**A letter sent to the editors of the main British newspapers by Sir Douglas Haig, May 1916**

**The Plan**

**The plan was to hit the front line of German defences of their trenches across the Somme area with intense artillery bombardments for 7 days to destroy German positions (get rid of the defensive barbed wire), and kill large numbers of troops. Alongside this would be the explosion of mines that had been set up under the German trenches which would destroy the German dug-outs.**

**Haig was sure that the Germans would crumble. Once the bombardment was over the British troops would walk, not run, across no man’s land. British cavalry could get behind the German defences, attack the Germans in the open and disrupt the road and rail links that kept the German troops supplied and reinforced.**

**Account**

**George Coppard was a British soldier who fought during the entire First World War and was twice wounded. He fought at the Battle of the Somme as a machine gunner and wrote about his experiences in his book, *With a Machine Gun to Cambrai*. In this excerpt, Coppard recollects his experience on July 2, 1916. The first day of the Battle of the Somme was the 1st of July.**

“The next morning we gunners surveyed the dreadful scene in front of our trench. There was a pair of binoculars in the kit, and, under the brazen light of a hot mid-summer's day, everything revealed itself stark and clear. . . . Immediately in front, and spreading left and right until hidden from view, was clear evidence that the attack had been brutally repulsed. Hundreds of dead, many of the 37th Brigade, were strung out like wreckage washed up to a high-water mark. Quite as many died on the enemy wire as on the ground, like fish caught in the net. They hung there in grotesque postures. Some looked as though they were praying; they had died on their knees and the wire had prevented their fall.

From the way the dead were equally spread out, whether on the wire or lying in front of it, it was clear that there were no gaps in the wire at the time of the attack. Concentrated machine gunfire from sufficient guns to command every inch of the [barbed] wire, had done its terrible work. The Germans must have been reinforcing the wire for months. It was so dense that daylight could barely be seen through it. Through the glasses it looked a black mass. The German faith in massed wire had paid off. How did our planners imagine that Tommies [British soldiers], having survived all other hazards - and there were plenty in crossing No Man's Land - would get through the German [barbed] wire? Had they studied the black density of it through their powerful binoculars? Who told them that artillery fire would pound such [barbed] wire to pieces, making it possible to get through? Any Tommy could have told them that shell fire lifts [barbed] wire up and drops it down, often in a worse tangle than before.

**Details in the source that I would follow up are…**

**Questions I would ask…**

**What type of source I could use…**

**How this might help answer my question…**