

Kakazu Ridge
Okinawa
April 19, 1945
A Battlefield WWII Scenario by Bill Slavin

*"I see no way to get them out except blast them out yard by yard."
— General Hodge, May 17, 1945*



The west end of Kakazu Ridge as seen from the gorge.

Scenario

On the morning of April 19, 1945, the Okinawan front erupts in a thunder of gunfire. Twenty-seven battalions of Corps and division artillery, 324 American guns in total pound the Japanese held Shuri defense line that stretches from coast to coast across the middle of the island of Okinawa. For more than a year now, in the jagged patchwork of ravines and hills, the Japanese have been preparing a defense in depth knowing that their only hope will be to endure the onslaught of the superior American air and artillery fire power and draw the Americans into a battle of attrition.

On the western side of the front, the US 105th Infantry Battalion squares off against the Japanese 272nd Independent Infantry Battalion at Kakazu Ridge. This ridge had brought the American advance up short more than a week previously when three American battalions had fought to a stalemate on its slopes.

But that had been without today's immense supporting artillery fire and air strikes. Across the entire front all three American divisions of the XXIV Corps prepare to attack in concert in hope of achieving a breakthrough.

And this morning the 105th will have the support of the tanks of the 193rd Tank Battalion, self-propelled guns and the newly arrived "Zippos", flame-throwing Shermans. But the Japanese are expecting this attack and in their prepared defenses in caves, pillboxes and trenches they lie in wait.

This scenario is intended to reflect the combined armour and infantry attack of the morning of May 19, 1945 before the 2nd Battalion was committed to the attack. By the time the 2nd Battalion of the 105th was sent into the fray, the armour assault had failed, the 1st Battalion was still pinned on the slopes of Kakazu Ridge and the attack had stalled, not to be reinvigorated from this quarter.

Duration

12 turns. The Americans move first.

Scale

It is recommended that players using 15mm scale up to the 20mm scale for this scenario, and that 20mm players scale up 200% (i.e. use a 6'X6' playing surface with templates and distances scaled up proportionately.)

Scenario specific rules

1. Engineering Rules for minefields, bunkers, etc. For the purpose of this scenario all American troops are considered qualified to close assault bunkers.

<http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/engineering.shtml>

2. Caves in the Pacific War Playtest Rules http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/caves_pacific_war.pdf and at end of scenario.

Japanese Only

1. Machine gun grazing fire. Rules found here: <http://www.fireandfury.com/extra/mggrazing.shtml> with the addition that the template needs to be centered on a spotted or suspected target and only "cover" modifiers apply (i.e. suspected target status and smoke do not)

2. Banzai! Panicked Japanese units, rather than retreating will charge the nearest enemy unit within one movement turn and engage in Close Combat at +1 (disordered result still applies). If there are no enemy units within one move or unit is unable to charge (i.e. in cave fighting position) simply treat a panic result as "0" (fall back one action or closest cover disordered).

Turn Sequence

Pre-game Barrage

Because the Japanese were well-entrenched in near-invulnerable fortified positions, the intense pre-attack barrage has been left out of this scenario. Historically it was estimated that it killed, perhaps, 1 in 100 defenders. Instead, to reflect the bombardment Japanese forces have to begin buttoned down in their fortifications and may only execute direct fire on their offensive fire phase in Turn 1. They may not maneuver until Turn 2. The Japanese may, however, call in indirect fire on Turn 1 if in a cave fighting position with Line of Sight.

In addition the American player may lay down 16 templates of smoke on Turn 1, in multiples of 2 templates each, anywhere within LOS of the north side of the board.

Turn 1

Armoured support enters via Ginoan-Shuri road. All armoured support must have entered board by the end of the American maneuver phase, Turn 3.

Turn 2

Japanese player may maneuver and fire as normal.

Victory Points

Americans

7 VP's Clear Kakazu Ridge of defenders by discovering and eliminating all enemy unit positions within Area A (blue line).

3 VP's Seize and hold Kakazu village (no undisordered enemy units within the BUA).

2 VP's Clear east side of Ginowan-Shuri Road of undisordered enemy units.

1 VP will be awarded for every Japanese cave position or exit that is successfully sealed by engineers.

Japanese

7 VP's Have at least 5 undisordered units within Area A (blue line)

3 VP's Have at least 5 undisordered units within Kakazu village BUA

2 VP's Have at least one undisordered AT or AA unit left on east side of Ginowan-Shuri Road

Casualty Victory Points

1 VP for every 3 enemy units destroyed

1 VP for every enemy gun or armoured vehicle destroyed

Briefing for the American Commanding Officer, Commander Col. W.S. Winn, 105th Regiment

An all out push by the 10th Army has been launched this morning in an attempt to crack the Shuri defenses in Okinawa from coast to coast. Your mission is to finally seize Kakazu Ridge and clear it of the stubborn Japanese defenders that have been holding up the American advance on this flank for more than a week.

An intense barrage utilizing twenty-seven battalions of artillery have pounded the Japanese defenses across the entire front for more than an hour, allowing your troops to reach their start line at the base of Kakazu Ridge. Meanwhile aircraft and naval fire have attacked the rear areas, attempting to neutralize the Japanese supporting artillery.

Although the ridge facing you doesn't appear formidable in height, with a gully on the attack side and deeply entrenched Japanese positions on the reverse slope it thwarted all attempts by the 383rd a week previously. But today your troops will be going in with the support of armour which will hopefully be able to break through on the flank and into the rear of the enemy's defenses. The two forces are to meet behind the ridge near the village of Kakazu and to join in a drive to the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment beyond. And the newly arrived "Zippos" should help smoke the Japs out of their holes.

But as General Hodge said two days ago, "I see no way to get them out except blast them out yard by yard."

Deployment

1st Battalion, 105th sets up anywhere north of the south edge of the gully (i.e. in the gully but may be on Japanese side of stream) and west of the the Ginowan-Shuri road (north/south road) .

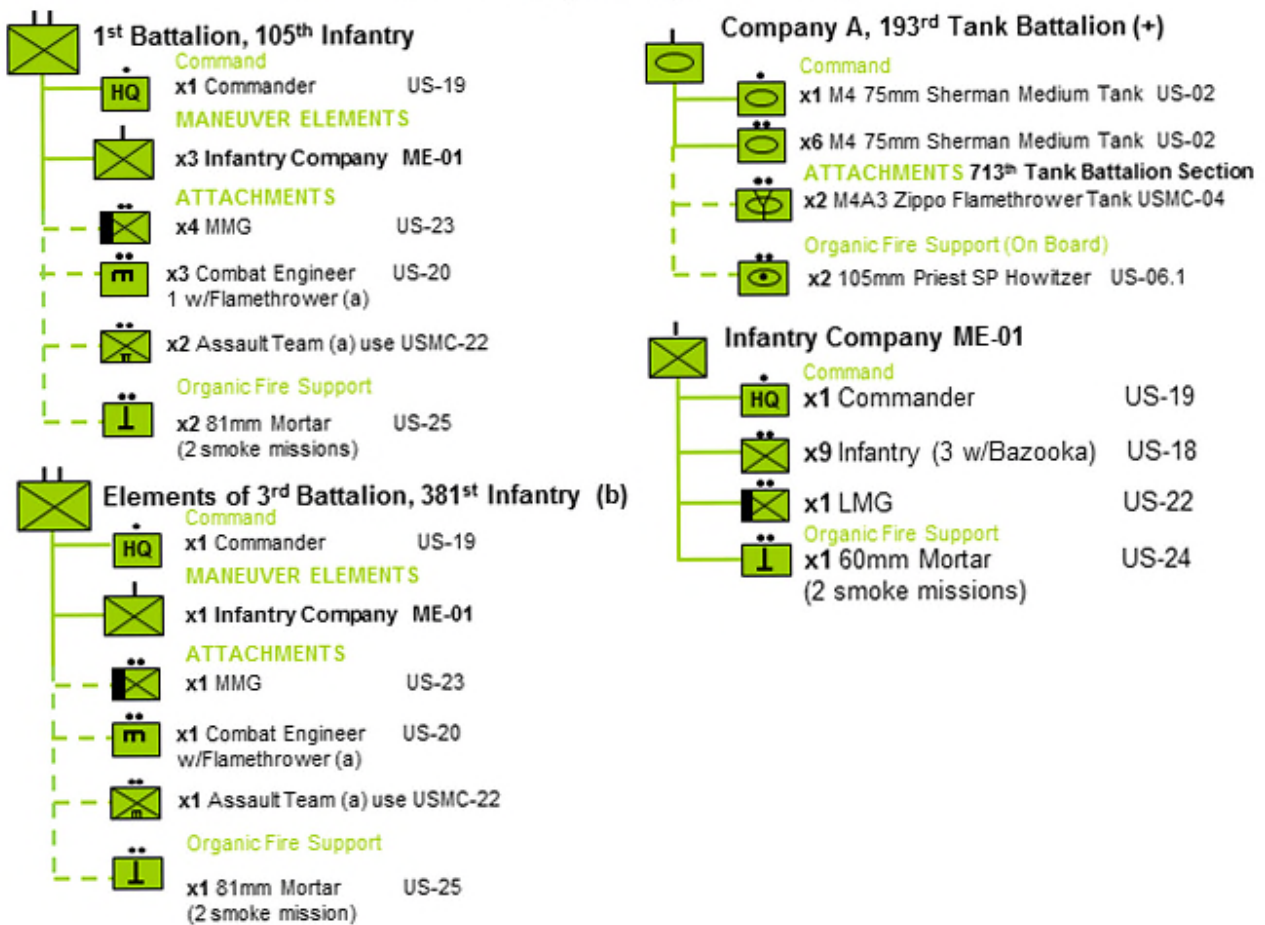
I Co., 3rd Battalion, 381st Infantry sets up anywhere north of the south edge of the gully and east of the the Ginowan-Shuri road.

Armoured support enters via Ginowan-Shuri road on the movement phase of Turn 1.

Ginowan-Shuri Road

The road represents the divisional boundary between the 27th and 96th. Because of this inviolate divisional boundary movement is restricted to the east side of the road for I Co., 381st, and the west side of the road for the 105th and supporting armour and artillery (including off board). Units may only engage enemy units on the opposite side of the road if they are within 5" of the road or have been fired upon by them.

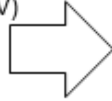
American Forces (all Experienced)



(a) See use of Assault Teams and Engineers in attacking and sealing caves in section at end of scenario.

(b) This unit represents the western-most unit of 96th Division, with the divisional boundary between 96th and 27th Divisions running just west of the Ginowan-Shuri north/south road. See set-up regarding restrictions on movement for this divisional boundary.

American Fire Support



The battalion may operate as 3 independent 105mm artillery batteries. The general support may be used to augment one of the 105mm batteries. If the general support 155mm is used, a maximum of 2 missions may be fired. If only the direct support 105mm are used, 3 separate missions may be fired.



(a) The FO may be attached to any maneuver element of the 105th















(b) All American off-board fire support originates from north side of board.

Two smoke missions are available. Note that only one battery in the battalion can fire a smoke mission in a turn and the others may not fire unless firing a mixed mission.

Note: All reverse slope positions (those down slope and within 3" from an intervening ridgeline or hilltop) are considered immune to IDF attack other than mortar attacks. Please note special rules following scenario regarding reverse slopes and Japanese fortifications.



Terrain Chart

- | | |
|--|--|
|  Level 0 |  BUS (Stone) |
|  Level 1 |  Ridgeline |
|  Level 2 |  Road (Unpaved) |
|  Level 3 |  Dirt Track (See Terrain Notes) |
|  Rocky Ground (See Terrain Notes) |  Stream (Shallow) (See Terrain Notes) |
|  Cleared Woods |  Brush |
|  Tall Crops |  Low Hedge |

Terrain Notes

Cultivated Areas

All areas on the board not otherwise indicated are considered under cultivation and are treated as “open terrain”.

Kakazu BUA

The BUA representing the village of Kakazu is treated as a continuous area of rubble. Kakazu would have been composed of wooden huts each surrounded by sturdy stone walls and hedges, but by this point in the fighting it was largely reduced to rubble by American bombardments. Japanese strongpoints within the village are treated as concrete pillboxes.

Roads

Other than the Ginowan -Shuri north/south road, all other indicated roads are simply tracks. Units traversing them use their cross country speed but the track does negate terrain modifiers.

Areas marked as “Rocky”

Treat these areas as impassable to all vehicles.

Stream

Treat as “Shallow”, but the marked area on either side indicates a “Gully, Wide and Deep”, impassable to vehicles.

Slopes

Levels 2 and 3 are treated as “Steep Slope”. Levels 0 and 1 are treated as “Gentle Slope”.

When sighting up or down a slope treat any spotting unit up slope as being on a higher level, regardless of whether both units are currently on the same level, and allow units to fire over other friendly units that are 1” distance or more away, (as per p.31 *Firing through Units*).

Ridgeline

Units can only spot over the ridgeline if they are conformed to the ridgeline, on a higher level than the spotted unit, or within 1” of an enemy unit.

BUS's

Because of the stone walls surrounding Okinawan homes, treat these as “Stone”.

Briefing for the Japanese Commanding Officer, 272nd Independent Infantry Battalion

After more than a week of repelling American attempts to breach the Shuri defences, the entire front this morning has erupted in enemy artillery fire. This is no doubt a prelude to a concerted American attack. Your forces have had many months now to prepare their current positions and the bunkers, reinforced caves and pillboxes should keep your troops protected from the enemy's superior air and artillery fire power.

Until now your predecessors in these positions have only had to deal with enemy infantry attacks but it is expected that today you will be facing armour as well. In preparation for this you have developed an extensive and well-integrated fire net of antitank guns, machine guns and mortar fire covering all possible avenues of attack. If things work as planned this will separate the enemy infantry from their armour support and not one enemy soldier will succeed in passing through your lines!

Your orders are first and foremost to keep Kakazu Ridge from falling into enemy hands. If this height of land is taken then there is nothing to stop the American assault on the next line of defense, the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment.

Deployment

Japanese forces may set up anywhere south of Line B.

All field artillery and antitank guns must begin in cave positions (these positions are over and above the cave fighting positions noted below).

Anti aircraft gun (JA-16) is dug in in a well-camouflaged position.

All infantry must begin game in cave positions (either barrack or fighting caves), fortified if within Kakazu BUA, or within 3" of ridgeline on reverse slope and in trenches or foxholes.

Pre-registered Firing Points

Three points on the board may be selected as pre-registered firing points before the game begins. These may be shelled at any time, regardless of whether there is a spotted enemy to target. In these cases the shelling is not considered "random".

Japanese Fortifications

6 minefields (anti tank, hidden unless on road or tracks, in which case surface sown and visible.)

2 road blocks

Up to 8 cave fighting positions on front slope of Kakazu and/or Nishibaru Ridge (any within 2" of ridgeline have an exit cave an equal distance on reverse slope.)

Up to 5 cave fighting positions on reverse slope of Kakazu and/or Nishibaru Ridge (exits 1" back from front-facing)

Up to 10 foxholes

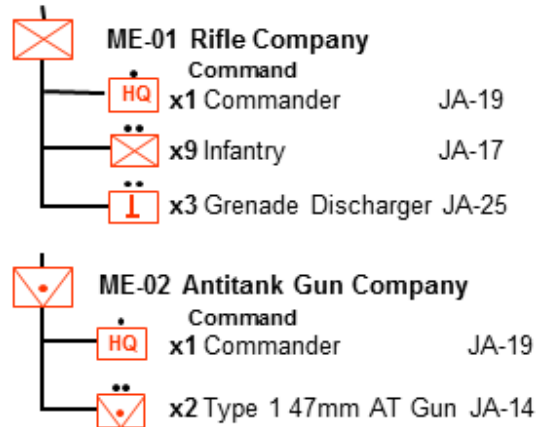
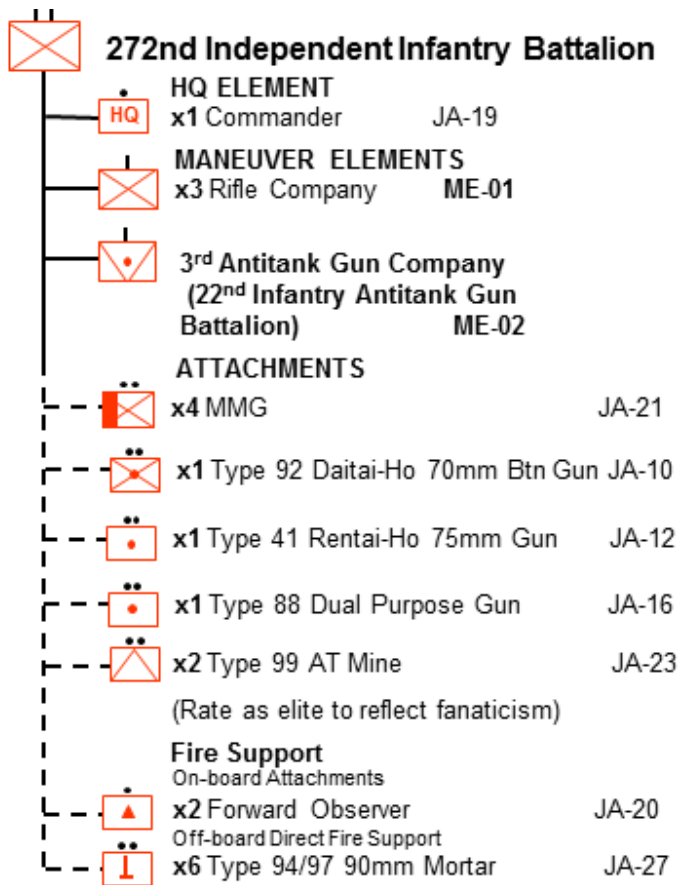
Up to 15" of trenchline

Up to 7 barracks caves

Up to 3 fortified positions in Kakazu (treat as concrete pillbox). These positions will have a 360° arc of fire.

Cave positions, if possible, should remain hidden. Trenchlines and foxholes may be placed on board at beginning of game if desired. Foxholes do not have to be occupied.

Note: For playtest rules on the use of caves in Battlefront WWII, see section at end of scenario.



Japanese FOs may attach to any ME.

All Japanese mortar fire is considered pre-registered but may be called in only by the FO, or 272nd Infantry Battalion Commander. No smoke or concentrations. See pre-registered firing points above.

Historical Outcome

The May 19th attack on Kakazu Ridge and Kakazu village developed into the worst defeat for American armour during the battle for Okinawa.

The plan of attack had the American infantry seizing the ridge while the armour rolled through the saddle, around the east end of the ridge and into Kakazu village. The intention was for the two forces to link up again in Kakazu village and then press the attack to the Urasoe-Mura Escarpment. The 3rd Battalion of the 105th replacing the 106th, would move around to the west of Kakazu to seize the smaller feature known as Kakazu West while the 2nd Battalion was held in reserve.

An extensive fire net prepared by the Japanese concentrated their machine guns, anti tank weapons and artillery on the saddle area between Kakazu and Nishibaru Ridge in the hope of separating the American armour from its infantry. The bridge over the gorge was purposefully left intact in order to draw the enemy into this trap while the reverse slope tactics that had successfully defended the ridge for the past week were also strengthened.

At 7:30 a massive opening barrage tore up the slopes and rear areas of Kakazu Ridge but succeeded in doing little damage to the Japanese who were well dug-in in their prepared positions. As the barrage lifted the 1st Battalion, 105th moved up from the gully towards the enemy, with C Company on the left, B Company to their right and A Company initially held in reserve. The attack had only just kicked off before it was stalled by intense and accurate machine gun and mortar fire, pinning the troops on the slopes of Kakazu. The American armour, rolled out shortly afterwards, crossed the bridge over the gorge before being ravaged by anti tank fire and minefields as they moved in column down the Ginowan-Shuri road. The tanks managed to battle their way through the saddle only to discover that they had missed the track leading to Kakazu, and were forced to retrace their steps in order to enter the village via the route that led over the eastern tip of the ridge.

But without close support of the 105th Infantry, relentless Japanese suicide attacks combined with the artillery, anti tank fire and hidden minefields continued to take their toll in the close quarters around Kakazu village. By 13:30 the tanks received orders to return to their lines but only eight of the 30 tanks and self-propelled guns that had set out that morning limped back across the gorge to their starting point.

With the 1st Battalion pinned and not moving forward (with the exception of a single platoon which was allowed to pass through the Japanese lines as far as the village before being attacked) the 2nd Battalion of the 105th was sent in at 9:07 to support the 1st. But the early loss of its commander as he moved forward to assess the situation delayed their attack until 12:25, at which point the the armour attack was already mostly spent. Unable to link up, news reached the 2nd Battalion that the 3rd had had some success circumnavigating the ridge at the west end, so by mid-afternoon the 2nd Battalion was withdrawn and put in support of this attack. Late in the day the 105th was withdrawn back across the gully and the direct assault on Kakazu Ridge came to a close.

Bibliography

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<http://www.history.army.mil/BOOKS/WWII/OKINAWA/index.htm#contents>

Okinawa: Victory in the Pacific by Major Chas. S. Nichols, Jr., USMC Henry I. Shaw, Jr. Historical Branch, G-3 Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps □ 1955
<http://www.ibiblio.org/hyperwar/USMC/USMC-M-Okinawa/>

The Battle for Okinawa by Hiromichi Yahara

Additional On-line Sources

Task Force Phoenix VII Archive
<http://dmna.state.ny.us/arng/27bct/27bct.php?id=history>

The Flamethrower in the Pacific
<http://www.history.army.mil/books/wwii/chemsincmbt/ch14.htm>

For some excellent information on cave warfare:
Leavenworth Papers Number 18 Japan's Battle of Okinawa, April-June 1945 by Thomas M. Huber
<http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/resources/csi/huber/huber.asp>

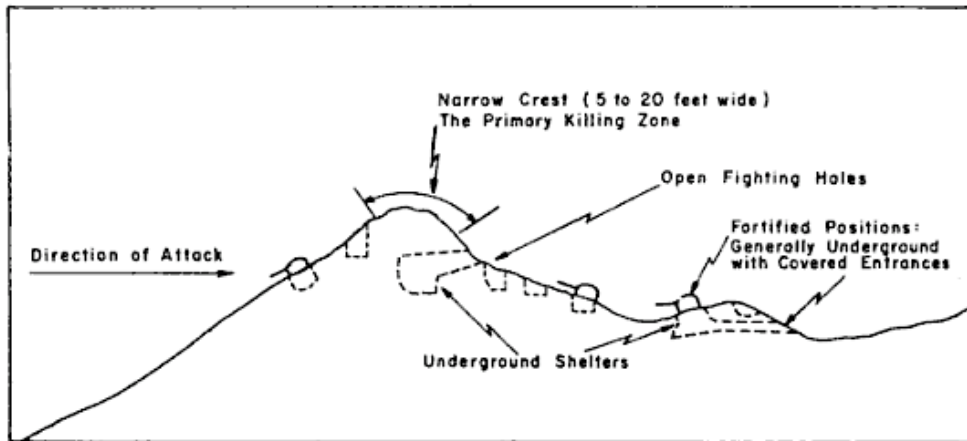
New York State Military Museum and Veterans research Center
<http://dmna.state.ny.us/historic/reghist/wwii/infantry/27thInfDiv/27thInfDivUnits.htm>

And finally, thanks very much to Jim Baker for his help in my sorting out American artillery and Roger Kumferman for his insights in the application of Japanese artillery and flamethrower use in the Pacific.

Caves in the Pacific War

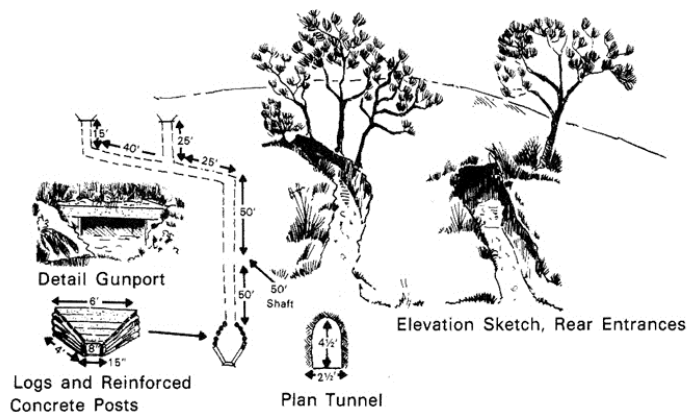
Optional Playtest Rules for Battlefront WWII by Bill Slavin

This set of rules is meant to model the unique circumstances created by the use of extensive cave systems and reverse slope tactics by the Japanese in the Pacific War. These rules do not deal with the more extensive fortress positions (typified by the Shuri Castle positions on Okinawa or the Pinnacle on Ie Shima) but rather the mostly man-made small unit fighting positions.



A Japanese Reverse Slope Position (Hypothetical)

From "The Second World War: Asia and the Pacific" by John H. Bradley, Thomas E. Griess, Jack W. Dice



A fighting position cave with rear exit on reverse slope, from "The Leanvenworth Papers #18"

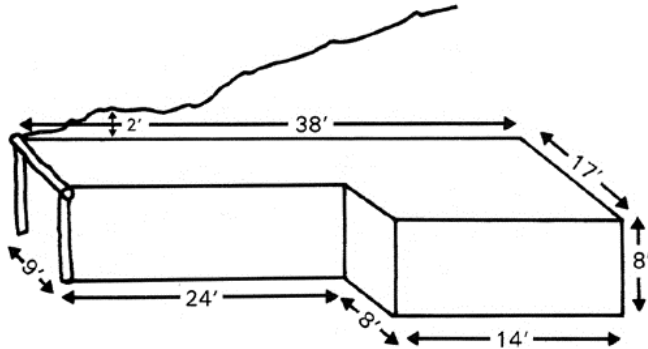
These caves are divided into two categories.

Fighting Positions.

Caves that only have firing ports with no immediate exit, usually accessed through a hidden entrance, either a vertical shaft to the rear of the position or from an exit on the opposite side of a ridgeline or hill (see “Exits and Connecting Tunnels” below.)

Barracks caves.

No fighting ports, merely a location that troops can retreat to that gives immunity to shellfire. For Battlefield purposes each of these positions is considered to house five infantry or infantry weapons stands (artillery excluded) and the exit is 1” from the front facing of the cave. They may only be attacked by close combat and entrances are spotted as other cave entrances.



Barracks or storage cave, from “The Leanvenworth Papers #18”

Cave Fighting Positions and Rear Exits

General Rules

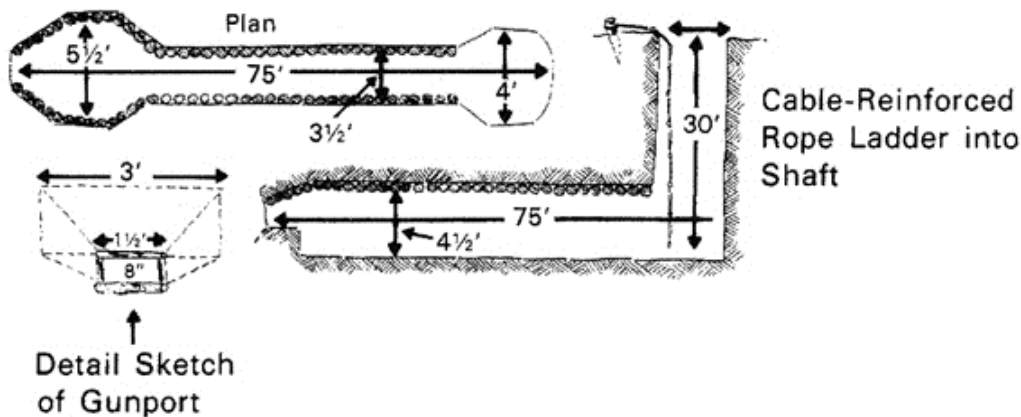
1. Treat as concrete pillboxes for direct fire, indirect fire and CC purposes.
2. Regardless of the modifiers on an IDF attack, treat all results (other than a natural 10) as disordered at best.
1. If a natural ten is rolled, with sufficient modifiers for a KO, then the position and unit are destroyed and the position may not be reoccupied.
2. All reverse slope positions (those down slope and within 3” from an intervening ridgeline or hilltop) are considered immune to IDF attack other than mortar attacks.
3. All cave fighting positions are considered to have a 180° arc of fire from front facing. These positions are immune from attacks by enemy units to the rear of the position but may be subjected to close combat from this quarter.

Spotting

1. All cave positions and exits are spotted as “troops dug in” in the same terrain, with a further “Down 1” modifier. The automatic *spotted at 1*” rule also does not apply, so it is conceivable that these positions are only discovered when units come in base to base contact with the position.
2. If possible it is recommended that all cave units be digitally photographed and removed from the board prior to play. Alternatively players can use hidden markers, liberally sowing the playing area with dummy markers at a rate of one for every actual position.

Exits and connecting tunnels

1. Caves were often constructed at the top of ridgelines and hills. Any cave fighting position located within 1” of a ridgeline or top of a dome-shaped hill is considered to have a corresponding exit position the same distance on the reverse side of the ridgeline or hill (see chart). This only applies to cave fighting positions on the non-reverse (attack side) slope.
3. Cave fighting positions on the reverse slope or further than 1” from a ridgeline or dome-shaped hilltop will have a dog-legged vertical exit that would take the occupants to the surface. Therefore all exits from these positions will be considered 1” back from the front-facing of the position.

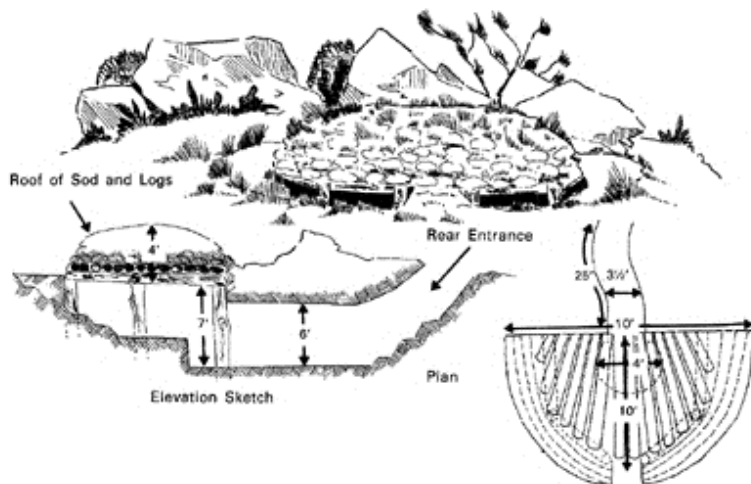


Cave fighting position with vertical shaft, from “The Leanvenworth Papers #18”

4. Any cave fighting position within 2” of an adjacent fighting position is considered to have an adjoining tunnel. This allows free movement from one position to the next without having to exit the cave, and requires the expenditure of one action. It is the only action allowed for that turn.
5. Moving from a cave fighting position to a reverse slope exit (or vice versa) requires the expenditure of one action and is the only action allowed for that turn.

Heavy Weapons Use in Caves

Mortars, antitank guns and even heavy artillery were often housed in and fired from caves. However if forced to abandon position any artillery pieces cannot be removed from caves and the unit is lost.



An excavated mortar position, from "The Leanvenworth Papers #18"

Caves and Close Combat

The rules governing Close Combat are the same as the rulebook with the following exceptions or additions.

1. Units cannot CC *from* a cave fighting position. They can, however CC *from* an exit.
2. Artillery that is forced to abandon a cave position as a result of CC is considered KO'd.
3. Outflanked cave positions receive a -2 (rather than -1) when attacked by close combat.
4. Units forced to abandon a cave fighting position must retreat either:
 - (a) 1" back from the position if it has a vertical shaft exit (see above), or
 - (b) from the rear exit if the position has a reverse slope exit.
5. Attacking units that seize a cave fighting position do not actually inhabit the cave but are considered on the surface of that position.
6. Attacking units that discover a rear entrance may enter the position and CC units in the connected fighting cave (or an adjacent cave – see "Connecting tunnels above). They will need to expend an action in order to do so and that will be the only action for that turn. In this case there is no negative defender CC modifier for being outflanked.

Caves and Engineers

Engineering units may successfully seal either a cave fighting position or a cave exit by performing one successful engineering action followed by a successful demolition action (see playtest Engineering Rules). Sealed cave fighting positions may no longer be fired from and units in caves with sealed exits may not exit from their position. (If CC'd and forced to abandon position they are considered destroyed.) Likewise if both exit and fighting position are sealed the unit is considered destroyed.

Image credits: All images other than "A Japanese reverse slope position" are from "The Leanvenworth Papers #18"

<http://www.cgsc.edu/carl/resources/csi/Huber/Huber.asp#32>