



Battle of the Somme

The Battle of the Somme was fought between the British and the French (the Allies) and German. It began on July 1st, 1916 and lasted until November 18th of that same year. It was one of the largest battles fought during World War I, and one of the bloodiest battles in human history.

Following the retreat of the German army after the First Battle of the Marne, the Germans and the Allies had been engaged in trench warfare along the western front, which had hardly moved at all. The intention of the Allied offensive at the Somme was to push the Germans back and out of France.

Before they could carry out this plan, however, the Germans attacked the French at the Battle of Verdun. While French troops were engaged in holding of the Germans at Verdun, they demanded that the British go ahead with the attack at the Somme a month earlier than originally planned. France hoped that in this way, German troops would be drawn away from Verdun and to the engagement at the Somme.

The Battle of the Somme began with a bombardment of artillery, with which the Allies hoped to break the German front line. The Germans had intelligence about this plan, however, so they were prepared for it. They waited out the 8-day long attack, which had little effect, especially as many of the British shells never even exploded. Refusing to give this failure due consideration, the British left their trenches and attacked the German front. They were quickly gunned down by the Germans, and the advance resulted in the single worst day in the history of British warfare. 20,000 were killed on the first day of the battle, and another 40,000 were wounded. The Allies nonetheless continued to attack, gaining about seven miles of territory and suffering another 623,000 casualties.

Historians disagree about whether or not British Commander Haig did the right thing engaging at the Battle of the Somme with a flawed battle plan. Some thing he had no choice but to

Did the British do the right thing attacking the Germans at the Somme a month early, after the failure of their bombardment? Explain your answer.