



The Battle of Poore's Ridge

The Kaladan Valley, Burma

11th March 1944

'Poore managed to get onto the telephone line from the mortar OP; he buzzed, and got what sounded to him like a disrespectful reply in Japanese. By way of a retort he called for ten rounds rapid fire from all six three-inch mortars; the officers at the mortar position knew, of course, exactly where the OP was. "There were no trial shots or warning shots. All sixty bombs were in the air before the first one landed. There was a sound like an earthquake for 20 seconds." When Poore buzzed again there was no reply.'

– from 'War Bush' by John A L Hamilton

The 81st (West African) Division was launched into the almost impenetrable Kaladan Valley in January 1944. Their mission was to screen the extreme left flank of Indian XV Corps, which was advancing into the Arakan Peninsula in a second attempt to throw the Japanese out of the region and to take the strategically-vital airfield of Akyab.

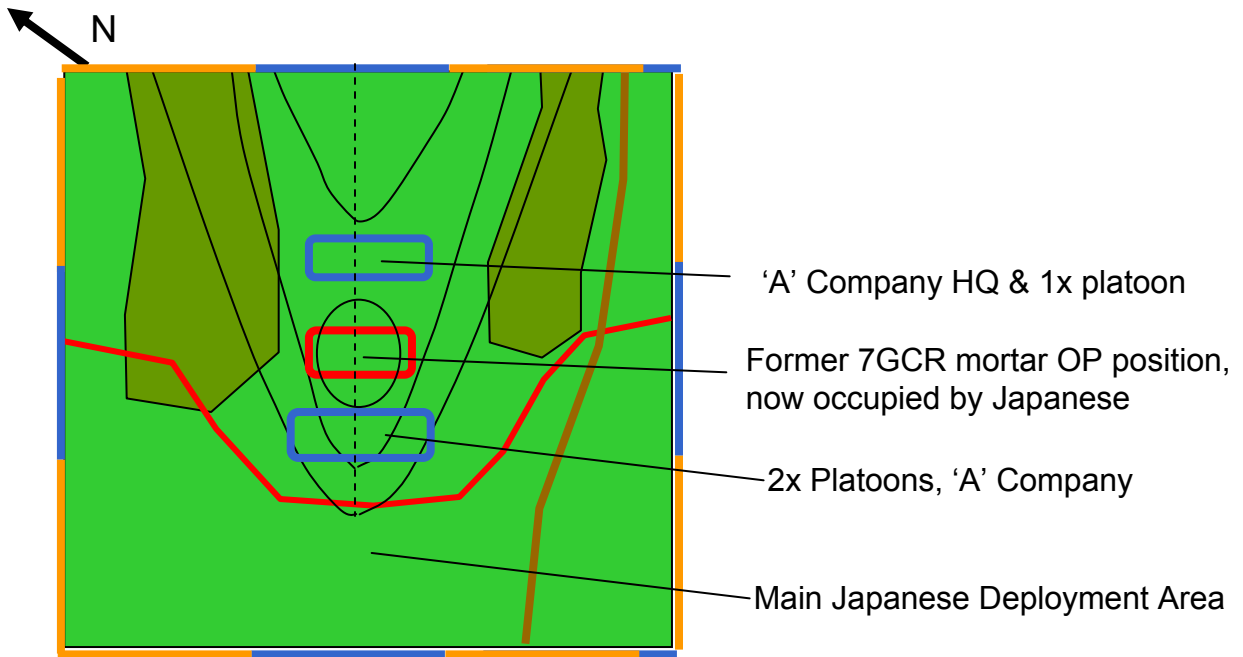
Uniquely relying entirely on air drops for re-supply and with everything carried by African soldier-porters, the division penetrated over 100 miles into enemy territory within the first six weeks, reaching the main river-port town of Kyauktaw by the end of February. At Kyauktaw they were within striking-distance of the Japanese communications hub of Myohaung and threatened the entire Japanese position in the Arakan peninsula.

However, the Japanese were not standing idly by and were massing units from all over the region to combat the threat posed by this African division in their rear. Then, just as the Japanese counter-attack approached, the division received contradictory orders from XV Corps – ordering it to simultaneously attack to the west while defending to the east! This with only two brigades and a grand total of twelve artillery pieces! The subsequent confusion and dispersal of the division aided the Japanese immensely when their assault broke upon the unprepared Africans.

Nevertheless, the high degree of light, jungle mobility allowed the Africans to disengage with minimum casualties. Like two boxers circling each other for an opening, the equally light protagonists marched and counter-marched through the dense, trackless jungle of the Kaladan. However, the Japanese had the numerical advantage and consequently the 81st Division was pushed steadily back up the Kaladan and Pi Chaung valleys.

Eventually the division withdrew to concentrate in the loop of the Pi Chaung at Kyingri, where they could form a defensive 'box' around one of their rough-hewn Dakota Strips while regaining their strength and flying out casualties, while flying reinforcements and supplies in.

The Japanese pressed their attack and encountered the West Africans in their defensive positions. During the night, the Japanese infiltrated behind the positions of A Company, 7th Gold Coast Regiment, 5th West African Brigade Group and captured an observation post. The West Africans need to recapture and hold this position to safeguard their supply base.



Terrain Notes:

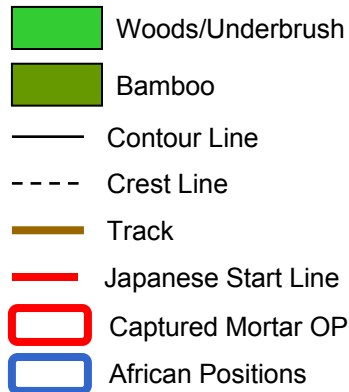
Track – As 'Street' in main rulebook.

Bamboo – Treat as 'Woods With Underbrush' for visibility, additionally Troops also suffer half-speed and bog-down check.

Main Terrain Type – 'Woods With Underbrush' in main rulebook. Note that this will severely restrict the lines of sight.

Contour Lines – The hill slopes up from the Southwest (bottom of the map) to the Northeast (top of the map)

Map Size – Each division along the side of the map is 12", so the map is 36" high by 39" wide.



Deployment Notes:

West Africans – Deploy in the blue-bordered areas as detailed above (note that a rifle platoon consists of three Infantry units). All 'A' Company elements may start in Dug-In positions (foxholes). 'C' Company and the attached Mortar Platoon may not be in Dug-In or in Improved Positions at the start.

Japanese – Three to five Troop units from either rifle company must start deployed within the captured mortar OP on the knoll atop the ridgeline. They may start in Dug-In Positions, having taken a mortar OP position during the night. The rest of the Japanese must start the scenario below the red line marked on the map in Improved Positions.

Deployment Order – The Japanese on the knoll deploy, then the African 'A' Company positions, then the rest of the Japanese, and then the African 'C' Company. No unit may deploy within 2" of an enemy unit. Despite the dense terrain, deploy all units on the map.

Game Length – 10 turns. Africans move first.

Victory - Side with the most points wins. If neither side has more, the game is a draw.

3VP – Be in sole possession of the OP ring contour. No enemy units have an aiming point within the contour line.

Casualty Victory points - As per p.12 of the rulebook:

1pt-ME at >=25% casualties <50% or KO gun, 2pt-ME >= 50% <75%, 3VP-Each ME >=75%

Briefing For Captain Phillip Poore,

'C' Company, 7th Gold Coast Regiment, 5th West African Brigade Group

Situation – Dawn, 11th March 1944

You are standing in for the company commander, who is sick. The battalion is widely dispersed as a screen beyond the western edge of the 'Kyingri Box' and your 'C' Company is the battalion reserve, while 'A', 'B' and 'D' Companies have taken up blocking positions on high ground overlooking the Pi Chaung flood plain...

At 0200hrs, the enemy blundered into the forward positions of 'A' Company, on the ridge north of Htabaw. Communication with the forward mortar OP within 'A' Company's position was soon lost as the position was overrun in the confused night-fighting. With dawn breaking, 'C' Company has been sent forward to stabilise the situation, though the sound of bugles in the jungle, combined with renewed MG and grenade fire, indicates that the Japanese are gearing up for a renewed attack..

Mission

You are to counter-attack down the ridge, with the intention of regaining the OP position and holding it against further enemy attack.

Execution

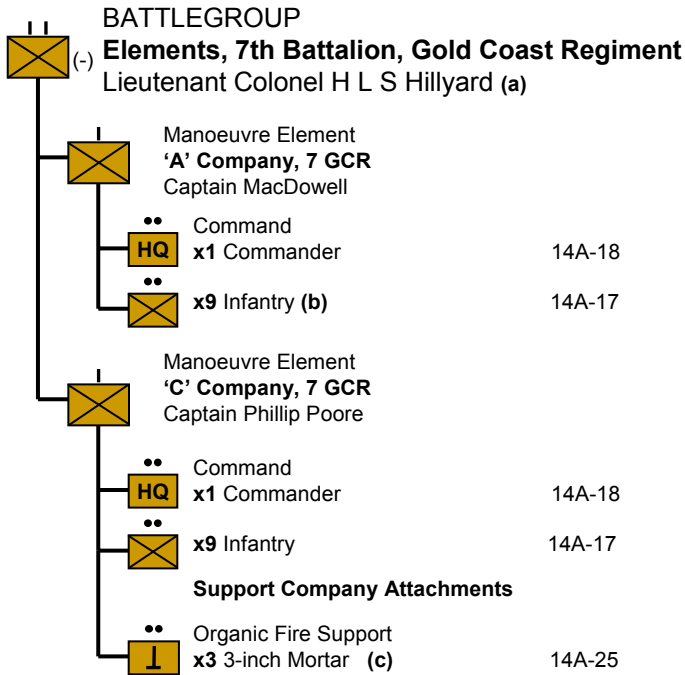
Your forces are listed in detail below. There is precious little support available. Divisional 3.7s and mortars are out of range and tactical air support is unavailable – no surprises there! However, Lt Col Hillyard has given you direct control of the battalion Mortar Platoon, which has moved forward with your company and is now standing ready on the startline.

Captain MacDowell of 'A' Company has promised to provide you with all the supporting fire he can, though two of his platoons are trapped and isolated beyond the Japanese-held knoll, so he only has the immediate use of a single platoon. No other reinforcements are available – 'C' Company is the battalion reserve and is all that is available for the counterattack. If 'C' Company cannot stabilise the situation, 'A' Company will have to withdraw to the Kyingri Box as best it can while 'C' Company forms the rearguard for the battalion.

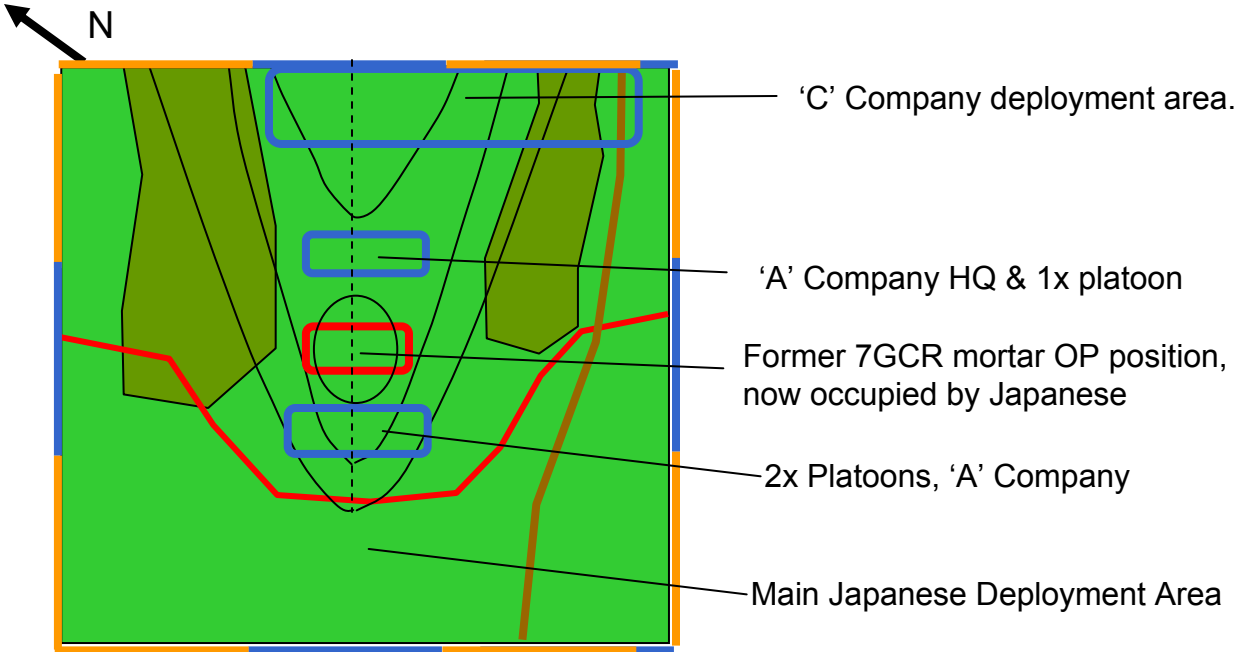
Enemy forces are thought to be present in full battalion strength, though only a reinforced platoon is believed to be holding the OP knoll. The battalion intelligence officer has declared them to be either from the fresh 111th Regiment of 54th Division, or from your old nemesis – the 55th Divisional Cavalry Regiment. Enemy air and tank support is non-existent and artillery support is limited only to those 70mm and 75mm pieces they can drag through the dense jungle hereabouts. You are now well beyond the range of the heavier pieces that were used down at Kyauktaw.

West African Order Of Battle

(Elements, 5 West African Brigade Group, 81st (West African) Division)



- (a) All elements classed as 'Experienced'.
- (b) A platoon consists of 3 infantry. 2 platoons are deployed in the forward position, while the HQ and the remaining 3 infantry are deployed to the rear.
- (c) When firing at Japanese units within the former OP position, an actual spotter is not needed. Perform a call-for-fire roll against these targets as if a Forward Observer were calling pre-registered fire. For all other targets, use normal spotting rules.



Briefing For Major Kobayashi, III Battalion, 111th Infantry Regiment, 54th Infantry Division

Situation – Dawn, 11th March 1944

The advance of the African division down the Kaladan Valley (where it was previously thought that British forces were unable to operate) has come as a shock to the Japanese high command in the Arakan region of western Burma. The enemy (identified as the 81st (West African) Division, whose men wear a black spider as their badge and are rumoured to be recruited from cannibal tribes) have made rapid progress since January. They brushed aside battalion-sized garrisons at Paletwa, Kaladan and Kyauktaw during their advance and got to within easy striking distance of the main Imperial Japanese Army operations base of Myohaung.

Watching this development with increasing concern, General Sakurai sent Colonel Koba and 111th Infantry Regiment (of 54 Division) into the Kaladan to stabilise the situation. As further reinforcements were scraped up, 'Koba Force' was launched against the African positions at Kyauktaw on 1st March. Outnumbered and out-manoeuvred, the Africans were quickly scattered, but melted away into the jungle just as quickly. A second clash at Thandaung, on the confluence of the Kaladan and Pi Chaung rivers a couple of days later resulted in a stalemate.

The Africans broke contact first and withdrew north. The race was on as our forces attempted to cut their line of retreat – all the time 'punching into thin air' as the Africans evaded encirclement and picked up air-dropped supplies as they went, while all the time our men grew hungrier as the supply lines were stretched thinner and thinner.

At last we have now discovered that we have overtaken the Africans! They have gone into a defensive 'box' within the loop of the Pi Chaung at Kyingri. We have already circled the eastern and northern sides of their positions and are now outflanking their western flank in order to launch an assault from the most unexpected direction.

However... at 0200hrs this morning, your leading company blundered into an Africa position on a ridge north of Htabaw. You had hoped to use this ridge yourself, in order to observe the 'Kyingri Box' some three miles to the northeast. To find an enemy outpost this far out was unexpected and unfortunate.

However, it seems that during the confused night-fighting, one of your platoons has managed to take a knoll atop the ridge and has dug in to await relief. You must now launch a more co-ordinated attack with your two companies in order to maintain the initiative and take the entire African position before they can get organised.

Mission

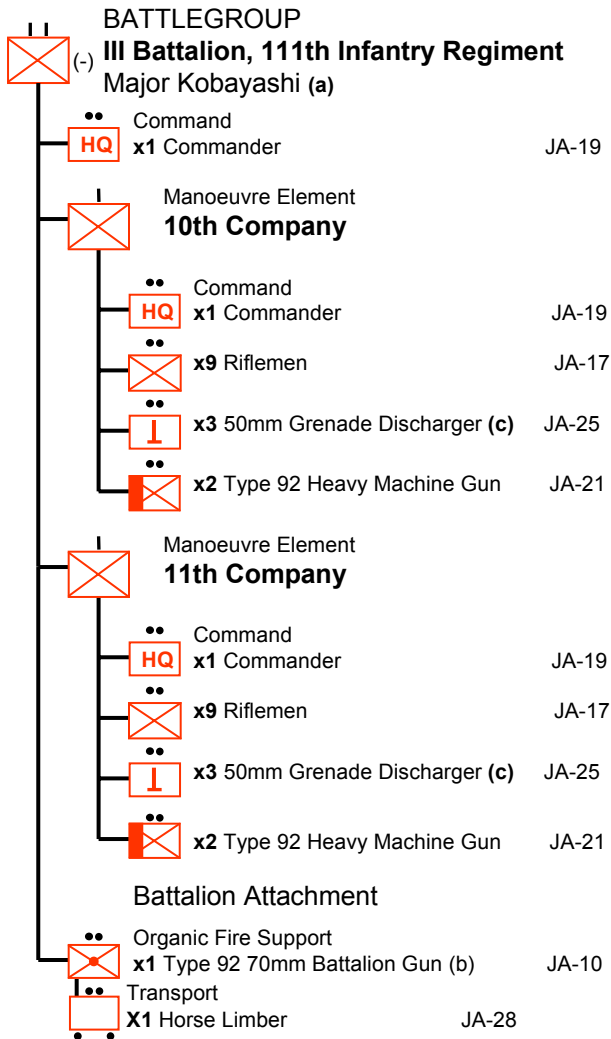
You are to take and hold the ridge against enemy counter-attack, with the intention of using it as a springboard for further attack against the Kyingri position.

Execution

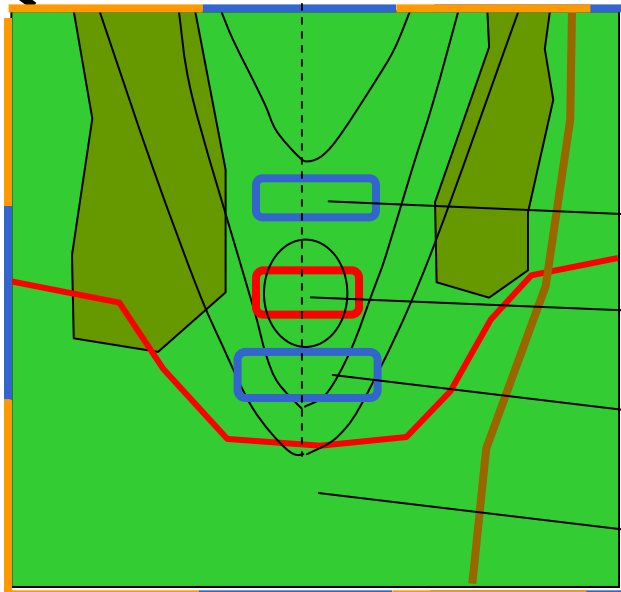
Unfortunately you do not have your full battalion with you. 9th Company is still making its way on boats up the Kaladan River as escort for the Regimental Gun Company, while 12th Company is forming a separate group with Colonel Koba's 111th Regiment HQ. However, you do have your 10th and 11th Companies, plus the Gun Platoon and most of the heavy machineguns. Your forces are listed in detail below.

You are well beyond the range of any regimental or divisional artillery and can expect no tank or air support – nor indeed, can you expect reinforcements of any kind until 55th Divisional Cavalry gets here in three or four days' time.

Japanese Order Of Battle (Elements, 54th Infantry Division)



- (a) All elements classed as 'Experienced'.
- (b) Only the Battalion Commander may spot for the Battalion Gun. It probably is best used in a direct fire mode.
- (c) Because of the dense terrain, most of the fighting will take place within the minimum range of the grenade dischargers, so they will be using their direct fire strength.



- 'A' Company HQ & 1x platoon
- Former 7GCR mortar OP position, now occupied by Japanese
- 2x Platoons, 'A' Company
- Main Japanese Deployment Area