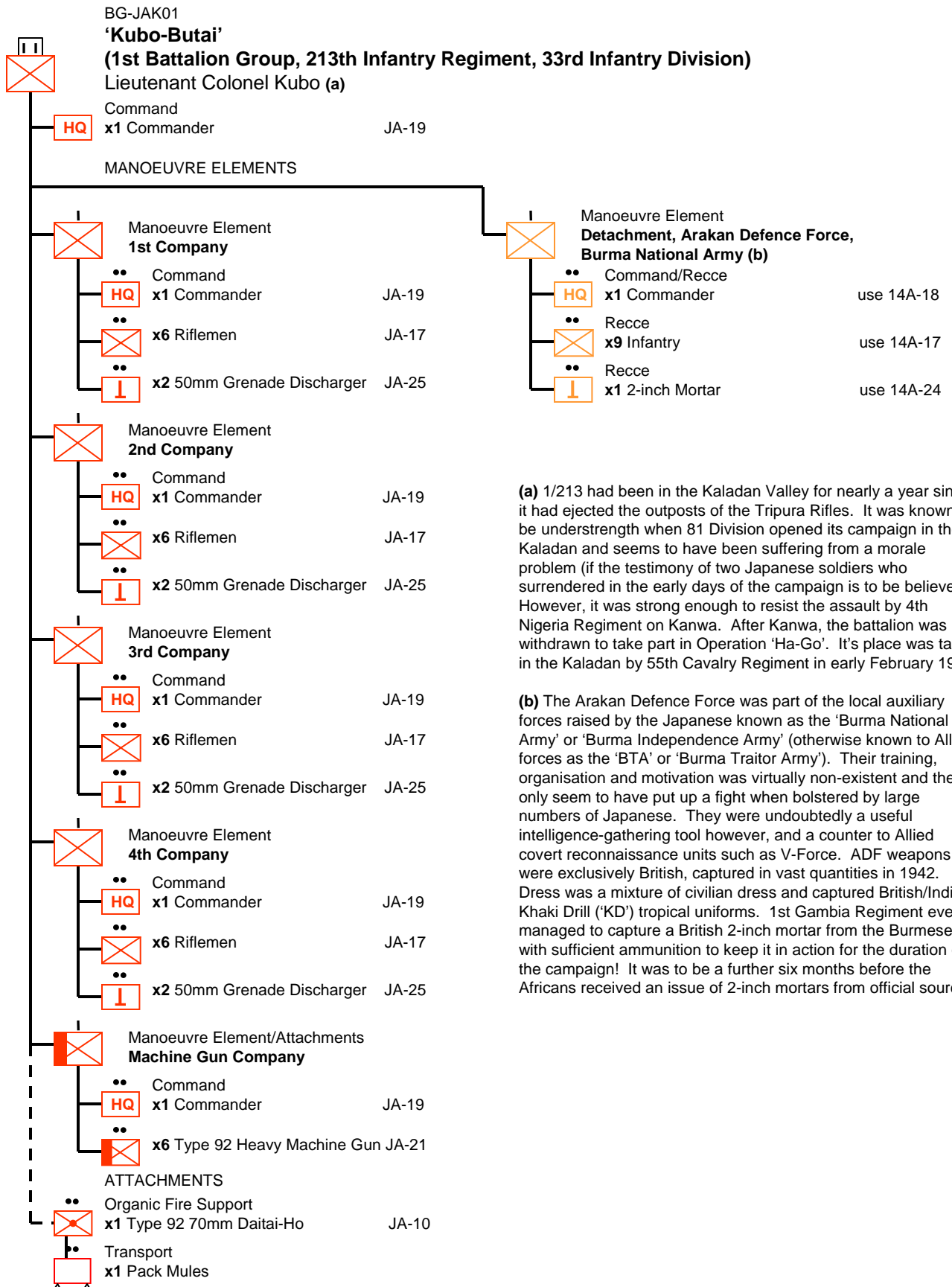


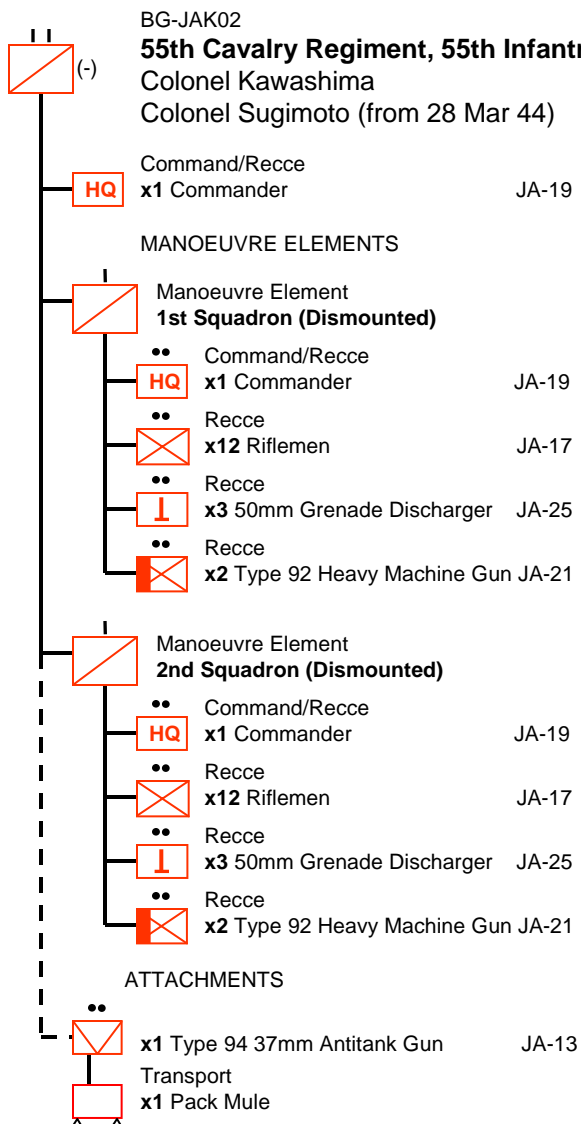
Japanese Forces In The Kaladan Valley Dec 43 to May 44

'Kubo-Butai' ('Kubo Force')



Japanese Forces In The Kaladan Valley Dec 43 to May 44

55th Cavalry Regiment



(a) 55th Cavalry 'Regiment' (actually a battalion-sized force) was garrisoning Akyab Island at the start of 1944, when it received orders at the end of January to replace 1/213 Infantry Regiment in the Kaladan Valley, to allow 1/213 to participate in the forthcoming Operation 'Ha-Go'. However, 55th Cavalry was a weak formation, consisting only of two large squadrons of dismounted cavalry and some heavy weapons. The rest of the regiment (including all the regiment's light tanks) had been sent to bolster the defences of Guam in the Pacific. Nevertheless, 55th Cavalry proved themselves to be highly proficient soldiers, giving the 1st Sierra Leone Regiment a bloody nose at Kaladan village on 12th February 1944 and continuing to be a painful thorn in the side of 81st West African Division throughout 1944. The 55th Division records that the regiment was rejuvenated with the arrival of the aggressive Colonel Sugimoto on 28th March. Sugimoto also took command of the new 'Kaladan-Butai', when Koba's 111th Infantry Regiment was withdrawn from the Kaladan on 5th May.

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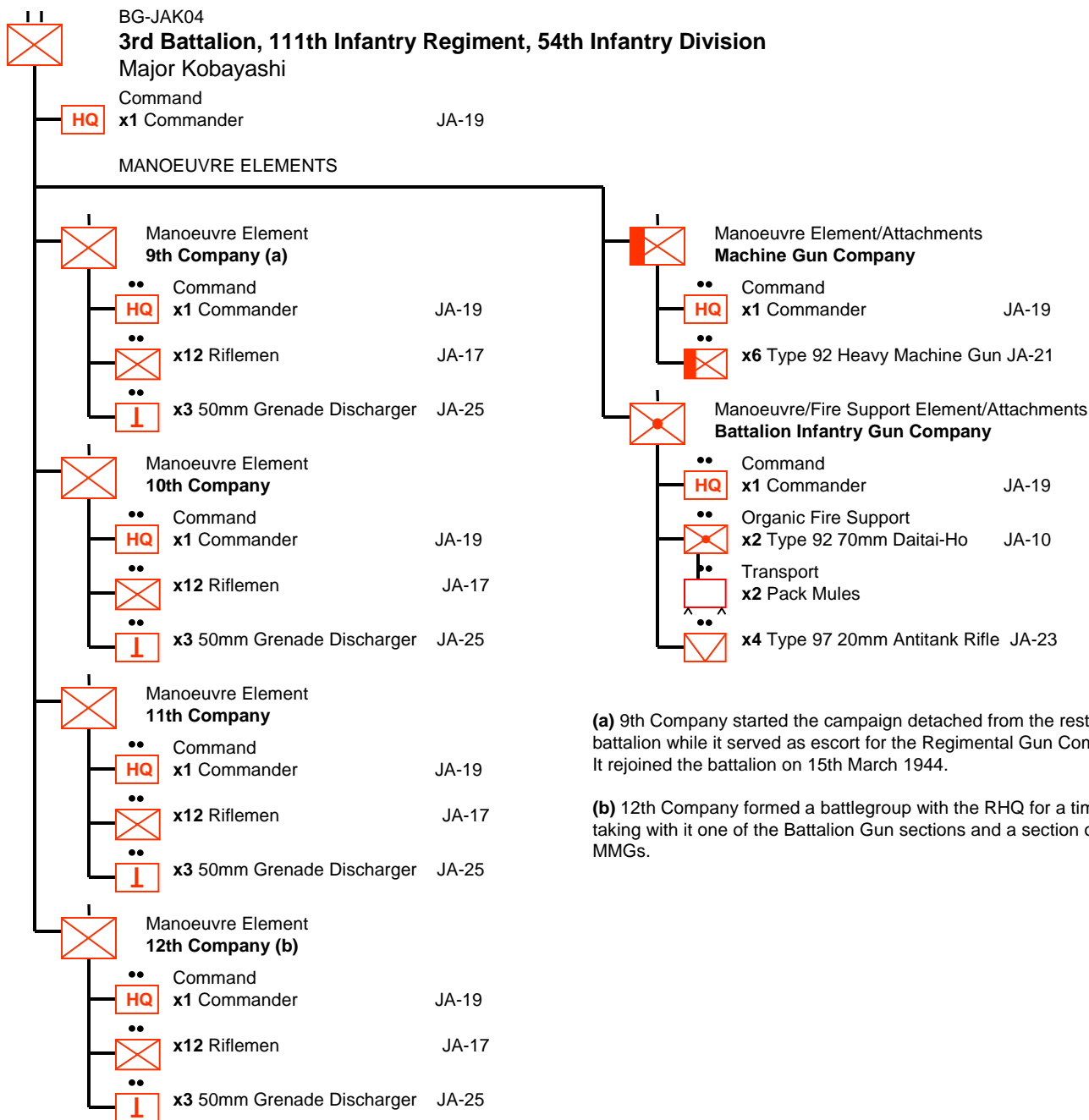
'Koba-Butai' ('Koba Force')



(a) 'Koba-Butai' was formed at Myohaung at the end of February 1944 from the RHQ and 3rd Battalion (less 9th company) of 111th Infantry Regiment, plus 55th Cavalry, which was already fighting in the Kaladan, and a number of other battlegroups (listed above). The Regimental Gun Company of the 111th, escorted by 9th Company, left Akyab by boat on 12th March, travelling upriver and joining Koba on the 15th. For a time the RHQ operated with 12th Company, as a separate battlegroup from the remainder of 3/111th which operated with 10th & 11th Companies (the MMGs and Battalion Guns were split). The 111th seems to have conformed to the 'Strengthened Modified' regimental organisation. The 111th was withdrawn from the Kaladan on 5th May 1944, with the remaining battlegroups being handed over to Colonel Sugimoto of the 55th Cavalry as 'Kaladan-Butai'.

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3/111th Infantry Regiment

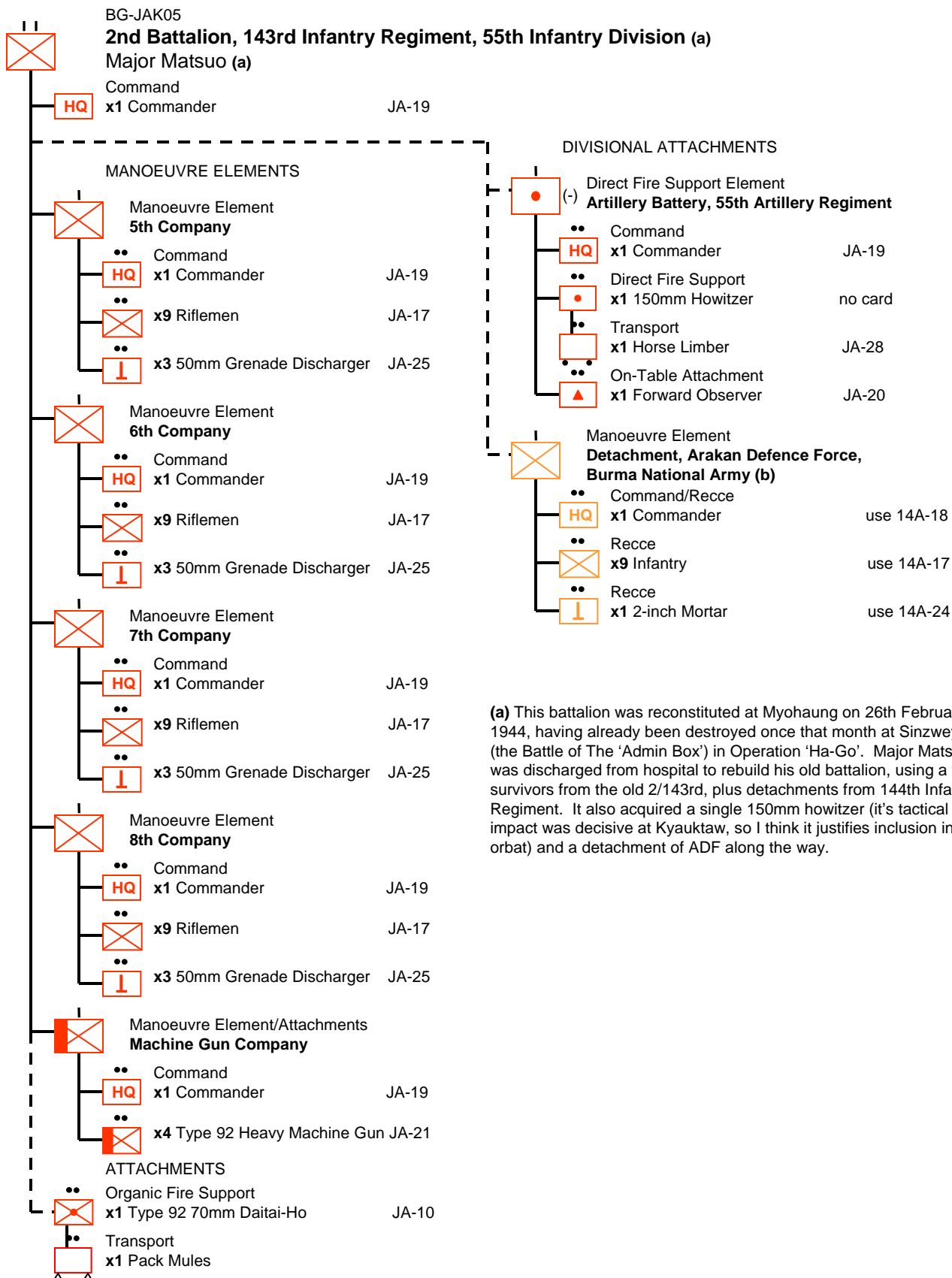


(a) 9th Company started the campaign detached from the rest of the battalion while it served as escort for the Regimental Gun Company. It rejoined the battalion on 15th March 1944.

(b) 12th Company formed a battlegroup with the RHQ for a time, taking with it one of the Battalion Gun sections and a section of MMGs.

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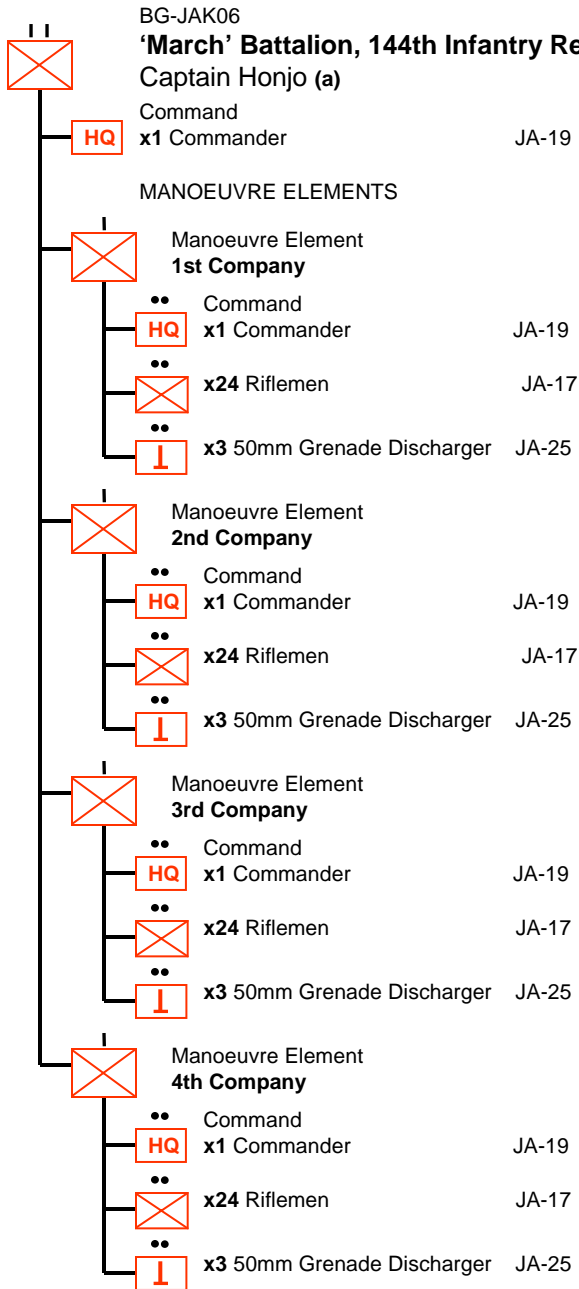
2/143rd Infantry Regiment



(a) This battalion was reconstituted at Myohaung on 26th February 1944, having already been destroyed once that month at Sinzweya (the Battle of The 'Admin Box') in Operation 'Ha-Go'. Major Matsuo was discharged from hospital to rebuild his old battalion, using a few survivors from the old 2/143rd, plus detachments from 144th Infantry Regiment. It also acquired a single 150mm howitzer (it's tactical impact was decisive at Kyauktaw, so I think it justifies inclusion in this orbat) and a detachment of ADF along the way.

Japanese Forces In The Kaladan Valley Dec 43 to May 44

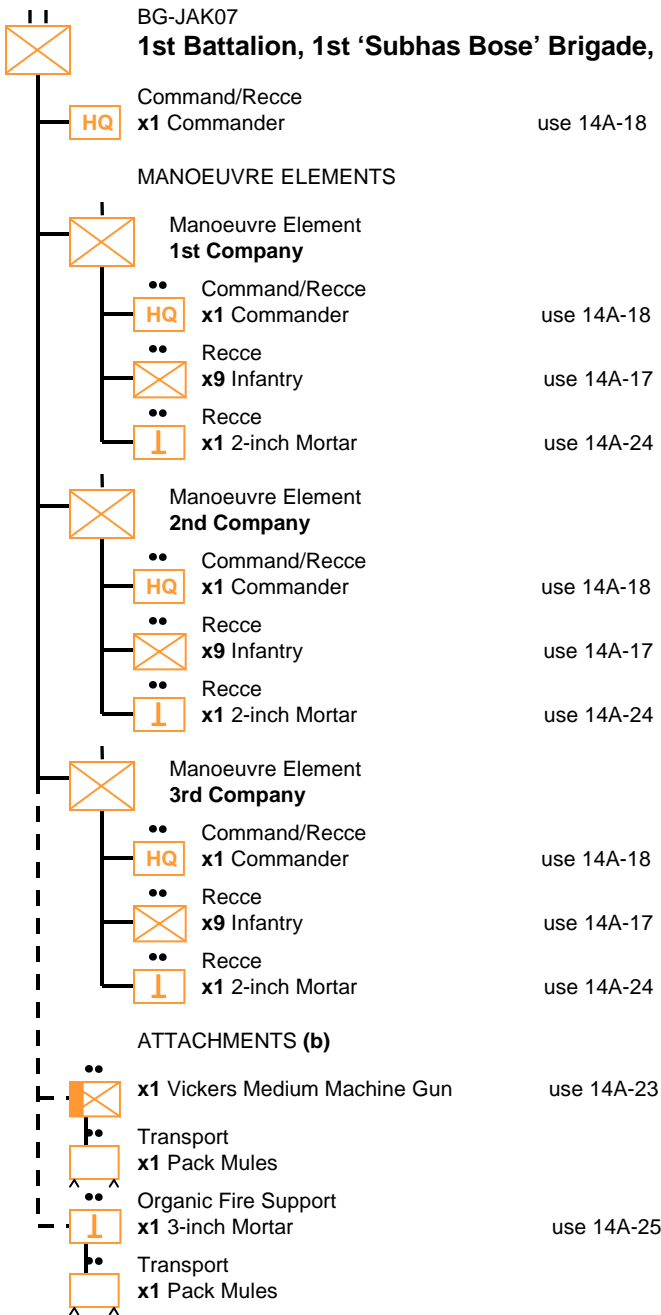
'March' Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment



(a) This battalion was created at Myohaung sometime around 20th February 1944 from a large reinforcement draft destined for 144th Regiment, which was fighting with 55th Division on the main Arakan Front. This force was at least 1,000 strong (possibly as high as 1,500), though it lacked sufficient officers and only one-quarter were initially armed. The arms problem was resolved by 28 (Arakan) Army, who flew in enough smallarms, but no battalion support weapons. It was placed under the command of one Captain Honjo, who previously commanded a small communications or administration unit in Myohaung and now found himself commanding a large garrison force. The battalion does not appear to have been used offensively against 81st (West African) Division and was almost certainly employed as the garrison of Myohaung. This organisation is entirely conjectural, but does reflect the large strength of the unit, added to its lack of leadership and battalion weapons.

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1/1st 'Subhas Bose' Brigade, INA

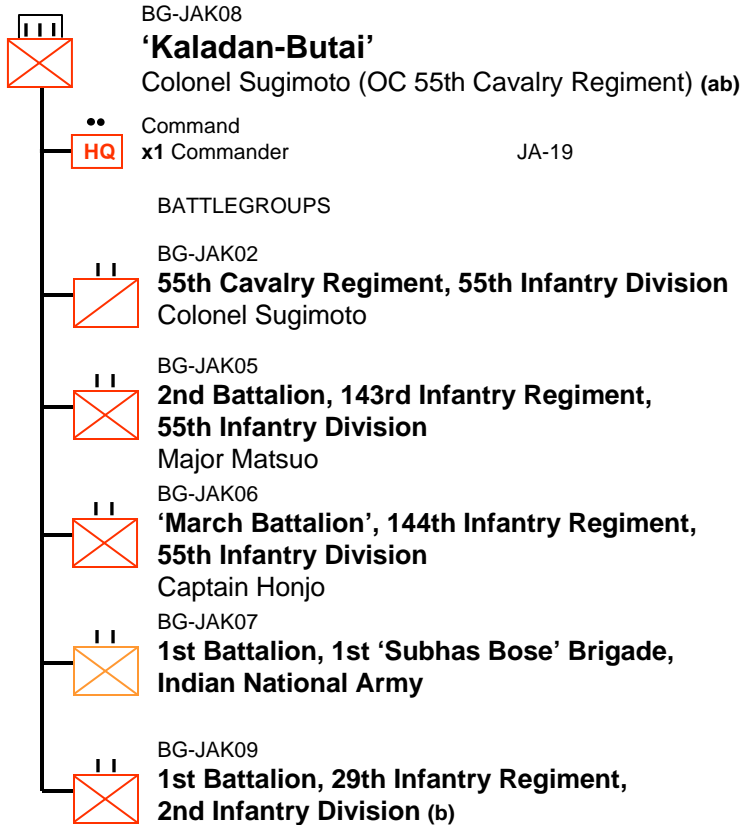


(a) This rather unusual unit represents the first time that the INA had put an full combat unit into the field. Previously their efforts had been purely propaganda-related and as 'jitter-parties' attached to Japanese units (which were already active on the main Arakan Front). However, their combat performance against 81st (West African) Division (and later against other units) was universally poor, with a great many 'volunteers' deserting to the Allies at the first opportunity. Despite their poor fighting record though, they did manage to gain a propaganda victory by planting their flag on Indian soil after the Battle of 'Frontier Hill' (Mowdok) in May 1944, when 'Kaladan-Butai' (including this battalion) forced 'Hubforce' (7/16th Punjab, 1st Gambia and 1st Tripura Rifles) to withdraw from their isolated border position. Like their Burmese equivalents, INA uniforms were ex-British/Indian Khaki Drill ('KD') tropical uniforms. Headgear was a forage cap or helmet, though as two of the companies listed here were Sikh, they would have worn the turban. Weapons were also British and organisation was along British lines. INA troops were usually referred to in Allied reports as 'JIFs' for 'Japanese-Indian Forces'.

(b) I don't have any details on battalion support weapons, though being a combat unit, it seems likely that they would have had some heavy support. The battalion was not strong (500 men), so I have only listed a section each of 3-inch Mortars and Vickers MMGs, which had been captured in large quantities in 1942.

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'Kaladan-Butai' ('Kaladan Force')

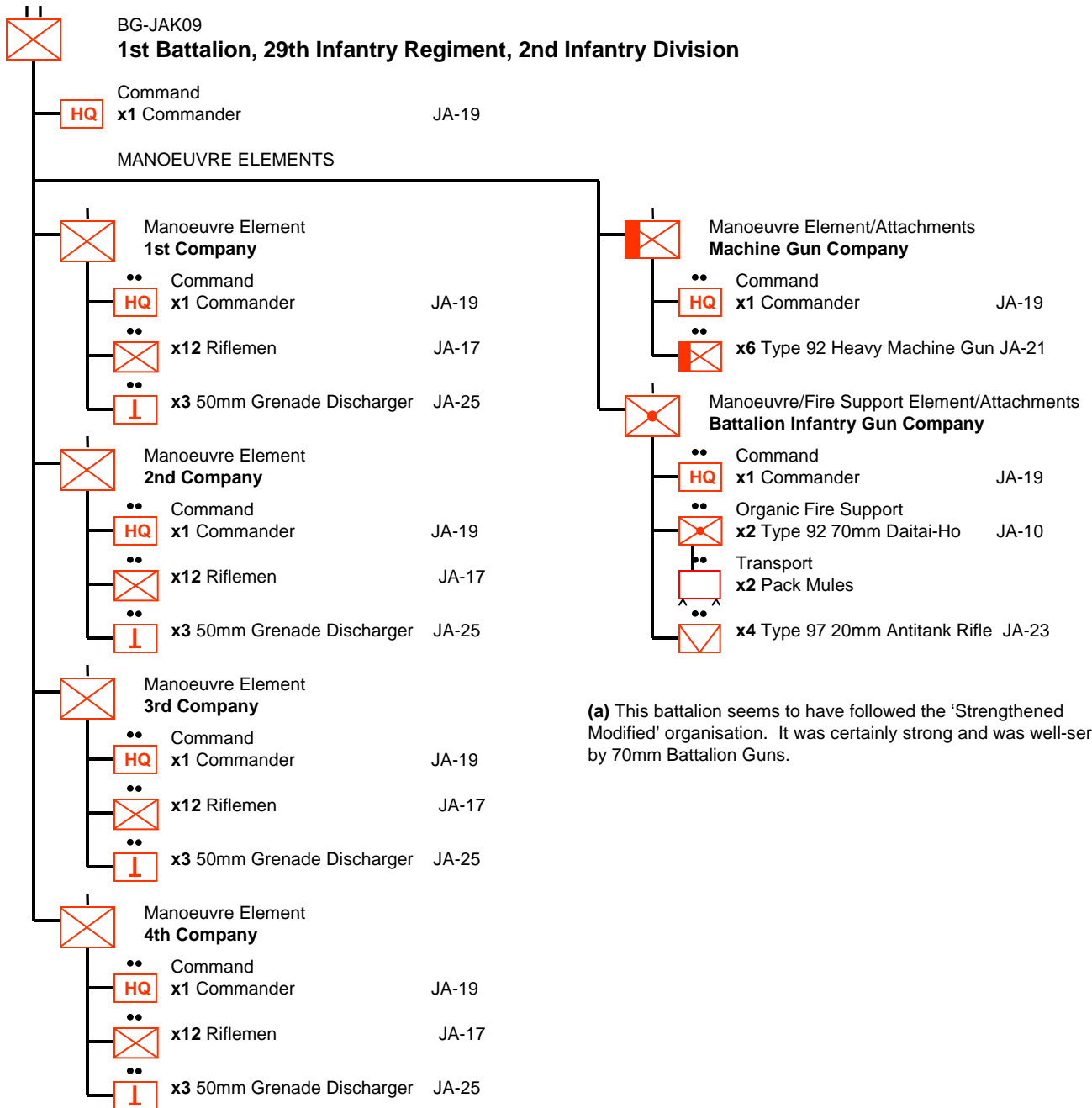


(a) Kaladan-Butai was created on 5th May 1944, when Koba's 111th Infantry Regimental Group was ordered to return to 55th Division. As the senior ranking officer, Colonel Sugimoto of 55th Cavalry Regiment was placed in overall command of all forces in the Kaladan Valley. 81st (West African) Division was by now marching west through the mountains to link up with the main body of XV Corps. However, a joint Indian-African force called 'Hubforce' (7/16th Punjab, 1st Gambia and 1st Tripura Rifles) were withdrawing north up the Kaladan Valley, so as to cover the head of the valley (and the India/Burma border) at Mowdok. Sugimoto was tasked with pursuing this force and if possible, to disrupt Allied lines of communication beyond the border (the INA battalion was particularly enthusiastic about this mission, hoping to spark a full-scale guerrilla war within India). Freshly reinforced by the strong 1/29th Infantry Regiment, the force fought a series of running battles up the Kaladan, before finally hitting the prepared positions at Frontier Hill (which straddled the border) on 10th May 1944. A Bitter two-week battle ensued (including a brief battle between the Sikh 'B' Company of 7/16th Punjab and the two Sikh companies of 1st 'Subhas Bose' Brigade) until eventually 'Hubforce' withdrew from the position on 26th May, leaving a few square miles of Indian soil in Japanese/INA hands for the duration of the monsoon.

(b) Interestingly, in the later Kaladan battles and again at Frontier Hill, there seems to be a reasonably large amount of artillery used by the Japanese – they regularly hit recently-vacated Allied positions with heavy concentrations, which seems to suggest a unit rather more powerful than 70mm Battalion Guns. Maybe Koba left his Regimental Gun Company with Sugimoto? Or perhaps the newly-arrived 1/29th had brought some elements of its Regimental Gun Company or divisional artillery with it?

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1/29th Infantry Regiment



(a) This battalion seems to have followed the 'Strengthened Modified' organisation. It was certainly strong and was well-served by 70mm Battalion Guns.

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Unit Quality Ratings

Veteran

111th Infantry Regiment
55th Cavalry Regiment
2/143rd Infantry Regiment
1/29th Infantry Regiment

Experienced

1/213rd Infantry Regiment

Trained

'March' Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment

Raw

Arakan Defence Force
1/1st 'Subhas Bose' Brigade