Completing the story of the Gallipoli Campaign: Researching Turkish Archives for a More Comprehensive History

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Background

This article represents a work-in-progress survey on the development stage of the Gallipoli Centenary Turkish Archives Project being conducted by The Department of Modern History at Sydney’s Macquarie University in association with the History Department at Turkey’s Middle East Technical University, Ankara. The universities recently conducted a pilot research project to reveal and investigate original Turkish documentation relating to the 1915 Gallipoli Campaign of the First World War. The campaign is accepted as being historically significant for both Australia and Turkey. However, the majority of the large amount of historical research on the campaign has been from Allied sources—British, Australian and French. Research from Turkish sources has been cursory but now recently identified Turkish document collections promise to provide the last remaining and significant store of Gallipoli Campaign material yet to be researched.

The Macquarie University pilot program, with its researches in Turkey, revealed sources of new archival material in three significant collections—The
Turkish General Staff Archives (TGSA), The Ottoman Archives, The Press and Information Archives. Further unpublished and published (in Turkish language only) diaries and memoirs exist in private collections across Turkey. Most documents in the TGSA and Ottoman Archives are written in Ottoman Turkish, using Arabic script (modern Turkish has used Latin script since the early 1930s) and there are numerous files in German only and some in French. Dates on documents are invariably in the Ottoman Islamic calendar and need conversion for publication in European languages.

The preliminary research carried out in the Pilot Project produced a Catalogue of Documents relating to the Gallipoli Campaign Held in the Turkish General Staff Archives, which serves as a basis for future research in the Archives. It has also produced the beginning of a translated document collection of Turkish Gallipoli documents to the extent of around 150 documents, including some operational and reconnaissance maps. This documentation also includes examples of hitherto unseen and untranslated battlefield operational reports, messages, signals, numerous maps as mentioned (including aerial reconnaissance), use of aircraft, supply details, intelligence, reconnaissance and interrogation reports, reports of Allied shelling, various HQ correspondence, and War Ministry communications. (Some examples appear later)
Macquarie University and the Middle East Technical University have recently been joined by the Australian War Memorial in developing the innovative Gallipoli Centenary Turkish Archives Research Project. The aim is to reveal the last major source of un-researched documentation of the campaign located in Turkish archival collections. It is planned to publish the findings periodically and then produce and publish the fullest possible comprehensive history of the campaign to mark its centenary in 2015.

The Historiography of the Gallipoli Campaign

The British and French naval operation in the First World War to force the Dardanelles Straits in Turkey by ships alone ultimately failed on 18 March 1915. The combined fleet’s aim was to reach Istanbul and thereby, in theory, force an Ottoman Empire surrender. The failure of the Allied Fleet to clear a way through the Ottoman mines and defences at the Narrows in turn led the Allies, led by British generals, to launch what most military historians consider the largest amphibious attack since the Persians landed at Marathon in 490 BCE. In the American Civil War the Union had made several amphibious landings on the Confederate coast, the largest being at Fort Fisher, Wilmington, North Carolina, where an assaulting force of over 15,000 men and 70 warships with over 600 guns constituted probably the most powerful amphibious assault since Marathon (William the Conqueror’s invasion force in 1066 numbered approximately 600 ships and an army of
7000). But the 1915 amphibious operation signalled the start of the Gallipoli Campaign—an attempt, after landing at several beaches, initially with a force of around 70,000, to cross the Gallipoli Peninsula and capture the Ottoman forts alongside the northern shore of the Straits to assist the passage of the fleet. The campaign began with the beach landings on 25 April 1915 and ultimately ended in failure with the last evacuations on 8 January 1916.

In the ninety or so years since then there have been numerous detailed publications on the subject—in English alone over one hundred and twenty dedicated to the campaign specifically. Some appeared immediately after the campaign itself.¹ On these figures, it would seem fair to assume that that we have the full account of events on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915. However, recent access to the Turkish General Staff Archives (TGSA) and other archival sources in Turkey by a small number of Turkish and foreign researchers, including this author, requires that view be changed. One document, revealed early in the Pilot Program, serves as example and provided encouragement to continue the research in the TGSA. In the initial sampling of TGSA documents identified for inclusion in the project files catalogue the signature on one document was immediately recognizable. This was the hand of Enver Pasha, the Ottoman War Minister and the Empire’s most powerful politician. On 16 June 1915 Enver had sent the document from Istanbul to German Admiral Guido von Usedom, who had been appointed Commander of the Straits. Attached to it were two maps of the harbours at Imbros and Lemnos islands
with details of Allied ships at anchor. It was an order to attempt a
decapitation of the enemy force.

Please find map rendered and provided by our trusted ally, which I
attach. It is of Kefala Harbour on Imbros, where the ship that carries
General Hamilton’s Headquarters is anchored. I request you to carry
out a bombing raid there with an aircraft, and moreover, if practicable,
to bomb his ship. There is also a copy of the Fleet Headquarters.

Minister for War,

Enver ²

Further sampling showed these archives to be holding a store of such un-
revealed information that could lead to a re-assessment of the campaign or at
least a significantly more comprehensive history.

The great majority of publications on the Gallipoli Campaign re-work the
existing research material produced by Charles Bean in preparing the
exhaustive *Australian Official History of the Great War* (1st edition, 1921 and
several subsequent editions). However, Bean and those historians who
followed him were unable to access existing material about Ottoman activity
from contemporary 1915 primary Turkish sources. These sources have been
overlooked in the past due to various factors, including inherent problems
with finding researchers who can read the documentation, which is in
Ottoman Turkish—the somewhat archaic language and alphabet (Arabic) of the Turks in 1915.

The main body of knowledge related to the Gallipoli Campaign has been acquired from collections in Australia, New Zealand and Britain. These sources, while rich in material concerning the Allies’ participation, contain extremely limited Turkish documentation. This existing material is also overwhelmingly researched and written from a British and Allied perspective. It uses accounts from selected (and relatively few) Turkish sources made available during the preparation of the Australian and British official histories in the 1920s and 30s. Where they exist, these Turkish sources are, in the main, secondary sources. They include memoirs of one or two leading commanders and assessments provided by the Turkish General Staff. Even though some of the memoirs were based on the authors’ original diaries, they were all written up several years after the Campaign and after the end of First World War. As such they were subject to hindsight and personal interpretations and remain a limited resource in this respect. Despite their limitations they have produced a general appreciation of Ottoman 5th Army dispositions during the campaign but nothing approaching the thoroughness of accounts of the Allies. The main body of the primary source documentation from 1915 held in the archival sources listed above has never been comprehensively or broadly examined. The Gallipoli Centenary Turkish Archives Project is designed to uncover and delve into this first-hand
information and make it available in English translation, with research-based linguistic and historical interpretation.

Essentially then, Bean’s Turkish information, despite his conscientious efforts in producing a general overview of Ottoman activity at Gallipoli, is overwhelmingly second-hand, anecdotal and from memory. He did not have access to Turkish archives and the Ottoman 5th Army documentation as it occurred during the campaign except for documents such as some Turkish prisoner interrogation statements and a handful of other Turkish documents acquired later or intercepted during the fighting. Bean’s papers contain some interesting snippets of translated Turkish documents such as an aerial reconnaissance report by Nazim Bey of the 16th Division and a Daily Order by the OC 16th Division. Bean, along with the British official historian, Cecil Aspinall-Oglander, gained his information about the Turkish forces from answers to a large list of questions put to the Chief of the Turkish General Staff, Kâzim Pasha, also a Gallipoli veteran and from a few other sources. These include a senior Turkish officer-veteran of the campaign, Major Zeki Bey, during Bean’s return research mission to Gallipoli in 1919. All these documents are now held in the Australian War Memorial. Only a few of Kâzim’s answers were detailed and Bean was to comment on their unreliability due to factors such as other conflicting information, questionable translation and lack of detail. Zeki Bey’s account was taken down by Bean as notes from their conversations. In a post-war letter to Bean Zeki Bey confirms
that he gave his information ‘relying on my memory, during our tour at Anzac’. 7

Bean and Aspinall-Oglander also had access to a general account of the campaign, produced post-war by the Turkish General Staff 8 and later to Liman von Sanders’ *Five Years in Turkey*, and other German officers’ publications (Prigge and Kannengeisser). 9 Useful as they are in presenting German commanders’ perspectives of the campaign and their relationship with and attitude to their Ottoman allies, they are cursory, especially where daily details are concerned, as is the Turkish commander Djemal Pasha’s 1922 publication of his memoirs.

Both official historians also had a translation of selected sections of 19th Divisional Commander Mustafa Kemal’s memoirs, made at the behest of the Turkish General Staff again after the war. However, Bean stated Turkish records as ‘being most unreliable’ and to have ‘been found to contain inaccuracies’. 10 Such sources leave many facets and most detail unexplored. Most notably, information is lacking about elements transpiring at company and platoon level, with individual officers and men, in the reserve positions and Ottoman command locations. Daily operational reports, likely to be the most useful in detailing Ottoman battle activity, have not yet been revealed. The same applies about conditions of ammunition and material supplies and the state and nature of intelligence and reconnaissance. When compared to
the detail Bean and Aspinall-Oglander are able to bring to the Allied side, the contrast is marked.

After the official histories, as already indicated, succeeding Gallipoli historians have produced research for a large number of books designed for the general public, including (to name the most prominent) John North’s *Gallipoli, The Fading Vision* (1936), Alan Moorehead’s *Gallipoli* (1956), Robert Rhodes-James’s *Gallipoli* (1965), Bill Gammage’s *The Broken Years* (1975), Steel and Hart’s *Defeat at Gallipoli* (1985), Michael Hickey’s *Gallipoli* (1995), and Les Carlyon’s *Gallipoli* (2001). These works, admirable in their own strengths, are again generally confined to the campaign from the Allied perspective. They deal in varying degrees with the Turkish situation but again from the well-used secondary sources and remain removed by time from primary Turkish documentation of 1914–15.

Kevin Fewster and V. and H. Basarin’s *A Turkish View of Gallipoli: Çanakkale* (1985, 2nd edition, 2003) laid claim to be the first book written in English to represent the campaign from the Ottoman side. The book provides a general overview from the perspective of Australian Turkish immigrant writers and does not claim to be more than this. It is useful in broadening the appreciation of events into the multi-national area but, without accessing primary Turkish sources, is far from being a comprehensive historical study of the Ottoman Army at Gallipoli. Its sources for military actions rely preponderantly on
previously used secondary sources, especially memoirs of German commanders.\textsuperscript{11}

By the time Moorehead wrote his book in 1956 the Turkish General Staff had expanded their early short history into a 3-volume official history using some documents held in their archives and the Allied sources stated above.\textsuperscript{12} This official history, never wholly translated into English, only used around fifty or so documents from Turkish archives. Scholars who have examined this history comment that it adds little to accounts already mentioned even though it has been referenced in these accounts. Preliminary research for the present project has now provided English translations of the primary source TGSA documents used in the production of the Turkish ‘official’ history.

Two latter day exceptions, which refer to primary Turkish sources are Tim Travers’ \textit{Gallipoli 1915} (Tempus, 2001), and Harvey Broadbent’s \textit{Gallipoli, The Fatal Shore} (2005, Viking Books, Sydney). Both of the works use limited access gained to the Turkish General Staff Archives in Ankara to examine particular aspects of the campaign from the Turkish perspective using original documents. The benefit of their access, albeit limited, was that this primary source of Turkish Gallipoli documentation was broadly revealed in the military history field for the first time.
Travers cites 58 original Ottoman 5th Army documents in his endnotes including fourteen between 5th Army Chief of Staff, Kâzim and Enver or Supreme Command, several between Liman von Sanders and Enver or Supreme Command, one or two from or about Mustafa Kemal and four relating to prisoners of war interrogations.  

The present author (Broadbent), in research for the pilot program referred to above produced *A Catalogue of Document Files Referring to the Gallipoli Campaign held in the Turkish General Staff Archives in Ankara*, which follows the logging system of the archives. The major significance of the Gallipoli Centenary Turkish Archives Research Project, therefore, is that it will enable the first-ever comprehensive investigation of Turkish primary sources relating to the Gallipoli Campaign. On completion it will provide the first detailed and comprehensive body of knowledge and understanding of the Ottoman Army’s responses to the allied landings and activities throughout the Campaign. The project is breaking new ground, not just in Australian and British military history studies, but also in global First World War studies in that it promises an extensive and detailed survey of the Ottoman 5th Army’s defence of its homeland in the First World War.

The existence of hitherto unseen documentation in the Turkish General Staff Archives and the other archival sources mentioned represent significant finds in the historiography of the Campaign. With them assessments of Anzac and
Allied performance will have a firmer historical basis. They promise to provide new facts and facets about the campaign, particularly relating to Ottoman military activity and its impact on the events, explanations for unresolved issues, the investigation of factors and topics hitherto unexamined such as aerial warfare, intelligence gathering and prisoners of war. Further, over and above battlefield events per se preliminary research also indicates that information for the analysis of cultural and behavioural elements and reactions to battle is also present.

The Pilot Program also indicated that the historiography of the Gallipoli Campaign would benefit from placing priority on certain elements of the Ottoman Turkish involvement in the campaign and which, at present, are greatly under-represented in the existing data and literature. It indicated there is ample information in the target documentation on elements offering new perspectives, both in terms of military studies and trans-national/cross-cultural history.

**Military Perspectives**

Initial document sampling suggests that appreciation of various campaign military issues will be greatly enhanced. Such factors include the strategic thinking and decision-making of the Ottoman commanders and the impact of Ottoman responses and tactics on the outcomes of battles, bombardments and casualties. New and more detailed information of Ottoman army activity is
indicated, especially when related to seminal episodes such as the Turkish attack of 19 May, 24 May Ceasefire, the battles of Lone Pine, Krithia, Conkbayiri (Chunuk Bair) and Suvla etc.\textsuperscript{15}

Documents have appeared that relate to assessments of Turkish and German organisational efficiency, command, strategy and soldiering and their impact on outcomes. Assessments arising from such documents will allow more detailed analyses when balanced against other elements such as the geography of the battlefield and the ability of the Allies in their planning and execution of offensive and defensive actions.

One exciting area of military history emerging from the archives is the information relating to the use of aircraft and the nature of early aerial warfare at Gallipoli, especially the nature and effectiveness of German and Turkish aircraft use at a very early stage in military aircraft technological development. Documents are appearing relating the use of aircraft for reconnaissance, mapping, and bombing \textit{sort\'ées}. This usage appears to be more extensive than previous accounts have been able to establish. One document contains aerial reconnaissance and other observational reports, dated variously from 23 March 1915 to 28 August 1915, coming to Ottoman 5th Army Command. It relates activities of enemy aircraft, secret actions of the Ottoman forces, details of Turkish aerial bombardments, Allied balloon positions and actions against them, casualties among Ottoman detachments,
the use of signal and flare guns and states an observed increase in Allied
activity in the Gulf of Saros.16

Documents detailing aerial reconnaissance are leading towards a fuller
understanding of the application, methodology, impact and effectiveness of
Ottoman military intelligence at Gallipoli when combined with documents
describing field observations, prisoner interrogation and espionage activity,
wireless interceptions and ciphering. Documents relating to the latter
intelligence factors are also appearing in the research. For example,
statements about and by Allied prisoners of war were revealed in the Pilot
Program research promising a new element in documenting the struggle.17

Other files appear to show documents that will allow the assessment of likely
Allied success (or failure, as we know with hindsight) and the level of
Ottoman confidence. Some documents, for example, show periods high and
low morale amongst senior ranks as well as periods of concern about
ammunition supply and the vulnerability level of the Dardanelles Straits. The
following document serves as one illustration.

Cryptograph sent by the Commander of the 5th Army,
Liman Von Sanders on 9 June 1331 (22 June 1915)
To His Eminence, the Commander-in-Chief, Enver Pasha

I would like to provide details of yesterday’s battle. In the Southern Group Front, the units starting from the right are as follows; firstly there are the 11th, 7th and 2nd Divisions and the 6th and 12th Divisions are behind them as reinforcements. For five days, the enemy have been relentlessly shelling the critical sector of the skirmisher line of the 2nd Division with their artillery and howitzers. Yesterday, at 05:00, they intensified their fire, together with naval shelling. After they annihilated the area that they wished to capture with shelling, their forces made a quick dash and captured some of our trenches. Yesterday, after reciprocal attacks, these trenches changed hands many times and towards the evening, only 100 metres of the trenches was in enemy hands. Tonight, after a charge, we captured those trenches as well. Thankfully, we are now completely back in our previous positions. Our casualties are very high. An intelligence report will be provided later. During yesterday’s battle, the enemy only used diversionary tactics on the 11th and 7th Divisions’ Front. For some time, especially lately, the enemy have been utilising these tactics. This means that they expend ample amounts of ammunition and risk very few soldiers. On the other hand, we are risking many soldiers and using very
little ammunition. The ammunition we expend is nothing near the number of naval and howitzer shells the enemy is expending. To satisfy our curiosity, we counted 150 shells per minute fired by the enemy. Last night, as usual General Bronzart* was informed of the ammunition stocks. This didn’t include yesterday’s figures. Yesterday, despite being given 3,000 land shells, the Southern Group required more. The reason for this is that we are trying to respond to the enemy’s heavy artillery with land shells. I have already informed you of the state of our heavy artillery ammunition. In general, the issue of ammunition is extremely worrying. The heroism of the Army is praiseworthy and the morale is high. However, this needs to be maintained and kept high. This is only possible if we can have the same amount of ammunition as the enemy has. The Army has to know how much ammunition it will receive. Would Your Eminence kindly explain your views on this matter, especially on the ammunition issue. I state that the Army will not fail to perform its duty, as it has done so far.

*Translator’s note: The Ottoman transliteration of the word “General Bronzart” is most likely to be “General Bienhold”.18
In military terms, the documents offer further to provide more accurate information than presently exists about the level of measures required to defeat the Turks and the adequacy or inadequacy of actual operations undertaken. Data relating to various other aspects such as soldier and command morale, the use and effect of heavy artillery by both sides and Ottoman army operational events associated with the main battles are also appearing in documents.

**Trans-national and cross-cultural perspectives**

The sampling further suggests that adequate data will be forthcoming that can provide analyses of behaviour and outcomes related to cultural factors and differences between the warring armies including the following:

- The interaction between both sides of the conflict generally, in specific episodes and situations and the extent to which cultural, religious and other socially related phenomena affect the conduct of soldiers from both sides and their attitudes to factors such as authority, discipline, hardship, and suffering.

- Attitudes and reactions of troops from both sides towards their role and identity as members of imperial armies, their status as colonial or home country troops, their activity and behaviour within and beyond the nation-state.

- The taking and treatment of prisoners of war on both Allied and Ottoman sides and thus establishing the truth about prisoners of war
in the Gallipoli Campaign. Some prisoners of war statements sampled reflect, for example, on their correct treatment by their captors. The issue here would be whether these accounts are at odds with other previously published accounts that are seemingly prejudiced against the Ottomans. Also some early documents provide details of Allied prisoners of war captured, which could revise the existing information, e.g. on 7 August ‘our soldiers captured 108 Allied soldiers’ and ‘we captured 62 allied soldiers with one major and two lieutenants’.

- Comparisons between both sides with references to soldiers’ relationship and contacts between the war front and the home front.
- The effect of the campaign on civilians in the war zone and the Dardanelles region generally, including how the events affected the indigenous population, the extent of dislocation, the loss of a significant male population etc.
- The level of understanding of the Ottoman Army at Gallipoli by British planners and how far there was under-estimation of the Ottomans, and the situation vice-versa.

**Examples of initial documentation and matters arising**

One of the most intriguing of the new perspectives offered by the Pilot Program sampling is the intelligence gathering operations of the Ottomans and Germans. The files presently show that these activities were centred on
discrete sources of information—aerial reconnaissance, ground observations and infiltration of enemy positions, prisoner of war interrogations and foreign embassy communications from espionage and other observational activity. There are possibly other sources.

Aerial reconnaissance reports have provided one of the initially surprising facts; firstly in the amount and regularity of reconnaissance carried out—some files show daily flight reports; secondly, in the thoroughness and effectiveness of the information being gathered; thirdly, in the clues the reports give about the modus operandi of the Turks and Germans, both in military aerial activity that was in its infancy and in the organization of their relationship as allies in the field. One document serves as an example. It is a report of an observational flight of 3 June 1915 to clarify the positions of allied ships. The pilot is a German Second Lieutenant, with the name Funk Hanzen, the observer an Ottoman Army Second Lieutenant, Salih Refet—men equal in rank, each with defined responsibilities. Salih’s neat, clear hand-drawn sketch map is attached, showing the flight path, positions and types of all allied ships and landing piers.

Departure 5.00 Return 7.30 Maximum altitude 1850

No balloon ship could be seen in front of Ariburnu (Anzac Cove) or at Seddülbahir (V Beach, Cape Helles)
There was one hospital ship and one transport ship in front of Ariburnu. With the sunlight all around us the transport ship appeared black and a whiteness was observed above it. In this situation the impression that it was a balloon ship was given to us. A bomb was dropped and it fell close to the ship.

At this time the aircraft took up a very effective position opposite the enemy’s main camp: on quitting this, another bomb was dispatched. This fell right into a reserve trench on the enemy’s right flank.

In order to gain useful and efficient information another reasonable circuit was made. When we were above Hain Tepe (Plugge’s Plateau) we took some flak but without effect. Whilst recceying the enemy position above Seddülbahir the weather became very tricky. There were bullet holes on a wing.

At Seddülbahir boats were taking something to (or from) a transport ship tied up to the pier. Most likely it was food. All piers are shown on the sketch. . . .

The whole of the enemy naval force appears to be at Imbros.
Second Lieutenant Salih’s aerial reconnaissance map, 3 June 1915, showing his route, with German translations of place names. A key to the map’s markings in German was also made.²¹
Both officers sign the report. This report alone is interesting in the number of factors it reveals—Ottoman-German co-operative protocol, techniques and nature of aerial reconnaissance (i.e. that *sortées* also doubled as bombing raids), and the ability to provide accurate updated information on enemy deployments). However, when we find it is only one of many, often daily, reports and observational maps, we can attest to the efficiency of this aspect of the 5th Army’s intelligence gathering and early use of aircraft. When, further, we find such information supplemented by reports from foreign embassies then we can begin to see how the Ottomans’ efficiency works on a broader front.

3 May 1915

Received in code from Rome by the Ministry of War

According to the information received . . . it is understood that a new French force consisting of twenty thousand territorial colonial soldiers most of which are from Senegal, has departed from Toulon towards Çanakkale.

Military Attaché Mumtaz
Documents exist that provide information about the level of intelligence related to the landings obtained by the Ottomans before the 25 April. The following telegram sent from the Straits Command at Çanakkale on 23 April to Ottoman High Command relates an update on the deployment of British and French forces just prior to the landings.

23 April 1915

Lieutenant Seidler has flown over Lemnos today. In the aforementioned Mondros (Mudros) Harbour the English (battleship) *Queen Elizabeth*, 2 *Duke of Edinbrough* ship and the French armoured cruiser, *Patri*, another battleship, two two-funnelled small war ships, two gunboats and a Russian ship, and in addition, one aircraft ship, two repair ships, three hospital ships, twenty-six large troop carriers and further, six plain ships, twenty-seven coal ships, six of them being French and twenty being English, and three headquarter tents have been seen on the shore with about 100 to 120 tents in total. As for Bozcaada (Tenedos), there are five enemy war ships and two ships in front of Çanakkale of *Agamemnon* type. Could not determine the number of mines and minesweepers. Yesterday a small cruiser has fired at Intepe.²³
The documents also promise to add crucial information, not hitherto fully appreciated or reported, and that raise interesting further lines of enquiry. This coded message sent by Straits Commander, Djevat Pasha, early on the morning of 25 April as the landings are taking place.

Cipher from the Straits Forts to the Proxy of Supreme Command.

Number: 3348  Drawn Up 6 a.m.  Arrived 7 a.m. Presented 7.10 a.m.

The weather is slightly foggy, the sea is smooth and beginning from five a.m. three battleships have been continuously bombarding the surroundings of Seddülbahir and Hisarlık and although about seventeen or eighteen ships can be seen in the distance, their type cannot be distinguished because of the fog. Heavy artillery sounds are also coming from the Kabatepe zone.

12 Nisan 1331/25 April 1915

Commander Djevat

Apart from this document indicating the level of appreciation of Djevat Pasha, the Straits Forts Commander at Çanakkale at this crucial time, it has not been widely understood previously that fog was present around the
Peninsula at the time of the landings. Further research will determine the relevance of this, but another piece of

Other pieces fill out the picture further. The following coded message marks the moment that Djevat Pasha realises and reports to War Minister Enver Pasha in Istanbul that the Allied amphibious invasion is seriously under way and marks the positions of the big Allied ships.

The Office of the Commander-in-Chief of the Sultan’s Ottoman Army

Branch Number 3645

Cryptograph sent from the Fort to the Office of the Commander-in-Chief

Drawn Up 11.00  Arrived 11.40  Presented 11.55

Queen Elizabeth, Agamemnon, Lord Nelson, Majestic, Jonquil, Swiftsure(?) and another unidentified 9 battleships and 17 small torpedo boats are located by the entrance of the Straits and inside the entrance. The majority of the enemy fire is directed towards the vicinities of Seddülbahir and Hisarlik and to a lesser extent at Intepe. Whenever they are in range, we return intense fire. The enemy opened up haphazard artillery fire towards Turgut, which was situated off Maidos. I submit for your information, from communications received
via radio and through our own observations, the impression given is that the landing at Seddülbahir is continuing.

12 Nisan 1331 (25 April 1915)  
Fortification  
Commander  
Commander Djevat²⁵

Further still, the discovery of interrogation reports of allied prisoners adds grist to the mill of understanding Ottoman intelligence gathering, but also promises to reveal a more objective and fuller account of Allied prisoners of the Turks than presently exists. One document among many states that:

13 August 1915

... Both of our reconnaissance units located in the bush land ... have attacked the enemy and each of the units returned with two prisoners. According to these prisoners’ statements, the enemy was both morally and physically demoralized and in addition to the scarcity of food, due to lack of water they were forced to drink their own blood by biting their wrists ...²⁶
A number of files are catalogued as containing prisoner interrogations and matter relating to prisoners of war. These offer to improve our information relating to Allied prisoners of the Ottomans substantially as existing material is thin and emanates from the Allied side in the shape of a few memoirs of p.o.w.s. Searches by Travers in the TGSA produced samples of prisoner interrogation reports that are illuminating and provide an enticement to find more. The following extract illustrates the kind of material contained within these documents.

According to his interrogation, Fawkes and the 1/5th Norfolks engaged in a fierce fight with the Turks, which destroyed his unit. Fawkes was left alive with his Sergeant, Varley, and Fawkes ordered Varley to advance with him for another 100 yards. Varley fell, but Fawkes continued on by himself. Then Fawkes also fell, shot in the chest. When he came to, the stars were shining, and the Turks were carrying him. He again lost consciousness, and this time when he came to, he was in a Turkish trench, apparently built into a parapet of sandbags, with a Turk resting his rifle on Fawkes’ head.27

Travers also cites interrogations of Lieutenant John Still, Captain Derek Elliott, and former British vice-consul at Çanakkale, Lieutenant Palmer, Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve, Naval Staff.28 The latter came near to being shot as
a spy, but seems, under interrogation, to have given disinformation to his captors about the landing places.

The Catalogue of Documents relating to the Gallipoli Campaign Held in the Turkish General Staff Archives shows the following selection of files to contain prisoner-related information.

File 539/2104 Intelligence. Reports of shore observations of British and French units and attacks in the Gallipoli area and prisoners’ statements.

File 540/ND 2107 Intelligence. French units positions according to prisoners’ statements.

File 3435/ND 11 Intelligence. Prisoners’ depositions, names and some photographs

File 3435/ND14 Intelligence. Documents describing enemy slain and prisoners taken in 5th Army area

It remains to reveal more and build up a full picture of the Ottomans’ approach to the use of prisoners for intelligence matters and subsequent actions on information obtained as well as their incarceration, treatment and
Work in progress by researchers in Turkish sources on documenting Gallipoli prisoners of war are indicating grounds exist for revision of existing perceptions.\textsuperscript{30}

The rare first-hand contemporary accounts of operations and notes on the strategic thinking and decision-making of the Ottoman commanders are helping us begin to develop informed ideas on the calibre of Turkish and German organisation, command, and soldiering and fuller details of responsive actions taken by the Ottoman army.

Numerous battlefield signals, messages and reports are contained within the TGSA documents. The following document sent by the 3rd Corps Commander, Esat Pasha, to 5th Army H.Q. at Gelibolu (Gallipoli), cites the units deployed in resisting the Allied landing at W Beach at Cape Helles \textit{(Tekke Burnu was the local Turkish name of the location)}. Interestingly, despite mentioning heavy losses, the report gives an overly optimistic account of their level of success. We can judge this from the Allied accounts that their W Beach landing (Lancashire Landing) was made good after initial set-backs and stiff Ottoman resistance.

\textbf{The Staff of the 5th Army}

\textbf{Intelligence}

\textbf{Dispatch official and origin:} Sadi, Maltepe
Date of dispatch: 12 Nisan 1331 (25 April 1915) at 03.20.

Place of reception and receiving official: Gallipoli, Abdulhalim.

Date of reception: 12.2.1331 (25.4.1915) at 04.00.

No: 3390

To the 5th Army Command

With the last heroic bayonet attack by the 7th Company of the 26th Regiment on Tekke Cove around Tekkeburnu, the enemy forces were driven into the sea and we inflicted many casualties. Unfortunately, the Company Commander and the other officers died and the Company suffered many casualties. A battalion of the 25th Regiment was sent as reinforcements to the area. The 9th Division Command reported that the 25th Regiment, along with two battalions and an artillery battery, were sent forward to attack the enemy that landed at Zigindere (Gully Ravine)

Commander of the 3rd Army Corps

Brigadier Esat

This document further reveals that only one battalion was available to the Ottomans and deployed as reinforcements at the X and W Beaches to stop the
advance of the British at this point after the landing. When combined with Allied accounts of the same events, documents such as this allow the fullest possible account of the action and suggest that, because the British had great superiority of numbers, there must be other explanations than force strength for their failure to advance beyond the perimeter of the coast at this point.

The document also gives details and the strength of the reserves sent to oppose the British landing at Y Beach (the area is named as Zigindere by the Turks and Gully Ravine by the British). Now that we know an artillery battery was sent with a largish force to oppose the British Y Beach force, which had no artillery in reply, no entrenchments, and was completely isolated, it gives greater clarity to the British decision to evacuate the Y Beach force to avoid a rout, a wastage of effort and men to allow a more advantageous deployment as support for the main force to the south. (The situation surrounding the evacuation of Y Beach has more complexities than space allows here being also associated with poor communications between the Y Beach landing force and the General in charge of the British landings at Helles, Hunter-Weston, and his negative attitude to effecting a landing at Y Beach in the first place). In addition, the document raises the issue of the Ottomans’ relatively strong deployment of the reserve 25th Regiment along with a battery. It is well-documented that 5th Army Supreme Commander von Sanders’ overall defensive plan for the Peninsula involved the main defensive force being kept in reserve locations until the main landing places
had become clear. We can now cite this document as showing the plan in operation and demonstrating its effectiveness.

The sampling of documents has been cursory so far but results promise much detail to enable a comprehensive analysis of how the Ottoman 5th Army at Gallipoli was able to prevail. Further, the sampling is already demonstrating that, when the Turkish archival documents are seen alongside the Allied records, a woeful underestimation of the Ottoman Army at Gallipoli is apparent. The picture emerging of the erstwhile enemy is in sharp relief. It is fresh, full of nuances, as one would expect of war, which is ever a slippery path to take, never simple or straight. And the rest of the story of Gallipoli promises to be as much a mix of adventure and misadventure as the incomplete versions we have had for over 90 years.

Appendix
Existing Major Published References to Ottoman 5th Army activity at Gallipoli 1915

Books

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Kadri Perk, Çanakkale Savaşları Tarihi [History of the Çanakkale Battles], in Askeri Mecmuası [The Military Journal], Ankara, (1939), Turkish.

Otto Liman von Sanders, Five Years in Turkey, 1st English Language edition, US Naval Institute, Annapolis, (1927)

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Turkish General Staff, The History of the Turkish Armed Forces; Turkish Campaigns in the First World War, vol. 5, books 1, 2 and 3 2nd edn. Turkish
General Staff Military History and Strategic Institute Historical Publications, Ankara, (1993), Turkish.


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**Journals, Articles and Papers**


Peter Doyle & Matthew Bennet, *Military Geography: The Influence of Terrain in the Outcomes of the Gallipoli Campaign*, from The Gallipoli Campaign


M. Onen, (n.d.) *Birinci Dunya Harbi ve Çanakkale Bogazi*, Istanbul. (Turkish)


Tim Travers, Birten Celik, ‘Not one of them ever came back’: *What happened to the 1/5 Norfolk Battalion on 12 August 1915 at Gallipoli*, in Journal of Military History no. 66, April 2002.
Endnotes

1 From a count in the bibliographies of 15 major publications on the Gallipoli Campaign, Turkish publications (including books, articles, conference and symposium papers) and 16 German publications. See H. Yildirim, Çanakkale Savaşıları Bibliografyası [A Bibliography of the Gallipoli Campaign], Turkish General Staff Naval Forces Command Publications, Ankara. 1995

2 Turkish General Staff Archives (TGSA) File 3402/ND13/Item 15

3 Bean’s papers in the Australian War Memorial, AWM 38.

4 AWM 38 3DRL 8042 Item 20

5 Kâzım (often written as Kiazim) was Chief of Staff to Ottoman 5th Army commander, Liman von Sanders during the campaign.


7 ibid, page 370
Extracts from *A Short History of Turkish Operations In The Great War*, Historical Section, General Staff, Constantinople. Translated version AWM 38 3DRL 8042, Item 41.

Kannengiesser’s account has been used widely by Gallipoli Campaign authors, but contains no document references and reads as a memoir. H. Kannengiesser, *Gallipoli; Bedeutung und Verlauf der Kempe, 1915*, Berlin, (1927) and *The Campaign in Gallipoli*, Hutchinson and Co, London, 1938.


Namely von Sanders, Mühlmann, Kannengiesser. See Bibliography.

Turkish General Staff, *The History of the Turkish Armed Forces: Turkish Campaigns in the First World War*, vol 5 Books 1-3 (Turkish)


TGSA Files 23/ND11, 24/ND114, 24/ND116, 180/ND774-779 Catalogue description: *Operations*

TGSA File 3426/ND116 Catalogue description: *Administration. Discussions with the British relating to instructions with the aim of instigating a burial truce.*

TGSA File 3402/ND13.

TGSA File 3433/ND8 Catalogue Description: *Intelligence. 5th Army Command daily battle and observation reports*, TGSA File 3435/ND11 Catalogue description: *Intelligence. Prisoners’ depositions, names and some photographs*

TGSA File No: 181/ND 778/Item 105-1
The Pilot Program established there are at least fifteen files containing prisoner of war related information.

Research project *Our Forgotten Anzacs: The Experience of the Gallipoli Prisoners of War* by Jennifer Lawless, University of Western Sydney. Work in progress.

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