehrmachtsamt.
under General Reinecke directed internal military propaganda and for the Inspector General for Prisoners of War.

The OKW also contained the so-called Abwehr engaged in espionage, counter-espionage and sabotage operations. With the defendant's approval, vital sections of the Abwehr were incorporated into the Reich Main Security Office (RSHA) in 1944. Moreover, until 1942, the OKW contained the War Economy and Armament Office (WiRu). In May 1942, the Armament office was merged with the Organization of the defendant Speer but the War Economy Office remained in the OKW. The WiRu not only played a leading part in Germany's economic preparation for war but was the key agency for the economic exploitation of occupied territory.

For the exploitation of the Army Rear Zone (rueck-wartige Heeresgebiet) in the occupied territories of the USSR, the WiRu organized the Wirtschaftsstab Ost (Economic Staff East) which ruthlessly exploited the material and labor resources of those territories. In these and other areas, the defendant established Armament Inspectorates, Armament Commands, War Economy Staffs and later Field Economy Staffs, which requisitioned and destroyed industrial machinery and forcibly recruited labor. The War Economy and Armament office also cooperated with the defendants Funk and Speer by setting up joint organizations for the exploitation of foreign countries.

The defendant's OKW also established a Propaganda Corps under a General of Propaganda Troops, and cooperating closely with the Ministry for Propaganda and Rosenberg's organization, exposed German soldiers and enemy populations to a steady stream of the most vicious Nazi propaganda.³³

³³ See especially: Mitteilungen fuer die Truppe (six issues a month); Mitteilungen fuer das Offizierkorps.
The defendant's OKW also exercised direct military control over certain occupied territories, especially over Norway and the Netherlands where the commanders of the German Armed Forces were subordinate to the OKW.

The defendant was in large measure responsible for the coordination of the armed forces with the Nazi Party. Indeed, his whole career was devoted to strengthening the influence of Nazi ideology in the Armed Forces. He was instrumental in rescinding a provision of the Reichswehrgezet (Armed Forces Statute) prohibiting members of the armed forces from participating in the Nazi Party, and he tolerated the introduction of NS Führungssoffiziere (NS Moral Officers) who virtually transformed the armed forces into a Party organization.

As Chief of the OKW, the defendant had cabinet rank. He is listed in the Taschenbuch fuer Verwaltungsbramente (1943, p.3.) as a member of the Reich Cabinet, exercising the functions of the former Reich War Minister after 1938. In this capacity and as a member of the Ministerial Defense Council his guilt goes far beyond pure military affairs, extending to the realm of legislation, administration and foreign policy.