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The Ottoman Army response in the Gallipoli Campaign: From English translations of documents in Turkish Military Archives and other sources by the Gallipoli Centenary Research Project.

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In my paper presented at Australian War Memorial Conference August 2010¹ I outlined how Turkish documents revealed and translated into English by the Gallipoli Centenary Research Project (GCRP)², which is an Australian government supported program, have enabled an examination of the situation faced by Ottoman commanders and their responses, especially those in the field at Gallipoli. These documents, all of which are now translated into English as part of the GCRP, include:

Turkish General Staff (TGS) Archival³ material revealed by the project by courtesy of the administration and staff at the Turkish General Staff Military Archives in Ankara (ATASE).

Other revealing documents as cited in the footnotes, some of which appear in the Appendix of the Turkish General Staff Official History of WW1 Vol 5, Books 1, 2 and 3, which covers the Gallipoli Campaign

the Ataturk Archive, Presidential Archives, Ankara

the very detailed Collected Works of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (Vol 1)

the Memoirs of Esat Pasha

the Memoirs of former senior 5th Army officers such as Lt. Colonels Cemil Conk and Fahrettin Altay, amongst others.

¹ Broadbent, 2012, Paper, ‘‘No room for any lapses in concentration’’ (General Esat Pasha, 11 August 1915): Ottoman Commanders’ responses to the August Offensive in the Anzac sector’, Australian War Memorial Conference ‘‘A Ridge Too Far’’, 5 August 2010. To be published in Conference papers, 2012.

² The Gallipoli Centenary Research Project is administered by Macquarie University’s Department of Modern History, Politics and International Relations, in partnership with the Australian War Memorial with funding assistance from the Australian Research Council. The project, managed by the author, is researching documents held in Turkish archives including the Turkish General Staff Archives, the Ottoman Archives, the Presidential Archives, the Red Crescent Archives as well as private collections and Turkish publications.

³ *Türk Genel Kurmay Arşivleri (TGK)*

the Ottoman Archives, Prime Ministerial Archives, Istanbul

the Red Crescent Archives, Ankara

Altogether the GCRP has now translated over 2,500 pages of Gallipoli related Turkish material into English, about 1000 of which are *primary* source documents from TGS ATASE archives, the Atatürk collection from the Presidential archives and ATASE, the Ottoman and Red Crescent archives and some private collections. This paper serves only as a progress account of the kinds of findings the research has uncovered so far with general citations and references only. A complete collection of translated documents with full citations and references will be published in some form, probably electronic, in the centenary year of 2015 along with a comprehensive account of Ottoman operations at Gallipoli contained in a new history.

The GCRP has also translated into English the three books of Volume 5 of Turkish Official History of the First World War the starting point for studying the Ottoman response to the British, French and Anzac actions at Gallipoli. These books use specific documents held in the TGS ATASE archives but these documents are summarised and specific interpretations are applied. Apart from the very useful and detailed maps that chronicle the positioning and general movements of Ottoman army units throughout the campaign, the books do not supply the level of textual detail for the Ottoman response that the British and Australians possess for their own actions.

The British and Australian official histories of Aspinall-Oglander and Charles Bean respectively provide extraordinary detail and minutiae about the Anzac units and their movements, losses and challenges, particularly Bean's. Moreover, subsequent studies over the last 90 years have added substantially to the cannon of works on the Allied side. But we have never had a similar exhaustive story from the other side of the hill. The GCRP translated documents are now providing this. And by doing so they will also provide Turks as well as English readers with a more detailed, nuanced and, I would argue, accurate account.

The GCRP researched documents will do this as they are revealing a range of issues and details of events concerning the Gallipoli Campaign, which are adding substantially to the

Turkish account of the campaign as it appears in the Turkish General Staff Official History of World War 1, Volume 5, Books 1, 2 and 3. The kind of details include, amongst other items:

High and Lower Ottoman command messages and orders and reactions to orders

particular orders in response to enemy actions

details of specific actions on the front line and in the trenches at various times

reports of enemy front line movements and those in the rear (i.e. observation results)

successful local gains and failures

ammunition and human supply issues e.g. shortages and methods of supply

artillery positions and movements

information about prisoners of war taken and the results of questioning (which can lead to the drawing of conclusions about enemy intentions and tactics by commanders)

the results of intelligence gathering by land and aerial reconnaissance (often recorded on sketches and maps) and even espionage

details of human and munitions supply

In this paper I am concerned with both what the documents reveal about the Ottoman commanders' responses to the Allied actions and also what kind of details the documents reveal about the subsequent events brought about by the commanders' decisions and orders.

As to Ottoman commanders, high, middle and low, in my 2010 paper I stated that the documents revealed a number of issues confronting Ottoman High Command prior to and at the onset of the August Offensive. For example, since the disastrous events of the Ottoman 19 May attack the 5th Army Command mind-set had changed to one reliant on defence rather than offence, as it was realised that losses in defensive actions were far less serious than those of offensive actions. But, it remained the case that energetic defence was required and

offensive retaliation was frequently seen as an instrument of defence in itself—thus the containment of the enemy at all costs.

Issues such as this particular one and others different also confronted the Ottoman High Command at the outset of the naval action in February and March 1915 and the land campaign in April 1915.

When we look at the opening of the land war on the Gallipoli Peninsula in the last week of April 1915, the documents accessed by the GCRP support the Turkish Official History account that Liman von Sanders was obsessed with the idea of the Allies landing their main force in the Gulf of Saros and not further south in the places where they did actually land. Von Sander's deployments of two divisions here reflect this conviction. General Hamilton, greatly criticised for his failures at Gallipoli, actually, whether by accident or design, caused von Sanders to maintain his belief in a Saros landing, by staging the Royal Naval Division feint at Saros. The sight of so many enemy ships in the Gulf of Saros was enough to stop von Sanders from immediately relocating a division down to the south to bolster the defence against the landings being reported at Ariburnu and Cape Helles. So Von Sanders belief in Saros and the Bolayir Isthmus as the key to the defence of the peninsula played into Hamilton's hands. Hamilton's Royal Naval Division feint produced a major effect in that it gave the invading Anzacs and British valuable breathing space to establish their landings without the pressure of superior numbers of Ottoman troops to overcome, or even to have to face in a determined counter-attack.

Illustration 1: Caption: 3rd Army Corps Field Sketch showing battlefield movements on 25 April. (By courtesy of Turkish General Staff Archives)

One interesting primary source document revealed is a sketch map of the Anzac landings drawn a couple of days after the landing, showing the immediate movements of units on the first day. This map alongside other documents illustrate that as events turned out, in fact, the Allies failed to take the advantage given to them by Von Sander's Saros obsession and deployment and made no progress against the depleted forces of Esat Pasha's 3rd Corps (27 Regiment, followed by 19 Division) desperately trying to establish a line of defence, west of Kocadere on the Sarı Bayır and Kemalyeri ridges and the two regiments of 9 Division south of Kirte (Krithia) and Alçıtepe (Achi Baba).

The ATASE TGS documents show us more, though, than this big picture situation. The documents and the *Harp Cerideler* (War Registers) particularly give us specific details of a number of important factors and events that contribute to understanding, for Australians, New Zealanders and Britons, how and why their forces failed to achieve their objectives in the campaign. And, for Turks, how their 5th Army and later supplementary forces overcame their massive problems to prevail against their invading enemy. These factors include:

conditions in the 5th Army High command and 3rd Corps command

details of attitudes of Ottoman commanders towards their German superior commanders and vice-versa, where this was applicable

details of the difficulties faced by the individual Ottoman commanders in carrying out orders to stop the enemy when they were essentially out of position from the start

details of how they tried and eventually succeeded in halting the Allied advance on the first day and subsequent days and later in the August Offensive

Some of the details make compelling reading for military specialists but also for students of the Gallipoli Campaign itself. If we look at the documents that record the events that unfolded at the Allied landings, for example, we find the documents revealing a large amount of detail not contained in any previous literature. For Australians especially the documents relating to the landings in the ANZAC sector serve to fill a major gap in our understanding of the events of 25 April 1915. The gap occurs in the information so far gathered about the Turkish forces on this day.

Illustration 2: 19 Division Order of Battle for 25 April (By courtesy of Turkish General Staff Archives)

One example is the translation of 19 Divisional War Registers, which give very detailed information about the Order of Battle and operations on the 25 April and other days for Mustafa Kemal's division.⁴ Information appears in these documents, too, which relates to some outstanding issues amongst military historians. One such issue is that surrounding the

⁴ TGK ATASE ATA-ZB, Box No. 41

supposed reasons for the delay of 19 Division's departure from Bıgalı. The divisional war register, for example, shows Mustafa Kemal leaving Bıgalı with main 19 Divisional echelons at around 8 a.m. somewhat delayed. It is generally stated by previous histories that the delay is caused by Mustafa Kemal not receiving orders from 3rd Army Corps Command to move out. The 19 Division War Register contains various messages, initially from 5.30 a.m. but coming thick and fast from about 7 a.m. that inform Mustafa Kemal of events as observed about the landings in the Ariburnu area. These outline the movements of the Anzacs.

However, there are remarks from Mustafa Kemal on the documents that he did not receive a number of the messages recorded in the war diary from 9 Division commander, Halil Sami Bey, 27 Regiment Commander Lt. Col. Şefik Bey and others detailing information about the Anzac landings at Ariburnu. This adds to our information about the issue, but whether it clarifies it satisfactorily is another matter. It remains a classic example of the need for further documentary research.

The 19 Divisional diaries do however point out significant factors as well as problems for the Ottomans on 25 April and other times. For example they detail artillery deployment and associated problems. At around 3 p.m. an entry documents an order from Mustafa Kemal that the Artillery Battalion will locate quickly to a position south of Hill 971 and Conkbayır, but that cannot be carried out because:

Due to reasons such as the defects of the battlefields of Ariburnu and Kocacimen, the inability to find tracks after Kocadere and the heavy fire of the enemy these field guns could not be exploited on this day.⁵

The 19 Divisional War Register continues to indicate and explain the successful blocking of the Anzac offensive later in the day and during the night with 77 and 72 Regiments' deployment in this capacity and the fact that they become scattered creating problems, the arrival of first reinforcements at Kilye Wharf, exact details of the 19 Division and enemy

⁵ ATASE ATA-ZB, Box No. 41, No, 3, 3-21

positions during the night and the recovery of the lost field guns. In other words details of positive and negative field operations.⁶

GCRP research has, further, translated important documents that reveal an important and much overlooked fact of the Ottoman defence of the first day. This is the credit due to the 27 Regiment, its officers and its commander Lt. Col. Şefik Bey. Firstly, there is information in a report of 27 Regiment's 11 May 1915 war register from Captain Faik of 2 Battalion/27 Regiment, written to 2 Battalion Command from Bıga Range Hospital, where he was receiving treatment for wounds received on the 25 April. Faik was the officer in command of the company positioned at Ariburnu with 3 Platoon and the first Ottoman units to face the 1500 Anzacs of their first wave. Faik's report after detailing the Anzac landings from torpedo boats, opening machine gunfire onto the shore, describes the reactions of each of the three platoons, their positions and their officers in charge. Faik's observations in the murky gloom of the dawn sees the landing boats heading in a northerly direction, to which he responds by ordering two squads from 3 Platoon under a sergeant (Ahmet) to cover the left flank and maintain contact with the centrally positioned patrol unit, which would send them down onto the Little Ariburnu, and he moves forward to the right and

. . . occupied the north Ariburnu-Ağıl Dere control position, which was now Hain Tepe [Plugge's Plateau], with the available vestiges of the division. We opened fire from 800 metres distance as the enemy began to land its troops. Standard-bearer Cem, son of Ismail, from Gelibolu, was ordered off to inform Sergeant Sadik Efendi located at the east of Ariburnu, behind Yeşil Dere [Monash Valley], to bring his battery to Kocaçimen and open fire on the enemy. A little later the aforementioned Sadik Efendi wanted to consult further about this move but there was not time to do so because of the increasing landing activities of the enemy.⁷

From the Australian point of view this information and this kind of information compliments beautifully the detailed work of Charles Bean in his Official Australian History. We can piece together the fight at Ariburnu now from both sides as it developed. We learn a lot from the above document such as some of the individuals and the units the Australians were fighting, where they were positioned, how they came to be there and the nature of the fighting, which ended in fixed bayonet combat. We even learn that had Sergeant Sadik

⁶ ATASE ATA-ZB, Box No. 41, No, 3, 3-21/22

⁷ 19 Division War Register

moved his battery to assist Faik he would probably not have lost it a little later on at Lone Pine when the Anzacs reached there.

Secondly in relation to 27 Regiment, a large amount of detail of the 27th Regiment's deployment, under its commander Lt. Col. Şefik Bey (Aker), on hearing of the enemy landing is contained in the regiment's war diary. The regimental war diary, written by Şefik Bey in 1915⁸ is the original basis for Şefik's later memoir produced in manuscript 1935 and published in Turkish in 2001.⁹ As such it contains more incidental and immediate details of events than the later, albeit invaluable memoir. This war diary documents Şefik Bey's reaction to hearing of the enemy landing, as was accurately understood in the vicinity of Ariburnu and receiving 9th Division commander Halil Samil Bey's orders to move off from 27 Regiment's location at Çamburnu to "block the enemy and categorically expel them to the sea"¹⁰

This movement of the 27th Regiment turns out to be fraught with difficulties for Şefik but his war diary and other documentation shows how it becomes the key to holding up the initial ANZAC advance after the Australian 3rd Brigade and newly-arrived 2nd Brigade under overall command of Sinclair-MacLagan from the second ridge at Lone Pine [Kanlı Sırt].

Şefik records how he ordered the regiment forward towards the Kaba Tepe area along two routes to produce a longer battle front line and cut the total marching distance in half. Also he sent one of the columns with the attached regimental machine gun company (thus bringing the first machine guns forward) via a gorge to provide cover from the view of the enemy fleet artillery and observation balloon. Şefik states that the Allied fleet's shells, when it began to send over salvos, fell harmlessly behind the columns.

Şefik describes in good detail 27 Regiment's movements, deployment places, his considerations of command, including his efforts to be thorough and gain as much intelligence as he can before engaging the enemy.¹¹ Şefik continues to explain how he makes accurate observations of the enemy's intent to advance over Kiliç Bayır [Baby 700] via his field glasses and hurries his northern most units onto Hill 165-Kemalyeri [Scrubby Knoll] and from here decides to start his attack. This is the very spot Mustafa Kemal later chooses

⁸ ibid

⁹ *Çanakkale Hatıraları* Vol 1, Arma Yayınları, İstanbul, 2001

¹⁰ 19 Division War Register documents

¹¹ ibid

as his battlefield H.Q. Şefik identifies its strategic importance first and early. He issues a detailed order to all his units for attack including positioning his four machine guns just south of Kemalyeri [Scrubby Knoll] to protect the attack. So the document indicates all units are thoroughly instructed in what they must do, down to the exact time of attack. In a telephone message to 9 Division Command at Maydos Şefik states ‘I am starting the attack between the ridges of Ariburnu and Kocadere at 07.55, by the grace of Allah. You must attach Kocaçimen Tepesi [Hill 971] to the 19th Division quickly’¹²

This kind of documentation not only gives Turks comprehensive detail of how they prevailed at Gallipoli, but also allows Australians to assess how they came to fail in achieving their objectives. If we now know the time of Şefik’s first arrival, at least by 7.40 a.m. and attack, for example, 07.55 (or later around 8.30 a.m. as per his 1935 memoir), we can use this to assess the calibre of Sinclair-MaLagan’s decision not to push on to the third ridge in force and take Scrubby Knoll (Kemalyeri), Gun Ridge and Kocadere before the 27th’s arrival. The telling fact is that Sinclair-MacLagan has around two and a half hours to advance, at least, before the 27th Regiment are in any position to counter-attack. That issue is one that is of controversial interest to Australians.

We can also use this documentation to illustrate an issue of special interest to Turks, which relating to the credit for stopping the Anzacs at Ariburnu on 25 April. Much is made, quite rightly as the documents show, of the heroism and debt owed to the Ottoman 57th Regiment. But, as the documents show, the 57th Regiment was not in position on Conkbayır until 10 a.m. at least, whereas the 27th are making the first counter-attack against the Anzacs around 8 a.m. Several documents, including Şefik’s war diary which describes the ensuing battle for the third ridge, further show how effectively the 27th fought, matching the Anzacs’ élan and pushing their scattered advanced units back to entrench on the second ridge. Şefik’s war diary also adds much to Charles Bean’s account in the official Australian history.

‘3 Battalion started fighting in the name of Allah on Kemalyeri [Hill 165]. It widened and developed a fire of rare intensity. The enemy infiltrated to the places shown on the map. The only battery to the north of Hill 165 fired its first shell to a point on Kanli Sirt [Lone Pine], which was now held by the enemy and it was then recognised that we had hostile heavy guns there on Hill 165. Our machine gun company, hiding

¹² ibid

in the scrub to the southwest of the hill started fire with four guns on to the enemy concentration that was seen close the same point. The pleasing sounds of machine guns adding to the sounds of artillery lifted our hearts. The 3rd Battalion's left flank units came alongside very soon after . . .'¹³

And so Şefik's war diary continues in this vein, incidentally documenting from the Turkish side before the attack the loss of three guns from the battery on Lone Pine and the saving of one gun. The diary also gives details of the battle deployment of the original 2/27 Battalion and 3/27 Battalion, which had been deployed before the landings as beach guardians at Kaba Tepe and Ariburnu, and had taken the brunt of the Anzac landings. Their role in the ensuing first day battle for Ariburnu adds much detail to Bean's Australian account.

Şefik describes how 3 Company/3 Battalion/27 Regiment is deployed right into the centre of the fighting on Kiliç Bayır [Baby 700] to add weight to the defence of Conkbayır long before 57 Regiment arrives.¹⁴ The diary offers a vivid glimpse of how the fighting developed into close combat in this vital sector and the ground itself.

Because the terrain is extremely scrub-ridden, the enemy sometimes comes up as close as 20 steps away and if it feels any weakness in our force there attacks. It has been repulsed though with losses . . . our weaker force of about 1.5 companies has not been too badly affected . . . they have held on heroically until the arrival of machine guns and units of 57 Regiment at three o'clock.¹⁵

It will be noticed also that these documents give us the times of certain crucial events, most important when putting together both the narrative and the analysis of the campaign. There is an issue about the recorded times though, which is referred to at the end of this paper. The GCRP is continuing though to uncover those kind of incidental details that illuminate the campaign history and give us an idea of the pressure of combat. The same document as above informs us that 3 Battalion loses its leadership when commander Major Halis Efendi is wounded in this fighting and two of his Lieutenants (Idris and Mustafa Efendis) are killed. As a result leadership of the battalion passes to Muharrem Vehbi Efendi, the Battalion accounts officer, essentially a non-combatant, who turns out to lead by zeal and example to

¹³ ibid

¹⁴ ibid

¹⁵ ibid

‘maintain protection of the ground against a very strong enemy until the arrival of 57 Regiment’¹⁶

Documents reveal that 27 Regiment continues its aggressive stance against the Anzacs throughout the day, joining tactically with the Avni Bey’s 57 Regiment and Kemal’s 19 Division to hold the Anzacs in check, but with significant losses and increasing difficulty. This more comprehensive study of the Ottoman regimental war diaries indicates that much more credit should be afforded to Şefik and 27 Regiment for halting the Anzacs on the first day than has been the case so far. The 19 Division and 57 Regiment particularly have been held up as the saviours and the memorials on the peninsula attest to this. And rightly so, but it is time to add accuracy to the story and let Şefik and 27 Regiment take their place in history.

Combining 27 Regiment and 57 Regiment documents adds a great amount of explanatory detail, especially to the official TGS history of the operations and outcomes of the battle for Gallipoli on the first day. Returning to the war diaries of 57 Regiment and 19 Division, they show in detail how the battle for Sarı Bayır intensifies and fluctuates throughout the day, how the Ottoman commanders react to action in the field and to sudden problems and how the Ottoman line advances to a more secure position below Hill 180 [Baby 700].

From the first thrusts forward from Conkbayırı after the arrival of 57 Battalion just after 10.00 a.m. and their brief pause for breath, the documents show the divisional commander, Lt. Col Mustafa Kemal Bey, and his regimental and battalion commanders Major Avni Bey, Major Zeki Bey and Major Ata Bey, to be totally energetic in command, keyed up and responsive. Take this exchange of messages from 11 a.m. just as the push down from Conkbayırı gathers momentum.

11.00 From Mustafa Kemal to Major Avni

In order to reconnoitre the enemy’s left flank, send an infantry officer led reconnaissance column. Inform me of the result swiftly.

11.29 From Mustafa Kemal to Major Avni

Immediately rush to aid the attack of the battalion on the right flank. The first line is moving too slowly. I would like you to secure the enemy’s landing point at once.

¹⁶ ibid

11.30 From Major Avni to Major Ata (2 Battalion)

Your movement is too slow. Facilitate your attack. The Division commander orders you to secure the enemy's landing point at once.

11.30 From Major Zeki (1 Battalion) to Major Avni

At the first position your first and third companies have gone forward by four to five hundred metres. I will shortly send reserve companies to the creek between our skirmishers and the reserve . . .

11.30 From Major Ata (2 Battalion) to Major Avni

It is reported that the enemy is being repulsed along our front. 2 Company is on the front line; 1 Company is on the right flank of the front line; 4 Company is at the centre.

11.30 Major Avni to Mustafa Kemal

Your order has been received and the battalions have been commanded to accelerate the attack.

11.40 Major Zeki to Major Avni

I am sending two reserve companies forward and am going forward as well.

11.40 Major Ata to Major Avni

1 Battalion on our left flank is moving too slowly. We are attacking fast; subsequently our attack will have a successful outcome. Please order 1 Battalion to move forward.

11.40 Major Avni to Major Zeki

2 Battalion is complaining that your attack is too slow. Speed up your attack and maintain contact with 2 Battalion.¹⁷

Illustration 3. Example of 57 Regiment War Diary entries (By courtesy of Turkish General Staff Archives)

¹⁷ 57 Regiment War Register documents

These war diary entries indicate a number of factors at play, which add to our understanding of the events and outcomes. One clear factor is that the Battalion commanders, Zeki and Ata Beys appear to have different views of the speed of advance required. Zeki informs that he is pushing ahead as strongly as he can by committing two reserve companies to the attack as well as his main line, but for Ata this remains insufficient. He sees an attack in concert, keeping the attack line coherent, being jeopardised by the 1st Battalion's tardiness.

This reveals two further factors. They are, the defensive tactic adopted by Kemal and the nature of the operation. Firstly, the defence tactic is not actually defensive in nature, but offensive, an attack against an enemy advance. Secondly, the nature of the attack is to maintain a coherent line, an unbroken front of advance, against the enemy to leave no gaps for enemy break-throughs. Where units get too far ahead and threaten to lose contact with the line Avni calls them back and where contact is lost with units he orders reconnaissance patrols to search, find and re-align the units.¹⁸

This same collection of 57 Regiment war diaries continues in the same vein. Thus, as is indicated in the above examples, it is possible to trace the nature of the attempted advance, together with the difficulties encountered. These difficulties appearing in the documents can partly explain why success in the fighting on this first day becomes fragile for both the Ottomans and the Anzacs. An example would be the information that by mid-day the two main attacking 57 Regiment battalions are running seriously short of ammunition. This is likely to be *part* of the explanation as to why the Ottoman advance is unable to proceed beyond the Nek and the second ridge as it reaches more concentrated Anzac forces.

57 Regiment documents go on to show that, as the fighting develops, other factors and details emerge to add to the chronology of operational events and thus our appreciation of the battle. We know in general terms from the available literature that Mustafa Kemal is mistakenly drawn away from the centre of the fighting in the Anzac sector to take a force south to the Kumtepe area to combat a supposed enemy landing there, which turns out to be an error. However, there is a document that shows how Kemal comes to be put in this detrimental situation. The same document reveals that Ottoman observations are able to produce important intelligence at crucial times. For example at 1.45 p.m. observations conclude that the enemy has not yet landed its heavy guns.¹⁹ That means of course that Ottoman artillery

¹⁸ *ibid*

¹⁹ 57 Regiment War Register documents

can operate without threat of retaliation as they do, thus making further successful Anzac attack at that stage impossible. The 19 Division War Register though indicates that ‘an enemy battery’ is active but is not effective as shells are falling ‘about 500 metres behind our marksmen’s lines’²⁰ This is a reference to the single Indian Battery struggled ashore.

Occasionally the documents also show the pathos of events. For example, our project has uncovered one of the documents that initially reports the death of the key 57 Regiment commander, Lt. Col. Huseyin Avni Bey on 13 June.

At 2.30 p.m.

From 5th Regiment Deputy Commander, Major Murad at Edirne Ridges

To 57 Regiment Command, 72 Battalion and Machine Gun Company

Our Regimental Commander, Avni Bey has been killed by a howitzer shell that fell onto the headquarters today. I wish all my friends to keep our promises by maintaining our feelings of vengeance towards the enemy and keep up the spirited efforts worthy of our faith and to most importantly demonstrate our efforts and remain vigilant.²¹

What I have stated, then, about how the documents illuminate in detail the initial days of the land campaign in the Ariburnu/ANZAC sector also applies to months to follow in the rest of the campaign. We have documents that show the impatient response of War Ministry High Command, essentially Enver Pasha, in May to the evolving stalemate as front lines become entrenched. This results in his insistence on the ill-fated major assault to try to push Allies back into the sea on 19 May and thereafter a change of emphasis to defence and containment.

From the first week of June 1915, Ottoman 5th Army Command had begun a strengthening re-organization of its defences in the northern sector (Kaba Tepe to the Anafarta Hills). This involved a number of modifications in the deployment positions of the 5th Army and the addition of reinforcements from the 2nd Army sent from Istanbul. But whatever the Allies decided as their offensive tactics, the Ottoman High Command decided with their limited resources to try to meet all possibilities of attack and contain them.

²⁰ ATASE ATA-ZB, Box 41, 3-16

²¹ 57 Regiment War Register documents

The deployments in July 1915 show a palpable reaction to intelligence received. Documents show this intelligence indicates an Allied build up, which would lead to the Anzac offensive at Ariburnu and the British attempt at Suvla [Anafarta] in August. Documents reveal that intelligence and observations had alerted all levels of Ottoman command to Allied preparations for major offensive action. They show 5th Army and 3rd Corps needed to react to the recent Allied encroachments that had occurred, such as at No. 2 Outpost [Mahmuz Sirt], which had been occupied by the enemy and strengthen defences there to stop any further advance. Therefore they became pro-active in defensive mode in this respect from the first week of June.

The Ottoman front was extended northwards as the 19th Division was strengthened with units from 5th Division to the south from Ece Harbour.²² Some Ottoman Field commanders, though, felt that the defensive arrangements were not adequate and too much complacency reigned at GHQ. They point to the difficulties they faced during the August Offensive, which they claim in memoirs and documents could have been minimized by better defensive planning in this period. All documents revealed so far suggest Esat Pasha himself reads Allied intentions on their route of attack wrongly, so his dispositions appear to put the defence under extra pressure.

Crucial field deployments of Ottoman units and field command centres appear in documents, such as Kemal's move of the 19th Division field headquarters to Duztepe [Battleship Hill] to bring the command post closer to the centre of the wider defensive front.²³ This is one example of the kind of detail the GCRP is now able to reveal to readers and researchers who only have English. Other factors relating to the August Offensive that are being clarified are:

the tensions caused by allocation of German commanders over Turkish commanders who have more local knowledge and the boundaries of command²⁴

disquiet at Supreme Ottoman Army HQ in Istanbul about Von Sanders tactical deployment of his divisions and covering, as in April, a possible landing at Saros, preferring larger forces on the beaches²⁵

²² Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, Complete Works Vol 1. Kaynak Yayınları, Istanbul, pages 386-394

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ *op. cit.* Paper, ‘‘No room for any lapses in concentration’’ Australian War Memorial Conference 5 August 2010.

the order of battle for Esat Pasha's Northern Group and its defensive nature, having fewer numbers with which to defend than it needed and could have been allocated, i.e. 19 000 in the Ariburnu/Anzac sector but only 2 500 in Suvla-Anafarta area.²⁶

the result of this allocation of forces leading to a level of desperation among commanders that followed once the offensive was under way.

the frontline and reserve dispositions concentrating them in the old areas of greatest conflict i.e. along the 2nd Ridge importantly leaving Rhododendron Ridge [Şahinşirt] and Conkbayırı unmanned relying on forward defence of these positions on the lower slopes.

Ottoman artillery effectiveness or lack thereof due to shortages and range, e.g. at Palamut Sirt

Esat Pasha's dispositional reaction to the Lone Pine attack of 6 August, e.g. assigning 5 Division's 5/13 Regiment, which was located to the east of Kavaktepe [Anderson's Knoll] to the command of 16 Division. Additionally and bringing up reserves to the rear.²⁷

the significant role of 9 Division Commander Lieutenant – Colonel Cemil Bey and his reinforcements.²⁸

the effect of fatigue on the commanders

A full account of the GCRP's most recent appreciation of the Ottoman defence in the August Offensive is to be found in the Australian War Memorial published papers of the 2010 Conference referred to above.

In conclusion, Turkish military archival documents are thus revealing the Ottoman command issues and reactions that enabled the 5th Army to successfully defend the Gallipoli Peninsula. But they equally show that at times this defence was seriously threatened. First, the records show that at the two major crisis points, the landings in April and the Allied August offensive that Ottoman commanders believed the 5th Army Divisions were dispersed too widely to respond quickly in necessary force strength to the major attack. In April this

²⁵ ATASE File 182, Dossier 105/782, Index 20

²⁶ Bayur, Yusuf Hikmet, 1991. *History of the Turkish Revolution*, Volume III, Section II, Turkish Historical Society Printing House, Ankara, pg. 337

²⁷ Turkish General Staff Official History of WW1 VOLUME 5, BOOK 3, pg.332, (TGSH),

²⁸ TGSH, VOL 5 BK 3, pg.336, quoting Hayri Bey

could have been a disaster if the enemy had been more aggressive on the ground. In August a contributing factor was Esat Pasha's belief that the approach to the high ground via the eventual route of the Anzac Right and Left Assaulting Columns would not be attempted due to the bad country. In August, too, Liman Von Sanders himself had kept significant forces at the Saros-Bolayır Isthmus away from the area of attack. This meant Esat Pasha's Northern Group had fewer numbers with which to defend than it needed and could have had. These facts in turn caused ensuing difficulties of deploying reserves quickly due to distances required in bringing them up. This was compounded by the Allied offensive inflicting swift losses and high casualty rates compounding the supply of reserves problems. In turn, this gave rise to chain of command difficulties due to casualties and resultant tensions between Ottoman and German commanders. These commanders also faced major artillery restrictions due to the terrain and distance problems as well as munitions supply. Finally, the need for crisis management created both desperation and then, almost as a reaction, motivation resulting in determination to defend the ground at all costs. But Ottoman troops and their commanders prevailed and under great duress.

The GCRP is still uncovering documentation that reveals even more about the Ottoman side of the campaign. Attaining accuracy and objectivity is one goal of the GCRP's work with Turkish archival documents. With that comes the effort to clarify many issues, which is a more difficult task as it often requires us to interpret statements made in diaries memoirs and even battlefield reports. Also, an important factor mentioned briefly, but not covered, in this paper, and one that needs addressing, is the question of recorded times in documents. How accurate are they? Times generally relate to the time when a record is written, but how close does that time correspond to the time of an actual event? And how efficient was synchronisation of watches around the battlefield and beyond? Confidence in knowing accurate times of events would make any account of the Gallipoli campaign much more definitive. Despite such concerns, we must try interpretation as we do not have the individuals around anymore to speak for themselves and be interrogated about issues.

In light of this and the details the present GCRP collection is now revealing, what remains for our project to do now is to continue to exhaustively collect, translate and collate Ottoman Gallipoli operational documents, and to put them together with the large body of existing Allied documents and produce the most comprehensive account yet of the Gallipoli Campaign, as is planned for the centenary and beyond. That, of course, depends on

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continued funding of the research being available and efforts are under way to achieve that end. Any assistance in that respect would be greatly appreciated.

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