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Formation Headquarters

Item number: 1/4/9 Part 2

Title: General Staff, General
Headquarters, Mediterranean
Expeditionary Force

December 1915



AWM4-1/4/9PART2

5121

SECRET.

G.S.R. Z/54.

Army Headquarters.

17th December, 1915.

From.

THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To.

THE VICE ADMIRAL COMMANDING,
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN SQUADRON.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that a small offensive operation will be undertaken by the 8th Corps on the 19th instant with the object of distracting the enemy's attention from the Northern Zone. It will be of great assistance if our gun fire, both from ships and shore, is intensive and continuous, and if the display of strength at CAPE HELLES is above the normal. May, therefore, the allowance of ammunition to the Covering Ships in that area be increased so far as resources will permit, and, if it is possible, may some addition be made to the Supporting Squadron? I quite realise, however, the many calls you have on your resources at the present time and do not wish to press for any additional ships if it is in any way inconvenient.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(Sd:) C. F. ASPINALL, Lt.Col.,

for Lieutenant-General,
Commanding Dardanelles Army.

Absent on duty.

General Headquarters,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

17th December, 1915.

General Officer Commanding
Dardanelles Army.

The following is a reply to your G.S.R.Z./54 of the 14th instant taken seriatim:-

(i) The arrangements for the relief of the French Infantry are noted. The French Government has agreed to leave the whole of their heavy artillery at HELLES, but their 75's will be replaced by two brigades of our 18-pounders, as soon as the artillery now being withdrawn from ANZAC and SUVLA has been re-sorted.

(ii) The strength of the 86th Infantry Brigade including one battalion City of London Regiment is only 1,400: the two battalions of that regiment in the 29th Division are respectively 207 and 47 strong; they are not in an efficient state as the result of the late storm, and the Commander-in-Chief is disinclined at the moment to take up the question of brigading these battalions as you suggest, and considers it preferable that they should continue to be incorporated in the other brigades for the present.

(iii) The question of re-arming the 15-pounder batteries with 18-pounder guns will be taken up as soon as the latter equipment arrives from home.

Lord Kitchener has decided to keep the 9.2 inch howitzers at ALEXANDRIA for the defence of EGYPT.

(iv) Your wishes with regard to the reserves of ammunition and bombs and trench mortars will be met as far as possible.

(v) The 29th Division will be rested first and retained on LEMNOS where it will be available if required. It will be relieved by the 13th Division.

The Commander-in-Chief wishes to send the 52nd Division to EGYPT, and has recommended that it be sent home with the 53rd and 54th Divisions, and that three other divisions be sent out in their place.

The 52nd Division must, however, remain until the 42nd Division has had a thorough rest, when the question of its going home can be reconsidered.

(vi) The question of extra transport and of supplies is being considered.

(vii) Tunnelling Companies have been applied for.

(Sgd:) W. GILLMAN, B.G.G.S.,
for Major-General,
Chief of the General Staff,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

SECRET.

COPY OF TELEGRAM.

From.....Vice-Admiral commanding, Eastern Mediterranean Sqn.

No.....670.

Date....17th December 1915.

To.....Admiralty, London.

Priority. 670. General Munro has given me a copy of a telegram he has sent to Lord Kitchener with reference to my 662. He considers the question of the possibility of retention of our footing on peninsula to be merely a military one. I regret I cannot concur in this. The important work of landing supplies for army is a naval question, as is that of naval gun support, I am very surprised he does not consider that capture of Achi Baba would reduce dangers which I anticipate from enemy's increased artillery fire. As an observation station alone it is invaluable to whoever holds it. It has always been talked of by higher military commanders as the key of the southern position. With it in our hands, Gully Beach would be available for landing stores should increased fire from Asiatic batteries make this impossible on W and V Beaches. It would greatly increase effectiveness of naval gun fire by giving us an ideal observation station when spotting from aeroplanes will be impossible owing to weather. The reported advent of heavy German artillery in northern zone has increased anxiety of military commanders to evacuate as quickly as possible. It is hardly logical to neglect this contingency in the southern zone. Given suitable artillery the enemy could drive supporting vessels out to a range from which their support would no longer be effective. The possession of Achi Baba would permit ships to lie close in to Gully Beach and render effective support by firing over heads of our troops. General Munro states that the capture of Achi Baba is quite beyond our resources and he considers it a fruitless undertaking under existing military situation. I believe he underestimates the support which, acting on the principles laid down in Sir Arthur Wilson's memorandum, the whole fleet can give in a general attack under the present conditions and before enemy's artillery can be reinforced. If however his view is accepted, I am of opinion that evacuation of Helles should take place at once. To renew the attack after enemy has had free access to arsenals of Germany for some time would I fear be attempting the almost impossible. General Munro has always shewed me every consideration and we work together with greatest amity. I regret exceedingly that my views should differ from his, but I should be lacking in duty were I not to place them fully before you. (0045).

SECRET.

"LORD NELSON".

1342

17th December 1915.

No. 257.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your letter No. G.S./Z/1 of 14th December 1915, enclosing a paper from the General Officer Commanding the Dardanelles Army on the subject of Naval support to the Army at HELLES, and in reply to forward the following remarks on this, a subject which has caused me considerable anxiety of late.

2. I notice that General Birdwood makes no mention of any support by the Navy on his right flank. At present this flank is rather inadequately secured against bombardment from the Asiatic shore by the presence of some heavy guns, mounted by the French at De Tott's, and by two monitors firing from Rabbit Island.

I presume that the guns at De Tott's will either remain or be replaced by similar calibre weapons. as regards the monitors at Rabbit Island it is almost certain that they will not be able to remain in their present position throughout the winter months, and it may be necessary to withdraw them, either permanently or for considerable periods of time in bad weather.

Every effort will, of course, be made to keep them in position, but the possibility must be faced of their being driven away by the weather conditions. There is also the possibility of the enemy mounting guns that would render the Rabbit Island position untenable. The monitors are not built to withstand shell fire and one hit from a six inch shell might well disable this kind of ship.

The loss of this gunfire from Rabbit Island would be severely felt, attacking as it does, the enemy's gun positions from the flank; to replace it, the most that can be done by the Navy will be an occasional bombardment by a battleship or battleships.

There is, of course, the alternative of mounting long range guns on the Rabbit Islands.

3. As far as the exigencies of the service permit, the supporting squadron for the Helles Army will be a permanent one; but the duty will be arduous and the number of vessels employed will have to be such as to allow for a system of reliefs.

General Birdwood's requirements as set forth in paragraphs 3 to 7 and 9 will receive my attention and his wishes will be taken into consideration when the Squadron is formed.

4. It is fully realised that the use of battleships to support the left flank may become a necessity during winter, and every opportunity will be taken of registering the guns of such ships on to suitable targets, as is done at present in the case of supporting cruisers.

During moderate weather conditions the support of the left flank will be supplied, as at present, by specially protected cruisers, monitors and destroyers, supplemented occasionally by battleships.

It is anticipated that heavy weather will have the following effect on the supporting ships' fire:-

Monitors will not be able to fire; these vessels are not built to fire in rough weather, being almost unmanageable in a heavy sea.

Destroyers are so lively in bad weather that accurate fire from them cannot be expected.

Cruisers and battleships should be able to fire in practically all weathers, but even a battleship will form a most unsteady gun platform, one from which indirect gun fire should only be used at large targets and from which fire at targets in close proximity to our lines should never be attempted.

5. The suggestion contained in paragraph 8 has been considered. It is impracticable to permanently enclose a firing area with nets. The depth of water is so great as to make it certain that the nets will not stand much rough weather; as has been the case at Suvla in a more moderate depth.

A netted area, such as the above, can be used for a special operation, such as supporting an attack on a large scale, as foreshadowed in para. 7. The amount of net available is limited and once laid it cannot be taken up, consequently the use of the net, except for important operations, is unjustifiable.

6. My remarks on the Naval support during the winter months may appear unduly pessimistic, but I am most anxious that the Army should not count too highly on this support, as I foresee great difficulties in maintaining it in rough weather.

The value of the fire must be greatly reduced by the difficulties of accurate laying and of keeping ships in their exact positions.

Aeroplane spotting will also be impossible.

It must also be remembered that the enemy have a gun now on the Asiatic shore which has hit the monitor "ROBERTS" in position at Rabbit Island, and that the destroyers off the north flank at Suvla during daylight are kept at a distance of 7,000 - 8,000 yards from the shore by enemy gun fire. It is only logical to assume that a big increase of fire will be directed against covering ships in the near future, this may make it impossible to keep either monitors or destroyers off the flanks, and even battleships and cruisers may find it impossible to remain stationary to fire for any length of time.

Off the Coast of Belgium, British ships have been straddled by heavy projectiles when 29,000 yards from the shore.

The sending of heavy howitzers from Austria for use in the Gallipoli has apparently been accomplished; it is therefore probable that long range guns will also be sent in the near future, and when considering Naval support it is well to bear this in mind.

I need not, I am sure, assure you that the Navy will do its utmost to support the Army at all times, but it is well to look facts in the face and be prepared for eventualities.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

(SGD) A. WEMYSS, Vice Admiral.

SECRET.

G.S.R./Z/48.

Army Headquarters.

17th December, 1915.

From
THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To
THE CHIEF OF GENERAL STAFF,
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

1. In continuation of my Instructions to Corps Commanders dated 10th December and my Army Order No.1, dated 12th December, copies of which have already been sent to you, I now beg to enclose copies of further written instructions which I have sent to the General Officers Commanding at SUVLA and ANZAC. I also enclose copies of 9th Corps and ANZAC Operation Orders, together with my comments thereon, and a copy of instructions issued by the O.C., R.N.A.S. at my request.

2. In addition to the orders and instructions issued to Corps Commanders, I have, in the course of my daily visits to ANZAC or SUVLA, discussed and given orders regarding numerous details in connection with the tactical and administrative sides of the evacuation. In particular, I have laid down the principle that the withdrawal of guns should be carried out by removing first a section, leaving with the remaining section a double supply of ammunition, and then by withdrawing one gun from each section, allowing four times the normal number of rounds to the last gun.

I have ordered cover to be placed over all emplacements unoccupied, so that the withdrawal of guns may not be noticed by hostile aeroplanes, and have given special instructions with regard to devices for deceiving the enemy and for hindering his advance, should he endeavour to follow up our retirement, by means of mines, wiring, and cheveu-de-frises.

3. The general plan on which the withdrawal is to be carried out is as follows:-

If the weather remains favourable the Intermediate Stage will have been completed by daybreak on the 18th December. At this time there will remain on the Peninsula:-

At SUVLA.....20500 men.....34 guns.
At ANZAC.....19940 ".....28 "

Each Corps will embark half the above number of men, and, if possible, a proportion of the guns, on the first night of the final stage. On both nights the withdrawal will be effected by a gradual reduction of strength all along the line, the troops left behind spreading out to cover the whole of the present front

occupied/

occupied by their units and all existing communications being maintained till the last. The guiding principle is that the front line trenches must continue to be held until the last night, and particular stress has been laid on the necessity for the final evacuation of the trenches at the point of junction between Corps being simultaneous, at an hour to be mutually arranged between Corps Commanders. Corps Commanders have arranged that the hour should be 0130 on 20th instant.

The withdrawal of troops at ANZAC will be carried out in one movement, direct from the trenches to the boats, with the exception that the embarkation of the final parties on the last night will be covered by selected men holding intermediate positions covering the beach.

At SUVLA, owing to the greater distance of the trenches from the piers the procedure will be slightly different, and two distinct second line defensive areas have been arranged, one extending from KARAKOL DAGH through Hill 10 to the SALT LAKE, and the other from the SALT LAKE to the sea at point Square 91. R.9. and including the LALA BABA Defences. The first mentioned area (Reserve Area "A") has been placed under command of Major-General FANSHAW, the second area (Reserve Area 'B') under Major-General MAUDE.

The troops from the front line trenches will gradually be withdrawn into these areas and thence to "Forming up Places", and though the front line trenches are to be held till the last moment, the second line positions will be available for a strong defence, covering the beaches, in the event of the Final retirement being followed up. It is hoped, however, that by keeping a few men in the front trenches till the last, and by continuing the normal routine of sniping and bombing, the enemy will not become aware of our intentions in time to organise a strong attack.

4. Arrangements have been made for saving as many as possible of the guns left for the Final Stage, but this will only be attempted when it is found that it can be done without jeopardising the embarkation of troops.

I should point out that the Naval Orders have now been brought into line with the Military Orders in this respect. When the Naval and Military Orders were being drafted here they were identical on this point, but the Naval Orders were subsequently taken to MUDROS to be printed, and the paragraph relating to the embarkation of guns in the Final Stage was cancelled without reference to me. On the matter being pointed out to the Admiral, however, he at once gave orders for the missing paragraph to be reinserted.

5. The Vice Admiral has arranged for the maximum possible naval support to the operations, vide Naval General Orders, copies of which have been sent to you direct.

6. I have already informed you in another communication, steps have been taken to prevent the leakage of information in IMBROS and the Vice Admiral has arranged to prevent any neutral craft arriving at or leaving the island until the conclusion of the operations.

7. In order to distract attention from the Northern Zone, and at the same time to improve slightly the situation at HELLES, I have arranged for a small offensive

operation/

operation to be undertaken by the 8th Corps, in the "G" Trenches, in the area now occupied by the 52nd Division. This operation will take place on the 19th, and I enclose for your information a letter which I have addressed to the Vice Admiral on this subject.

8. I propose to be at SUVLA during the day of the 18th and at ANZAC during the day of the 19th. (night of 18th/19th on board a destroyer off the coast), and on the night 19/20th I shall be with the Vice Admiral on board H.M.S. "CHATHAM".

Reports during the last night will be sent to me via my Headquarters at IMBROS.

(SGD) W.R. BIRDWOOD, Lieut-General,
Commanding Dardanelles Army.

565

SECRET. PRIORITY.

From A.H.Q., D.A.

To G.H.Q.

D.O.697.

17/12/15. Desp.1230

Recd.1400

Reference my G.R.Z.48 dated 14th December, is this action? If so, I propose adding to letter a paragraph asking for armistice on 20th in area between GABA TEPE and SUVLA Point for definite number of hours so as to allow work of collecting wounded to be done. Duration of armistice asked for will depend on extent of our casualties. Propose sending two Officers on shore, one at ANZAC and one at SUVLA, with identical letters; I should be glad if Deedes could be spared for this duty at latter place. If so, may he come here tomorrow, returning at once duty is completed. Have arranged with V.A. that on conclusion of armistice warships will bombard the shore destroying all remaining heaps of supplies and stores.

566

SECRET.

From : A.H.Q. D.A. Desp.2204. 17/12/15.
To: G.H.Q. Recd.0835. 18/12/15.

D.O.A.B.32.

Following evacuations reported since
yesterday:-

SUVLA:

Officers	15
Others	455
Guns	4

ANZAC:

All Ranks	966
Guns	15

1567

SECRET.

From:- A.H.Q. D.A.

To:- G.H.Q.

D.O.A.B. 35. 18/12/15.

Despd.1310.

Recd. 1421.

My D.O.A.B.32. Add to SUVLA all ranks 3114.

572

SECRET.

PRIORITY.

From:- A.H.Q. D.A.

To:- G.H.Q.

D.O.800. 18/12/15.

Despd.1518.

Recd. 1549.

Suggest for your consideration that War Office be asked to send cable to Australia and New Zealand Governments immediately evacuation completed explaining situation. Otherwise many garbled accounts of being driven into the sea may reach Dominions from German sources and cause painful impression until contradicted.

SECRET.

G.S.Z/1.

18 December.

General Officer Commanding,
Dardanelles Army.

With reference to your telegrams D.O.697 and D.O.699 of today, the Commander-in-Chief has signed two copies of the letter containing the suggested new paragraph and slight amendment.

The Deputy Judge Advocate General states that while medical personnel cannot, under the Geneva Convention, be treated as prisoners of war, they can be kept as Medical personnel to look after the wounded.

(SGD) A. LYNDEN BELL, for Major-General,
Chief of the General Staff,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

D 68

SECRET.

From: Chief, Medforce.

To: Proemial, London.

C.M.92. Cipher.

18/12/15.

Desp. 2125.

Reference my C.M.80 of 15th. Vice-Admiral has addressed another telegram, number 670 of 17th. to Admiralty on subject of HELLES Position and possibility of capturing ACHI BABA. On his sending me a copy I have replied to him as follows. Begins. Regret having given you impression that I considered possibility of retention of HELLES solely a military question. The purely military question is the possibility of our capturing ACHI BABA with the military resources at our disposal. I agree that capture of ACHI BABA would give us certain advantages, if it were possible, but it would not really reduce the essential danger, which is continuous intensive bombardment of our lines from three sides. With your main argument as to dangers of HELLES Situation, I agree, but can only repeat that I see no prospect of success in an attack on ACHI BABA. I concur in your opinion as to the necessity for the evacuation of HELLES but I have always understood that its retention was determined on in deference to Navy's representations that it was necessary from Naval point of view to maintain hold on entrance to Straits. Am sending copy of this letter by telegram to Lord Kitchener. Ends.

SECRET

564

PRIORITY.

From A.H.Q., D.H.

To G.H.Q.

D.O.699.

18/12/15. Desp.1572

Recd.1600

Reference my D.O.697 and letters brought by Gillman today, will you send by an officer tomorrow two more signed letters including new paragraph suggested but leaving number of hours blank. It is important that armistice asked for should only include northern zone from GABA TEPE to SUVLA. According to Article 3 we could apparently ask for embarkation of all medical personnel. If this reading is concurred in will you amend my draft accordingly.

569

SECRET.

From:- General Birdwood.

To:- Commander-in-Chief.

B.1.

19/12/15.

Despd.0248

Recd.0300

So far all well.

PRIORITY.

570

From:- G.H.Q.

To:- A.H.Q. D.A.

O.A.B.14.

19/12/15.

Despd.0705.

Please submit further report at once.

571

SECRET.

From: A.H.Q. D.A. Desp.0836. 19/12/15.
To: G.H.Q. Recd.0903. 19/12/15.

D.O. 706.

19th.

Everything successful.

SUVLA and ANZAC completed embarkation of night's
quota. SUVLA also embarked 12 guns.

All quiet this morning.

573

To G.H.Q. (For information),

Sender's No. G.37.

Day of Month 19th.

Very quiet aaa Turks busily engaged digging &
erecting wire aaa Everything proceeding satisfactorily
aaa Addressed Anzac repeated A.H.Q. 9 Corps.
Rearguard Anzac 2310.

SECRET.

574

From: A.H.Q. D.A.

Desp. 2144. 18/12/15.

To: G.H.Q.

Recd. 0700. 19/12/15.

D.O.A.B. 38.

18th.

Following evacuations reported since yesterday:-

ANZAC:-

All ranks 1500

Guns 10

SUVLA:-

No report received yet.

SECRET.

From: General Gillman. Desp. 0934. 19/12/15.
 (A.H.Q., D.A.)
To:- G.H.Q. Recd. 1015. 19/12/15.

PRIORITY.

S. 8.

Situation remains normal. Turks still apparently ignorant of situation. 9th Corps time-table worked well during night and no apparent hitch at ANZAC. Some mules and horses are purposely left at each place to give normal appearance to conditions. Am going to ANZAC 9.30 with Army Commander for a short time.

576

SECRET.

From:- Chief, Medforce.

To: Proemial, London.

O.A.39.

19th.

Desp.1225.

Suggest that you send cable to Australian and New Zealand Governments immediately evacuation completed explaining situation. Otherwise many garbled accounts of being driven into the sea may reach Dominions from German sources and cause painful impression until contradicted.

*

SECRET.

PRIORITY.

From:- General Gillman.

To:- G.H.Q.

S.9. 19/12/15.

Despd.1737

Recd. 1800

Returned from ANZAC and SUVLA 1715.

Conditions quite normal. Anticipate no hitch tonight. Only eight days supplies left at SUVLA and not much more at ANZAC. Our bombardment ACHI BABA continues.

578

TO:- G.H.Q.
Sender's No.D.O.717.
Day of Month 19th.

8th Corps attacked successfully in two places aaa
52nd Divisions secured western end of G.12 and
western end.of G.11.a. but are held up in latter
by small bomb proof redoubt which if not taken
will be blown up later aaa 42nd Div.occupied
crater just east of GULLY RAVINE and connected
with posts already established in neighbouring
craters aaa No reports as to Casualties but turkish
artillery fire not heavy and rather wild.

From A.H.Q. 1830.

579

SECRET.

From: 9th Corps.

To: G.H.Q. for information.

G.R.53.

19/12/15.

Despd. 2214.

19/12/15.

Recd. 2305.

All quiet on front. Everything proceeding satisfactorily. All guns except four already on lighters.

580

To:- G.H.Q.

Sender's No.D.O.725.

Day of Month 20th.

Everything gone without a hitch at Anzac aaa

Anzac office now reported closed A.H.Q.0145.

581
Priority.

To:- G.H.Q.

Sender's No. 10.

Day of Month 20th.

Anzac - - Reported clear 0345 aaa Suvla lat
farewell bonfires about 0430 aaa Everything
apparently satisfactory and do not anticipate
any casualties.

General Gillman 0615.

D82

TO:- G.H.Q. (for information).

Sender's No.S.M.l.

Day of Month 20th.

Anzac Office now closed.

Signed D.A.0130.

SECRET.

583

PRIORITY.

From 9th Corps.

To G.H.Q.

G.R.61.

20th December 1915.

Desp.0140.

Recd.0300.

All quiet on front line. All S.A.A. evacuated
on right flank C.Beach except what men carrying.
26th Casualty Clearing Station cleared and closed.
All carts and mules now afloat. Withdrawal of
troops proceeding without a hitch.

SECRET.

From: - CHIEF MEDFORCE.

To: - PROEMIAL.

C.M.94. cipher.

20/12/15.

Despd.1020.

Evacuation of ANZAC and SUVLA completed this morning. aaa About 65,000 men and 140 guns have been got away without Turks being aware of movement aaa Entire credit due to Birdwood, his Corps Commanders and Admiral Wemyss. aaa Losses and all matters of detail will be wired you later. The former quite insignificant. aaa All reports received up to the present agree that there were practically no casualties among personnel and that all personnel including sick have been successfully evacuated.

586

From:- General Birdwood.

To:- G.H.Q.

D.O.728. 20/12/15.

Despd.0950

Recd. 1155

Continuation my telegram O.530. From "Chatham", have so far only heard of two wounded men but returns are not complete. aaa The Turks on other hand must have suffered severely as the carefully prepared mines containing several hundreds of pounds of explosives on RUSSELL'S TOP area were complete success causing two tremendous volcanic explosions in middle of Turkish positions aaa This resulted in very heavy outburst rifle fire from all Turkish trenches along ANZAC Position which continued uninterruptedly till 0730 aaa While Turks were still shelling our positions when I left considerably later aaa Arrangements by 9th Corps to destroy their remaining stores left nothing to chance aaa Every detail had been worked out by them with result that I do not think Turks got anything at all in SUVLA Area beyond hospitals aaa Ships are standing by to try and destroy stores left in open at ANZAC, and to fire at any target offered.

588

PRIORITY.

From General Birdwood.

To General Monro.

D.O.B.658.

20/12/15.

Desp.1257.

Recd.1343.

O.B.A.46 and A.42. Following was my message sent off from "Chatham" at 0530 this morning. Begins. Owing perfect naval arrangements under Admiral Wemyss and real good work by Corps Commanders and Staffs, evacuation of SUVLA and ANZAC Areas has been effected with very small loss if any of personnel by 0400 this morning. Out of some 200 guns all but about 12 have been embarked the few left behind being blown up. Practically all animals ammunition except some small arm ammunition, ordnance and engineers stores have been taken off. Details will be submitted later. Evacuation evidently not detected. Turks still firing on trenches an hour afterwards. ends. All details not yet received but now believed that only guns left behind were two three pounders one twelve pounder naval anti-aircraft, three eighteen pounders, two five inch hows, all of which were destroyed.

589

SECRET.

From Chief, Medforce.

To Troopers, London.

Despd.1545. 20/12/15.

C.M.98.

Reference my CM.94.

In view of the possibility of similar operations in the future it is of the utmost importance that no hint should be given to the enemy of the methods by which the successful withdrawal of troops from the Peninsula was effected. No reference whatever should appear in the Press. It is impossible with the means at my disposal to ensure that no private letters contain indiscreet references. Therefore the only sure means is to prevent the publication of any private letters, or extracts therefrom, in any newspaper whatsoever, and I urge that the Press Bureau take the most stringent measures to this end, and that similar precautions be taken in Australia and Egypt.

590

From Chief, Medforce.
To Proemial.

C.M.101. cipher.

20.12.15.

Despd.2215.

In amplification of my C.M.94 the evacuation was conducted on the following plan aaa I decided that a surprise was more likely to be secured if a feint were not made elsewhere with a view to distracting the attention of the Turks aaa It seemed to me that by pursuing our normal attitude towards them without alteration the chances were greater that we might get away unobserved aaa As it turned out our work proceeded without interruption and the Turks were evidently so entirely unaware of our intentions that they were observed still shelling our trenches many hours after the withdrawal had been completed. So far as results are known at present no personnel was left behind and our casualties were three men wounded aaa Practically all ordnance and engineer stores, animals and ammunition except a small quantity of S.A.A. were removed. aaa The only guns left behind were two naval three pounder, one anti-aircraft gun, three 18-pounder, two 5-inch hows. all of which were destroyed aaa All medical personnel and the bulk of medical comforts were got away at the last moment aaa I am not able to determine at present the quantity of supplies that had to be left; they are computed to reach roughly to about ten to twelve days aaa This amount could have been reduced by spreading the evacuation over a longer period, but in the uncertainty of the weather in the Aegean at this time of year it seemed to me urgent to complete the operations in hand as rapidly as possible aaa Every endeavour however was made to prevent the supplies being of any use to the Turks and the Navy shelled the places where supplies were collected in order to complete the process of destruction aaa The troops have all been landed and are under canvas in MUDROS and IMBROS aaa The weather conditions could not have been better and this good fortune accompanied as it was by admirable Naval and Military organisation enabled us to succeed beyond our most sanguine expectations. May I suggest that this account of the operations, accompanied by your expression of approval of the great services rendered by the Australian & New Zealand Corps, be cabled at once to Australian and New Zealand Governments in order to anticipate the mendacious accounts which are certain to be circulated by the German authorities.

591
SECRET.

CLEAR THE LINE.

FROM:- LORD KITCHENER.

To:- GENERAL MONRO.

11225 cipher.

20/12/15.

Despd.1605

Recd.2030.

The Government have received your telegram C.M.94 with the greatest pleasure and desire at once to express to you and to all those under your command their high appreciation of the excellence of the arrangements made for the evacuation of SUVLA and ANZAC and their warm admiration for the conduct of the troops in carrying out one of the most difficult operations of war. They recognise to the full the effective help rendered to you by Admiral Wemyss and the Navy as well as by General Birdwood and the Corps and other Commanders. Please accept for yourself and convey to all concerned the thanks of the Government for this fine achievement. I would like to add my own personal congratulations.

56

SECRET

G.S.Z/26.

The Vice-Admiral Commanding,
Eastern Mediterranean Squadron.

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

20th December 1915.

Sir,

I have been giving much consideration to the question of the evacuation of CAPE HELLES, should such an operation be ordered. This operation is undoubtedly a more difficult one to carry out than the evacuation of SUVLA and ANZAC, both owing to the distance of the trenches from the shore, and on account of the heavy shell fire which can be brought to bear on the beaches not only from ACHI BABA but also from the Asiatic shore. Moreover, the enemy is hardly likely to be taken completely unawares twice. In order to assist in its execution it is very important that the enemy's attention should be distracted by some form of demonstration. A threat, in order to achieve its end, must be delivered in very close proximity to CAPE HELLES. A feint against the coast north of KRITHIA does not seem likely to deceive the enemy, and the only area in which a threat might have the desired result is the Asiatic coast line from IN TEPE and KUM KALE as far south as BESIKA BAY or YUKERI BAY. It is suggested that a pretended landing in ERENKEUI BAY carried out by warships and a certain number of small craft might distract the attention of the gunners on the Asiatic side, as well as of the Turks occupying ACHI BABA. Possibly a demonstration on a larger scale in BESIKA BAY or YUKYERI BAY might have the effect of further puzzling the enemy and drawing away troops from the critical point.

I put these schemes forward as suggestions, while recognising that the operations must be almost entirely a naval matter. It would seem advisable to have a conference on the subject, and if you agree perhaps you would suggest a date and time, and inform me whether you would propose to come yourself or to send officers to represent you. The question of actual naval support to a withdrawal might perhaps be discussed at the same time.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

(Sd.) C.C. Monro.
General,
Commander-in-Chief,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

The General Officer Commanding
Dardanelles Army.

In continuation of my G.S.Z.24 of the 17th December, the various questions raised in your G.S.R.Z./54 dated 14/12/15 have now been fully considered.

1. With regard to the formation of a third brigade for the Royal Naval Division, composed of the Newfoundland Battalion and four City of London Battalions, the Commander-in-Chief does not consider it advisable to form a new and very weak formation requiring command, staff, etc. This matter is dealt with further below, in connection with a complete reorganization of the 8th Corps.

2. As regards the artillery, this matter is also dealt with under the general question of the 8th Corps reorganization.

3. With regard to reserves of ammunition, it is considered that the accumulation on the Peninsula, under shell fire, of the very large amounts per gun which you suggest is open to various objections. The following scale has, however, been approved, and the reserves on the Peninsula will be constantly kept up to the amounts in question:-

	<u>Rounds per gun.</u>
18-pounders.....	1,000
Field howitzers.....	800
6" Howitzers.....	500
6" Mk.VII gun.....	500
60-pounders.....	600

There are only 500 rounds available for 12-pounder guns, the Navy being our only source of supply.

Besides maintaining these reserves, when any operation is in contemplation an amount of ammunition corresponding to the estimated expenditure will, so far as possible, be sent up in advance.

4. Arrangements are being made to maintain extra supplies of bombs and grenades at Cape Helles. In answer to enquiries from the War Office it appears that the Stokes trench mortars and the trench howitzers promised in October last, with personnel to man them, are now ready for despatch, and the War Office has promised to send them out as soon as a reasonable amount of ammunition is available. Presumably some trench mortars from Suvla and Anzac will be sent by you to Cape Helles, with additional ammunition for them?

5. With regard to the occupation of the Cape Helles lines, the Commander-in-Chief is of opinion that there has

been

been a tendency to keep somewhat unduly large numbers of infantry on the Peninsula itself. He agrees with your estimate of requirements for the Cape Helles garrison, i.e., 34,000 effective rifles on the Peninsula and resting at Imbros. He considers, however that it should be possible, even taking into consideration the probability of more or less prolonged spells of bad weather, safely to maintain your lines with not much more than two-thirds of that number, allowing approximately one-third of the infantry, say, 19000 to 11000 rifles to be kept in reserve at Imbros.

6. With regard to the question you raise as to the 29th Division, it is not at present anticipated that this Division will be available to return to the 8th Corps. The 11th and 13th Divisions and the remaining troops now at Cape Helles have by this time acquired a very considerable experience of trench warfare. Provided that their numbers are maintained and that adequate provision for complete rest is thereby ensured, these troops should be fully competent for the work required of them.

7. Your detailed recommendations are awaited Tram- with regard to an increase of transport for Cape Helles lines.

It is important to keep the numbers of animals ashore as low as possible owing to the difficulties involved in maintaining a large reserve of forage, as well as owing to the difficulty of disposing safely of the animals themselves.

8. The necessity for building up a larger reserve of supplies is receiving attention.

9. With regard to the reorganization of the 8th Corps referred to above, it is proposed to form the Corps as follows:-

11th Division.

13th Division, with one battalion of the London Regt., T.F. attached to each of its brigades.

Composite Division -

1 Naval Brigade	(made up of the whole Naval Division)
1 Lancs. Brigade	{ 42nd Division).
1 Lowland Bde.	{ 52nd Division
	with one battalion, London Regt.,
	T.F. attached).

This would enable the three Divisions to be immediately brought up to the following strengths:-

11th Division.... 12,000 effective rifles, with 3,000 drafts already here or on the sea.

13th Division.... 10,000 effective rifles, with 2,500 drafts already here or on the sea.

Composite Division. 12,000 effective rifles, with 4,000 drafts already here or on the sea.

The

The above numbers would meet your requirements as regards garrison, and the drafts in sight amount to over 25% of the infantry of the three Divisions.

This course is being proposed for the following reasons:-

- A good suggestion.
- (a) An effective organization would be provided.
 - (b) No formations need be broken up, though battalions would have to be linked and divisions reduced to brigades.
 - (c) A number of unnecessary commanders and staffs would be saved.
 - (d) The battalions of the Composite Division would gain greatly in efficiency by having a greater proportion of senior officers after the linking process is completed.
 - (e) The signal organization would be facilitated and signal personnel and gear freed for use elsewhere.
 - (f) Superfluous medical and veterinary units would be freed.
 - (g) In every way complexity of organization and the multiplication of small weak units would be remedied.

10. The question of Divisional Artillery is dealt with separately. It is proposed to form Divisional Artillery for each Division as follows:-

11th Divisional Artillery -

58th Brigade, R.F.A.	}	All available in Egypt.
59th Brigade, R.F.A.		
60th Brigade, R.F.A.		
½ 69th (How.) Bde. R.F.A.		

13th Divisional Artillery -

56th Brigade, R.F.A.	}	At Helles. In Egypt.
66th Brigade, R.F.A.		
55th Brigade, R.F.A.....)		
½ 69th (How.) Bde.R.F.A.....)		

Composite Divisional Artillery -

1/1st East Lancs.Bde. R.F.A.)	}	At Helles. In Egypt being re-armed with 18-prs
1/3rd East Lancs.Bde. R.F.A.)		
1/2nd East Lancs.Bde. R.F.A.)		
1/2nd Lowland Bde. R.F.A.)		
1/4th E.Lancs.(Howr) Bde.R.F.A. at Helles.		

Each Division will thus have an identical organization so far as numbers of batteries go, i.e., 12 batteries of 18-prs. and 2 batteries of field howitzers.

The 1/4th Lowland (Howr.) Bde., R.F.A. may also be allotted to the 8th Corps after reorganization in Egypt.

The

The 20th Heavy Brigade will be allotted to the 8th Corps, after reorganization in Egypt, the 90th Heavy Battery rejoining the 29th Division in exchange.

The Siege Artillery, French heavy artillery, etc., to remain at Helles as at present.

The French Field Artillery and the 29th Divisional Artillery would be replaced by such of the 11th, 13th and Composite Divisional Artillery as is not already at Helles. In the case of the 29th Division, however, this would only involve the relief of the personnel, its equipment remaining on the Peninsula and taking the place of that of a corresponding number of batteries mentioned above.

(Sgd:) A. LYNDEN BELL,

Major-General,
Chief of the General Staff,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

G.H.Q., M.E.F.
20.12.15.

D.92

From General Birdwood.

To G.H.Q.

D.O.740.

21/12/15.

Despd.1125.

Recd. 1345.

Continuation of my D.O.728. About 8.30 a.m. yesterday enemy began bombardment along whole front of Suvla second line trenches. Shelling was heavier and longer sustained than any previously seen in that area and it is thought that enemy imagined we had so far only retreated to our Second Line, during afternoon, large parties approached beach and battery was brought to LALA BABA. Grafton inflicted numerous casualties. Consider that well executed attack by 8th Corps on 19th was of great assistance to operation in the North.

5165

SECRET

From: Chief, Medforce.

To: Proemial, London.

C.M.99 cipher. 20.12.15. Despatched 1745.

I have been looking at the military future in the Eastern Mediterranean from the point of pure defence of SALONIKA and HELLES. I propose to send Australian and New Zealand Corps to EGYPT as soon as possible. My reasons for this are: (1) the climate of MUDROS is unsuitable for them; (2) EGYPT is the only place where they can be properly refitted, reorganized and rested; (3) they are 14,000 short of establishment and reinforcements of that number are now waiting for them in EGYPT; (4) I wish to clear MUDROS as soon as possible owing to the higher cost of keeping troops here and heavy demands on sea transport involved. Ships for the conveyance of the Corps are now at MUDROS but Admiralty orders these ships to go to MARSEILLES, presumably to bring troops to EGYPT. The matter of transports is however an urgent one for the following reason. Seeing that the Vice-Admiral in his telegram to the Admiralty 670 opposes the retention of HELLES, and as it was solely in the interests of the Navy that we are remaining there, I hope that orders may now be sent for its evacuation. If this should happen the Australian and New Zealand Corps must go to EGYPT in order to make way for the 8th Corps which is now on HELLES. The earliest possible decision in respect to HELLES is urgent as, owing to the very uncertain weather which prevails normally after the 1st January, an evacuation would be rendered an operation of extreme difficulty and beyond the scope of accurate calculation with the elements unfavourable. Should this proposal to evacuate HELLES meet with approval I would propose to send the whole of the Dardanelles Army to EGYPT as soon as transport is available. The above policy would facilitate much the reorganization of this Army, would lead to immediate reduction in expenditure, and would set free a large amount of freight, the latter point being one which I know is greatly desired by H.M. Government. Moreover, this Army, when rested and reorganized, would represent a valuable asset in a central position ready to strike either in France or Egypt according as the situation demanded.

D3243

From: Troopers. Desp.1245. 20/12/15.
To: Chief Medforce. Recd.0700. 21/12/15.
 Repeated to Superflux.

11228 cipher.

In reply to C.M.90.

Your position and difficulties regarding your reinforcements in Egypt are fully appreciated. Maxwell has a difficult task in preparing Egypt against an attack without any formed organizations to support him. In these circumstances he must be permitted to organize where he can and have a free hand in the matter, subject to his not interfering with the despatch, of your reinforcing drafts for Salonika and Dardanelles.

Telegraph the numbers of the divisions you require for defence of Helles, explaining strength of garrison and strength in reserve on the islands. When this information is received further instructions will be sent regarding the released divisions.

5763

SECRET

From: G.H.Q.

To: VICE-ADMIRAL "Lord Nelson".

O.630. 21.12.15. Despd. 1045.

No British troops will be sent MITYLENE
but engineer detachment will remain there for
present.

5164

SECRET

From: G.H.Q.

To: A.H.Q., D.A.

O.A. 49.

21.12.15.

Despd. 1130.

Arrangements should be made for all Mounted
Light Horse and Mounted Rifle Brigades to be
sent to EGYPT.

A166

SECRET

From: War Office.

To: Chief Medforce.

11272 cipher Q.M.G.2.	21.12.15.	Despd. 1945
	22.12.15.	Recd. 0900

Your C.M.99 AAA Your proposals regarding Australian and New Zealand Corps approved. Every endeavour should be made to get the troops to EGYPT as soon as possible refit and reorganise.

Regarding your recommendations they are receiving the most careful consideration.

5167

SECRET

From: War Office.

Despd. 1600. 21.12.15.

To: General Monro.

Recd. 0730 22.12.15.

11254 cipher.

The evacuation of SUVLA and ANZAC and the withdrawal on SALONIKA having been successfully accomplished, a reorganization of the commands in the Mediterranean appears to be advisable.

As long as CAPE HELLES is held Birdwood will remain in command of the Dardanelles force, and now that SALONIKA is clearly defined as a defensive operation the command will remain with Mahon or such successor as may be appointed.

In these circumstances the task for which you were specially selected having been successfully carried out, the Government, fully recognizing the value of the services you have rendered, wish you to resume at as early a date as possible your work as an Army Commander in France. Haig has taken over command from Sir J. French and you have been nominated to command the 1st Army.

The defence of EGYPT requires a reorganization of the command there. Maxwell is fully occupied with the internal military affairs of the country, and it is necessary to appoint a General in complete control of the defences of the Canal and in command of troops detailed for that line.

General Sir Archibald Murray has been appointed to take over this duty, and he will also supervise HELLES and SALONIKA with Headquarters in EGYPT.

5168

SECRET

From: Proemial.

Despd. 1725 21.12.15.

To: General Monro.

Recd. 0730 22.12.15.

11260 cipher.

Our 11254 cipher of today.

You will proceed to France with your Personal Staff, and on your departure will direct the Headquarters Staff of the Mediterranean Command to proceed to Alexandria to await Murray's arrival. Murray probably leaves England about December 28th.

5169

From: CHIEF MEDFORCE.

To: PROEMIAL LONDON.

O.630. 23.12.15. Despd. 1250.

Propose sailing 26th via MARSEILLES AAA
Shall hand over to Birdwood pending Murray's
arrival AAA Staff proceed EGYPT about 28th to
meet MURRAY.

G.S. Z/26.

513
SECRET

General Headquarters,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

22 December 1915.

The General Officer Commanding,
Dardanelles Army.

The Commander-in-Chief wishes you to be prepared with a detailed scheme for the evacuation of Cape Helles, in case orders to carry out this operation at short notice should be received.

At present nothing is known of the intentions of the Government in this regard, except that the instructions received refer to the temporary retention of Cape Helles.

A letter has been written to the Vice-Admiral suggesting a conference to consider this matter as early as possible, and raising the question especially as to the direction and scope of any active operations which the Navy could undertake simultaneously in order to distract the enemy's attention.

Careful consideration is needed as to the extent to which the admirably successful methods adopted for the evacuation of Anzac and Suvla might be varied in order to deceive the enemy. The Commander-in-Chief, is, however, of opinion that it would be essential to carry out any such movement in one step from the fire trenches to the beaches and boats; and that the final stage should be carried out in a single night.

(Sd.) A. Lynden Bell,

Major General,
Chief of the General Staff,
Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.

5170

SECRET

From: G.H.Q.

To: GENERAL BIRDWOOD.

C.M.104 cipher. 23.12.15. Desp. 1335.

Owing to change in shipping arrangements, Chief wishes you to come here tomorrow as he leaves Saturday for MARSEILLES. You will assume command of Medforce after his departure and should proceed to ALEXANDRIA to hand over to General MURRAY, leaving General BYNG in command of Dardanelles Army until your return. Passages for yourself and two personal staff will be taken on "Scotian" sailing Tuesday 28th in which G.H.Q. staff also being sent.

Addressed General Birdwood, repeated General Mahon, Superflux and I.G.C.

5771

From: PROEMIAL

To: CHIEF MEDFORCE.

11347 cipher.	23.12.15.	Despd. 1600
	24.12.15.	Recd. 0715.

Instructions contained in my telegram
11260 cipher December 21st are hereby cancelled
as regards movements of yourself and staff. You
will remain in command of Medforce until Murray
arrives. H.Q. staff to be located as you think
best pending his arrival.

5724

0/386/1.

Headquarters,
8th Army Corps.

23/12/15.

A. H. Q.

The problem of dealing with the enemy's batteries on the Asiatic shore has now become one of increased importance owing to the change in the situation and demands urgent and immediate reconsideration.

The facts are that the enemy will certainly receive increased supplies of ammunition and will probably set to work to mount heavier guns, and by means of them, endeavour once more to obtain control of the entrance to the Straits.

Already these batteries have in several cases withdrawn out of the efficient range of the French heavy artillery and can shell, with practical impunity, the landings and anchorages at Cape Helles. The French guns are mostly of old pattern and unequal to the task allotted to them, while it has been proved that the fire of our monitors from Rabbit Island is not effective in neutralising these batteries.

As far as the guns which the enemy have at present are concerned it is essential that there should be established on shore here one or more batteries of modern long range guns capable of engaging them on at least equal terms.

Until such guns are mounted and ready for action it is necessary that the Navy should take further steps to deal with these guns with the object of destroying such emplacements as are within the range of any protected ship that can be brought up. It is only by constant and powerful attacks that any real results in this respect are likely to be achieved.

It is however rather to the future than to the present that we must look if the position here and the control of the Straits is to be maintained. The enemy is certain to mount heavier guns both on the European side to deal with our batteries as well as to shell the landing places and areas occupied by the troops, and also on the Asiatic side where they have ground from which direct observation of the landing places is assured.

In my opinion it is essential that we should forestall such action on their part both by installing heavy guns or howitzers to deal with such similar weapons as they may bring up under cover of ACHI BABA and by mounting still more powerful guns to command the Asiatic shore.

I suggest that a conference of the naval and military authorities concerned should be held to discuss

the

the whole question at the earliest possible moment,
and that those responsible for the maintainance of the
position here, both naval and military, as well as the
chief authorities who have power to order up the necessary
material should be represented at this conference.

(Sgd:) FRANCIS DAVIES,

Lieutenant-General,
Commanding 8th Army Corps.

512

SECRET

To: The General Officer Commanding,
8th Army Corps.

The Army Commander has received instructions from G.H.Q. to be prepared with a detailed scheme for the evacuation of CAPE HELLES in case orders to carry out this operation should be received at short notice. The intentions of the Government in this respect are not known, but G.H.Q.'s instructions refer merely to the temporary retention of CAPE HELLES.

A letter has been written to the Vice Admiral suggesting a conference to consider this matter as early as possible, and raising the question as to the direction and scope of any active operations which the Navy could undertake simultaneously in order to distract the enemy's attention.

The Army Commander would like you to give this matter your close attention and furnish him with your proposals as soon as possible. The Commander-in-Chief is of opinion, and the Army Commander agrees, that it would be essential to carry out any such movement in one step from the fire trenches to the beaches and boats, and that the final stage should be carried out in a single night. All the beaches, including GULLY BEACH, could be used, and the whole strength of the boats used at the evacuation of ANZAC and SUVLA would be placed at your disposal.

The French would be evacuated previously and need not be considered in your calculations.

(Sd.) C.T. Aspinall, Lieut.Col.

General Staff,
Dardanelles Army.

Army Headquarters,
Dardanelles Army.

24th December 1915.

Headquarters,
8th Army Corps.

24th December, 1915.

A.H.Q.

I beg to request that the general policy as regards the situation here and the resources which will be available to maintain it may be made clear to me as soon as possible. At the present time the situation cannot be called anything but unsatisfactory and unless a rapid improvement in the supply of all resources is made speedily I consider it will be dangerous.

At the present time I have less than the minimum number of effective rifles which I consider necessary to hold the length of line, and the daily casualties are increasing. In addition the 42nd Division is in urgent need of rest and cannot be considered reliable in case of a determined attack.

I have less than half the amount of artillery ammunition which I consider should be available here and it has taken a week to replace the expenditure incurred in the operations on the 19th instant. I estimate that I have here sufficient only for three days severe fighting. There are as yet no anti-aircraft guns here.

He tells me he will have enough when 29th Divn. is complete at Helles & I agree. Intd: W.R.B.

A few days ago the reserve of hand grenades consisted of a few small mixed lots of various patterns and 12,000 of Egyptian make 70% of which have been found not to explode. This in spite of frequent prior demands. There are now only 4500 Mills grenades though a further supply of Grenades Hand A has been received. Our expenditure of hand grenades the preceding week was 29,000.

There are in reserve 600 rounds only for 18 3.7 inch trench howitzers, 50 rounds for the 3 Japanese mortars and 300 rifle grenades on the Peninsula.

25,000 troops here have no leather jerkins or other essential protection against the bitter winds which we know will prevail shortly. The same number require kit bags and half the troops have not been provided with "winter stores" such as stoves, tubs, disinfectors etc.. All this has been repeatedly brought to notice.

Other items of stores wanting are tarpaulins, large and small, nosebags, 6,000 saddle blankets, catapults and rubbers, Very's

pistols,

pistols, signal and telephone equipment of all kinds, clothing for Indian troops, and harness and spare parts for vehicles of Indian transport. Only 12,000 out of 34,000 P. anti-gas helmets have been received.

I consider that another million rounds of S.A.A. Mk. VII should be put ashore here.

Only 30% of the troops in reserve areas have any cover over them. Timber is required in large quantities and there is a great deal in the superstructure of the CRUBA sunk at IMBROS which would have been invaluable here. Rails are required in large quantities and more railway line. Rivetting material of all kinds is urgently needed.

These are only some of the more important items of present needs, but it is with regard to the question of future provision that I am anxious and, judging from the past, I think rightly so.

The situation here from a military point of view is not a pleasant one and might fairly be called serious. At least it calls for the whole spirit and determination of the troops and the concentrated attention of all commanders and staffs.

There is practically not a spot on the peninsula which is not under shell fire if the enemy wishes to reach it and the consequent strain on all, commanders, staffs and troops, particularly in view of their tired condition, is very great.

If to this strain is to be added the constant anxiety as to whether supplies of all resources for living and fighting will not run short or even whether the supplies that ought to have been available will ever reach them, I consider that it is very nearly asking too much. At any rate it very seriously affects their power of fighting and constitutes conditions under which I think that troops ought not to be asked to fight for so many months on end.

I am fully prepared to maintain the position here as long as I am ordered to do so and to continue such operations as may, I trust, permit of this Corps having as great an effect against the enemy as can be expected in its present position, but I would, in fairness to the troops who have done so well - and no one can deny that they have done well - urge that I should be given the assurance that conditions in the future will be better than in the past, and that all necessary resources will be available as and when they are needed.

(Sgd:) FRANCIS DAVIES,

Lieut.-General,
Commanding 8th Army Corps.

SECRET.

15344

Clear the line.

From: Chief, War Office.
To: Chief, Medforce.

Desp.1620. 24/12/15.
Recd.2003. 24/12/15.

11399 cipher.

Your C.M.80 of December 15th.

You are authorised to make all preparations necessary for the rapid evacuation of position at HELLES subject to condition that no steps are to be taken which will prejudice our power to remain there if so decided.

571.

SECRET

PRIORITY.

From: G.H.Q.

To: A.H.Q.

G.649	24.12.15.	Despatched	2252
	25.12.15.	Received	0034

Following received from Chief, War Office :-

"You are authorized to make all preparations necessary for the rapid evacuation of position at HELLES subject to condition that no steps are to be taken which will prejudice our power to remain there if so decided".

Please wire early brief general arrangements for proposed evacuation stating formations to be withdrawn during initial stages and those left for Final stage in order that destinations of each may be decided upon and drafts for those remaining to the end may be kept here. The question of French and number of guns to be left must also be arranged. It will almost certainly be impossible for them to save all their heavy guns. While IMBROS and LEMNOS are being cleared suggest "X" and GULLY beaches be prepared for Final Stage at any rate for infantry. Final Stage in this case may be unable to include anything but personnel and if by then our intentions should be discovered by enemy "W" and "V" beaches might be made almost impossible by them whereas use of "X" and GULLY might be comparatively safe if previous work there not discovered. Will you want officers of Admirals and P.N.T.O's staffs to work out details. Remainder of 88th Brigade here (?) under orders for HELLES night 25/26th. Do you still wish them to proceed. Reply Priority.

PRIORITY.

584

To G.H.Q.

Sender's No. D.O.726.

Day of Month 25th.

Suvla Office now closed aaa there too everything
has gone without a hitch.

A.H.Q.

0330.

585
TO G.H.Q. (For information).

Following received from Heliotrope to A.H.Q.
begins commander rear parties has just reported
evacuation completed without mishap aaa Medical
units all evacuated and no wounded on shore aaa
few more guns saved aaa

General Godley.

Vice

1430.

5725

S E C R E T.

G.S.R. Z.54.

Headquarters,
Dardanelles Army.

25th December, 1915.

From: GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To: CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF,
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

In reply to your G.S. Z.24 of the 20th inst., I earnestly ask for a reconsideration of the decision regarding the reserves of ammunition to be maintained at CAPE HELLES throughout the winter. In formulating the requirements of the 8th Corps in my G.S.R. Z.54, of the 14th inst., at 1500 rounds per gun and 1000 rounds per howitzer, full consideration was given to the disadvantages, to which you refer, of amassing unduly large amounts of ammunition on the Peninsula. But the dangers of exposure to shell fire are discounted by the admirable underground magazines prepared for its reception; while the daily increase in the intensity of the Turkish Artillery fire at CAPE HELLES, which in the event of a prolonged spell of bad weather, might possible develop into continuous offensive action, convinces me that my above-quotes estimate cannot safely be reduced. I must point out that the proposal contained in the last sentence of para. 3 of your letter under reply cannot meet this danger. It may be remarked, moreover, that the expenditure at CAPE HELLES on the 19th inst. had not, up till yesterday, been replaced.

2. As regards the numbers of rifles required for the defence of CAPE HELLES, the dangers of overcrowding troops in that restricted area are fully appreciated. There are some further factors, however, bearing on this question which I fear I may have failed hitherto to place in their correct light before you. From your telegram O.636 of the 23rd inst. it appears there is some misapprehension as to the length of the line which has to be held.

The G.O.C., 8th Corps, informs me that from sea to sea the front trenches measure 8050 yards instead of 7200, on which figure I note that your calculations in that telegram are based. My estimate of 34,000 for the necessary garrison (vide para. 5 of my G.S.R. Z.54 of the 14th inst.) was based on the higher frontage and I note that that estimate meets with the approval of the Commander-in-Chief. But in making my calculations, I was relying on the presence of the 29th or other regular division, and indicated, in the above quoted paragraph, the importance I attached to the inclusion of regular troops either in the garrison itself or, available in reserve. I regret I did not make this clear in my proposals for the formation of the garrison detailed in para. 6 of the same letter. Since the 29th Division, as I now understand, will not be available to return to

the

the Peninsula after a period of rest, I feel compelled to amend, to a considerable extent, my previous estimate of the numbers required at CAPE HELLES.

I agree that the conclusion reached in para.6 of your letter of the 20th inst. to the effect that the experience acquired by the troops at SUVLA and HELLES should render them fully competent for the work required of them, is a fair one. But I regret that the truth of the assumption is not borne out by the facts. The best troops now serving at CAPE HELLES (other than the 29th Division) are those composing the 52nd Division. I am informed, however, that their Commander, Major-General LAWRENCE, for whose judgment I have the utmost regard, feels that he can no longer trust his men to maintain their position in the event of determined attacks, more especially should the enemy meet with any considerable initial success. Capable as they still are of answering the calls made on them by trench warfare pursuing a normal course, it is doubtful whether they have sufficient offensive power remaining to retake by counter-attack any considerable length of trench the Turks might capture by Coup de Main.

Owing, therefore, to the eventual withdrawal of all regular troops from CAPE HELLES and to the indifferent quality of those remaining, I feel strongly that 3.25 men per yard is the minimum number required to hold the position, and that to guard against strong attacks reducing the garrison below this amount during a period of bad weather, a reserve of some 5,000 rifles in addition should also be maintained on the Peninsula. To meet these conditions it will be necessary to maintain ashore 32,000 rifles. To ensure adequate rest off the Peninsula for all these troops, additional reserves, equivalent to about one third of the above numbers, should be resting, and the total force, on and off the Peninsula, required to provide for the maintenance of our position is therefore, in my opinion, 40,000 rifles.

3. With reference to your telegram No. O.642, I much regret the War Office decision not to allow the amalgamation of the 42nd and 52nd Divisions. At the same time I wish to urge, as strongly as I can, that the Royal Naval Division should be kept intact as a Division under its present Commander. Its brigades are the strongest here and the provision of reinforcements for them is promising. There is no reason on this score, therefore, to advise their incorporation in another Division. Moreover, the conditions of service and methods of administration of the Royal Naval Division differ to such a degree from those of any other unit, that its attachment to an Army formation would involve additional administrative work and would not make for smooth and efficient control. Finally, the loss of its commander, whose personal influence and leadership throughout has been of the greatest value to these troops, would be very regrettable.

4. As regards the relief of the 29th Division, referred to in your telegram No. O.636 of the 23rd inst., I wish strongly to represent to the Commander-in-Chief my opinion that the 42nd Division should be the first formation to be relieved. The Corps Commander has today

informed

informed me with regret that Commanders, Staffs and men of this Division are so worn out that it is unsafe to leave them in the line any longer. I would urge therefore that the 13th Division, which, in accordance with the permission granted in your above-quoted telegram, I am now ordering up to the Peninsula, may be allowed to relieve the 42nd Division, in the first place, and that the 29th Division may remain till this relief is completed. The difference to the 29th Division would only be a few days as the 13th Division could be followed immediately by the 11th, and the 29th Division would be relieved as soon as an equivalent number of men had arrived.

5. Should the above suggestions meet with the Commander-in-Chief's concurrence, I would propose to complete the relief of the French troops as soon after that of the 29th Division as possible. General BRULARD has been pressing recently to know the approximate date on which the relief of his troops may be expected, since he anticipates receiving orders from his Government for their withdrawal at an early date. I have informed him that, according to the orders received by me, the date of the withdrawal of the French is to be the subject of a mutual agreement between our respective Governments, but that, so far as I am concerned, I hope to be prepared to take over the remainder of the French line about the 15th January. For this reason it will be necessary to ask that the 11th Division shall follow the 13th Division to CAPE HELLES without delay.

6. I have to-day paid a visit to CAPE HELLES and find that the need for roofing material is even greater than I have hitherto reported, 30% of the troops in reserve being without any cover whatever. But for the fine weather conditions which have recently been prevalent, the situation would be most serious. I was very much impressed by the unfortunate effect which the non-arrival both of roofing material and of ammunition appeared to have exercised on all ranks from the Corps Commander downwards.

In conclusion, I enclose for the information of the Commander-in-Chief, a copy of a letter which I have to-day received from the G.O.C. 8th Corps in which he mentions in detail various points to which urgent attention is desired. As I find myself in agreement with his remarks I think it better to send you the complete letter rather than to take extracts from it.

(Sgd:) W.R. BIRDWOOD,

Lieut.-General,
Commanding DARDANELLES ARMY.

5.10.

SECRET

G.S.R. Z/56.

Army Headquarters,
Dardanelles Army.

25th December 1915.

From: THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To: THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF,
GENERAL HEADQUARTERS.

1. In reply to your letter No.G.S. Z/26, dated 22nd December 1915, and your telegram No.0649 of last night I had already been closely considering the plan to be adopted in the event of the evacuation of CAPE HELLES being decided on, and I entirely agree as to the importance of completing the Final Stage in one night and of arranging to embark infantry at points as near as possible to the present front line trenches.

2. I would urge that if this operation is to take place, it should on no account be delayed beyond 14th January, after which date it seems almost hopeless to expect suitable weather.

If orders could reach me soon, I could arrange to be ready for the Final night on the 12th January, or say 10 days after receipt of order and issue of necessary instructions, unless a good deal of material is abandoned. This would give us the light of the moon, which my experiences at SUVLA and ANZAC, have, contrary to my expectations, proved to be not only a great advantage but almost a necessity.

3. I have today had a conference at 8th Corps Headquarters with General Brulard and General Davies, and took the opportunity of acquainting them with the contents of your telegram and of discussing several important points.

4. In my G.S.R. Z/48 dated 1.12.15., I informed you that in the event of evacuation being ordered I should consider it important to embark all the French during the Preliminary or Intermediate Stage, but I now wish to make a slight amendment to that letter. As the French are expecting that their Infantry will in any case be relieved in the near future I propose that, as one of the first steps, this relief should take place as soon as possible, but that all the French artillery should remain on the Peninsula under the command of General Davies. In the event of evacuation being ordered the French guns could be withdrawn gradually, simultaneously with the British artillery, on the same system as was recently employed at SUVLA and ANZAC. General Brulard entirely agrees with this proposal, and fully recognises that it will almost certainly be impossible to save all the French heavy guns.

5./

5. I learn that the French have already practically completed their Preliminary Stage, i.e. the evacuation of everything not needed for a winter campaign. They have, however, a certain number of spare animals and a certain amount of surplus supplies still on the Peninsula, and these I have ordered General Brulard to remove as quickly as possible. (I have promised that we will help with motor lighters and a ship to do this). I have however arranged that the D.A. & Q.M.G. of the 8th Corps should first ascertain whether any of the surplus supplies could be usefully transferred to the British.

6. As regards the troops to be sent away during the Preliminary Stage, I have in my G.S.R. Z/54 of today's date already pointed out the extreme importance of withdrawing the 42nd Division from the Peninsula at the earliest possible date, and in advance of the 29th Division.

In view of the possibility of an early evacuation the G.O.C., 8th Corps urges strongly that this course should be taken, as he considers the division quite unable to undergo the strain of withdrawal. On the other hand he affirms that the 29th Division are in no way in such need for rest, and if the evacuation is to take place before the 15th January, he particularly requests that he may be allowed to keep this division till the end. He recognises that the division has few of its original personnel left, but affirms that as a result of the Regular tradition and name, it is still immeasurably more trustworthy than any of his other formations. I am in entire agreement with General Davies in this request, and hope very much that in the event of evacuation being agreed on, it may be granted. In this case I would propose to relieve the 42nd Division and French brigade with the 13th Division, and not to recall the 11th Division to the Peninsula.

7. I have not yet worked out details of the evacuation, but I at present incline to the view that it will be preferable during the Intermediate Period to withdraw portions of each of the various divisions in the front line, rather than to remove a complete division, with the consequent re-arrangement of communications and responsibility. This thinning-out process worked successfully at ANZAC AND SUVLA where, with the exception of the 54th Division, only troops in the reserve areas were withdrawn in the first instance.

8. I have ordered a careful reconnaissance (without in any way drawing attention to this) of the whole coast line in our hands for the purpose of finding out the most suitable points for embarkation from the open beach and for the erection of alternate piers in closer proximity to the front line than "W" or "V" Beach.

9. I shall be very glad of the assistance of officers of the Admiral's and P.N.T.O's Staff at a later date, but am not ready for them as yet.

10./

10. In conclusion I would beg that the importance of coming to an early decision should be impressed on the Home Authorities, not only by reason of the daily approaching bad weather, but also, and particularly, because it is practically impossible for the staffs concerned to make adequate plans for this most difficult operation when they have at the same time to consider and make provision for all the requirements for a winter campaign.

(Sd.) W.R. Birdwood,
Lieut. General,
Commanding Dardanelles Army.

15127

SECRET.

From. A.H.Q., D.A.
To. 8th CORPS.
G.H.Q.

D.O. 761. 26/12/15. Despatched 1215.

Propose sending up thirteenth division early as possible and withdrawing similar number 42nd or 29th Division nightly on returning ships aaa Please say how many you could conveniently land and embark each night and when you could be ready to begin aaa Maximum numbers P.N.T.O. could deal with probably 3000 each way aaa G.H.Q. wired again last night ordering 29th Divisions' withdrawal first but Army Commander has urged reconsideration aaa Addressed 8th Corps repeated G.H.Q.

5128

PRIORITY.

SECRET.

From.

A.H.Q.

To.

G.O.C. 13th Division.

D.O. 765.

26.12.15.

Desp. 1500.

Hold 39th Bde. ready to embark for HELLES
to-morrow night AAA No water carts or heavy
equipment to accompany AAA Embarkation orders will
be issued by I.G.C. AAA Please proceed HELLES
yourself same day as brigade and taking one staff officer
with you AAA Acknowledge.

15129

PRIORITY.

SECRET.

From. A.H.Q.

To. G.H.Q.

D.O. 767.

26th December.

Despd. 1515.

Following which crossed by D.O. 761 received from 8th Corps. "Requested that relief of 42nd Division by one brigade 13th Division may be carried out as early as possible AAA General DOUGLAS must go for rest at once". I have accordingly asked I.G.C. to send up 39th Brigade tomorrow night also G.O.C. 13th Division and one Staff Officer AAA Propose sending 42nd Division to MUDROS as soon as relieved.

5730

From - C.G.S.

To - General BIRDWOOD.

O.A.67.

December 26th.

Despd. 1228.

Recd. 1641.

In reply to O.A.655 Cipher.

Your difficulty not understood. Perhaps it was not made clear to you that 29th Division must under any circumstances proceed to EGYPT. 11th and 13th Divisions are at your disposal to delegate to HELLES whenever and in whatever quantity you wish. If therefore 42nd Division amounting to about a brigade must be relieved will (why?) not put a brigade of either 11th or 13th Division in its place. Will you please therefore inform 29th Division as directed in my O.655.

1345

SECRET.

26th December 1915.

No.266.

Sir,

With reference to your letter G.S./Z/26 of 20th December 1915, and in view of an Admiralty telegram No.506 of 25th idem, directing me that a plan is to be prepared to evacuate cape HELLES, should the Government decide on this step; I have the honour to propose that a joint naval and military committee shall draw up the definite scheme for the re-embarkation of our troops, and at the same time consider the nature of the feints and demonstrations to be carried out during such an operation.

2. The naval members would be Captain Francis H. Mitchell, Royal Navy; who sat on the Anzac-Suvla Committee, provided the General Officer commanding, Dardanelles Army will be so good as to spare his services for the purpose; and Captain Cecil M. Staveley, Royal Navy.

3. If you agree and will inform me of the names of the military officers selected, I will instruct Captain Staveley accordingly, and Captain Mitchell can get into direct touch with the senior military member as to date, time and place.

4. My chief of staff, although not a permanent member of the committee, will attend the meetings when required.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(SGD) J.M. DE ROBECK, Vice Admiral.

G.S.R. Z/56.

SECRET

ARMY HEADQUARTERS,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

27th
~~21st~~ December 1915.

From:- THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To: MONSIEUR LE GENERAL DE DIVISION BRULARD,
COMMANDANT ENCHIEF LE CORPS EXPEDITIONNAIRE,
DES DARDANELLES.

Sir,

I have the honour to acknowledge receipt of your letter No.0171/M dated 26th December 1915.

I now beg to inform you that I am beginning to move up reinforcements to the Peninsula tonight, and that they will be coming up in parties of 1500 or so for several nights. The first troops to be relieved by them will be the 42nd and 29th Divisions, but as soon as these - a total of not more than 12,000 have been relieved, I will at once begin the relief of the French infantry and the taking over of the remainder of the front line. I hope that this may be completed by the date mentioned by you, but you will realise that much depends on the continuance of the present fine weather.

As regards the artillery I have not yet received any instructions regarding the withdrawal of your guns, but I will not fail to acquaint you as soon as these orders are received.

I shall be glad if you will kindly complete the evacuation of your surplus material as soon as you can conveniently do so, and if you will let me know exactly what assistance you require in the way of boats you may rely on our doing everything in our power to help you.

May I ask that you will be so kind as to explain the departure of French soldiers and stores by saying that they are being replaced by British soldiers from SIVLA. This is the truth, and will prevent any idea spreading that the Helles position is to be evacuated.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,
Your obedient Servant,

(Sd.) C.F. Aspinall, Lieut.Col. G.S.
for Lieutenant General,
Commanding Dardanelles Army.

58

G.S.R. Z/56

SECRET

ARMY HEADQUARTERS,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

27th December 1915.

General Officer Commanding,
8th Army Corps.

In view of the possibility of the evacuation of our position at HELLES being ordered in the near future the Army Commander directs that any of the guns recently landed from SUVLA and ANZAC which owing to want of certain parts have not yet been brought into action, as well as any guns which are temporarily out of order, should be evacuated at as early a date as possible.

2. With regard to your plans for evacuation the Army Commander wishes to draw your attention to the following points:-

- (a) The necessity for evacuating all sick and weakly men as early as possible.
- (b) The necessity, when evacuating stores, to leave the outside walls of dumps still standing, so that no change shall be noticed by the enemy.
- (c) The advisability of issuing orders that on the last night the boots of men retiring from positions in close proximity to the enemy should be wrapped in sacking or other material, to deaden their footsteps.

3. It would at present appear, that sufficient Naval transport could be given you to complete your Intermediate Stage in about 7 nights, but it is doubtful whether all your animals could be got off in that time.

4. The Final Stage can, so far as naval transport is concerned, be completed in one night provided that not more than 16,000 men remain to be embarked on that night.

Gully Beach, "X" Beach and Morto Bay can, if you desire, be used for that night, as well as "V" and "W" Beaches. It is improbable that motor lighters could use Morto Bay, but 1000 men could be embarked there by cutters into destroyers if this would fit in with your tactical dispositions.

A suggested distribution of troops for embarkation on the Final Night is therefore:-

From GULLY BEACH and neighbourhood.....	3,000	
" " "X" "	3,000	
" " "W" "	5,000) or vice versa.
" " "V" " ,	4,000	
" MORTO BAY	<u>1,000</u>	
		<u>16,000</u>

These/

These figures are not final but are merely sent as a preliminary guide, and it is possible that they can be increased by the Navy should you so desire.

5. The French infantry will, in any case, whether evacuation is ordered or not, be relieved by British troops at an early date - as soon as sufficient British reinforcements have reached you. You should therefore make all necessary preparations for taking over the whole of the French line.

6. The French authorities are also asking to withdraw two groups of field artillery, but definite orders on this point have not yet been received.

7. Orders have been issued to the effect that no heavy baggage should accompany the 13th Division.

8. Two Fortress Companies have been asked for.

9. By courtesy of Major General Fanshaw, Captain Coleridge, G.S.O. 2nd Grade, 11th Division and Captain Collard, D.A. & Q.M.G., 11th Division, are being sent to HELLES tomorrow to be attached temporarily to your staff. General Fanshaw speaks in the highest terms of Captain Coleridge whom he is sure you will find most useful.

(Sd.) C.F. Aspinall,
Lieutenant-Colonel,
General Staff,
Dardanelles Army.

SECRET.

PRIORITY.

From:- Chief, Medforce.
To:- Chief, War Office.
C.M.115. cipher.

27/12/15.

Despd.

Birdwood has just learnt from the French General at HELLES that he has received orders from his Government to evacuate from HELLES all his personnel and guns. I can arrange to replace personnel but his guns must remain. Our artillery have been sent to EGYPT to be re-sorted, re-equipped and re-organised. Unless these steps are taken immediately we cannot expect to have our artillery ready to take the field when needed. Respecting your wire as to evacuation of HELLES I urge for a decision at the earliest date; the weather conditions in the Aegean Sea would after middle of January in normal years render the operation impracticable.

1353

SECRET.

B346

From Chief, War Office.

To: Chief, Medforce.

11456. Cipher M.O.1. 27/12/15. Despd. 1440.
28/12/15. Recd. 0700.

Reference War Office telegrams 11254 of December 21st and 11347 December 23rd. Following is extract from telegram received by Admiralty from V.A.C. Eastern Mediterranean Squadron dated December 25th: begins. "I saw General Birdwood yesterday and he and General Davies consider HELLES can be held. Birdwood, Davies and Admiral Freemantle are meeting today to consider all points connected with requirements for defence and improvement of our position in Peninsula" ends. I feel sure that you realise that all opinions regarding the conduct of military operations which may emanate from subordinate commanders of your force should be forwarded to London if at all through you, and so conform to the recognised custom of the service. Observance of this procedure is especially necessary respecting questions of wide importance such as HELLES and regarding which you have already expressed your opinion and War Office answers have been issued. Please wire necessary instructions to ensure proper procedure being followed in future.

From: Chief, Medforce.
To: Chief, War Office.

1347

C.M.115/2/Cipher. 28/12/15. Despd.

Your 11456. cipher. M.O.1.

Had already issued instructions on the 3rd and specially impressed upon subordinate commanders that matters involving questions of military policy of this kind must not be discussed by them with Navy. But Birdwood and Davies have more than once been placed in difficult position by no fault of theirs. Necessary to allow them arrange matters of detail regarding defence etcetera with naval authorities concerned and this is not first time that Admirals have wired home impressions as to their views on matters of general policy gained from conferences on matters of detail. Discussed HELLES situation fully with Birdwood yesterday and heard from him Davies's views. Everything confirms me in opinion expressed in my C.M.99 of 20th that from purely military point of view which alone I can take into account it is most advisable to evacuate HELLES. Commanders on spot are indisputably anxious and give me impression they are losing confidence and that same may be true of their troops. Fear that calls for additional troops which are already beginning may eventually involve locking up 60,000 or more in this unprofitable quarter with wastage running over 200 per cent per annum. Situation undoubtedly becoming more difficult as enemy's artillery fire from north-east round to south-west and aircraft become more effective and persistent. Navy does not explain what useful purpose army serves for them, but naturally my opinions are subject to any convincing reasons they may give you.

G.S./Z/26/3.

D348

The Vice-Admiral Commanding,
Eastern Mediterranean Squadron.

28 December 1915.

Sir,

I have the honour to bring to your notice the fact that I have this morning received information from the War Office to the effect that the Admiralty have received a telegram from you in which reference is made to the views of Generals Birdwood and Davies regarding the possibility or desirability of the retention of our position at Cape Helles.

It will be very clear to you that I alone, in my capacity of Commander-in-Chief, give advice to H.M. Government, through the War Office, in respect of the military situation in this theatre. If I desire to record the opinions of any of my subordinates, I do so myself through the proper channels, and I can permit no one else to do so.

The opinions of my subordinate commanders, while of the greatest value and assistance to me, do not, in fact, exist at all for any other than the military authorities to whom they are responsible.

I can only request you to consider how you would view my action if I should undertake to telegraph to the War Office that in the opinion of certain Post Captains (named) in H.M. Navy, the arrangements for the naval and military defence of Cape Helles - or any similar matter - were or were not practicable or desirable.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

(SGD) MUNRO, General,

C-in-C. M.E. Force.

15172

From: CHIEF MEDFORCE.

To: CHIEF, WAR OFFICE.

C.M.115 cipher. 28.12.15. Despd.

Your 11438 cipher M.O.1.

Had already issued instructions on the 3rd and special impressed upon subordinate commanders that matters involving questions of military policy of this kind must not be discussed by them with Navy. But Birdwood and Davies have more than once been placed in difficult position by no fault of theirs. Necessary to allow them arrange matters of detail regarding defence etcetera with naval authorities concerned and this is not first time that Admirals have wired home impressions as to their views on matters of general policy gained from conferences on matters of detail. Discussed HELLES situation fully with Birdwood yesterday and heard from him Davies's views. Everything confirms me in opinion expressed in my C.M.99 of 29th that from purely military point of view which alone I can take into account it is most advisable to evacuate HELLES. Commanders on spot are indisputably anxious and give me impression they are losing confidence and that same may be true of their troops. Fear that calls for additional troops which are already beginning may eventually involve locking up 60,000 or more in this unprofitable quarter with wastage running over 200 per cent per annum. Situation undoubtedly becoming more difficult as enemy's artillery fire from north east round to south west and aircraft become more effective and persistent. Navy does not explain what useful purpose army serves for them but naturally my opinions are subject to any convincing reasons they may give you.

55.
SECRET

From: Chief, C.I.G.S.

To: G.O.C. Dardanelles Army. Dec.28. 1120
1645

1490 cipher M.O.606.

Your telegram C.M.115 Dec.7th and W.O. telegram 11399 of Dec.24th, the Government has decided that the position at Cape Helles may now be evacuated. The withdrawal should be carried out as soon as practicable but at your complete discretion. No doubt you can in these circumstances arrange with the French Commander as to the French guns.

Murray leaves London on Friday next.

Addressed Chief Medn.Force. repeated G.O.C.Dardanelles.

A.H.

Conference of 29th December.

Present:- Brig.Gen. MacMunn.
" " Street.
Captain Mitchell, R.N.
" Staveley, "
Major Austey. *ANSTEY.*

1. Brig.Gen. Street stated 8th Corps had reached following conclusions:-

(a) The Final Stage cannot be completed in one night -
22,000 men 50-60 British guns + some French guns
required to maintain position for one week.

To be withdrawn as follows:-

Y Night (last but one) 7,000 men, 30-40 British Guns.
? French Guns.

Z night (last) 15,000 men, 20 British Guns.
? French Guns.

(b) Cannot estimate numbers per pier until Capt. Staveley has inspected them. Suggest possibly:-

Gully Beach..... 5,000
X and Bakery Beaches..... 4,000
b, Lighthouse Cove
and portion of W..... 6,000
Morto Bay preparations for 500 in emergency.
Not required if things go well.

(c) Numbers for Intermediate Stage about 15,000 once relief of 42nd was completed, requiring five nights.

2. General Street was informed:-

(a) The destination of all troops was Mudros. In an emergency during the Final Stage men might be temporarily landed here.

(b) 8th Corps H.Q. could if they liked come here where a camp is ready. He agreed.

(c) That French had been informed they should be clear of Helles, excepting for guns left with us, in one week from now. This Gen. Street agreed fitted 8th Corps plans.

(d) That Y night would probably be between 8th and 10th (incl.) due to time required to collect shipping - It was agreed moon would then be favourable, 1st quarter being on 12th.

(e) That following ships had been asked for to be off Helles permanently or at short call:-

1 Gun Ship.
2 G. Ships (vehicles and Stores)
2 Horse Ships.

This exceeded what 8th Corps intended to ask for by one Horse Ship.

It/

It was specially remarked by Capt. Staveley that these ships should be complete with full working parties on board prepared to work all derricks day and night.

(f) In response to a query Gen. Street was informed that it was found elsewhere possible to destroy guns at any time without arousing suspicion.

(g) He was told he was to call on I.G.C. direct during Intermediate Stage for ferries as required.

3. 8th Corps do not require 3rd Bde. of 13th Division now that 29th Division remains until convenient to evacuate - Gen. MacMunn took necessary action.

4. Reference Greek Labour Corps. It was agreed it should be relieved as soon as possible, sent to Mudros, time expired men discharged and remainder kept on board ship.

5. A Greek steamer running between V Beach and Mitylear^{NE} to be stopped. ("I" taking action).

6. Capt. Staveley asked that, as a result of his experience at Anzac, the Senior Military Officer ashore during the Final Stage should not be constantly changed as was done at Anzac.

Gen. Street replied it was already arranged there should be an evacuation zone, distinct from the fighting zones, on entry into which troops could come under orders of General Lawrence who would remain ashore until the last.

7. 8th Corps want both labour and Fortress Coys. up - or at any rate one of each on receipt of which wing of R. Scots will be sent away. Every days work on the piers is increasing their value in a marked way and it is important the work on them should be maintained to the last.

8. They would like 3 Senior Officers (Majors) and 3 Juniors from 11th Division to assist General Lawrence.

9. May a request be sent home that a question should be asked in the House as to our intentions at Helles to which the reply should be that we are not only going to hold it but are now pushing up troops and intend turning it into a second Gibraltar.

10. Regarding the suggested feint of a landing on the Asiatic shore, it was thought inadvisable at all events during the Final Stage. Reconnaissance of the coast during the next few days might be useful.

11. Hospital Ships - one off beach - one at Kephalos.

12. Greatest importance attached to secrecy. The reconnaissances by hostile aircraft are now almost constant*. The dangerous day of course is Z. On

that/

that morning therefore the movement of troops carriers must not be abnormal. This can be met by employing 2 battleships and 2 carriers for Y night to come here if Mudros cannot be made before daylight.

* A deserter taken yesterday stated instructions had been given them to push small parties constantly up to our lines to see if we were still here.

(Sd.) E.C. ~~Austey~~ ^{ANSTEY} Maj.G.S.

29.12.15.

53.

SECRET

From:- Chief, Med.Force.

To:- Gen.Birdwood.

C.M.121.

29/12/15.

Despatched 2200
Received 2330

In carrying out operation ordered in W.O. telegram 11490 Dec. 28th Chief wishes to emphasize the instruction that the withdrawal should be carried out as quickly as practicable. Everything therefore should be arranged with a view to completing the evacuation at earliest moment.

In view of possible bad weather Chief is especially anxious that the operation should not be prolonged and lives unduely risked by attempting too much in respect of evacuation of material. As far as possible Chief hopes that loss of following may be avoided. 18 pdrs., 4.5" Hows., serviceable 60 pdrs., 6 pdrs. and howitzer ammunition.

A proportion French 75's should be released in preparatory stage and such French heavy guns as you may arrange with Gen.Brulard should be included in above list.

As soon as all superfluous personnel and so much above mentioned artillery as is practicable has been evacuated and provided that by that time the necessary shipping is available Chief considers that the whole remaining personnel should be taken off at once, that is on the first subsequent night of fine weather.

Navy has been requested to be ready to assist in Final Stage by running in to draw enemy's fire or by acting otherwise as arranged in concert with you. Chief leaves to you in this as in other matters free hand to concert detailed plans with Navy, and Admiral is being asked to meet so far as he is able such requests as you may make direct to him for offensive or defensive action during operation. Acknowledge receipt of these instructions.

G.S.R. Z/56.

ARMY HEADQUARTERS,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

SECRET

30th December 1915.

From:- GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING,
DARDANELLES ARMY.

To: MONSIEUR LE GENERAL DE DIVISION BRULARD,
COMMANDANT EN CHEF LE CORPS EXPEDITIONNAIRE,
DES DARDANELLES.

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I have received orders to carry out the evacuation of CAPE HELLES as soon as possible.

2. The infantry under your command will be relieved, and their line taken over by the 8th Corps, on the night of 1st/2nd January. I have instructed General Davies to arrange all details in consultation with you.

You should arrange with the French Naval Authorities for the embarkation of your infantry as soon as possible after their relief on the above date.

3. The two batteries of French artillery, now in action in the right portion of the British Zone, may be withdrawn, and embarked as soon as possible.

4. The withdrawal of the remaining French guns will be carried out "pari passu" with those of the British, and, after your departure from the Peninsula, the French artillery will receive their orders from the General Officer Commanding, 8th Corps. The system adopted will be the withdrawal of two guns per battery in the first instance, followed by that of a third gun at a later stage. Every effort will be made during the last stage to withdraw all remaining pieces, but it is feared that the embarkation of all the 240 mm guns will be impossible. You should therefore warn your artillery that these and any other guns which cannot be withdrawn must be effectively destroyed in such a way that they will not be of any value to the enemy even as trophies.

5. In accordance with my conversation with you today, it is understood that such ammunition as is required for the service of the guns will be left behind and as much as possible of the remainder saved. I am confident that you will leave as little as possible of your reserves of stores and supplies to fall into the enemy's hands.

6. The date on which it is hoped to complete the operation, depending as it does on the provision of shipping and the state of the weather, cannot for the moment be foreseen. It will be communicated to you without delay as soon as a decision can be reached.

I have the honour to be,
Sir

Your obedient Servant,

(Sd.) W.R. Birdwood, Lieutenant-General,
Commanding Dardanelles Army.

SECRET

GENERAL HEADQUARTERS,
MEDITERRANEAN EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

31.12.15.

G.S./Z/26

G.O.C.

Dardanelles Army.

In accordance with War Office telegram 11490 cipher of 28th December and my telegram C.M. 121 of 29th December, the Commander-in-Chief wishes your action to be guided by the following general instructions:-

1. The withdrawal should be conducted with the utmost rapidity, the "final stage" being limited to one night. The operation during the "final stage" should be carried out in one movement direct from the front trenches to the beaches.
2. Every effort should be made to improvise embarkation facilities at as many points on the coast as can be used, other than W. and V beaches which are so accurately registered by the Turkish artillery - due measures being taken to prevent observation by enemy aircraft.
3. Every endeavour should be made to evacuate as many as possible of the following:-

18 pdr. guns.	}	British.
4.5" howitzers.		
60 pdr. guns.		
6" guns and howitzers.		
75 m.m. guns.	}	French.
Heavy guns.		

Also artillery ammunition and such small arm ammunition as can safely be withdrawn before the "final stage".

4. The period of time which must elapse before the "final stage" is undertaken, will be determined by the time required to collect the necessary shipping, small craft etc. and to make the essential preparations ashore (work on beaches, pathways etc.) taken in conjunction with the necessity for evacuating the superfluous personnel and as much as possible of the material mentioned in the preceding paragraph.
5. During the "intermediate stage", the duration of which will be determined by the foregoing considerations, such other animals, material, stores and supplies as are possible to embark without prolonging this period will also be evacuated; and in arranging for their evacuation, the following will be given precedence:-
 - (a) A.T. carts.
 - (b) Limbered G.S. wagons.
 - (c) Pack animals.
 - (d) Other mules.

6./

6. The French troops on the peninsula will be withdrawn before the "final stage". The number of French guns which may be left until the "final stage", or which may be abandoned, should be determined by you in consultation with General Brulard.
7. In the removal of artillery, stores, supplies, etc. the prime necessity for concealing from the enemy aircraft what is afoot by avoiding alteration of the appearance of anything within our lines, must be constantly impressed upon all those carrying out the work.
8. The Vice-Admiral is being requested, subject to his own requirements in respect of observation of naval gun fire, to place the services of the Royal Naval Air Service completely and directly at your disposal and under your direction and control.
9. The strength of the garrison left on the peninsula until the "final stage" will be determined by you, keeping in view the possibility that there may be a spell of bad weather before the "final stage" can be undertaken.
10. The Vice-Admiral is being requested to afford you all support in his power in whatever form you may consider best calculated to assist your operations. In general outline, the Commander-in-Chief thinks that naval support can best be afforded to you by constantly bombarding, both by day and by night, the Turkish batteries on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles. Such action is likely to be regarded by the enemy as retaliation for their shelling of the Cape Helles beaches, and not as an indication of any intention to withdraw. With this conception in view, the Vice-Admiral is being requested to allow the Navy heavily to bombard the Asiatic batteries whenever they attempt to molest our beaches, and to institute this procedure as soon as possible; and it is considered very desirable that, during the later stages of the operations, no departure should be made from this course of action.
11. From the commencement of the operation, a short daily progress report will be telegraphed to the Commander-in-Chief. On the conclusion of the "final stage", a brief summary will be telegraphed to G.H.Q. in Egypt, for transmission to the Secretary of State for War, stating the total numbers of troops and guns evacuated and estimated casualties. This latter will be supplemented as soon afterwards as possible by detailed information.
12. Instructions regarding the distribution of the troops after withdrawal will be sent to you in due course.

(Sd.) A. Lynden Bell,

Major General,
C.G.S.

Mediterranean Expeditionary Force.