

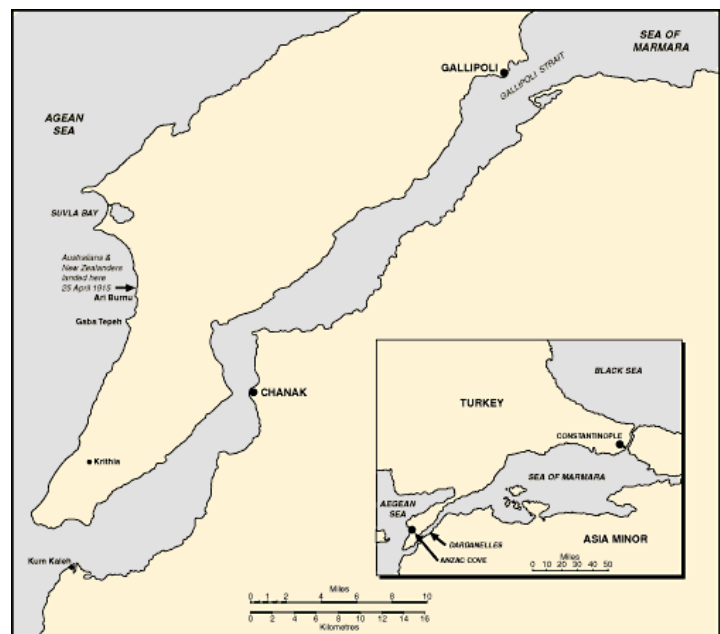
Was the Gallipoli Campaign doomed from the start? Part 1 Churchill's Plan

By early 1915 the war on the Western Front, in France and Belgium, had become a stalemate due to trench warfare. Trenches, protected by barbed wire, artillery and machine guns made it nearly impossible for either side to breakthrough.

Some British leaders argued that an attack on Turkey should be launched. Turkey was one of Germany's allies in the war. In 1915 Winston Churchill was First Lord of the Admiralty, in charge of the Royal Navy. Churchill believed that it would be possible to use warships to force a way through the narrow Dardanelles Straits. This would then allow Allied troops to attack Constantinople (Istanbul). Thus would lead to the collapse of Turkey and allow supplies to get to Russia.

Other commanders believed that this was risky plan. They argued that the army could not spare enough men to attack Turkey. Churchill was determined that his plan should be tried. In January 1915 the government gave its backing. The War Minister Lord Kitchener promised to support the attack using available British, Australian and New Zealand troops.

The French also agreed to take part in the scheme. They would supply both ships and men.

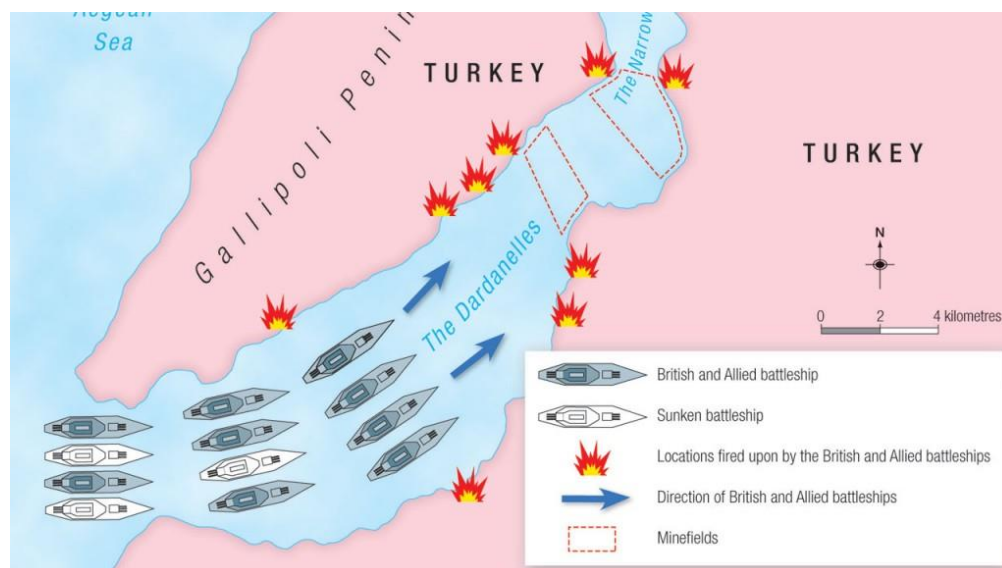


Part 2: The navy attacks February-March 1915

To get through the Dardanelles would be difficult. The Turks had built a series of forts, which would need to be destroyed as they could use their guns to bombard the Allied ships. The Turks also had a series of mobile artillery batteries which again could do the damage to the ships. Finally mines also protected the peninsula – any ship hitting these risked sinking.

The Allied naval commander, Sir Sackville Carden, began his attack on 19 February 1917. He sent 42 warships to attack the forts and 21 trawlers to clear the mines. Although some of the Turkish forts were damaged the Allied ships suffered a number of losses. A second attack on 25 February also failed although the Royal Marines captured two of the Turkish forts.

On 18 March a third huge naval attack was launched. Again the results were disastrous. Three allied battleships were sunk when they hit mines. One of the ships, the Bouvet sank in just 15 minutes with the loss of 639 men.



It was clear that the navy alone could not take control of the Dardanelles. Churchill and Lord Kitchener took the decision to use troops to capture the Gallipoli Peninsula.