



## Background

### Origins of the Gallipoli plan

By early 1915, it was clear that this was going to be a long, hard war. It was also clear that the western front had effectively become a siege, with French and British troops trying to drive the Germans off the land they had taken. The politicians and the military began to look at campaigns that might get results, rather than a terrible stalemate.

Winston Churchill, the government minister in charge of the Royal Navy, suggested an attack on the Dardanelles. The Dardanelles are the narrow straits of water giving access to the Sea of Marmara. Controlling the straits would give the Allies several possible advantages:

The Royal Navy could attack Constantinople, capital city of Germany's ally, Turkey. The Navy could attack Turkish industry, which was mainly based around the Sea of Marmara. Greece and Bulgaria might join the war on the side of the Allies against Turkey. British and French merchant ships could send vital arms, equipment and other supplies to their ally, Russia. In January 1915, the Russian commander, Duke Nicholas, was asking for allied help because the Germans were pushing his forces backward.

On 13 January 1915, Churchill put forward a plan for a Royal Navy attack on the straits. Senior naval officers, including the most senior naval officer, Admiral Fisher, were opposed to the idea. Churchill had the support of the War Minister, Lord Kitchener, and got the go-ahead for the plan.

Churchill took some trouble to get French support. The French naval minister, Jean Augagneur, agreed to provide some ships, even though his own military commanders opposed the plan. Apparently he felt that the French should be involved so that they would gain their share of the credit if it were a success.

Many military commanders felt that it was a risky attempt to get some favourable headlines. They questioned what the Navy was supposed to achieve once it broke through the straits. They were concerned that unless the army took control of the land on either side of the straits, it would be very difficult to get supplies to the ships. Admiral Fisher was also alarmed at the removal of ships from the North Sea for a venture he considered to be not worth the risk.

### Attack on the straits

From 19-25 February, French and Royal Navy ships bombarded the Turkish forts at the edge of the straits. They also landed marines ashore to destroy Turkish forts and guns. These actions were relatively successful, but they were only against the weaker Turkish fortifications. The highly mobile Turkish field guns were untouched and the main defences of the straits were still unchallenged.

On 8 March, the Navy decided to force its way through the straits. Admiral Carden, the reluctant author of the attack plan, collapsed from nervous exhaustion and was replaced by Admiral Robeck. The attack was disastrous. As a result of mines, the British and French lost 3 battle-ships and 3 more were crippled.



This meant that the action would now have to be mainly an army campaign. This was not part of the original plan and the arrangements for a large land force were put together in a great hurry. The French supplied around 18,000 French colonial troops. The main British Empire force was about 75,000 strong. A large number of these were inexperienced Australian and New Zealand (ANZAC) troops. There were Indian, British and Irish troops as well.

## Invasion of Gallipoli

The initial attack took place on 25 April. The British overall commander, Sir Ian Hamilton, was fortunate to choose landing places that were relatively weakly defended. Despite this, losses were very heavy. The Turkish troops were trained and led by German officers and performed just as well as German troops on the western front. This took the British by surprise. It was also clear that the Allies had little information about the landscape of Gallipoli before the attack. They did not realise how difficult it was.

The ANZACs under Sir William Birdwood managed to set up a base at ANZAC Cove and Hamilton managed to take control of Cape Helles. During May and June of 1915, Allied forces under General Sir Aylmer Hunter Weston tried three times to capture more land on Gallipoli by attacking Krithia. Each attack was driven back with heavy casualties.

The Gallipoli campaign was under-resourced and had not been properly planned. A new Dardanelles Committee was set up. It included Churchill, but not in a senior role. He had already been humiliated when Admiral Fisher resigned in protest over the campaign after the failure of the Navy attack in March. The new committee sent 3 divisions (about 45,000 men) of reinforcements to Hamilton – not a popular decision with commanders on the western front. The Turks were also reinforcing their troops.

In August 1915, the ANZACs attacked from ANZAC Cove and Hunter Weston's troops attacked from Helles. The new troops under Sir Frederick Stopford landed at Suvla Bay. Hunter Weston's forces again suffered heavy casualties while Birdwood's ANZACs performed well. Stopford's landing was a great success, but he failed to push forward quickly enough and the Turks were able to pull back to new defences and stop him.

## Stalemate

The Gallipoli campaign became a stalemate. It was trench warfare again as neither side could dislodge the other. The Allied forces were dug in, but their enemies were mostly on high ground above them. Turkish attempts to drive the Allies out failed, but the Allies could make no headway.

Conditions were terrible; heat and lack of water were major problems. The Allies were short of ammunition. Their losses were running at about 40,000 casualties and disease was rampaging through the troops. They held on until October 1915, but faith in the Gallipoli campaign was fading. Hamilton was criticised in the Australian newspapers and had little support in the British government. He was replaced by General Sir Charles Monro.

Monro immediately recommended abandoning the campaign. Lord Kitchener disagreed and travelled to Gallipoli himself. Once he arrived there and saw the situation for himself, he immediately agreed and the evacuation began in December. Monro organised the evacuation well.



Casualties were very few as Monro took great trouble to confuse the Turks so that they did not realise what was happening. The evacuation was probably the most efficient aspect of the campaign.

	<b>Died</b>	<b>Wounded</b>	<b>Total</b>
Australia	8,709	19,441	28,150
New Zealand	2,701	4,852	7,553
Britain	21,255	52,230	73,485
France (estimated)	10,000	17,000	27,000
India	1,358	3,421	4,779
Newfoundland	49	93	142
Total Allies	44,072	97,037	141,109
Turkey	86,692	164,617	251,309

A government committee investigated the campaign, but its conclusions were vague and no figures were released at the time. By this time, Churchill had resigned from the government. Sir Ian Hamilton was not given another senior command, although several of the other commanders did take up important posts on the western front.



**Image 1**

Part of a note on whether to publish the papers on the campaign, July 1918

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## Links

### Gallipoli: The Drama of the Dardanelles

<http://www.imw.org.uk/online/gallipoli/index.htm>

The Imperial War Museum provides documents and information on the campaign.

### The Gallipoli Front – An Overview

[http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/overview\\_gf.htm](http://www.firstworldwar.com/battles/overview_gf.htm)

This article on the Gallipoli campaign gives plenty of detail and useful links to profiles of commanders etc.

### Gallipoli Campaign

<http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/Gallery/Anzac/galli-poli/>

This is the New Zealand government website on the Gallipoli campaign.

### Australians at Gallipoli

<http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/5environment/index.html>

This is the official Australian site on the Gallipoli campaign.

### Gallipoli Campaign Timeline

<http://user.glo.be/~snelders/timeline.htm>

Use this for reference and checking dates.