

John Fuller's Stand

152 (Indian) Parachute Battalion at Point 7378 The Prelude to Sangshak

Assam, 19th/20th March 1944



*A 'Battlefront: WWII' Scenario
By R Mark Davies*

'By mid-morning the enemy's fire slackened considerably. Suddenly, from the top of the hill, a small group of about twenty men charged down towards us, firing and shouting in a counter-attack. However, between us was a wide ravine which they had been unable to see, and of those who were still alive, some fell into it in their rush onwards while the rest had no choice but to surrender. A few escaped. At the very top of the position an officer appeared in sight, put a pistol to his head and shot himself in full view of everyone below. Our men fell silent, deeply impressed by such a brave act... At Point 7378 the 3rd Battalion suffered 160 casualties in the action, with one company and two platoon commanders killed and another four officers wounded... The enemy had resisted with courage and skill.'
– From the diary of Colonel Utata Fukunaga, commanding the Imperial Japanese 58th Infantry Regiment

Scenario Background

If the British-Indian XIVth Army is the 'Forgotten Army', the Battle of Sangshak is undoubtedly the 'Forgotten Battle' of the Forgotten Army: Surrounded by a fanatical enemy, unsupported, running low on water, ammunition and men and without hope of relief, the 50th Indian Parachute Brigade, along with elements of the 23rd Indian Division, held out for several days, withstanding assault after assault before finally breaking out to escape in small groups. Without this battle, the Japanese 31st Division would have reached Kohima long before the famous defence there could be established and history might have been very different – there certainly would not have been a heroic defence of Kohima and relieving the Siege of Imphal would have been considerably more difficult.

But even before the Battle of Sangshak, a chain of events began that was to lead to the successful defence of Kohima...

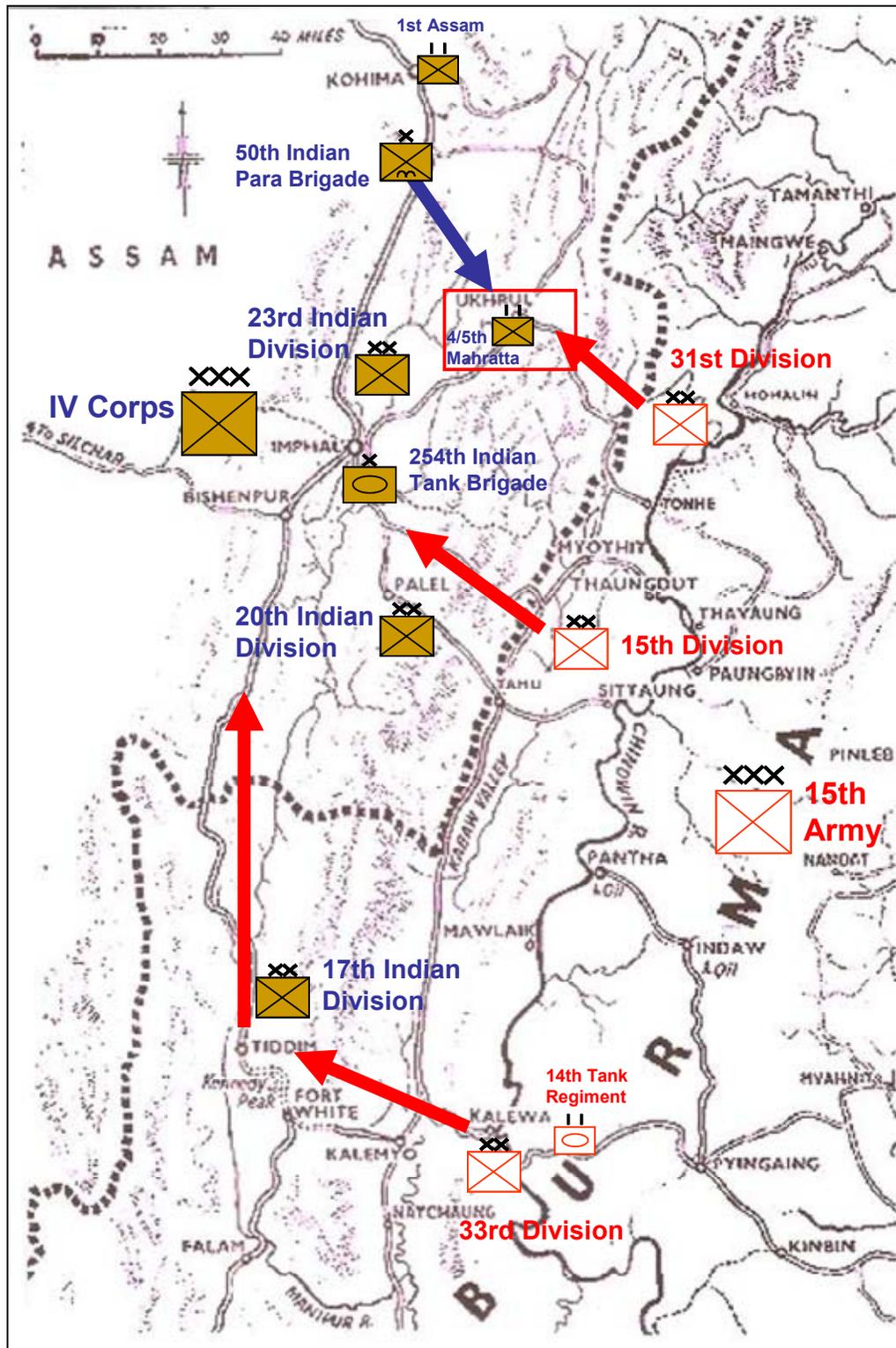
The 50th Indian Parachute Brigade was formed in 1942. The long-term plan for the brigade was that it would be the spearhead for an attempt to retake Malaya and Singapore from the Japanese (a plan that would become the much-delayed Operation 'Zipper'). Its three constituent Parachute Battalions were formed from volunteers from throughout the Indian Army as well as the British Army in India. The 151st Parachute Battalion was formed from British volunteers, the 152nd Battalion was formed from Indians and the 153rd was formed from Gurkhas. However, 151st Battalion soon found itself shipped off to the 1st Airborne Division in the Mediterranean (being renumbered 156th Battalion as a counter-intelligence measure) and a new battalion, the 154th, was formed from the 3/7th Gurkhas, veterans of 17th Indian Division's long fighting retreat from Burma in 1942 and who had unanimously volunteered en bloc for the Paras.

However, some Gurkhas clearly didn't know what they were getting into: some Gurkhas reported to their company commander that jumping from 600 feet seemed somewhat high and that jumping from 300 feet might be preferable. "But at that height your parachutes won't have time to open." replied the company commander. "Oh." said the Gurkhas "So we will have parachutes?" The Gurkhas went away, visibly relieved...

By the end of 1943 the Brigade, now under the command of Brigadier Hope-Thomson, had done nothing but train, train, train for nearly two years, while no fewer than eight airborne operations had been cancelled. Operation 'Zipper' also looked no closer to becoming reality, thanks to a lack of landing craft. The brigade was consequently getting stale and was badly in need of fresh experience in the field. Hope-Thomson therefore asked permission to be deployed to the front line and the decision was taken in early January to place the brigade under the command of 23rd Indian Division, which as part of IV Corps, was watching the hilly jungle frontier east of Imphal. There the brigade could gain some valuable jungle experience, while releasing a 'line' brigade for a long-overdue rest. There might even

be the chance of action against long-range Japanese patrols! However, the newly-formed 154th Battalion would remain in India to continue jump training.

In mid-March 1944, 50th Para Brigade arrived at Ukhrul, in the hills of the Indian-Burmese border, north-west of Imphal, to relieve the weary 49th Indian Brigade. However, 49th Brigade was in something of a flap. A Japanese offensive had apparently erupted to the south-east of Imphal! Lieutenant General Scoones, commanding the Indian IV Corps was withdrawing the corps' strength into the Imphal Plain; intending to fight the Japanese armies on ground of his choosing. The 23rd Indian Division suddenly found itself designated as Corps Reserve and was marching southwest to Imphal – leaving the newly-arrived Paras to take over a string of scattered hilltop positions from 49th Brigade's rearguard: the 4/5th Mahratta and the Royal Nepalese 'Kali-Bahadur' Regiment.



Briefing for Major John Fuller, Commanding 'C' Coy, 152 (Indian) Para Bn

Situation at 1100hrs, 19th March 1944 – Point 7378, East of Ukhrul, Assam

Your company took over this position yesterday from a company of the 4/5th Mahratta Light Infantry and has spent the last 24 hours improving the fighting positions and digging in deeper. You're not expecting trouble, but there is a flap on at 23rd Division HQ, so it's better to be safe than sorry.

Your position is atop a 'pimple' on a spur of Sihorifara Hill (Point 8425), whose peak lies 2-3 miles north of your position. Your position immediately overlooks the Pushing to Ukhrul Jeep track, which is one of the few east-west routes over the range of hills separating India from Burma. There is also a mule track cutting straight through your position, which takes the direct route to Ukhrul. Some two miles south of you, further along the same spur (codenamed 'New Guinea'), is another company outpost at Point 7386, codenamed 'Badger', which dominates not only this Jeep track, but also another Jeep track crossing the hills from Humine.

The bulk of 152 Para is some three miles to the southwest, at Kidney Camp, along with 4/5th Mahrattas and a couple of companies of the Nepalese 'Kali Bahadur' Regiment. The rest of 23 Division, 50 Para Brigade HQ and the brigade's support companies are strung out along the road from Imphal to Ukhrul, while 153 Para is still some 40 miles away to the northwest, at the Kohima depot.

Suddenly, your 2ic, Captain Roseby, reports that the Colonel has just sent an urgent signal – Japs have been spotted in at least battalion strength, only one mile to the east of your position!

Mission

You are to hold until relieved, with the intention of delaying the Japanese long enough to allow the Brigade to form defensive positions.

Execution

Friendly Forces

- These are detailed in the attached order of battle. You have your own 'C' Company, with an attached section of 3-inch mortars from Battalion and a section of Vickers MMGs from the Brigade MG Company.
- **Place 24 inches of entrenchments within your deployment area, delineated by the red circle.**
- Deploy your forces as Hidden Unit markers within your deployment area.
- You may split your command into two smaller Manoeuvre Elements if you so wish, in which case add a second, subordinate Commander unit (representing your 2ic, Captain Roseby).
- Major Webb's 'B' Company is some two miles south of you, down the Jeep track at 'Badger' and 'Gammon' (down the Jeep track from Point 'A' on the map), while the rest of the battalion is three miles to the southwest at 'Kidney'. Captain Holland's 'A' Company of the 4/5th Mahrattas is probably the closest, being some 1.5 miles to the west, along the mule track at Kangooi (Point 'B' on the map).
- There is no hope of artillery support and while the RAF has gained air superiority over the Japanese Air Force within the last few weeks, there is little hope of getting any air support.
- You may also deploy **x5** Dummy Unit markers within your deployment area.

Enemy Forces

- These are thought to consist of a battalion of infantry. Their lead company is now visible, marching along the Jeep track at Point 'C' on the map.

Reinforcements

- Starting on Turn 20, roll a D10 for the arrival of Captain Holland's 'A' Company, 4/5th Mahratta Light Infantry. On a roll of '0', he will arrive in column, on the Mule Track at Point 'B'. Add +1 to the chance of success in each successive turn. Note that he might not arrive at all during Day 1!

Optional Reinforcements

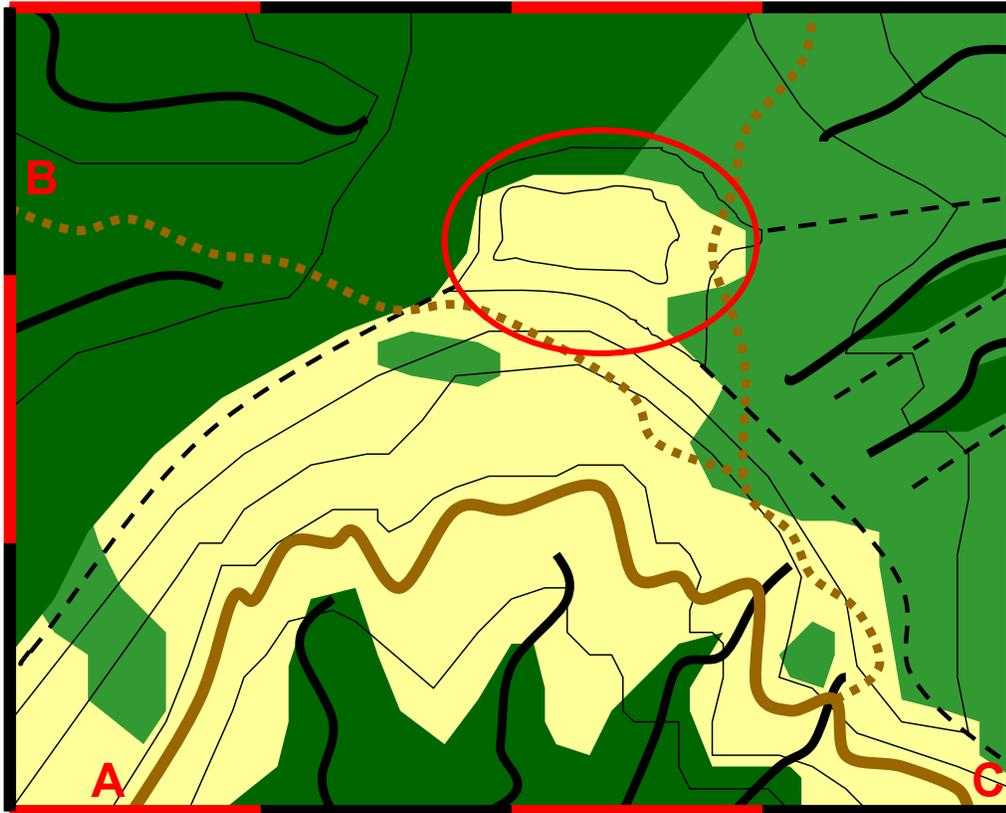
- Historically, Lt Col Hopkins dispatched Gillett's 'A' Company of 152 Para across the valley south of Point 7378, intending them to loop around and take the Japanese from the rear. However, the terrain was incredibly difficult to traverse and consequently Gillett arrived late on the 20th; just in time to see 'C' Company be wiped out. With both players' agreement, 'A' Company could be sent straight up the Jeep track in a direct attack from Point 'A'. Begin rolling for Gillett's Company from Turn 15, using the method described above.

Game Sequence

- You have the initiative here, so may take the first turn.

Point 7378 Map – Indian Deployment

12 inches

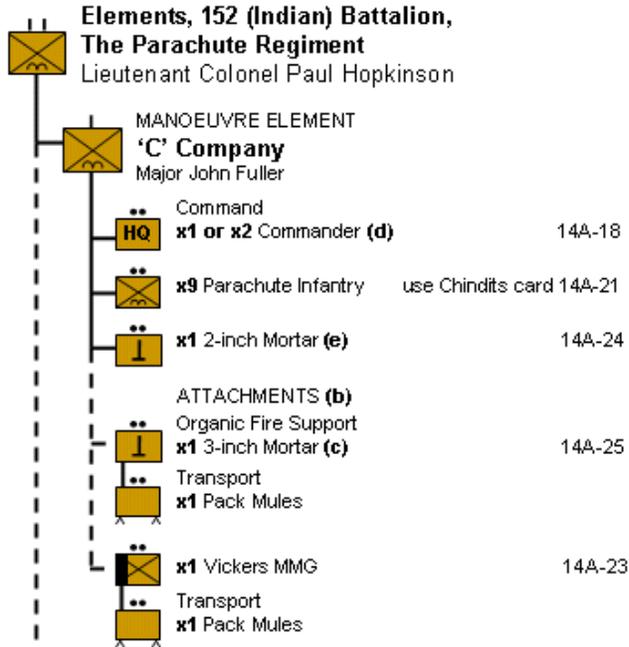


Map Key

-  Open Terrain
-  Brush
-  Dense Jungle
-  Jeep Track
-  Mule Track
-  Crest Line
-  Contour Line
-  Deep Gully

Fuller's Stand – Point 7378 – Indian Order Of Battle

(Elements, 50th Indian Independent Parachute Brigade Group)



(a) All elements are classed as 'Veteran' for this scenario.

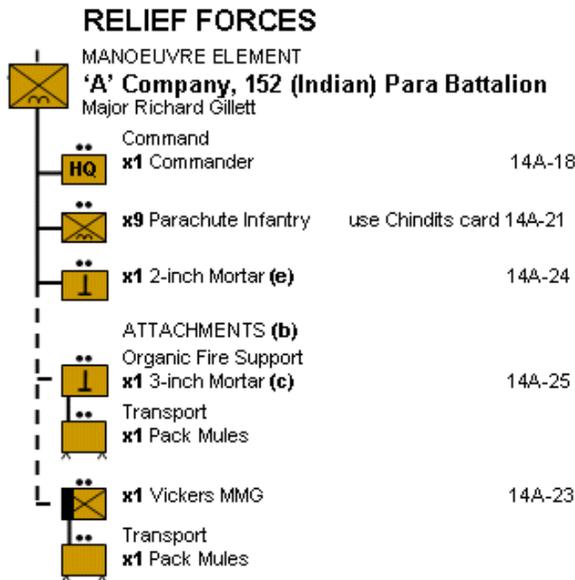
(b) The 3-inch Mortar sections are detached from 152 Para's Mortar Platoon, while the MMG sections are detached from 50 Independent (Parachute) Machine Gun Company.

(c) The 3-inch mortars may not be concentrated and may not fire as a single battery. They may only be called in by members of the company to which they are attached.

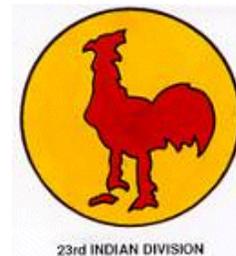
(d) The British player may split 'C' Company into two groups, with the second group commanded by the 2IC, Captain Roseby.

(e) The 2-inch mortars may not concentrate their fire with any other mortars.

(f) In the actual battle, Fuller was unsupported by artillery, being hopelessly out of range of 50th Brigade's attached 3.7-inch Mountain Battery, and being just out of reach of the mortars of 582 Battery, which were situated some 5km distant, at Kidney Camp. As a scenario-balancing measure, the mortar troop listed below could arrive as reinforcements with 'A' Company, 4/5th Mahratta LI.



OPTIONAL FORCES



Scenario No.2 – The Last Stand

Assuming that at least some of the Paras are still alive at the end of play on 19th March, the second scenario may be played:

Situation – 0800hrs 20th March 1944 – Point 7378, East of Ukhrul, Assam

Well, your company has beaten the odds and has resisted all Japanese attacks so far. However, the Japanese now have you completely surrounded and your radio has been destroyed, which means that you have no communications with Battalion HQ or the outside world. The last communication you had with Lt Col Hopkinson indicated that help was on its way – Richard Gillett's 'A' Company is crossing the valley south of you, with the intention of outflanking the Japs and attacking them from the eastern spur (Point C). The 4/5th Mahrattas meanwhile, are trying to push a company up the mule track from Kangooi (Point B). So all hope is not lost!

Mission

As long as there is some hope of relief, you are to hold your position, with the intention of delaying the enemy's advance as long as possible.

Execution

Deployment & Setup

- If both Commanders are still alive from Day 1, 'C' Company may be formed into two MEs (as for Day 1) and troops allocated to each Commander as you see fit. Suppression and Disorder markers from Day 1 are removed.
- If one Commander was KO'd on Day 1, the whole company must be massed as a single ME under the surviving Commander.
- If both Commanders were KO'd on Day 1, a new Commander unit must be created by converting one of the surviving infantry units to a Commander.
- The ME starting strength at the beginning of Day 2 is taken as the new starting strength for game purposes and percentage losses from Day 1 are disregarded. However, the 'No Casualties' +1 manoeuvre modifier may not be applied.
- Troops may be redeployed (as Hidden Unit markers) within the Indian deployment area as shown on the map, but entrenchments may not be moved. However, any Troops not within entrenchments may be classed as being in Improved Positions.
- Also deploy **x5** Dummy Unit markers.
- If reinforcements arrived on Day 1, first move them directly back towards their entry point, so that they are no closer than 6 inches from the nearest Japanese unit. They may then be redeployed within a radius of 6 inches from where their Company Commander ended Day 1 (after being moved back from Japanese units within six inches). However, they may be deployed no further forward than their forward-most unit. All such units may be placed in Improved Positions, but may not be deployed as Hidden Unit markers and may not be allocated Dummy Unit markers.
- Of course, if reinforcements did manage to reach Fuller's entrenchments, they may be added to Fuller's command.

Enemy Forces

- The enemy has infiltrated around you during the night and now has you completely surrounded. They have also brought up some light artillery pieces, so you can expect the renewed attack to be supported by artillery this time.

Reinforcements

- Holland's 'A' Company of 4/5th Mahrattas will arrive on Turn 1, in column on the Mule Track at Point 'B' if he has not already done so. Arrival may be delayed by two turns if Holland wishes to deploy his forces up to four inches either side of the track before arriving on table.

- Starting on Turn 5, roll a D10 for the arrival of Major Gillett's 'A' Company, 152 Para. On a roll of '0', he will arrive in column, on the Jeep Track at Point 'C'. Add +1 to the chance of success in each successive turn. Note that this will not apply if you have already invoked the optional reinforcement rule for Day 1 and brought Gillett on at Point 'A'.

Optional Reinforcements

- With both players' agreement, the Indian reinforcements can be given some unhistorical artillery support by attaching 'D' Troop of 582 (Mortar) Battery to Holland's 'A' Company, 4/5th Mahrattas. The mortars themselves may remain off-table, with only the FO being on table, but this will require Holland to leave a platoon of **x3** infantry behind to protect them. The FO or any element of 'A' company, 4/5th Mahrattas, may call for fire as Direct Fire Support. No other ME may call for fire from this Mortar Troop.

Game Sequence

- The Japanese player has the initiative this time!

Briefing for Major Shimano, Commanding III Battalion, 58th Infantry Regiment

Situation at 1100hrs, 19th March 1944 – Point 7378, East of Ukhrul, Assam

Your battalion forms the extreme left flank of 31st Division's advance. On your right, the regiment's II Battalion is making for the peak of Point 8425, while I Battalion is swinging around the north side of that mountain to take Ukhrul from the rear. On your left is the 60th Infantry Regiment, which forms the extreme right flank of 15th Division. Together, your primary objective is to continue driving westward, with the intention of cutting the Imphal to Kohima road. Once that is achieved, Imphal will be cut off from reinforcements coming from Kohima and the British rail-head at Dimapur. The 60th Regiment will turn south, to keep northern escape routes from Imphal firmly shut, while the 31st Division strikes north to capture British supplies from their depot at Kohima and then continue the drive on to Dimapur.

You have been advancing along the Homalin to Ukhrul road for several days now and so far there is no sign of the enemy. You have an excellent guide in Captain Nishida Susumu of 9th Company – he led a long-range reconnaissance patrol as far as Kohima last year and consequently knows the route well, along with the likely points of British resistance. One of these is the village of Ukhrul and the first combat task for Colonel Fukunaga's 58th Infantry Regiment will be to quickly destroy the British garrison there, so that the division may push on to Kohima as quickly as possible.

Your battalion is now just passing over the crest of this range of hills separating Burma from India and in the far distance, you can see the wide Imphal Plain. However, you don't have time to take in the view. Your plan here is for part of your battalion to take the winding main track, through the village of Sangshak, cutting the Ukhrul to Imphal road while the rest of your battalion takes the more direct to Ukhrul, via the mule track over the peak in front of you – marked as '7378' on your captured British map.

However, your scouts have just sent a runner back to you! They have spotted figures on the crest of the hill and signs of military activity. It looks like you will need to fight for this mountain pass after all!

Mission

You are to overcome all enemy resistance at Point 7378, with the intention of pressing on to Ukhrul as soon as possible.

Execution

Friendly Forces

- These are detailed in the attached order of battle. Your 9th Company is leading the column along the Jeep Track and has just passed over the crest the pass. The rest of the battalion is strung out along the Jeep Track and will take some time to assemble.
- 9th Company begins the game deployed in close column (each unit in base-to-base contact with the one in front and behind), on the Jeep Track, within the red circle shown on the map. All reinforcements will arrive in column at Point 'X'.

Enemy Forces

- Intelligence is minimal. All your scouts can say is that they have seen activity on top of Point 7378, which dominates all routes through the pass. Colonel Fukunaga advises you that he cannot spare II Battalion to attack them from the north, so you are to deal with them yourself!

Reinforcements

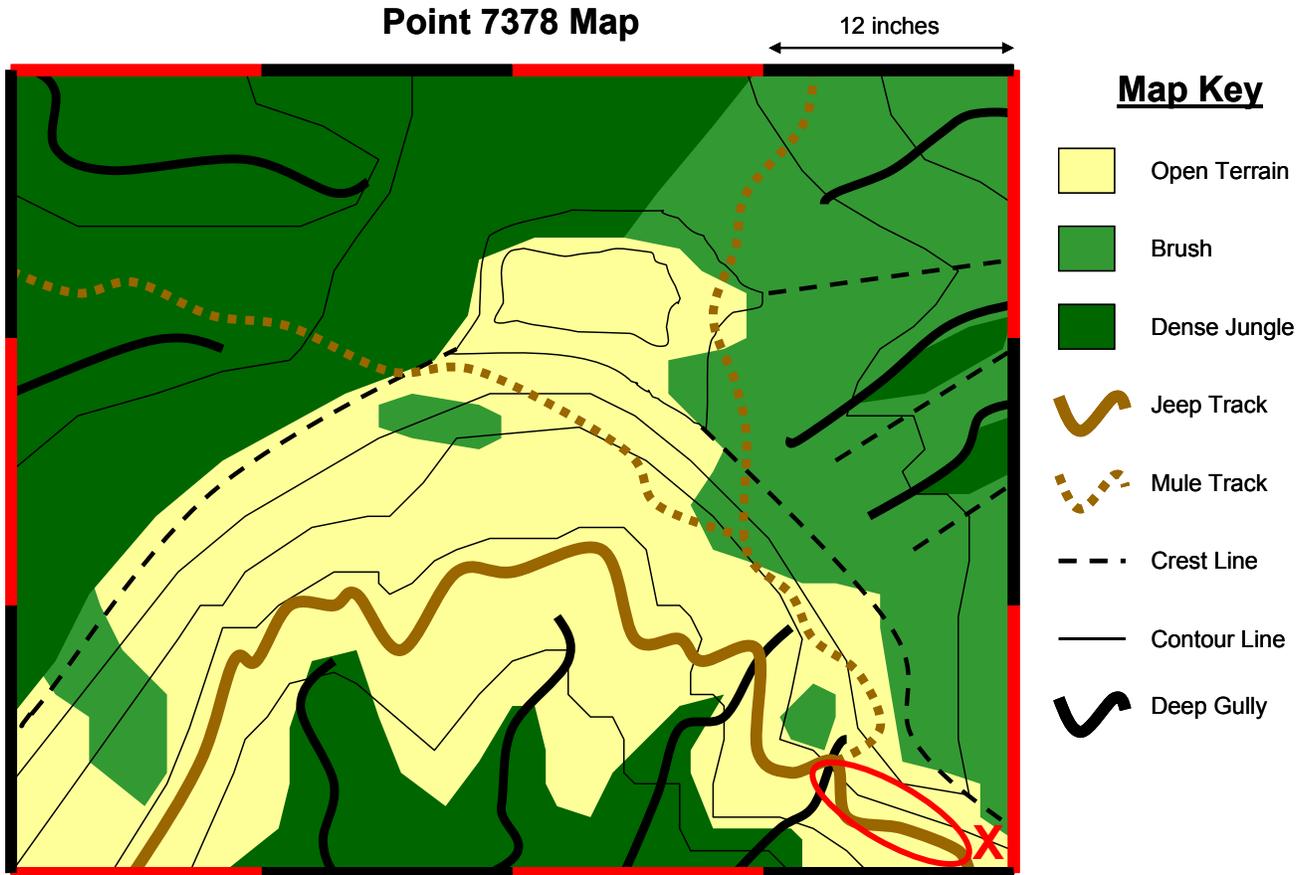
- 10th Company will arrive in column at Point 'X' on Turn 3.
- 11th Company will arrive in column at Point 'X' on Turn 6.
- The Battalion Headquarters, with the reserve MMGs, will arrive at Point 'X' on Turn 8.
- 12th Company is escorting the Battalion Gun Platoon and the Regimental Gun Company and is consequently delayed while trying to coax the fractious pack mules/elephants over the precipitous mountain pass. These elements will not therefore appear on Day 1 of the battle and their current location on the edge of a steep mountain pass does not permit them to engage in indirect fire support against the enemy.

Game Sequence

- The Indian player has the first turn.

Breaking Off The Attack

- You may, at any point, decide to break off the attack. In this case, the battle will automatically be designated as a 'Draw' and the game will then move to Scenario No.2. However, in order to break off the attack, you must first have cut the western Mule Track in order to prevent overnight reinforcement of the enemy position.



Scenario No.2 – The Last Stand

Assuming that at least some of the Paras are still alive at the end of play on 19th March, the second scenario may be played:

Situation – 0800hrs 20th March 1944 – Point 7378, East of Ukhrul, Assam

The enemy has resisted with courage and skill. The bodies of your men littering the slopes of the hill are evidence of this. Your intelligence officer advises you that judging from intelligence obtained from the bodies of the enemy, you are facing an Indian Paratroop unit – the elite of the Indian Army.

Nevertheless, your battalion has infiltrated around the enemy position during the night and your reserve elements have finally arrived, including the Battalion Gun Platoon and the Regimental Gun Company. At dawn you intend to launch an overwhelming assault on the hilltop and resume your inexorably victorious advance.

May the Emperor live for a thousand years!

Mission

You are to assault the enemy position, with the intention of wiping it off the face of the earth!

Execution

Deployment and Setup

- Troops may be redistributed between companies in order to strengthen companies that were weakened on Day 1. However, companies may not exceed their order of battle strength and the weapons mix may not be changed, other than by adding attachments from the battalion reserves. Take the new strength as the ME starting strength for this scenario, but MEs that suffered casualties on Day 1 may not claim the 'No Casualties' +1 Manoeuvre modifier, even if they have been brought back up to full strength.
- Once the Indians have deployed their forces, you may deploy your forces as Hidden Unit markers anywhere on table, though not within 6 inches of any Indian units and nor within 6 inches of the table edge.
- The only exception to the above rule is if Japanese units made it into the Indian entrenchments on Day 1. These units may remain exactly where they were at the end of Day 1, even if this means being adjacent to Indian units – it was not unusual in Burma for belligerents to spend the night within grenade-throwing range of each other!
- Also deploy **x5** dummy unit markers per surviving ME.

Enemy Forces

- The enemy paratroop company is clinging on to the positions atop Point 7378. However, your patrols have also encountered enemy patrols on the western Mule Track.

Game Sequence

- The Japanese player has the first turn.

Victory & Defeat

The scenario victory conditions are listed below. Note that victory or defeat is entirely dependent upon the ability of the Japanese commander to complete his victory objectives. The Indians win by frustrating the Japanese objectives.

Note that it is impossible for the Indians to gain anything more than a Draw on Day 1, as the Japanese still have more troops left to throw into the fight on Day 2. Similarly, if the Japanese allow the battle to drag on for a second day, the best they will be able to achieve is a Tactical Victory, as the defenders' sacrifice will already have delayed the Japanese long enough for a coordinated defence to be formed by 50th Parachute Brigade at Sangshak.

Scenario No.1	Japanese
Total Victory	The garrison of Point 7378 has been totally annihilated and there are absolutely no un-disordered Indian troops anywhere on the table.
Tactical Victory	There are un-disordered Indian troops still on the table, though there are none within 12 inches of Point 7378.
Draw	Un-disordered Indian troops remain within the entrenchments on top of Point 7378. Now play Scenario No.2

Scenario No.2	Japanese
Tactical Victory	The garrison of Point 7378 has been totally annihilated and there are absolutely no un-disordered Indian troops anywhere on the table.
Draw	There are un-disordered Indian troops still on the table, though there are none within 12 inches of Point 7378.
Total Defeat	The above objectives have not been achieved.

Terrain Effects

Open Terrain – As per the rulebook, but note that everything south of the main crest-line (and south of the second contour line down from the peak), is classed as **Steep Slopes** (see below).

Dense Jungle – Dense Area Concealment. Soft Cover. Half Speed for Troops. Impassable to Guns, though they may be deployed in such terrain if they have been transported there by pack animals.

Brush – Sparse Area Concealment. Soft Cover. Full Speed for Troops. Half Speed for Guns.

Steep Slopes – Half Speed for Troops. Half Speed with Bog-Down check for Guns. Note that this penalty is cumulative and must be applied in addition to penalties for vegetation. So an infantry unit passing through jungle on a steep slope would only move a quarter of the full rate (1 inch) per action.

Deep Gully – Sparse Edge Concealment for units within the Gully. Hard Cover. Troops require a Breach action to enter and exit the gully. Guns also require a Bog-Down check. Troops may move along gullies at half speed, but Guns may not move along gullies.

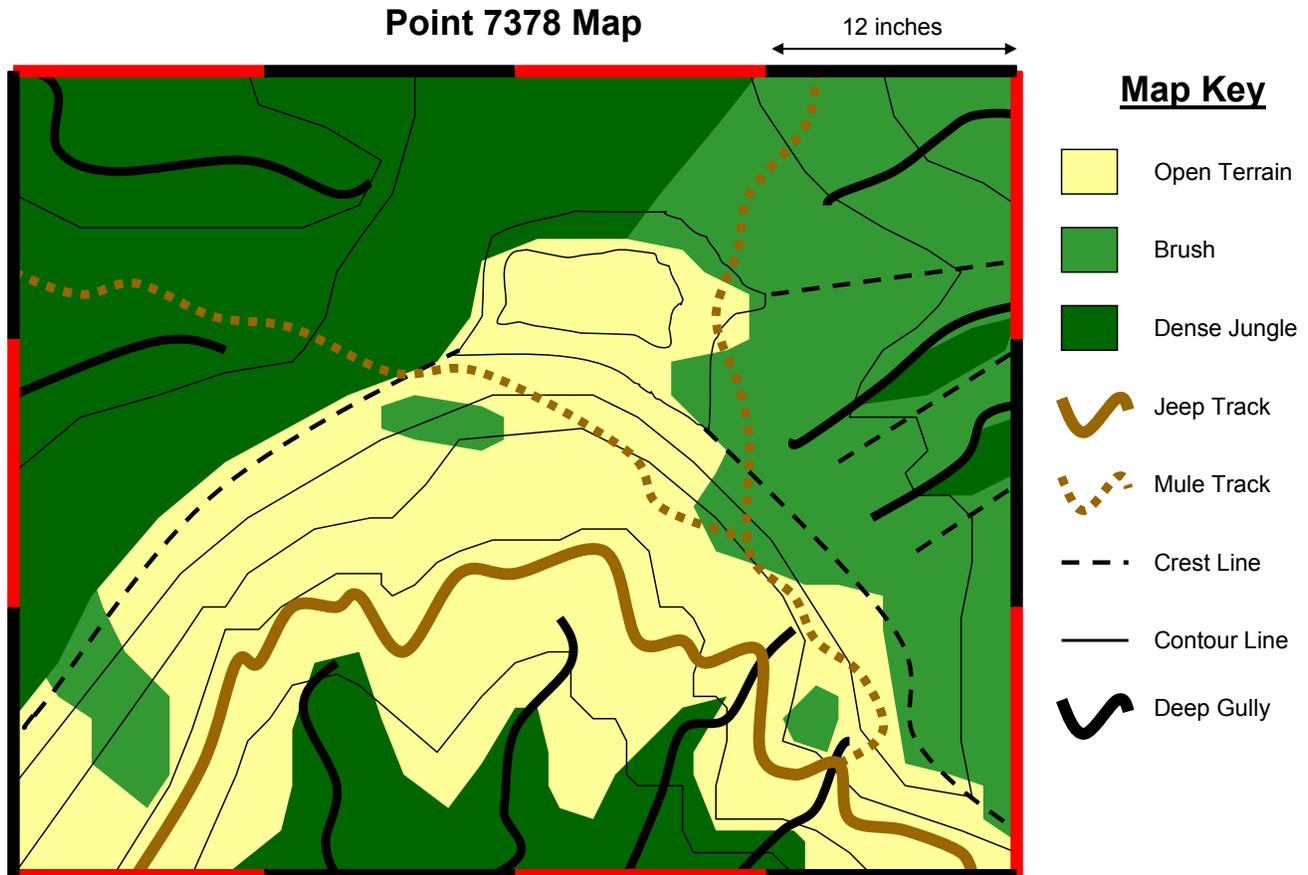
Jeep Track – Unpaved Road. All units on the Jeep Track are automatically spotted by any units on a higher elevation with an uninterrupted line of sight. Note that the Jeep Track has High Banks on either side (as the track is cut out of

the hillside), which confer no cover bonus, but require a Breach action to cross (Guns also require a Bog-Down check).

Mule Track – Counts as Open terrain, rather than road. The Mule Tracks take the best route up the hill, thus negating the half speed penalty.

Crest Line – Blocks line of sight, unless the observer is on a higher contour. The nature of the terrain in this part of the world results in many knife-edge ridges.

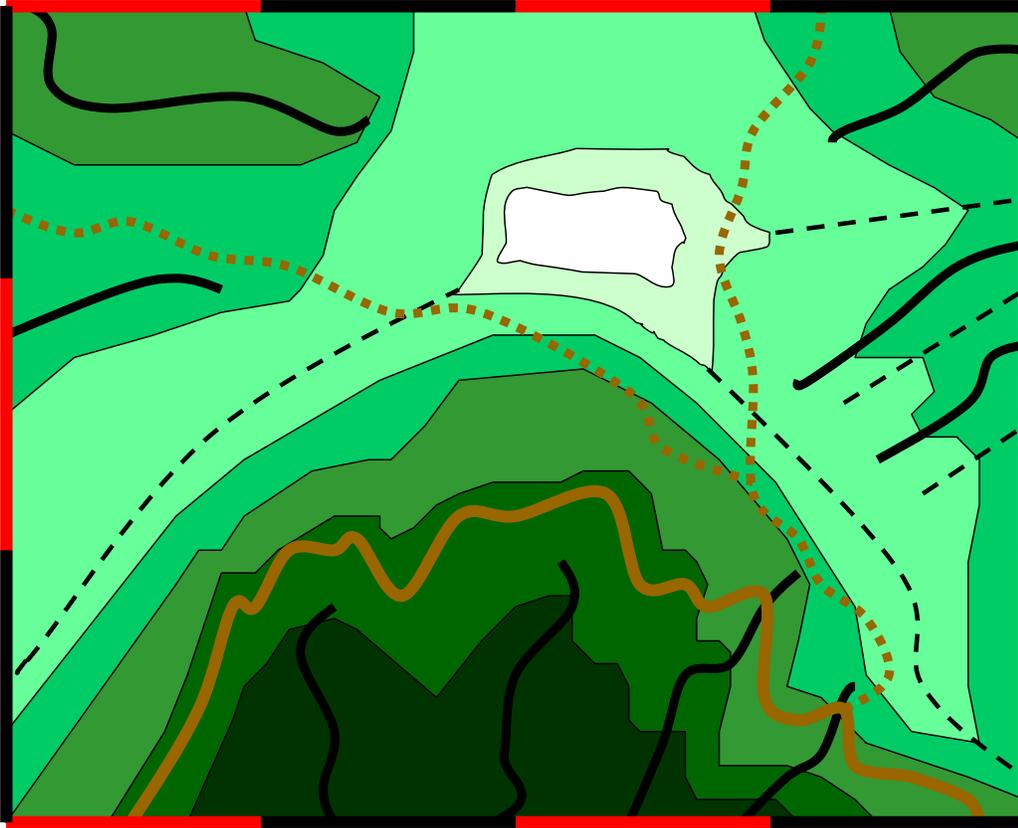
I realise that the terrain for this scenario is rather complicated, being drawn from aerial recce photos and original maps. Indeed, this is a recurring problem when attempting to recreate battles on the Burma Frontier and it is difficult to draw a balance between accuracy and simplicity. Hex-based terrain tiles can translate accurate maps onto the table with relative ease, but you do tend to need a lot of hex tiles and they're not cheap! For that reason, here is a simplified version of the map, which should be within the means of most wargamers' terrain collections:



As the hilly and wooded terrain is somewhat difficult to read, I've also created a topographical map to show the contours in more clarity:

Point 7378 Topographical Map

12 inches

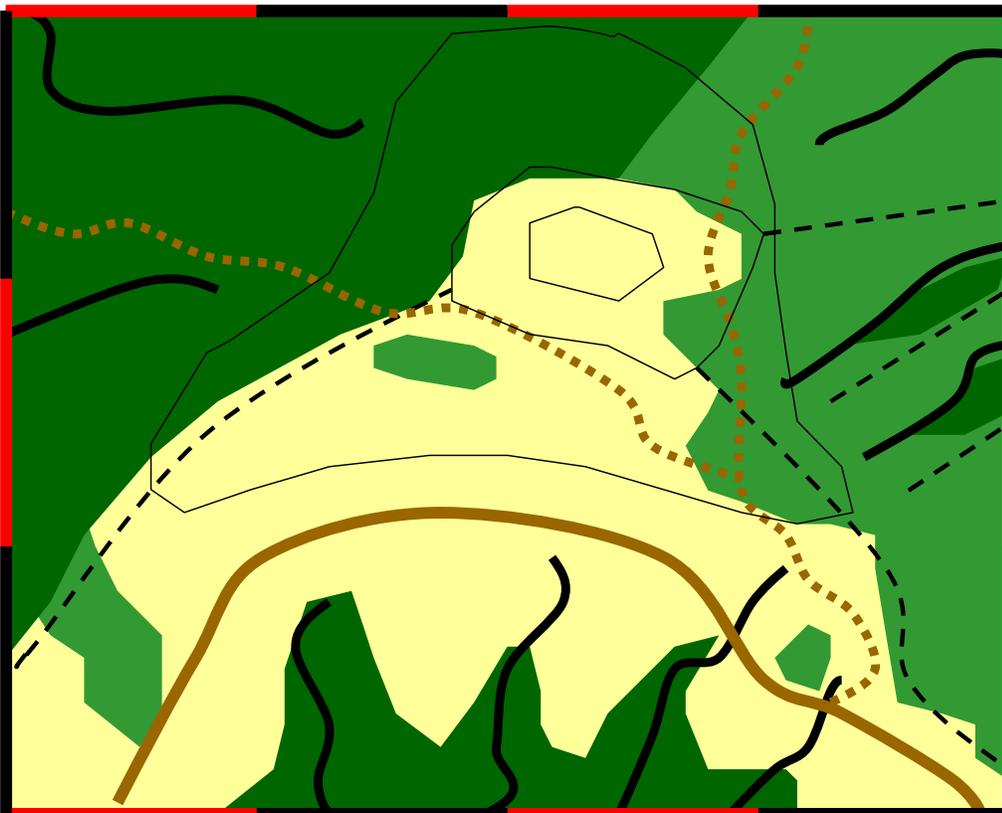


Map Key

-  Jeep Track
-  Mule Track
-  Crest Line
-  Contour Line
-  Deep Gully

Point 7378 Map - Simplified

12 inches



Map Key

-  Open Terrain
-  Brush
-  Dense Jungle
-  Jeep Track
-  Mule Track
-  Crest Line
-  Contour Line
-  Deep Gully

Scenario Length

Day 1 – 24 turns (or until the Japanese player breaks off the attack). The Indian player has the first turn, having already spotted the Japanese column on the Jeep track.

Day 2 – 24 turns (or until 'C' Company is annihilated or until the Japanese player concedes defeat or until the Indian player escapes). The Japanese player has the first turn.

Recommended Optional Rules

In order to stand a fighting chance of winning, the Indian player really needs to make good use of his Vickers MMG section. To that effect, I recommend using the following optional rules (found on the 'Extras' page of the www.fireandfury.com website) to maximise Indian chances:

- **Machine Gun Grazing Fire**
- **Machine Gun Plunging Fire**
- **Indian Fall-Back/Panic Options** – A dug-in Indian unit that gets a Falls Back or Panic result on a Manoeuvre Table may instead opt to stay (Disordered) within the entrenchment. Otherwise, they will Fall Back/Panic toward the western table edge. Reinforcement columns will Fall Back/Panic toward their respective entry point.

Scenario-Balancing Options

This is a very tough scenario for the Indian player to win. As in the historical action, the Indian Paras can inflict considerable casualties on the leading Japanese companies, but eventually the Japanese will close and overwhelm them with superior numbers – particularly in the second scenario.

Cards Required

You will need the **Battlefront: WWII Far East Card Supplement** to play this scenario.

British-Indian XIVth Army

14A-18 Commander
14A-17 Infantry
14A-20 Forward Observer
14A-21 Chindits (used for Paratroops)
14A-23 Vickers MMG
14A-24 2-inch Mortar
14A-25 3-inch Mortar

Japanese

JA-10 Type 92 70mm Battalion Gun
JA-12 Type 41 75mm Regimental Gun
JA-17 Riflemen
JA-19 Commander
JA-21 Type 92 Heavy Machine Gun
JA-25 Type 89 50mm Grenade Discharger
JA-P26 Pack Elephant (website prototype card)

Generic

Pack Mules