A survey of Ottoman Anti-Submarine Measures in the Dardanelles 1914-15

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Background

The Ottoman Empire entered the war on 31 October 1914 when Russia declared war on her after ships of the Ottoman navy, including the acquired old German cruisers Goeben (renamed the Yavuz) and Breslau (renamed the Midilli) gifted to Turkey, bombarded Russian Black Sea ports on 29 October (Sevastapol, Novorossisk, Feodosia, and Odessa). This was a pre-emptive strike, which had military and political strategic reasons behind it (which are not dealt with in this paper), and only minor damage was inflicted (on two small warships and six merchantmen). However, it was a success for Germany, as it propelled Russia to declare war on the Ottoman Empire and by 5 November, her allies Great Britain and France, too, were at war with what was left of the Ottoman Empire.

The Ottoman Government had actually mobilised its armed forces on the outbreak of the European war in August and had gradually been drawn into the conflict by German machinations, internal Ottoman politics and British failures in diplomacy.1

Planning Ottoman defensive considerations during this period was something of a nightmare. By the nature of its geo-political position the Turks would have to defend at least four potential fronts—the Caucasus in the East, Sinai/Palestine and Suez in the south, together with the Mediterranean (e.g. Iskendurun/Alexandretta) and the Dardanelles Straits/Black Sea/ and Aegean approaches. Three of these became a reality—Caucasus, Suez-Sinai and of course the Dardanelles Strait.

The Strait had always featured prominently in Ottoman defensive considerations and previous belligerent enemy states’ offensive considerations, especially since the British navy under Admiral Sir John Duckworth had penetrated to Istanbul (Constantinople) in 1804.

So the Strait and its shores, the Gallipoli Peninsula and the Anatolian side as its guardian terrain, had to be secured. German naval assistance was sought from their naval mission,

1 Turkish General Staff, The History of the Turkish Armed Forces Ottoman Period, First World War, Volume V Book 1, The Dardanelles [Çanakkale]Front Operations. Turkish General Staff Publications, Ankara 1978. Referred to subsequently as TGSH History (Turkish General Staff History). p. 2 and Chapter 2
which had replaced Admiral Limpus’s British naval mission. 600 German defence specialists were sent, in attempted secret, to help the Ottomans on mine, gunnery, fortifications and torpedo warfare for the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. At sea this meant laying a serious minefield and improving and updating shore fortifications.2

The Strait was only partially defended with laying of a cursory minefield and strengthening of the forts with their 12 and 15 inch cannons. Ottoman ships at this point needed to negotiate passage through the minefield and this was done by a pre-selected route (see Map 1).3

The British reply to the Ottoman fortification strengthening work, with German assistance, was a naval blockade of the Strait from the Aegean by their Mediterranean naval squadron, which began on 26 September 1914. In response, the Ottoman Government closed the Strait on 29 September.

Now it was crucial to stop intruders and potential enemies from the south. On land to protect the shores, the 3rd Army Corps was initially deployed by 3 November and gradually reinforced until the Ottoman 5th Army was created in time for the Gallipoli Campaign in April 1915, putting 80,000 or so troops to garrison the Peninsula.

This military deployment corresponded with the first naval offensive activity. As 3rd Corps were settling their deployment on 3rd November 1914, British First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, it seems, though records are not clear on this, had ordered the British Navy to bombard and try to reduce the outer forts of the Strait. In so doing the British issued a strong message to the Ottomans that the expected front at the Dardanelles was earmarked for operations.4

The intention of the attack was essentially to test the fortifications and measure the Ottoman response. The results were deceptively encouraging. In a 20-minute bombardment, a single shell struck the magazine of the fort at Seddulbahir at the tip of the Gallipoli peninsula, displacing (but not destroying) 10 guns and killing 86 Ottoman soldiers. Total casualties during the attack were 150, of which 40 were German. The most significant consequence was

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3 TGSH, Sketch (Kroki) C
that the attention of the Ottomans was drawn to strengthening their defences, and they set about expanding the mine field.⁵

People familiar with the Dardanelles Campaign are well aware that the first phase of Allied operations was to be purely naval, ending in failure to breach the Narrows on 18 March 1915. This paper is not concerned with the details of this action except to consider how the Strait’s defences were developed and how they were to impact on the operations of Allied submarines throughout 1915.

**Defence against attempts to force the Strait in 1915**

Defence of the Strait was shared between Turkish and German commanders, Cevat Pasha, Turkish Commander of Strait’s Forts and Vice Admirals Guido von Usedom and his No. 2 Vice Admiral Merten. They were appointed by leader of the German Naval Mission, Admiral Souchon with the imprimatur of Enver Pasha, Ottoman War Minister and Deputy Commander-in-Chief to command all sea-based operations.⁶ This split command in the Strait was a manifestation of the Ottoman-German alliance and not always advantageous.

A glance at the situation of the Strait’s defences on the 18 March, as the British and French Fleets assaulted, shows how far these defences had been developed since the outbreak of the war (see Map 2). The Strait is 35 miles from top to bottom. As a result of an appreciation, based on the November 1914 experience, that the vulnerability of the outer forts was not to be easily put right, Cevat developed a three sector defensive system. "Outer", "Intermediate" and "Inner", with the balance of defence strength being shifted to the Intermediate and Inner forts.

The main foundation of the defence had to be the extended minefield, concentrated at the Narrows. This became well-known to the Allied fleet, especially as their minesweepers had failed and continued to fail to clear them. The British naval squadron’s use of North Sea Trawlers as minesweepers together with their civilian skippers is well recorded. There were 11 main lines laid across the Strait near the Narrows and containing a total of between 399 mines by 18 March, mainly German with some Russian ones retrieved from the Black Sea. Most were designed to withstand the strong current of the Strait.⁷

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⁵ TGSH op. cit. Chapter 2
⁶ By historical precedent, the Ottoman Sultan, Mehmet V, held the title of Supreme Commander-in-Chief
⁷ TGSH op. cit. Chapter 2
A few days before 18 March, undetected by the British fleet and their aerial reconnaissance, the 11th line had been laid in Erenköy Bay under cover of night by the Nusret minelayer. This line caused the ultimate loss of the Bouvet and Inflexible. By December 1915 the number of lines was to be increased to 18 and the mines to 552. Mines in lines 1-10 were spaced 44 to 55 yards apart, and line 11 110 to 165 yards apart. The later lines 14 and 15 were comprised of two deep lines intended for destroying submarines. The Turks also had floating mines at their disposal—estimated at 50 in number. In addition to mines at the Narrows three 18 inch torpedo tubes were installed on the pier at Kilid Bahir, giving a point blank range field of fire across the Strait.8

The role of the forts was to protect the minefield from sweeping as much as bombarding warships. There was massive increase in numbers of guns on the forts and batteries. (see Map: Fields of Fire). The field of fire of the principal forts was below the minefields. Thus a barrage could be maintained on ships entering the Strait before they could reach the minefield to sweep them.

Mobile artillery, mainly howitzers, 24 of them, were positioned along the both sides of the Strait. These were especially effective against the enemy minesweepers. They would move from one position to another, dragged by oxen teams to avoid the enemy getting a fix on them. Smoke canisters were used at various intervals to confuse the enemy gunners to draw fire away from the mobile batteries.

It was the Ottoman tactic that the forts and batteries, mobile or fixed, protected the minefield. 70 guns and six searchlights protected the minefield at the Narrows. So searchlights played an important role in keeping the Strait defended at night. The further tactic was that these guns of the fixed and mobile batteries were protected by the large calibre guns of the forts, which in turn were protected from the enemy fleet by the mobile howitzers. These fired on the enemy ship to keep them moving so no concentration of fire onto the forts could be achieved, thus increasing inaccuracy. All these defences could be employed against submarines—the surface ones of course only seriously effective if and when a sub surfaces for any reason.

When it came to underwater defences then more submarine-specific measures were necessary. Submarine nets were deployed, essentially submarine entanglement nets. They

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8 Rudenko, p.29 and TGSH.
were manufactured from strengthened fishing nets and were designed to show path of submarine, rather than stopping it. If the path of the submarine could be traced then it could more easily be attacked from the surface with explosives.

Since these nets were 5m in height and 47 – 50m in length, 4 of them were tied on top of each other so that they would be 20m tall and they were produced in layers. On every piece of net, the length of the wire rope between the observation cauldrons that served as buoys on the surface was 100 meters. There were several lash-like rope flagella on the net which could also entangle the propeller of the submarines that tried to go through. Additionally, cork floats were attached to it to keep the net light.

As told in the memoirs of Nazmi Bey, German Lieutenant Colonel Vasildo Bey, gunnery instructor under the Çanakkale Forts Command and Commander of the Anatolian Hamidiye Emplacement, a German captain and a Lieutenant Nabek Efendi, placed the net to be dropped on a barge and left on 18 January with Nusrat in tow. The net was dropped on a line that went from Karanfilburnu towards Beyazyarlar, in the middle of the Strait, slightly closer to the Anatolian shore at 38 – 39 fathoms.  

On February 5, in addition to the earlier placed nets on the Anatolian side, two number 50 net systems were dropped and on February 11, two more nets towards the European side bringing the number up to eight. On February 12, the Nusrat dropped two more nets.
An interview with a Turkish Dardanelles veteran soldier, Ali Yalçın, published in 1981 sheds some light on how these nets proved effective from time to time. It is not clear which British or French submarine Ali refers to, but the procedure is of interest.

A submarine got caught in the nets below Akbaş . . . near the mouth of the Bigalı Creek . . . The nets were bobbing up and down . . . We went across there with Captain Celal and a German officer, a submarine captain. They took a sounding to see how many fathoms down it was. They measured and made their calculations accordingly. We lowered the dynamite to explode at the right depth and they lit it. Then we got out of there. The sea then swelled. Five or ten minutes later the sub was there and men started emerging from the hatch. There were twenty seven of them …

**Allied Submarine Operations**

The narrative of Allied submarine activity in the face of these solid defences provides examples of how the Ottomans operated their anti-submarine defence once a submarine had breached the defences at the Narrows. For the record, during the Dardanelles and Gallipoli Campaign a small number of British, French and one Australian submarine passed through the strait a total of 27 times.

The first main incident was the sinking by torpedoes from the British sub HMS B-11 of the Ottoman battleship Mesudiye with losses of 37 men from a 637 crew. This occurred on December 13, 1914 in Sarsişğlar Bay and demonstrated early to everyone that it was possible for enemy submarines to get into the Sea of Marmara. At this point though, there were only 5 lines of mines.

The captain of B11, Lieutenant-Commander Norman Holbrook, was awarded the Victoria Cross—the first Royal Navy VC of the war—and all 12 other crew members received awards. Coupled with the naval bombardment of the outer defences on 3 November, this success encouraged the British to pursue the campaign but it led the Ottomans to speed up the mining and engage in a number of defensive developments.

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13 TGSH
The Ottomans set up patrols (small vessels such as the big yacht *Galata*, the steamboat *Istanbul* and the gunboats *Zuhaf, Pelengiderya, İşareis* and *Aydınreis*) were used to find and destroy underwater intruders. In addition, look-out posts were built on each side of the Strait and mantelli guns were positioned at important places along the shores of the Marmara, the Izmit Gulf and the Istanbul area. Only permission to navigate during daytime hours was given to civilian craft and all comings and goings in the Sea of Marmara had to be done adjacent to the coast. This was especially important so boats used for marine transportation could be protected from submarines, which would not be able to get close to shallow waters.

Another near breach of the Narrows took place on 15 January 1915, by the French submarine *Saphir* but she ran aground at Nagara Point—either mined, sunk by shellfire or scuttled, leaving 14 crew dead and 13 prisoners of war.

Establishment of a more efficient defensive, observation and reporting system was underway utilising Ottoman and German personnel. Observation posts were set up along the shores of the Sea of Marmara, where Gendarmerie and land troops were posted. Enemy actions and routes were communicated by telegraph and phone to Istanbul or to the nearest station by signal. The nucleus of this organization consisted of four officers and 15 soldiers under a Turkish navy captain on the Marmara Island and working closely with a hunter group. When a submarine was observed at a post, the report was sent to the Navy Headquarters, which in turn conveyed this report to all ships by radio and all available boats were sent to the reported section.

Captain von Benheim, leading the Marmara observation flotilla established his HQ on Marmara Island on April 7, 1915. Together with the commander of the Marmara Island Signal Station, Captain Nazmi Efendi, von Benheim visited the observation station centres at Bandırma, Erdek and Karabiga on the western part of the Sea of Marmara on the Anatolian coast. Observation stations were also designed to be signal stations and production of a specification manual called the “Submarine Observation Manual” was begun outlining actions for the observation-signal points. It was not ready for approval until 3 July 1915 and it took a few more months before it was available for distribution. Observation points grew in

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14 *Submarine Hunt in the Sea of Marmara*, op. cit.
15 A type of small calibre mountain gun.
number slowly as items they needed were manufactured step by step, reaching 50 by December 1915.  

Meanwhile British submarine activity began to increase slowly after the 18 March debacle. The British submarine E-15 tried to breach the Narrows on 17 April but hit the seabed in front of Kepez at 06.00 trying to execute an escape manoeuvre. Ottoman sources reveal its conning tower was sighted and attacked with gun fire from the shore defences. The submarine was damaged, seven of the crew were killed and the rest captured. The beached E15 was a valuable prize for the Ottomans and the British went to great lengths to deny it from them, finally managing to sink it after numerous attempts.

On 25 April the AE2 was the first submarine to breach the minefield across the Narrows and then make a nuisance of itself ‘running amuk’ in the Marmara, till it met its demise on 30 April. (See later section on the AE2 pursuit for details)

The second submarine through the straits had more luck than AE2. On 27 April, HMS E14, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Edward Boyle, entered the Sea of Marmara. It proved to be that was one of the most successful actions achieved by the Allies in the entire campaign. E14 went on a three-week rampage and sank the gunboat Nurülbahir between Mürefte-Şarköy on May 1. Boyle was awarded a VC.

Eventually E-14, too, was to meet her demise. On May 1, 1916 E14 attacked a merchant ship as she withdrew from the Dardanelles. Firing two torpedoes, one prematurely exploded damaging the submarine. She was forced to surface because of flooding but then came under coastal battery fire off Kum Kale and was sunk by shellfire. E14 sank. 9 of her crew survived and were taken prisoner.

E14 was followed by E11, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Martin Nasmith, who was awarded the VC. He reached Istanbul waters and sank or disabled 11 ships, including three on 24 May at the port of Rodosto (Tekirdağ) on the Thracian shore. On 5 August E11 again entered the Marmara and sank the steamboat Halep in front of Akbaş and heavily damaged the torpedo boat Peyki Şevket heavily.

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16 Submarine Hunt in the Sea of Marmara, op. cit.
17 TGSH, op. cit.
18 ‘running amuk’ was the suggestion of Commodore Roger Keyes, see Brenchley, F and E, Stoker’s Submarine, HarperCollins, Sydney, 2001. p.58
On 8 August off Bulair [Bolayîr], E11 torpedoed the Ottoman battleship Barbaros Hayreddin, the former German battleship Kurfürst Friedrich Wilhelm, sold years earlier to the Ottoman Navy as she was steaming towards Çanakkale. Then it sank the steamboat Isfahan, which was at the Haydarpaşa Dock in Istanbul on August 15 and it entered the Gulf of Izmit and shelled the Gebze Bridge and the railway; the E 11’s deputy captain’s attempt to swim ashore to destroy the bridge was prevented by the guarding units.

E 11 was joined by E 12, E-2 and E-7 and H-1 as British subs continued to breach the Narrows and sink Ottoman steamboats and destroyers. E-7 became a victim of the submarine nets on 4 September, then was hit by a shell, forced up to the surface before the crew jumped ship after opening the valves and scuttling. On May 10 1915, the submarine Ani damaged the boat Gülcemal with a torpedo. It was carrying soldiers and supplies to Çanakkale under the protection of a destroyer.

The defences were more successful against French subs. The French submarine Joule sank on July 26, 1915 when it was entering the Çanakkale Strait and hit one of the mines. And the Mariotte was sunk by cannonfire in front of the Çimenlik fort on July 26, when it had to surface to enter the Strait.19

The only French submarine that managed to enter the Sea of Marmara was Turquoise. This submarine, which entered the Marmara on October 19, 1915, hit the bottom in front of Akbaş as it was returning from an unsuccessful operation, surfaced in an attempt to escape and was damaged by the fire opened by Turkish field cannons.

The crew, who did not have any chance of escape, had to surrender; meanwhile, all the documents on board fell into the Turks’ possession. According to these documents, Turquoise was to meet the British submarine E-20 on November 5. Hence, the German Submarine UB-14 was assigned with the duty of sinking E-20. UB-14, which went to the meeting point, succeeding in sinking this submarine with a torpedo shot from a distance of 500 metres. The submarine Turquoise was taken to Istanbul and was re-named after Corporal Müstecip, who had caused the submarine to surrender by opening fire on it.

In regard to German U-Boats, they had become an important addition to the Ottoman sea defences, not just in the Strait, but also around Helles and Anzac. The Turkish Navy had no submarines during World War I. The submarines ordered from Britain and France just before

19 TGSH Vol. 5 Book 3, p. 511
World War I began were not delivered to the Turks with the start of the war. The Ottomans, therefore, had to rely on the Germans to provide any underwater challenge to the British and French. And these came in spades.

U-Boats had appeared in May when Commander Otto Kersing and his U-21 sank HMS Triumph, which had been the marker ship for the ANZAC landing of 25 April, off Kabatepe on 25 May and HMS Majestic on 27 May off Teke Burnu at Cape Helles. U-21 entered the Çanakkale Strait on June 4, 1915. It sank the 56,000-tonne ship Carthage. On 2nd September UB-14 torpedoed the 12,000 ton ship Swaziland at Mudros and on the 5 November 1915 as stated, it sank the British submarine E-20 in the Sea of Marmara.

The onset of U-Boats was an most important development as it hastened the departure of the Queen Elizabeth with its massive guns and destructive power from the Dardanelles, the only dreadnought deployed in the Dardanelles. British fear of losing her had her skidaddling to back to Scapa Flow.

13 submarines of various tonnages carrying German flags were sent to the Eastern Mediterranean, the Aegean and the Black Sea from Germany, five of them eventually being lost. A Lesser known fact of the submarine warfare at the Dardanelles is that the British were able to restict the activities of the German submarines by placing their own minefield and submarine nets across the mouth of the Çanakkale Strait.

The TGS History states that apart form the sinking of Allied warships: ‘The greatest benefit of the German submarines was to prevent the British and French battleships from easily firing towards the Turkish emplacements as if engaging in target practice’.

During the Dardanelles Campaign, Allied subs sank eight Ottoman battleships with a total of 21,000 tonnes, and 31 transportation ships with a total of 38,000 tonnes, and it damaged more than 200 sailboats and pontoons. On the other hand, they lost 9 submarines with a total of 5,818 tonnes, five of which belonged to the British Naval Forces, three to the French and one to the Australian and one French submarine of 390 tonnes was captured by the Turks.

AE2

\[\text{\cite{ref1}}\]
\[\text{\cite{ref2}}\]
Those acquainted with the AE2’s story will know how the AE2 breached the Narrows and its minefield on 25th April, the day of the ANZAC landing and then on 26 April entered the Sea of Marmara to begin its ‘running amuk’. The Ottoman perspective of the pursuit and loss of the Australian submarine illustrates a little of how the Ottoman defences operated.

At 10:45 on 25 April as the Ottoman 3rd Army Corps is determinedly blocking Anzac and British troops from making any headway ashore on the peninsula. The Turkish battleship Turgutreis, is patrolling off Nara Point. She reports seeing two water bubble tracks between the Nara buoy and the fort at 800 to 1000 yards, and concludes a submarine has fired a torpedo. At the same time, the battleship Barbaros, before her demise, which has sailed down from Istanbul, and the destroyer Yarhisar are in the area. The Barbaros has just reported being attacked by a submarine in front of the Yapıdlak lighthouse.

There has been an earlier report that an enemy submarine has entered Çanakkale Harbour and has been spotted once near Çimenlik (Çanakkale Fort) and once between Değirmenburnu and the Mecidiye Battery on the Anatolian side of the Strait. The report stated that the submarine was fired upon both with torpedoes as well as from the Mecidiye Fort on the coast. “Whether the mentioned submarine sank or dove on its own accord could not be determined,” the report stated.22

These reports are the first known sightings of AE2 as she approached the Narrows and then penetrated into the Marmara. They prompt Admiral Guido von Usedom, German commander of the Straits, to telegram Navy HQ to send some torpedo boats down to the Marmara. The Navy Commander replies’ “All available torpedo boats will immediately come to Gallipoli with the flotilla commodore.” Sources vary as to their departure time but the Flotilla under German Commodore Adolf Pfeifer sails off from Istanbul to Çanakkale by 27 April, commissioned with various tasks including hunting submarines.

One vessel of this flotilla is the torpedo boat Sultanhisar, which had been on the Black Sea on observation duties and mine sweeping on the Bosphorus at the end of 1914 and beginning of 1915. There are no more reported sightings of AE2 till 27 April. On that day at 01:20 am, the patrol gunboat Zuhaf at anchor in Şarköy notices a submarine on the surface approximately at 27° 28’ east and 40° 30’north (between Şarköy and Karaburun) Zuhaf fires 19 shells from a distance of 1000 to 1500 meters. She keeps on firing until the submarine disappears from

22 Submarine Hunt in the Sea of Marmara, op. cit., p. 65ff
sight at 01:25 am and at 01:45 am the torpedo boats Yarhisar and Kütahya come alongside the Zuhaf and they fire in concert. At 14:10, Zuhaf sees the submarine on the surface at the same location and fires two rounds from 6400 meters and the submarine disappears again.

While this action is taking place the torpedo boat Sultanhisar is approaching the vicinity at slow speed. Its Captain, Rıza Efendi, is casually watching another ship, No. 38. Being something of a literary sort, he is lost in thoughts, as some of his crew make music. This is part of his idiosyncratic report:

My duty watch sailor was awake and on alert. He had not left me alone on this road and was following me with a protective pursuit. All of a sudden, he pointed to a spot in the distance which had become silvery. There, like a fish taking a deep breath, a torpedo had been fired and was moving toward the boat. I saw the torpedo on our port side moving fast toward the 38. I sent a signal to 38 and it immediately turned to the land and went towards the shore. It was as if a falcon had flown over a spring forest. The drum, the pipe, the singing, everything stopped. It was saved by the right manoeuvre. There was confusion on the boat and everybody held on to their guns. . .

But the enemy firing the torpedo was not to be seen. Instead, there was only the white foamy trace of the torpedo moving fast on the surface. The torpedo missed 38, went toward the shore and exploded with a loud report.

This unexpected incident had me exasperated. One of the submarines, the presence of which in the Marmara had everybody preoccupied for days was now in my hands. I was hoping to use this opportunity and catch it. Notifying the Peyk-i Şevket, operating close to my position of my intention, I stayed at that location. I searched around for more than two hours hoping to find a trace. I turned up every corner of the sea to find the enemy shrouded in the magic dark blue mantle of water. It was nowhere to be found; it did not dare to make itself seen.  

After these developments, Sultanhisar on 28 April receives an order from the commodore to “patrol with Akhisar between Gallipoli and Karakova lighthouse until 18:00 and drop anchor in Gallipoli after that.” At 18:40, she picks up Liman von Sanders Pasha and his entourage, dropping them at Maydos at 19:50 and arriving at Gallipoli at 22:35, dropping anchor in the

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23 Submarine Hunt in the Sea of Marmara, op. cit., p. 82
harbor at 6.5 fathoms. *Sultanhisar* was also assigned this duty of ferrying von Sanders up and down the Strait.

On 29 April *Peyk-i Şevket* notices a submarine at 07:30 near Gallipoli. On this day the British fleet shells Maydos causing massive damaged and loss of life in including wounded troops in the Maydos hospital which includes 25 Allied wounded p.o.w.s. This causes an interruption in the hunt for the AE2, but fires up the crew on the *Sultanhisar*. The torpedo boat *Basra* then sights a submarine and fires one shell from its fore and three from its starboard guns and moves to attack near Cape Karabiga at 13:00; the submarine stays on the surface for two minutes and then dives again.

The same day, *E 14*, manages to get through into the Marmara, and unsuccesfully attacks a convoy of two ships guarded by a torpedo boat. *AE2* moving toward Istanbul on the surface sights her. Meanwhile back at Gallipoli harbour, Captain Riza meets up with the *Basra*’s captain, Lutfi. They discuss the submarine pursuit and Lutfi tells Riza he had seen the ‘pesky submarine’ off Karaburun Point. Then Riza receives an order from the flotilla commodore to return to Istanbul just as bombs from some British aircraft fall on Gallipoli.

The next day, 30 April, *Sultanhisar* sets off early in the day for Istanbul. Visibility is poor due to heavy mist, but Riza orders a circuitous route, via Karaburun. He is on the hunt again and sets the ship to search areas where enemy submarines had been reported. At 09.00 they are off Karaburun. In the distance, north of Marmara Island, on a line to Hayırısz Island, a small shadow appears in the mist. A seaman yells: “Vessel ahead of us!”

Riza’s report continues:

> The distance and the early morning fog didn’t allow a clear sight. The insufficient strength of the binoculars prevented me from getting an idea about the ship ahead. Yet, the silhouette wasn’t one of a boat we were used to seeing. …I had to decide what to without wasting time. In any case, I had to find out the nature of this boat. I gave the order through the tube: Burn the British coal, full speed ahead!

At high speed *Sultanhisar* speeds towards the craft. Through their binoculars the crew suddenly see the vessel dip lower in the water. Crewmen jump up and shout: “Submarine!
Submarine!” They man the guns and torpedoes, the ship’s engine is at full power, they get within shooting range just as the sub disappears below the surface. All that Riza could now do was maneuver and not let the sub escape.

Riza moves towards Marmara Island, eyes scanning the horizon. Suddenly a submarine periscope breaks the surface just about 100 to 200 metres in front of him. Riza opened fire. From his report again:

. . . the gunners on the two guns on the deck were aiming for the periscope. They were estimating the distance, measuring angles, and raising or lowering the gun according to the given angle. I steered the ship slightly to port. Edremitli Ömer (Ömer from Edremit) was on the starboard gun . . . As I gave the order to fire, all eyes were fixed in one direction. At 10:35, the guns fired. The gun burst with a loud noise, the projectile fell short. I issued a new order:
- Up 50!

The starboard gun fired again. The projectile fell exactly where the periscope ripped the water. A cracking noise was heard. I yelled from the command post again:
- Hit! Continue firing!

The port gun also started firing with the same angle and distance. This time, they withdrew the periscope. I had my men continue firing. But the enemy wasn’t to be seen, it had disappeared. Our mini guns, firing in quick succession had just presented the 4th projectile, but the periscope had been lowered. But two shots fired by the starboard gunner Corporal Ömer from Edremit had been hits.

Unknown to Riza, he had hit AE2. Also unknown to him was that Captain Stoker in AE2 is having major problems keeping the sub alive. His diving wheel is inoperative and the submarine keeps going deeper. To stop going down, Stoker empties the water in the tanks.

Above the surface Riza is convinced with the periscope hit and damaged, the sub must surface again somewhere. He reported:

With this in mind, I kept going in wide circles at full speed, trying to keep the point the submarine disappeared in the centre of these circles . . . For twenty minutes, I went around without seeing a trace of the enemy . . . All eyes were scanning the sea,
everyone at their stations, paying full attention, it was a hard wait. Minutes seems as long as years. And still there was no trace of the enemy submarine. The suddenly:
- It’s coming up!

Something was certainly coming up slowly on our port side. Two feet above the surface at 1500 meters our binoculars revealed a conning tower two feet above the surface now approaching us. Ordering the guns and rifles to fire, I steered towards it as it started diving again. At that moment I saw a torpedo coming toward the starboard bow. A minor manoeuvre was enough to eliminate this danger and the torpedo went past like a dolphin leaving a foamy trace. The battle was on—to the finish. We had two torpedoes. It would be pleasant to attack the enemy with his own weapon. This would also help us to get results faster. I gave the order to the torpedo officer to ready torpedo no. one. I informed them that we’d fire the torpedo when it surfaced again. About 500 meters away, the waters started swelling. The submarine’s tower appeared again. I took this opportunity and started manoeuvring to effectively use the torpedo. Then I saw a torpedo coming to us. The distance was very short and *Sultanhisar* suddenly faced the danger of going down in spite of all the efforts . . .

Almost involuntarily, my hand moved to the command bell. Full speed ahead and I called the engine room:
- Danger, Give it all you can!

*Sultanhisar* leapt forward, I veered hard to port . . . as the torpedo closed . . . and went past. I ordered torpedo number one to be fired. I heard the fuse but the torpedo did not leave the tube. We had missed a great opportunity. I called the torpedo officer, furiously:
- What happened?
- The powder didn’t catch fire, sir.

Powder firing fuses had been abandoned from all navies but we were still insisting on keeping on with this old obsolete musty method of firing. I was furious at the missed opportunity. It got worse as by our various manoeuvres at full speed we were now rocking and rolling in our own waves. This caused the torpedo which had failed to fire but was loosened to fall overboard. We were now like a man with only one leg. *Sultanhisar* had two 37 mm guns and two torpedoes. The ineffectiveness of the guns could be seen by the fact that the enemy was still moving around in spite of many hits. So, our most trusted weapons were our torpedoes. One of them was wasted and we were left in a near useless situation. I did not know what to do. I could not see the
body of the submarine but the ineffectiveness of our shots gave me a rough idea about its size.

The submarine had dived again and again we were in a sorry period of observation as well as being open to a sudden attack ourselves.

It is now past 10 o’clock and for the last half an hour, there has been as no sign of life from the submarine. Riza’s impatience is immeasurable. Then suddenly there’s a stir on the ship.

The submarine is seen again, now apparently fleeing towards Tekirdağ (Rodosto) with its tower above the surface. A long distance separates them but Sultanhisar heads at full speed after the submarine firing its 37 mm guns. To no avail despite some hits. Riza decides to use his last torpedo. It fires successfully this time, but misses to the great consternation of Riza and his crew. Riza continued:

This provoked me even more and I just kept going after it. We watched the submarine going towards Erdek and all of a sudden it disappeared. This nearly drove us crazy. I kept on the same course while at the same time, I was progressing in wide rounds and was prepared for a sudden torpedo threat . . . I can’t tell how long I had to wait. Not minutes but even seconds seemed like hours. But there was no sign of life on the horizon, scanned by all eyes [on the deck] . . . Finally, about 500 meters ahead, the waters started to swell . . . the struggle was about to be renewed. There was delight in all eyes. The marksmen gave directions for the guns and the mausers started firing again. The submarine’s tower appeared on the surface again, rising higher and higher as the large vessel slowly surfaced.

So far our engagement had been solely with the periscope. We did not know how big the vessel or who the enemy was. But the waiting did not take long. The whole submarine appeared with its whole bulk above the surface. I could read the AE2 marking on it and realized that our opponent was a member of the British Navy. I was indebted to the exceptional opportunity fate offered me. . . The only solution, whatever the cost, was in fact to ram it. Otherwise I would have to leave the battle scene . . . May be we would not be victorious, may be with the ramming, both Sultanhisar and AE2 would suffer serious damage and both would go down in the blue waters of Marmara, but we were going to ram it. It was the only solution and would take us either to death or victory . . . I decided to ram it at its weakest spot, on
the aft above the rudder, which would also prevent it from diving again. I turned
*Sultanhisar* and increased speed. It was ten to eleven.

Continuing gun fire, I sped towards it, to hit it on the rudder, which was on our prow. The crew had prepared the collision mats, waiting for it calmly . . . The short reports of the guns continued and the machine guns roared furiously shaking the vessel. Alive with the crew’s determination and excitement, *Sultanhisar* roared forward fast and furious towards an enemy ten times its size. We were heading full speed toward the submarine. Then I turned the ship’s prow toward the rudder at angle of 10 degrees with the submarine on my right. Then it started to submerge its head. We continued at full speed and *Sultanhisar’s* stern hit the tip of the starboard horizontal rudder. *AE2* started slowly to go down head on. There was little chance she would come up again. I thought I’d stay near the sinking point so that we could rescue anyone who could open the hatches and survive; and so we stayed where we were. This action had almost cost us our lives in the blue waters of the Marmara . . . *AE2* suddenly came to the surface very close to the ship. It splashed water over our deck. If the vessel’s head was in that direction, there is no doubt that it would come up from under us and roll us over. This time though we were saved by luck. I immediately reversed the ship and started watching this beast rising next to us. By the time we assumed our former position, it was above the surface. We were anxiously waiting, watching what the enemy would do next, our sailors with their rifles in their hands, the gunners with their fingers on the triggers.

Then, the British Imperial War Ensign was slowly hoisted on the conning tower. Sailors stepping down on to the deck started waiving their shirts and hats. The enemy was surrendering.24

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24 *Submarine Hunt in the Sea of Marmara, op. cit., pp. 90-99*
Map 1 The Narrow’s Defences September 1914

Route through the Minefield

TGSH, Vol 5 Bk 1.
Map 2 Ottoman Defences on the Dardanelles Strait by March 1915\textsuperscript{26}

\textsuperscript{26} ibid (in translation)
Sources


