

Corps Expeditionnaire d'Orient at Gallipoli 1915

Introduction

Accounts of the Gallipoli campaign often focus on English, Australian and New Zealand units, whereby the significant French contribution tends to be overlooked. This article has been created in connection with research into which army units were part of *the Corps Expeditionnaire d'Orient*.

Corps Expeditionnaire d'Orient

The expeditionary corps initially included only one infantry division, but in May 1915 another division was added.

The French contribution at the landing in April 1915 totaled 16,762 men, out of a total strength of 75,056 men.

At the start of operations on 25 April 1915, the French were tasked with carrying out a diversionary maneuver on the Asian side of the Dardanelles, and there made a landing at Kum Kale. In addition to obscuring where the main attack took place, the landing was also to prevent the Turks from directing artillery at the landing at Cape Helles. The force then withdrew according to plan on 26 April 1915, after which the French Expeditionary Corps was deployed on other parts of the front.

Bosses



General d'Amade.

From Source 4.



General Sarrail.

From Source 16.

General Albert d'Amade, veteran of the French campaigns in Morocco, became the first commander of the Expeditionary Corps. On 14 May 1915 he was replaced by General Henri Gouraud, who was also a veteran from Morocco. However, his time as chief was quite short, as he was badly wounded on 30 June 1915, breaking both legs and losing his right arm.

The command was then temporarily taken over by General Maurice Bailloud, who was the commander of the Expeditionary Force's 2nd Division. Per On 6 August 1915, General Maurice Sarrail was appointed French commander-in-chief and held this post until the end of the campaign in January 1916, and the British commander at the time, General Monro, singled him out in his official report (Source 13).



General Gouraud (standing) and General Bailloud.
From FirstWorldWar.com.

Several of the generals had held high positions in 1914, but had fallen out of political favor as a result of the course of the war, and their own more or less talented contributions to it.

The impression of the English commander-in-chief

General Sir Ian Hamilton, the British commander-in-chief, describes in his diary (Source 14) his impression of the French Expeditionary Force as follows:

th April, 1915. Alexandria. Motored after early breakfast to French Headquarters at the Victoria "5 College. Here I was met by d'Amade and an escort of Cuirassiers and, getting on to my Australian horse, trotted off to parade.

Coming on to the ground, the French trumpeters blew a lively fanfare which was followed by a roll of drums. Never was so picturesque a parade, the verdict of one who can let his mind roam back through the military pageants of India, Russia, Japan, Germany, Austria, Switzerland, China, Canada, USA, Australia, and New Zealand. Yes, Alexandria has seen some pretty shows in its time; Cleopatra had an eye for effect and so, too, had the great Napoleon.

But I doubt whether the townsfolk have ever seen anything to equal the *coup d'oeil* engineered by d'Amade. Under an Eastern sun the colors of the French uniforms, gaudy in themselves, ran riot, and the troops had surely been posted by one who was an artist in more than soldiering. Where the yellow sand

was broken by a number of small conical knolls with here and there a group, and here and there a line, of waving palms, there, on the knolls, were clustered the Mountain Batteries and the Batteries of Mitrailleuses. The Horse, Foot and Guns were drawn up, Infantry in front, Cavalry in rear, and the Field Artillery - the famous 75s - at right angles.

Infantry of the Line in grey; Zouaves in blue and red; The Senegalese wore dark blue and the Foreign Legion blue-grey. The Cavalry rode Arabs and barbs mostly white stallions; they wore pale blue tunics and bright scarlet breeches.



General d'Amade at the presentation of the banners to the two French units.
From Source 14.

I rode down the lines of Infantry first and then galloped through the heavy sand to the right of the Cavalry and inspected them, by d'Amade's request, at a trot, winding up with the six Batteries of Artillery.

On reaching the Saluting Base, I was introduced to the French Minister whilst d'Amade presented colors to two Regiments (175th Régiment de Marche d'Afrique and the 4th Colonial Regiment) making a short and eloquent speech.

General d'Amade is saying: "We swear that these colors -red, white and blue -shall be defended to the death. We swear looking at this red earth, this white city, and this blue sea, and in the presence of our commander, General."

He then took command of the parade and marched past me at the head of his forces. Were all the Houris of Paradise waving lily hands on one side, and were these French soldiers on the other side, I would give my cold shoulder to the Houris.



With General d'Amade in the lead, the infantry units of the Expeditionary Force pass the review for General Hamilton.
From Source 14.

The Cavalry swung along at the trot to the cadence of the trumpets and to the clink-clank and glitter of steel. The beautiful, high-stepping barbs; the trembling of the earth beneath their hoofs; the banner streaming; the swordsmen of France sweeping past the saluting base; breaking into the gallop; sounding the charge; charging; *ventre à terre*; out into the desert where, in an instant, they were snatched from our sight and changed into a pillar of dust!



French 75 mm field guns pass review for General Hamilton.
From Source 14.

High, high soared our hopes. Jerusalem - Constantinople? No limit to what these soldiers may achieve. The thought passed through the massed spectators and saw enthusiasm coursing through their veins. Loudly they cheered; hats off; and hurrah for the Infantry! Hurrah, hurrah for the Cavalry!! Hurrah, hurrah, hurrah for the 75s!!!

At the end I said a few farewell words to the French Minister and then galloped off with d'Amade. The bystanders gave us, too, the warmest greetings, the bulk of them (French and Greek) calling out "d'Amade!" and the Britishers also shouting all sorts of things at the pitch of their voices ..."

1st Division d'Orient

1er Division d'Orient (General Masnou) 1er

Brigade d'Orient 175e

Régiment d'Infanterie

- 1st Battalion
- 2nd Battalion
- 3rd Battalion

1st Régiment de Marche d'Afrique (Lieutenant Colonel Nieger)

- 1 battalion from the 4e Régiment de Zouaves
- 1 battalion from the 3e Régiment de Zouaves
- 1 battalion from the 2e Regiment Etranger d'Infanterie
(Foreign Legion)

2e Brigade Mixte Coloniale (Colonel Ruef) 4e

Régiment Mixte de Marche (Lieutenant-Colonel Guards)

- 1er Bataillon Sénégalais d'Algérie (Major Labarsouque)
- 2e Bataillon Sénégalais d'Algérie (Major Derratier)
- 4e Bataillon Coloniale (Major Serre)

6e Régiment Mixte de Marche (Lt. Col Nogues)

- 3e Bataillon Sénégalais du Maroc (Major Simonin)
- 4e Bataillon Sénégalais du Maroc (Major Nibaudeau)
- 6e Bataillon Coloniale (Major Chabbert)

The 175e Régiment d'Infanterie was created in 1915, of personnel from Marseilles, Grenoble, Saintes and Riom. 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique was established on 1 February 1915 (Source 2).

The divisional artillery

Type	Pamphlet
75 mm field guns	21
65 mm mountain guns 8 120 mm guns 2	
155 mm guns	2

Source 7 states that the divisional artillery of the 1st Division consisted of a total of 33 pamphlets.

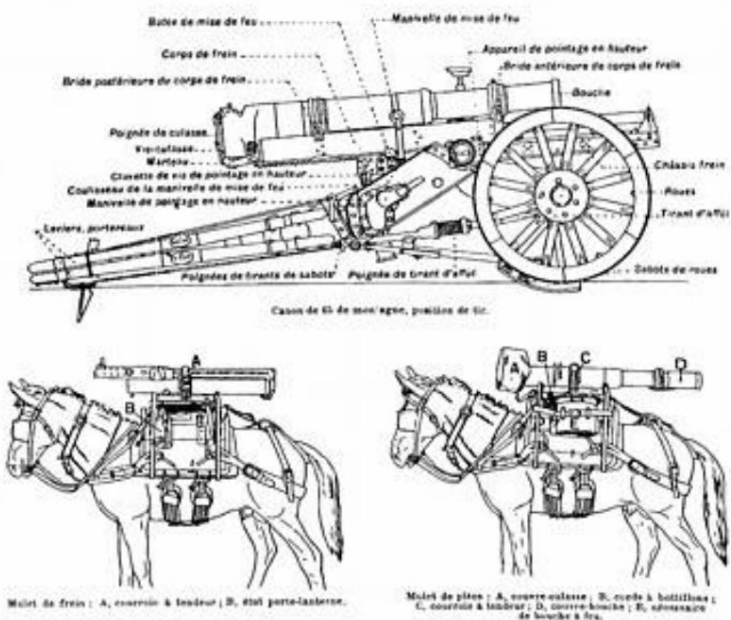
Which regiments provided the batteries does not appear from the available sources, but the overview in Source 1 indicates several possibilities.



*French 75mm field gun,
photographed at Sedd el Bahr, Cape Helles, Gallipoli, during the
Third Battle of Krithia, 4 June 1915.
From Source 4.*

The gunners wear both kepies and troop helmets, a mixture that does not seem uncommon among the French units.

The 21 pcs. 75 mm pamphlets are distributed among 6 batteries (Source 17), but how the mutual distribution has been is not stated.



French 65 mm mountain gun.
From Source 10.

The divisional artillery in the 1st Division included two mountain batteries, each with 4 pcs. 65 mm mountain guns.

Source 1 mentions that *the 2e Régiment Artillerie de Montagne* took part in the French Expeditionary Corps, and it is not unlikely that the two mountain batteries came from this regiment.



French 155 mm gun, deployed at Seod-UI Barr ridge.
From Source 12.

The divisional artillery in the 1st Division included two heavy batteries - 1 battery with 2 pcs. 120 mm guns and 1 battery with 2 pcs. 155 mm guns.

Combat Support and Supply Units

In addition, a number of combat support and supply units were included, about which I do not currently have a concrete breakdown.

The attack at Kum Kale 25 April 1915 (Source 14 and Source 15)

The attack force consisted of:

- 6e Régiment Mixte de Marche (*Lieutenant Colonel Noguès*)
- A 75 mm gun battery

- A machine gun platoon from a cavalry regiment (from the Regiment de Marche de Chasseurs d'Afrique, see below)
- A halfling pioneers A
- sanitation unit A
- signal team.



Excerpt from Map of the Gallipoli peninsula (FirstWorldWar.com).

The target of the attack was the village of Kum Kale as well as an older fort whose cannons had been destroyed during the naval operations conducted in the months preceding the landings. In positions about Kum Kale were units of the Turkish 3rd Infantry Division (about 3 battalions).

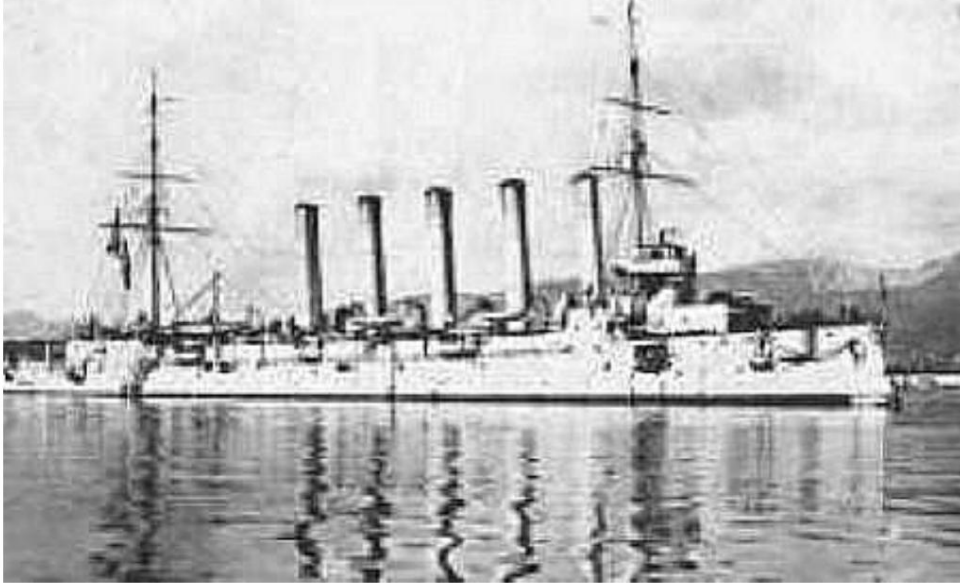
At 04:20 the invasion fleet anchored off the coast, and the attack began at 05:15 with a bombardment from the lake, including from the Russian cruiser Askold, which lasted until 06:20, when the signal to attack was given. However, the current along the coast was so strong that the landing craft did not reach the coast until 10:15.

The landing was hampered by heavy Turkish fire, but the 10th and 11th Senegalese companies waded ashore and attacked the fort through a breach created by the ship's artillery. By 12:00, most of the village of Kum Kale had been captured, but there was fierce fighting at the town's cemetery. The French field artillery, which was landed approx. 14:30 was too weak to really influence the matches that took place

stand at nightfall approx. 18:30, halfway between Kum Kale and Yeni Shehr..

During the day, the French fleet also carried out a mock landing at Basika Bay (approx. 25 km south of Kum Kale). The purpose was to maintain the Turkish 11th Infantry Division in its positions, so that no intervention was made against the landing at Kum Kale. (Source 18)

During the night, the Turkish forces launched three counter-attacks, which were repulsed with heavy losses on both sides.



The Russian cruiser ASKOLD.

From The Askold cruiser in the Gallipoli battle by Svetlana Samchenko (Russia and Australia - two centuries).

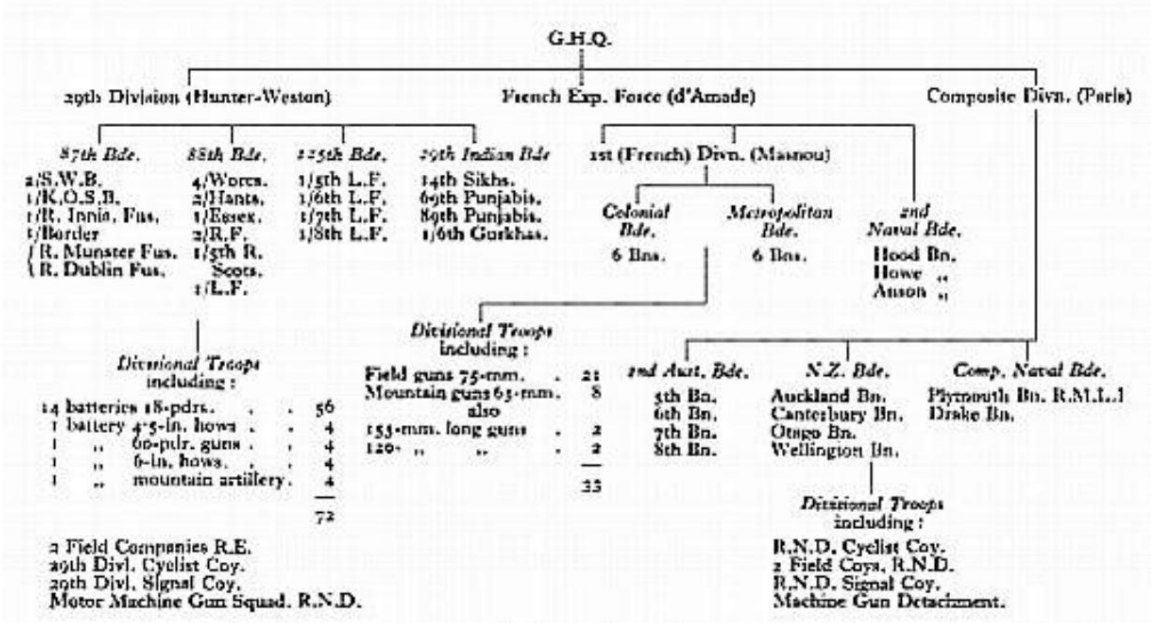
The French attack was resumed at dawn, supported by the ship's artillery. Some Turkish soldiers surrendered at seven o'clock, while others continued the fight. In the confusion, Turkish soldiers managed to push back into Kum Kale, during which the French lost two machine guns, which were however recaptured by a quick counter-attack. However, a renewed attack against the cemetery failed.

From General Hamilton's diary:

"At 1.45 d'Amade came aboard (on the battleship HMS Queen Elizabeth) in a torpedo boat to see me. He has been ashore at Kum Kale and reports violent fighting and, for the time being, victory. A very dashing landing, the village stormed; house to house struggles; failure to carry the cemetery; last evening defensive measures, loop holed walls, barbed wire fastened to corpses; at night savage counter attacks led by Germans; their repulse; a wall some hundred yards long and several feet high of Turkish corpses; our own losses also very heavy and some good Officers among them. All this partly from d'Amade to me; partly his Staff to my Staff. Nogués and his brave lads have done their bit indeed for the glory of the Army of France. Meanwhile, d'Amade is anxious to get his men off soon: he cannot well stay where he is unless he carries the village of Yeni Shahr. Yeni Shahr is perched on the height a mile to the South of him, but it has been reinforced from the Besika Bay direction and to take it would be a major operation needing a disembarkation of at least the whole of his Division. He is keen to clear out: I agreed, and at 12.5 (?) he went to make his preparations."

The order to withdraw reaches Lieutenant Colonel Nogués approx. 17:00. Embarkation begins at nightfall and approx. 22:00 the last infantry forces depart from Kum Kale.

The French losses during the operation were: Killed - 7 officers and 183 non-commissioned officers and privates; wounded - 13 officers as well as 575 non-commissioned officers and privates. The Turkish losses amounted to 1,730 dead, wounded and missing, of which 500 ended up as prisoners of war.



Organization Chart - The Allied Forces at Gallipoli, 25 April 1915.
Source 7.

The forces were, in relation to the task, relatively limited, and there was no possibility of carrying out anything other than a mock landing on the Asian coast.

2e Division d'Orient

2e Division d'Orient (General Maurice Bailloud) 3e Brigade

d'Orient (General Ganeval) 176e Régiment

d'Infanterie (Lieutenant-Col. Bernadotte)

- 1st Battalion (Major Dumontt) 2nd
- Battalion (Major Ducas) 3rd
- Battalion (Major Pinchon)

2e Régiment de Marche d'Afrique

- 1 battalion from 1er Régiment de Zouaves 1
- battalion from 2e Régiment de Zouaves 1
- battalion from 4e Régiment de Zouaves

4e Brigade Mixte Coloniale (General Simonin) 7e

Régiment Mixte de Marche (Major Aymes)

- 2 native battalions 1
- colonial battalion

8e Régiment Mixte de Marche (Lt. Col Adhemar)

- 2 native battalions 1
- colonial battalion

The division arrived at Gallipoli on 14 May 1915, and included, analogously to the 1st Division, a number of combat support and supply units, about which I currently do not have specific information.

176th Infantry Regiment

The regiment was created in 1915 (garrison in Salon de Provence), of personnel from Rouen, Pau and Montpellier. On embarkation for Gallipoli, the regiment (cf. Source 5) consisted of:

- Staff with 2 officers and 12 non-commissioned officers and privates, 5 animals and 1 wagon.
- 3 battalions and 3 machine gun divisions with 54 officers and 3,357 non-commissioned officers and privates, 207

animals and 54 wagons.

"Animal" in this context is assumed to mean both horses and mules.

Uniforms



*Private,
4e Regiment d'Infanterie
Coloniale, 1915.
From Source 8.*



Trumpets,

8^e Regiment they
Chasseurs d'Afrique, 1915.
From Source 8.

The colonial regiments were originally dressed in dark blue uniforms, see Uniform Plancher - About French Colonial Troops, 1914, but from 1915 they were gradually replaced by horizon blue uniform items. The soldier here shows precisely this mixture of the two uniforms, and can therefore serve as an example of soldiers from the colonial battalions that were part of the two native brigades.

The soldiers from the two French regiments - 175th and 176th Infantry Regiment were - according to various photographic material - wearing horizon blue uniforms (like the illustration, only with horizon blue trousers), with capes or troop helmets as headgear.

The illustration shows how the soldiers got out in France. On his chest, the soldier carries a gas mask pouch, which was not used in Gallipoli. In his hand he holds an early version of a "steel helmet" that could be worn under the hat.

In February 1915, *the Regiment de Marche de Chasseurs d'Afrique was established*, from depot squadrons from the 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th African Mounted Hunter Regiments.

The regiment was sent to Egypt and was stationed at Alexandria. The regiment's machine gun division was sent to Gallipoli, where it was part of the 1st Division's 6 Pr. 17 August 1915 the regiment was ^e Régiment Mixte de Marche in April and May 1915. given the designation, 8 it embarked, heading for Salonika. ^e *Regiment de Chasseurs d'Afrique*. In October 1915, The regiment then went to Macedonia and Albania, where it served until December 1917, when the regiment was disbanded.

The uniform here is from the campaign in Salonika, and shows the khaki uniform, which from 1915 replaced the more brightly colored uniform of earlier times, which i.a. seen in France 1914 - The mobilization of Th. Claudius and Scrapbook - Chasseurs d'Afrique, approx. 1933. The only remnant from this uniform is recognizable, namely the red cap, which here is almost covered by the khaki cover. However, the uniform was still used for parade use, cf. General Hamilton's description of cavalymen in *pale blue tunics and bright scarlet breeches*. Despite Source 6's extensive review of the uniforms of the African hunters, it is not possible to deduce how the machine gun division at Gallipoli was uniformed.



Tirailleurs Sénégalais approx. 1890.

From Red Shadow.

Although these uniforms are a little more brightly colored than the 1915 edition, they still give quite a good impression of the uniforming of the Senegalese units, who, in addition to Senegal, also came from West Africa and the French colonies at the Equator.

In 1915, dark blue trousers and cloaks were used, before finally switching to khaki-coloured uniforms.

Source 4 shows examples of the dark blue uniform.



Zouaves, ca. 1913.

From a simultaneous postcard.

The Zouaves also underwent a uniform evolution away from the brightly colored uniforms and also ended up with khaki colored uniforms, described as mustard colored.

See e.g. Les uniformes de Zouaves et Tirailleurs (Marsouins, Jackals et Turcos).

It is conceivable that white canvas trousers (from the summer uniform) were used at Gallipoli instead of or over the red uniform trousers.

In Source 12, the uniforms of the Foreign Legionnaires are described as being the traditional French infantry uniform, although blue canvas trousers were issued which could be worn over the red trousers.

Examples of the traditional uniform are shown in Uniform Plancher - About French Colonial Troops, 1914.

Sources

Organization

1. Force Française en Turquie (Dardanelles- Gallipoli) (La Coloniale). An unedited and uncommented list of the various French units that contributed soldiers. Can serve as a starting point for further investigations.
2. La guerre de la péninsule de Gallipoli (La Coloniale). Contains i.a. the war diary of the 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique in the period 19 to 27 May 1915.
3. Les Colonieaux en 1914-1918 (La Coloniale). A general overview of French colonial troops, including a section on the units at Gallipoli. The text is also available on the unofficial website of the French Marine Infantry L'histoire des Troupes De Marine: 1914-1918.
- 4th Corps Expeditionaire d'Orient (Digger History). An English-language presentation that gathers a lot of information about the French expeditionary force, although without very many sources.

5. JMO du 176e RI du 8 mai 1915 au 6 octobre 1915 (Marsouins, Chacals et Turcos). Journal Des Marches et Opérations is the French term for a war diary. The site provides good information about the regiment's organization and efforts.
6. *Les Chasseurs d'Afrique* by Jacques Sicard and François Vauvillier, Histoire & Collection, Paris 2001, ISBN 2-908-182-874. A thorough review of the history and uniforming of the regiment(s) from 1831 to the present day.
7. *Military Operations: Gallipoli, Volume I: Inception of the Campaign to May 1915* by Brigadier General CF Aspinall-Oglander, Heinemann, London 1929. I have only used an organizational chart which was reproduced when the book was once offered for sale on the Internet. Closer studies of the book, which can be borrowed from the Royal Garrison Library, will certainly contribute further to my report.

Uniforms, equipment and material

8. *Men at War 1914-1945: French Colonial and African Troops, Sergeant, 1e Régiment de Marche de Zouaves, France 1914*, published in association with Osprey by Del Prado Publishers, Madrid 2000, ISBN 84-8372-516-9. A "light edition" of the older Osprey publication *French Colonial and African Troops*, by Ian Summer, with illustrations by Bill Younghusband.
9. Color Photographs of French Colonial Troops (1915) (Old Magazine Articles). One of many exciting articles reproducing early color photographs from the First World War.
10. *Solid cast Mules* by Alex Riches and Linoel Gaurie, The Bulletin, No. 1, 2005. An article from The British Model Soldier Society's members' magazine, reviewing various toy versions of French mountain artillery.

In general

11. Battle of Gallipoli (Wikipedia). Danish-language articles about the Gallipoli campaign that are available online are not among the most common, but here a translator has made a good effort.
12. With the Foreign Legion in Gallipoli by AR Cooper (The Great War in a Different Light). One colorful account of AR Cooper, who at the age of 15½ signed up for the Foreign Legion in 1914, and then took part in the Gallipoli campaign. The text is also part of Source 4.
13. The Gallipoli Despatches of General Sir Ian Hamilton and The Gallipoli Despatch of General Sir Charles Monroe (The Long, Long Trail). The generals' official reports give, among other things, an insight into the efforts of the French units during the campaign. This also shows that the two French divisions worked closely with the English 29th Division and the Royal Naval Division.
14. Gallipoli Diary, Volume 1 by General Sir Ian Hamilton (Project Gutenberg). The general's personal diary from the campaign, of which the good people of Gutenberg have temporarily made the first volume available online.
15. The French Landing at Kum Kale 25-26 April 1915 by Yves Fohlen (Digger History). One description of the French landing on the Asian side of the Dardanelles.
16. General Maurice Sarrail (The Great War in a Different Light). Brief description of the general's life, which after Gallipoli led him to Salonika, where he was for a time French commander-in-chief.
17. Gallipoli: The Landings of 25 April 1915 by S. Monick (South African Military History Society). A good description of the battles on the first day of the campaign, incl. an overview of the participating combat and combat support units.
18. *Gallipoli - The fatal Shore* by Harvey Broadbent, Viking, Victoria/Australia 2005, ISBN 0-670-04085-1. A recent and well-illustrated book that seeks to cater for all participating units.
19. Helles: The French in Gallipoli by Eleanor van Heyningen (Imperial War Museum). A paper that on brilliantly sums up the French part of the story of the Gallipoli campaign.

Postscript

The Foreign Legion's contribution to the Corps Expéditionnaire d'Orient

As a supplement to the Foreign Legion's contribution to the 1er Régiment de Marche d'Afrique in the Corps Expeditionnaire d'Orient, Source 1 provides the illustration shown here as well as some additional information.

The regiment's 3rd Battalion consisted of two companies from *the 1st and 2nd Regiment Etranger d'Infanterie* respectively , and thus not only from the 2nd Regiment as previously mentioned.

Uniforms



Foreign Legionnaire, Gallipoli, spring 1915.

Drawn by Mike Chappel.

From Source 1.

Uniform description (Source 1)

Headwear

Tropehjem Model 1888, with light khaki colored cover, or kepi Model 1884, with light khaki colored cover.

Uniform

Cape Model 1877, with the regiment's number in red as a collar badge. Light khaki colored canvas trousers. Black leggings Model 1913, worn over boots Model 1893. The hunter's horn on the sleeve is a marksman's mark.

Equipment

Black harnesses and waist belt with two black cartridge pouches Model 1888 in front and one in back; long bayonet in black scabbard at left side, also here light khaki colored bread bag.

Armament

Rifles of the *Lebel type*. Over his shoulder, the soldier carries a Hotchkiss Model 1914 machine gun.

It is further stated that the Foreign Legionnaires at Gallipoli during the summer of 1915 may have changed to purely khaki colored canvas uniforms.

Whether the legionnaires actually wore the light blue coveralls mentioned in Source 2 does not appear from the available material.

Sources

1. *French Foreign Legion 1914-45* by Martin Windrow, Osprey Men-at-Arms 325, Oxford 1999, ISBN 1-85532-761-9.
2. *With the Foreign Legion in Gallipoli* by AR Cooper (The Great War in a Different Light).

Per Finsted

Notes:

- 1) Albert d'Amade (1856-1941) (*Généalogies célèbres sur la Web*). The year of birth varies from 1856 to 1858 according to the sources.
- 2) Henri Gouraud (1867-1946) (*Wikipedia*)
- 3) Maurice Bailloud (1847-?) (*Photographie militaire et Organization de l'armée française au XIXeme siècle*)
- 4) Maurice Paul Emmanuel Sarrail (1856-1929) (*City of Paris official website*)
- 5) Despite General Hamilton's enthusiasm for the French units, it appears that the names of the regiments are not quite correct. Judging from the names, it could be 175e Régiment d'Infanterie (French) and 4e Régiment Mixte de Marche (Algerian).
- 6) *Gyldendal's Foreign Dictionary*: Huri (from Arabic *hūrīyah* black-eyed woman) young, beautiful woman in the Mohammedan paradise.
- 7) Historique du 2e Régiment Etranger d'Infanterie (*Legion Etrangere*).
- 8) 175e Régiment d'Infanterie (*Historique de Régiments*)
- 9) Maybe this time is not quite right. General Hamilton mentions in his diary (Source 14) - with the English Admiral de Robeck as a source - that the attack on the village of Kum Kale was already carried out as early as 09:35.
- 10) ASKOLD was nicknamed *A packet of Woodbines*, as the five chimneys resembled a 5-pack of Woodbine cigarettes.
- 11) 176e Régiment d'Infanterie (*Historique de Régiments*)
- 12) See Salonika (*Historical Battles*) (present-day Thessaloniki) for a discussion of the battles here.