

'Kai Kai Baloch!'

The Battle of Kuzeik

Burma, 12th February 1942

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



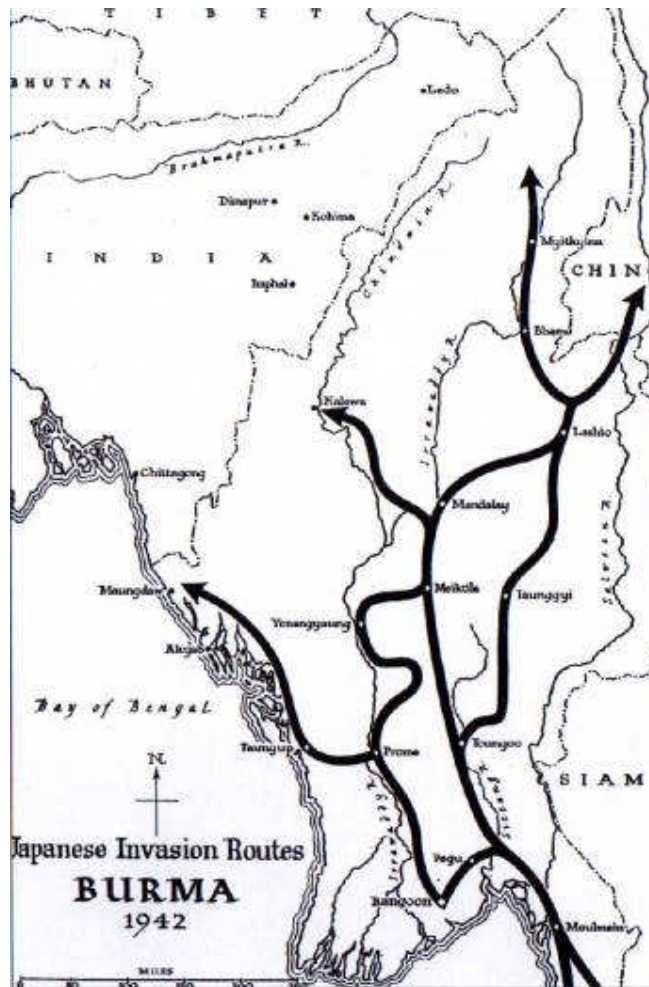
Historical Overview

In the first few weeks of 1942, the British Empire was facing its darkest hour in the face of Japanese aggression: Hong Kong had fallen, the battleships HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales had been sunk, Rangoon had been bombed, the Japanese 25th Army seemed unstoppable in Malaya, Singapore seemed doomed, Burma faced imminent invasion and Britain's allies were all in retreat.

The prospects for a continued British presence in Burma looked grim. The Japanese clearly had their sights set on the country, as it provided their Chinese enemies with access to American military supplies; via Rangoon, Lashio and the American-built 'China Road', which wound its way precariously over 'The Hump' of the Himalaya and into China. The first Japanese incursion came in mid-December, as Japanese forces secured Victoria Point, at the southern tip of Burma.

The British had only one weak and barely-trained division – 1st Burma Division – to defend this massive country. More units were being dispatched to shore up the defence of Burma, but they would take time to arrive and other theatres of war – namely North Africa and Singapore – had an even higher priority. Nevertheless, the raw 17th Indian Division was soon dispatched to Burma, even though it was trained and equipped to go to Iraq! To add to its difficulties, two of its three brigades had already been sent to Singapore. Only 46th Indian Brigade was left under command and this brigade was sent straight to the eastern frontier, where 2nd Burma Brigade and 16th Indian Brigade (part of 1st Burma Division) were already skirmishing with the Japanese.

The Japanese 15th Army, consisting of the 33rd and 55th Divisions (as well as the 56th, which would arrive once sea transport became available) had already arrived in Thailand and was securing the invasion routes into Burma. The invasion proper began in mid-January 1942. The 55th Division's first objective was the main regional town of Moulmein, which stands at the mouth of the Salween River and also had the main RAF airbase in the area (along with Burma's only radar set). 55th Division was then to cross the Salween, seizing Martaban on the western bank and then driving on to seize crossings on the next obstacle, the Bilin River. 33rd Division meanwhile, was to operate north of 55th Division; its first objective was to secure a crossing on the Salween at Pa-an, some thirty miles upstream of Moulmein.



Both Japanese divisions were travelling light – one regiment from each division and more than half of the artillery was left in Thailand; to be brought along later by 56th Division. However, each infantry company was boosted in strength to over 200 men. To make up for the lack of artillery, 15th Army was supported by the powerful 5th Army Air Division. However, the hopelessly-outnumbered RAF and American Volunteer Group (AVG – the famed ‘Flying Tigers’) aircraft were able to hold their own against the Japanese air onslaught during these few weeks of the campaign, causing havoc among Japanese columns caught in the open and forcing them to move mainly by night.

Despite the nuisance caused by the RAF and AVG, the Japanese 55th Division quickly swept aside British, Indian and Burmese resistance east of Moulmein and began its assault on the town on 29th January. The Allies complete their evacuation on the 31st and the town fell into Japanese hands, along with its largely-intact airfield. The 33rd Division similarly advanced quickly to the north and took Pa-an on 1st February after a sharp fight with the 1/7th Gurkhas (of 2nd Burma Brigade). Harried by Japanese aircraft, the Gurkhas were forced to abandon the position and crossed over to Kuzeik – the western terminus of the Pa-an Ferry.

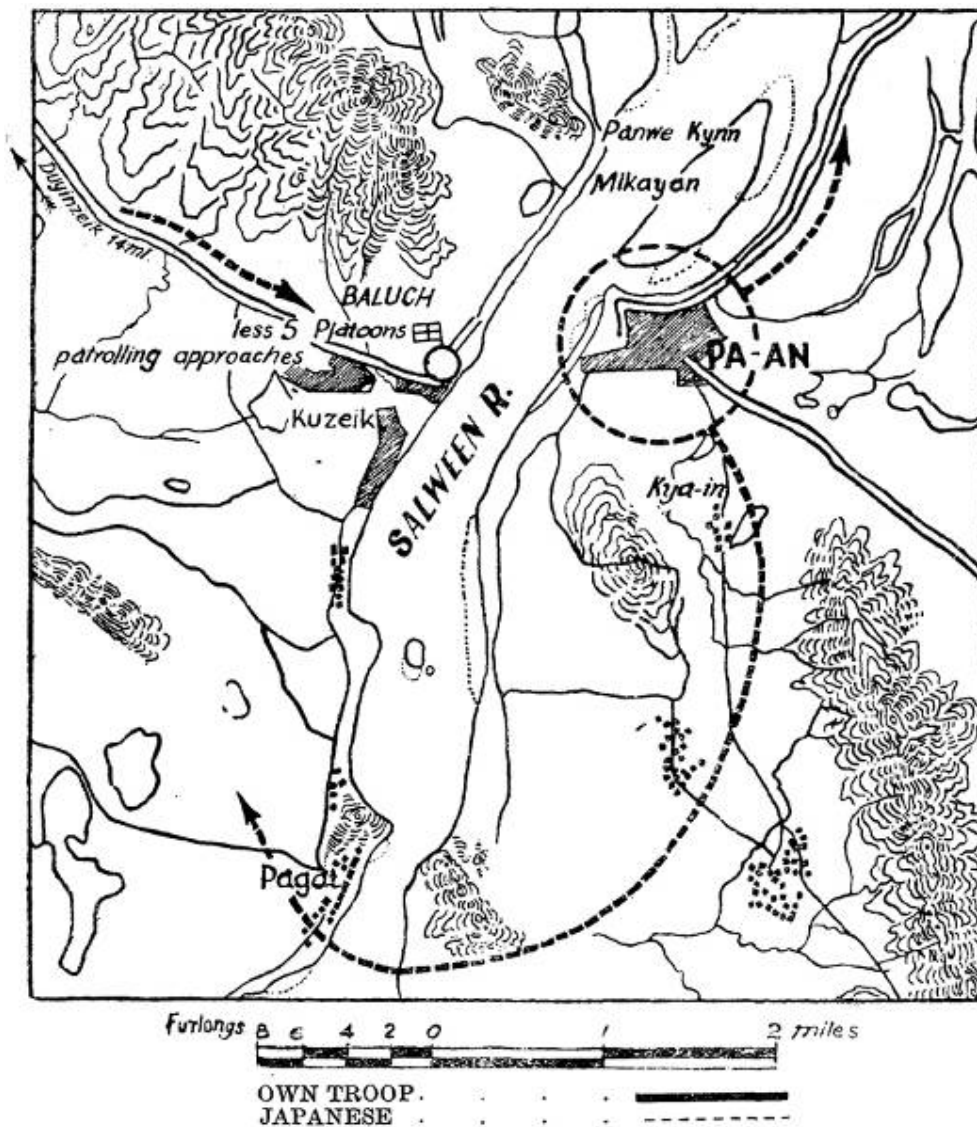
The first week of February was marked by intense air activity over the Salween, as the Japanese Army Air Force hammered suspected enemy positions on the western bank, while the RAF and AVG did likewise to Japanese concentration areas and supply routes. Artillery and mortars on both sides similarly pounded any sign of enemy activity on the far bank. Japanese reconnaissance patrols attempted to cross the river, which was often as much as a mile wide in places, but were beaten off.

17th Indian Division now took over responsibility for the defence of the Salween River line: 16th and 46th Indian Brigades would establish outposts along the river, while the newly-arrived 48th Indian Brigade moved into reserve at Bilin. The battered 2nd Burma Brigade meanwhile, was moved back to defend the vital railway bridge over the mighty Sittang River. On 8th February, the 7/10th Baluch Regiment relieved the 1/7th Gurkhas at Kuzeik and settled into a ‘box’ position nestled within a horseshoe of hills overlooking the Pa-an Ferry. From this position they were to patrol aggressively up

and down the riverbank, with the intention of locating and delaying any Japanese crossing. If a Japanese bridgehead was discovered, they were to contain it while the two reserve battalions; 5/17th Dogras and 2nd KOYLI, were moved in for the kill.

However, the Baluchi positions were bombed and strafed by Japanese aircraft for the following three days, causing 35 casualties and destroying a significant amount of equipment and ammunition. Unknown to the Baluchis, their positions and strength were being conveyed to the Japanese by sympathetic Burmese, who included some infiltrators of the nationalist Burma Independence Army (BIA). The BIA, initially numbering around 200 men, plus 70 Japanese officers and NCOs, had accompanied the Japanese troops from Thailand, serving as guides, scouts and recruiters.

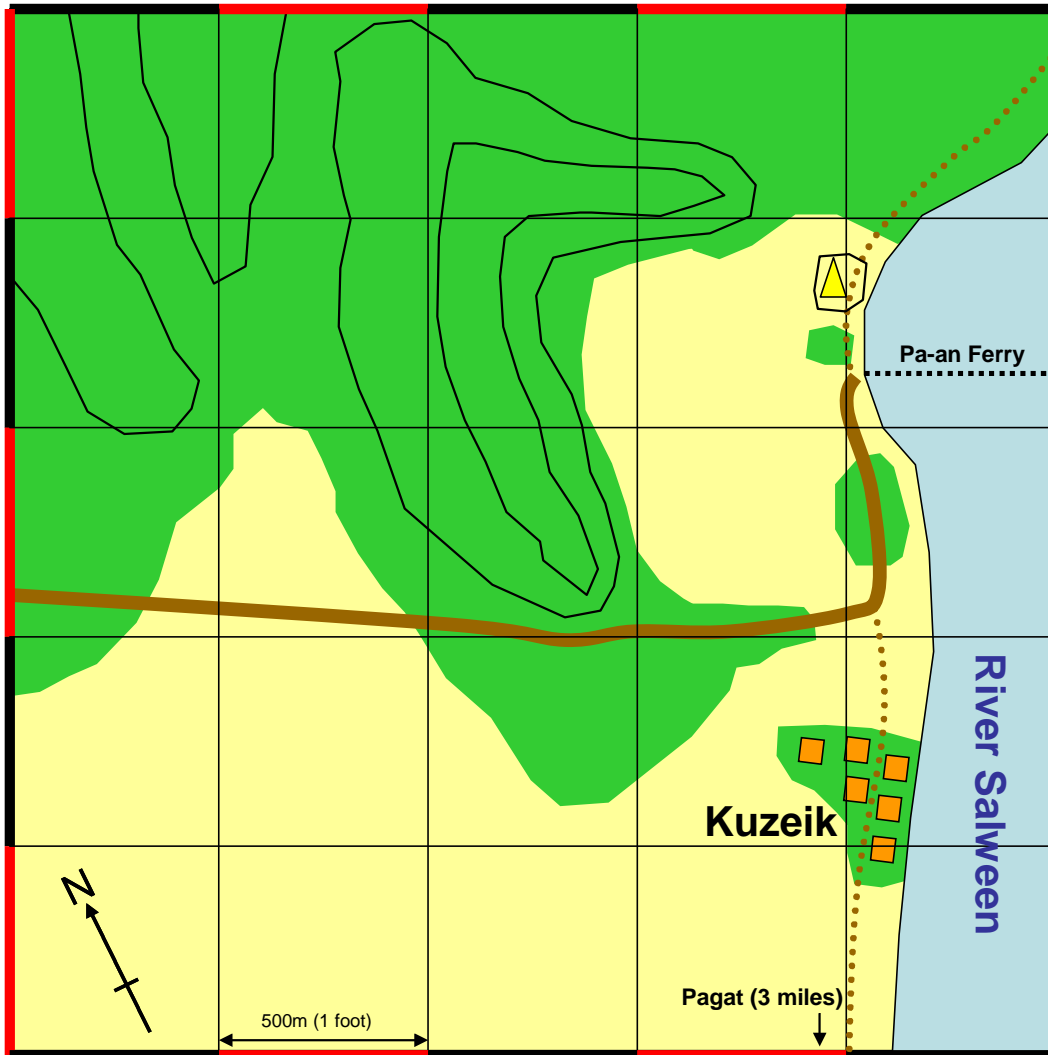
During the night of 10/11th February, the 7th and 8th Companies of Colonel Munaji Harada's 215th Infantry Regiment crossed the Salween at Pagat, some four miles south of Kuzeik. Crossing in silence, they took the patrol base of 'B' Company, 7/10th Baluchs, completely by surprise and overran the position. Many of the garrison platoon were killed, including the commander, Subedar Mehr Khan. The rest of Harada's 2nd Battalion was soon across the river and the bridgehead was consolidated, with a Baluchi probe being beaten off. The regimental HQ, Gun Company and 1st Battalion were also soon established on the west bank and already, Japanese patrols were fanning out, probing the Baluchi defences and cutting the lines of communication with the rest of the brigade.



As night fell on the 11th, Colonel Harada executed his plan to destroy 7/10th Baluchs: While the 1st Battalion (less 3rd and 4th Companies) established a roadblock on the west road, to block any counter-attack by reserve forces, the 2nd

Battalion (less 5th Company) would move to assault the flank and rear of the Baluchi position north of Kuzeik village. Harada meanwhile, would directly control a reserve force formed by the 3rd, 4th and 5th Companies, plus the Gun Company. There would be no artillery preparation. The plan was to get as close as possible before launching an all-out, silent attack with bayonets.

However, the Baluchis were not to be caught napping – they were alert and used parachute flares to locate their enemy. Harada knew that he would have to do this the hard way...



Terrain Key

- Woods with Underbrush (no rapid advance)
- Dry Paddy (criss-crossed with Low Banks)
- River Salween (Impassable)
- Contour Line
- Unpaved Road
- Built-Up Sector (Wooden)
- Pagoda: Built-Up Sector (Stone)
- Track (treat as Open Terrain for movement)

Briefing for Lieutenant Colonel 'Jerry' Dyer, Commanding 7/10th Baluchs

Situation – 0200hrs 12th February 1942

The situation is grim. The Japanese forces, having crossed the Thai-Burmese border in mid-January, have advanced rapidly, easily brushing aside all attempts at resistance. As a consequence, we are now dug in along the Salween, waiting to see what the enemy will do next (in between Japanese air raids).

Your answer to that question came yesterday night. Your southern patrol base at Pagat, which was manned by Subedar Mehr Khan's platoon from 'B' Company, was overrun by a surprise assault. The rest of 'B' Company was also 'bounced' by Japanese forces. 'B' Company is consequently now severely shaken and undermanned, though young John Randle is doing a good job of holding the company together.

Since establishing their bridgehead, the Japanese have spent the past day consolidating their position and patrolling aggressively all around your position. Reports have also come in of further Japanese landings to the north. As a consequence, our patrols have been largely beaten off, the line of communication with Brigade has been cut (quite literally, in the case of your telephone link with Brigade) and your outlying platoon patrols have been unable to rejoin the battalion defensive perimeter. Now that night has fallen, you have a feeling that they're coming. The battalion has been 100% stood-to since dusk and parachute flares cast their eerie, shifting light across the scene.

Suddenly there is movement out in front... One of your Vickers MGs has opened up... Shrieks, yells and howls of '*Banzai!*' come from the jungle as the Japanese charge hits your forward sections...

Mission

You are to hold your positions until relieved, with the intention of giving the Brigade reserve battalions time to mount a counter-attack.

Execution

General Outline

- Your battalion is to hold a defensive box, centred on the Pa-an ferry terminus.

Deployment

- Your companies are deployed as Hidden Unit Markers, within the area shown on the map below, in an all-round defensive 'box'. At least one company should be deployed along the riverbank, while the other companies should face north, west and south.
- All units are Dug-In to individual foxholes and weapons pits. There are no connecting trenches.
- Your HQ and support platoons, plus the attached Mountain Artillery troop, are deployed where required within the battalion perimeter.
- Vickers MMGs may be attached directly to companies, but other support platoons and the Mountain Artillery troop must be attached directly to Battalion HQ.
- Note that one company must be deployed on the river bank.
- You may deploy up to 16 Dummy Unit Markers.
- All units must be deployed before the Japanese commence their deployment.

Friendly Forces

- Your forces are detailed in the order of battle below.

- Note that 'A', 'B' & 'D' Companies are all missing a platoon on patrol, while 'B' Company has lost a second platoon in the action at Pagat.
- The 5/17th Dogras are at Duyinzeik, approximately 15 miles to the west. The Dogras will 'march to the sound of the guns' now that battle has been joined.
- You have no artillery support other than the troop of mountain guns placed under your command and your own mortar platoon.
- Air support is not likely to be forthcoming.

Enemy Forces

- The enemy is known to have landed in at least battalion strength at Pagat, four miles to the south. Reports have also been received concerning another landing to the north.
- Enemy aircraft have bombed and strafed the battalion position for the last three days. You can therefore expect further air attacks when it gets light.
- Enemy artillery fire has been light and sporadic.
- The enemy has had sufficient time to surround your position, so expect an attack from any direction.

Fire Support

- The 3.7-inch Mountain Howitzers lack the elevation to fire indirectly at such close targets. The mountain artillery is therefore limited to engaging targets over open sights (note that the Indirect Fire method may still be used – representing area suppression effect – but this must be against targets within direct line of sight of the mountain artillery).
- Each Company may pre-register a Defensive Fire (DF) target for the mortar platoon. This DF target need not be visible to the observer, but at least one member of the Company must be able to directly Suspect or Spot a target before the DF mission is called (note that observers in this sort of engagement often could not see the enemy – once an enemy attack was detected, they would fire into likely forming-up areas, or into areas through which the enemy must pass).
- Note that the 'optional' MG Grazing Fire rule is absolutely essential in this scenario if the Baluchs are to have any hope of holding their ground. Note that unlike normal direct fire, where the range is limited to 4 inches in Dense Concealment, the MMGs may fire up to the full extent of the Grazing Fire 'cone'.
- Grazing Fire is not available to Japanese MMGs in this scenario.

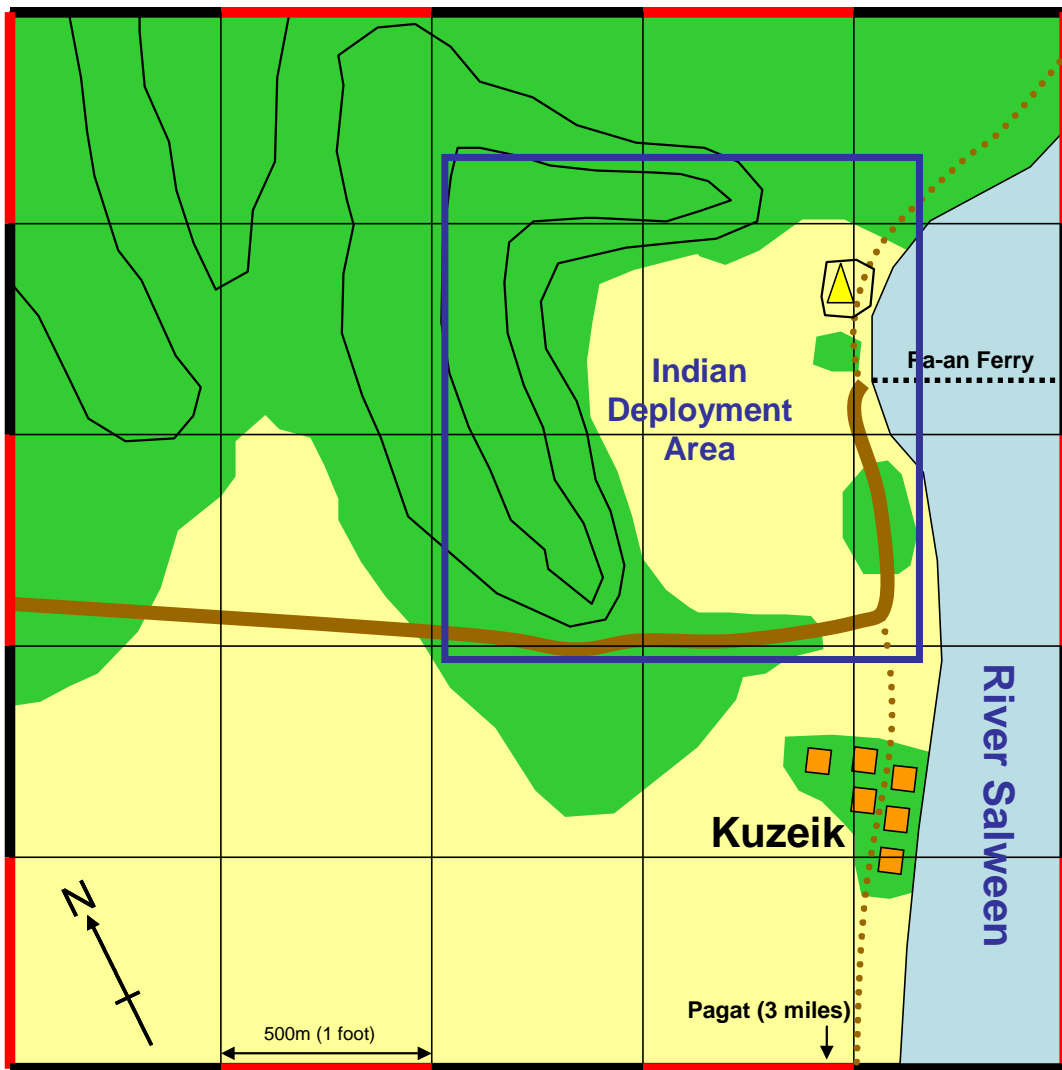
Scenario Information

- The Scenario lasts 25 turns.
- Turns 1-20 are in darkness. Turns 21-25 are in daylight.
- The Japanese have the first turn.









Victory Points

- **1 VP** for each enemy Manoeuvre Element with greater than 25% casualties OR each knocked out Gun.
- **2 VP** for each enemy Manoeuvre Element with greater than 50% casualties.
- **3VP** for each enemy Manoeuvre Element with greater than 75% casualties.
- **5 VP** for having the only un-disordered unit within 5 inches of the pagoda.

- **Total Victory** – for having more than 11 VPs or more than the enemy.
- **Partial Victory** – for having 6-10 VPs more than the enemy.
- **Draw** – for having 0-5 VPs more (or less) than the enemy. The side with the higher number can claim a 'Winning Draw'.

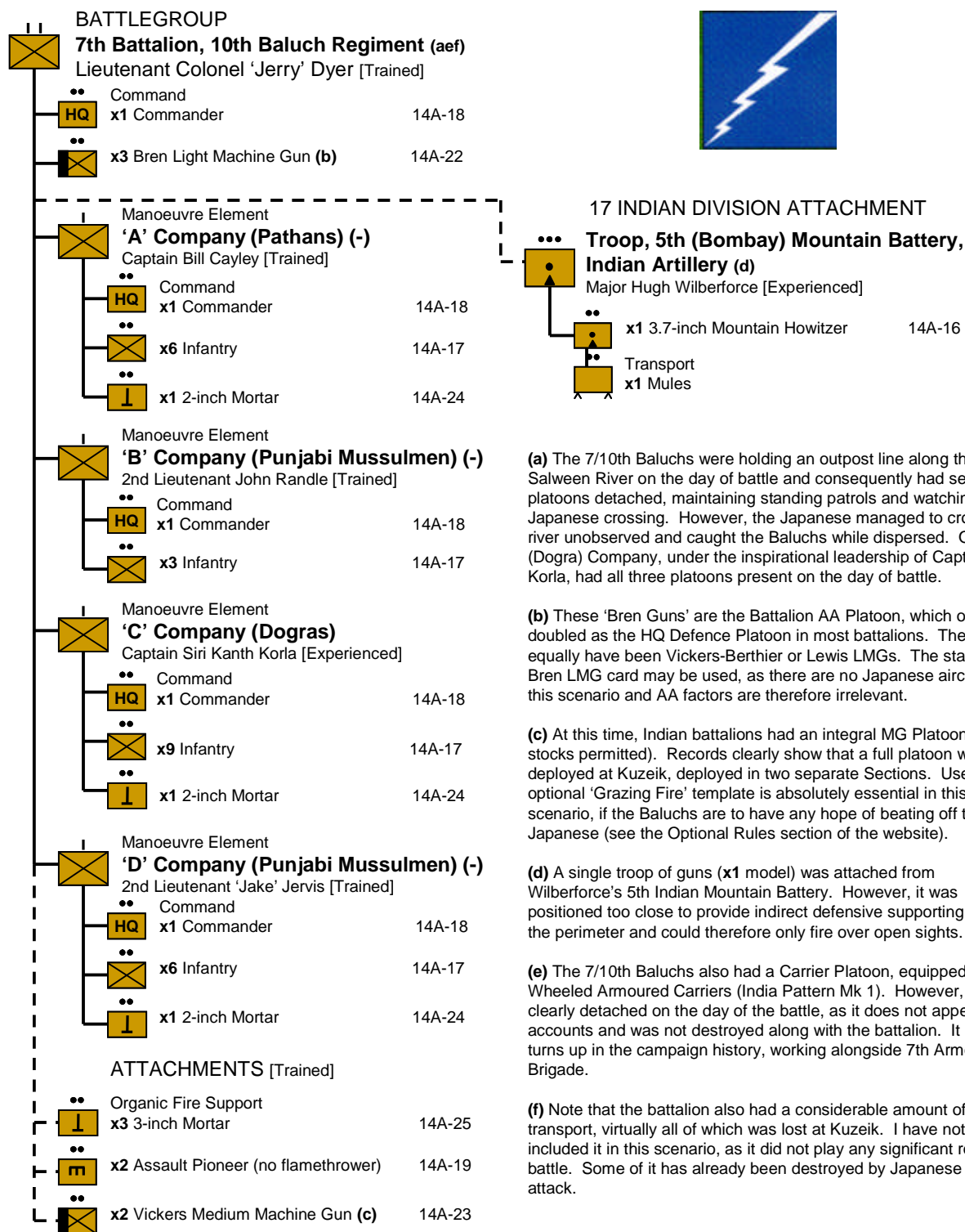


Terrain Key

- | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|
|  | Woods with Underbrush (no rapid advance) |  | Built-Up Sector (Wooden) |
|  | Dry Paddy (criss-crossed with Low Banks) |  | Pagoda: Built-Up Sector (Stone) |
|  | River Salween (Impassable) | | |
|  | Contour Line | | |
|  | Unpaved Road | | |
|  | Track (treat as Open Terrain for movement) | | |

British & Indian Order Of Battle

Elements, 46th Indian Brigade, 17th Indian Infantry Division



(a) The 7/10th Baluchs were holding an outpost line along the Salween River on the day of battle and consequently had several platoons detached, maintaining standing patrols and watching for a Japanese crossing. However, the Japanese managed to cross the river unobserved and caught the Baluchs while dispersed. Only 'C' (Dogra) Company, under the inspirational leadership of Captain Korla, had all three platoons present on the day of battle.

(b) These 'Bren Guns' are the Battalion AA Platoon, which often doubled as the HQ Defence Platoon in most battalions. They might equally have been Vickers-Berthier or Lewis LMGs. The standard Bren LMG card may be used, as there are no Japanese aircraft in this scenario and AA factors are therefore irrelevant.

(c) At this time, Indian battalions had an integral MG Platoon (if stocks permitted). Records clearly show that a full platoon was deployed at Kuzeik, deployed in two separate Sections. Use of the optional 'Grazing Fire' template is absolutely essential in this scenario, if the Baluchs are to have any hope of beating off the Japanese (see the Optional Rules section of the website).

(d) A single troop of guns (x1 model) was attached from Wilberforce's 5th Indian Mountain Battery. However, it was positioned too close to provide indirect defensive supporting fire to the perimeter and could therefore only fire over open sights.

(e) The 7/10th Baluchs also had a Carrier Platoon, equipped with Wheeled Armoured Carriers (India Pattern Mk 1). However, it was clearly detached on the day of the battle, as it does not appear in the accounts and was not destroyed along with the battalion. It later turns up in the campaign history, working alongside 7th Armoured Brigade.

(f) Note that the battalion also had a considerable amount of motor transport, virtually all of which was lost at Kuzeik. I have not included it in this scenario, as it did not play any significant role in the battle. Some of it has already been destroyed by Japanese air attack.

Briefing for Colonel Munaji Harada, Commanding 215th Infantry Regiment

Situation – 0200hrs 12th February 1942

The situation is currently favourable. You have spent the last day consolidating your regiment's bridgehead on the west bank of the Salween. During this time the British have made no attempts to dislodge you from your bridgehead and their patrols have been easily beaten off.

Your patrols have thoroughly reconnoitred the British position at Kuzeik and have cut their lines of communication with their headquarters, which seems to be at Duyinzeik, some 15 miles to the west. One patrol has also reported discovering and cutting a field telephone line along the Duyinzeik road.

No other contacts have been reported with enemy forces, so it would appear that the battalion at Kuzeik is isolated and ripe for destruction by you force. The Army Air Force has maintained the pressure on this unit for the last few days, so they may already be about to break.

Mission

You are to assault the British battalion position at Kuzeik, with the intention of destroying it in detail and in so doing, clearing the ferry terminus of enemy forces.

Execution

General Outline

- While your 1st and 3rd Battalions move to block possible intervention by other British forces, your 2nd Battalion will assault the flanks and rear of the British position at Kuzeik, utilising the elements of darkness and surprise.
- You will maintain a regimental reserve under your direct command, comprising 3rd, 4th and 5th Companies, plus the Gun Company.

Deployment

- Once the British player has fully deployed, you may deploy your forces as Hidden Unit Markers, anywhere south of the line A-B, as marked on the map.
- You may also deploy 30 Dummy Unit Markers anywhere on the table, but not within the British deployment area.
- Note that in this scenario, Hidden Unit and Dummy Unit Markers are allowed to move. However, Hidden Units must be replaced with actual units if Suspected or Spotted. Dummy Units must be removed as soon as this occurs.
- No units (including Dummy Units) may start the game deployed within 5 inches of any British units.

Friendly Forces

- Your forces are listed in the order of battle below.
- Your 1st Battalion (minus 3rd and 4th Companies, which are under your direct command) has been sent west to block the Duyinzeik road, while your 3rd Battalion is conducting an independent crossing of the Salween some miles to the north.
- There are no other Japanese forces operating within the area, though Burma Independence Army (BIA) elements are continuing to gather intelligence on the enemy.

Enemy Forces

- Enemy forces are known to consist of a single weak Indian infantry battalion, comprising four rifle companies plus heavy weapons, including mountain guns, medium machine guns and both light and medium mortars.
- The enemy has already been weakened by sending out detachments on patrol – one of which you have already destroyed. The enemy has been further weakened by repeated air attacks over the last few days.
- The BIA report that there is at least one other battalion at Duyinzeik, some 15 miles to the west, which seems to be co-located with the British brigade headquarters. The discovery of a field telephone cable laid along the Duyinzeik road would tend to support this.
- Enemy air activity is sporadic, but has not been eliminated as the Army Air Force promised it would! Your forces have been subjected to air attack when caught in the open during daylight hours.

Fire Support

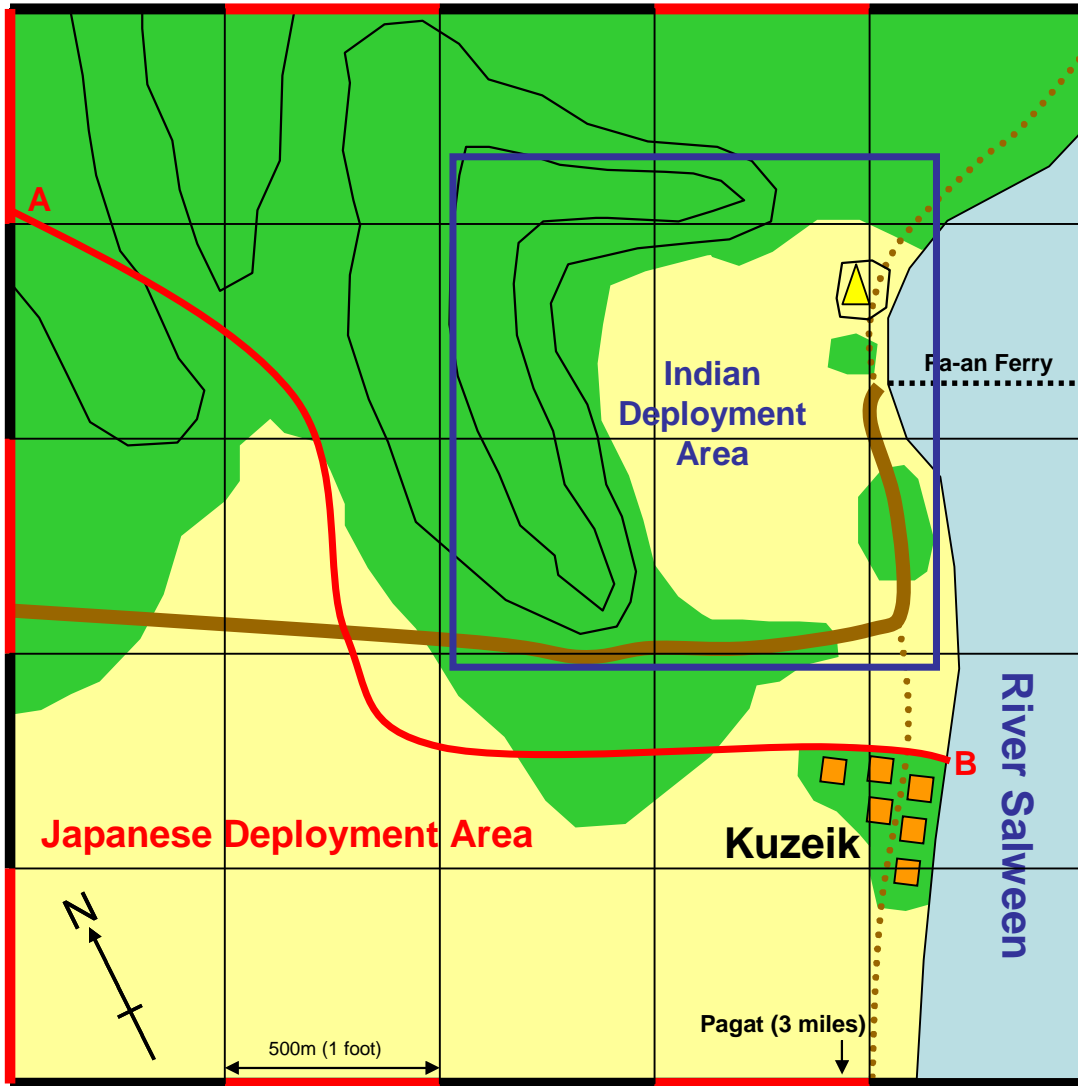
- Your only available fire support consists of your Regimental Gun Company and 2nd Battalion's Gun Platoon. However, you have decided to forego a preparatory barrage, as that would alert the defenders to an impending attack.
- From Turn 15 onwards: You may exchange each 75mm Gun or Pack Mule unit in the Regimental Gun Company for **x2** Riflemen (JA-17) units (for a total of **x8** Riflemen units) as long as no element of the company is within 12 inches of known Indian units. The company must ALL convert to infantry in one go. It may not convert back to artillery during the course of the game. This reorganisation process will take an entire Maneuver Phase and may not happen if the guns have already fired earlier in the turn. Note that the Regimental Gun Company will drop one grade to 'Veteran' if it is used as infantry in this way.

Scenario Information

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Victory Points

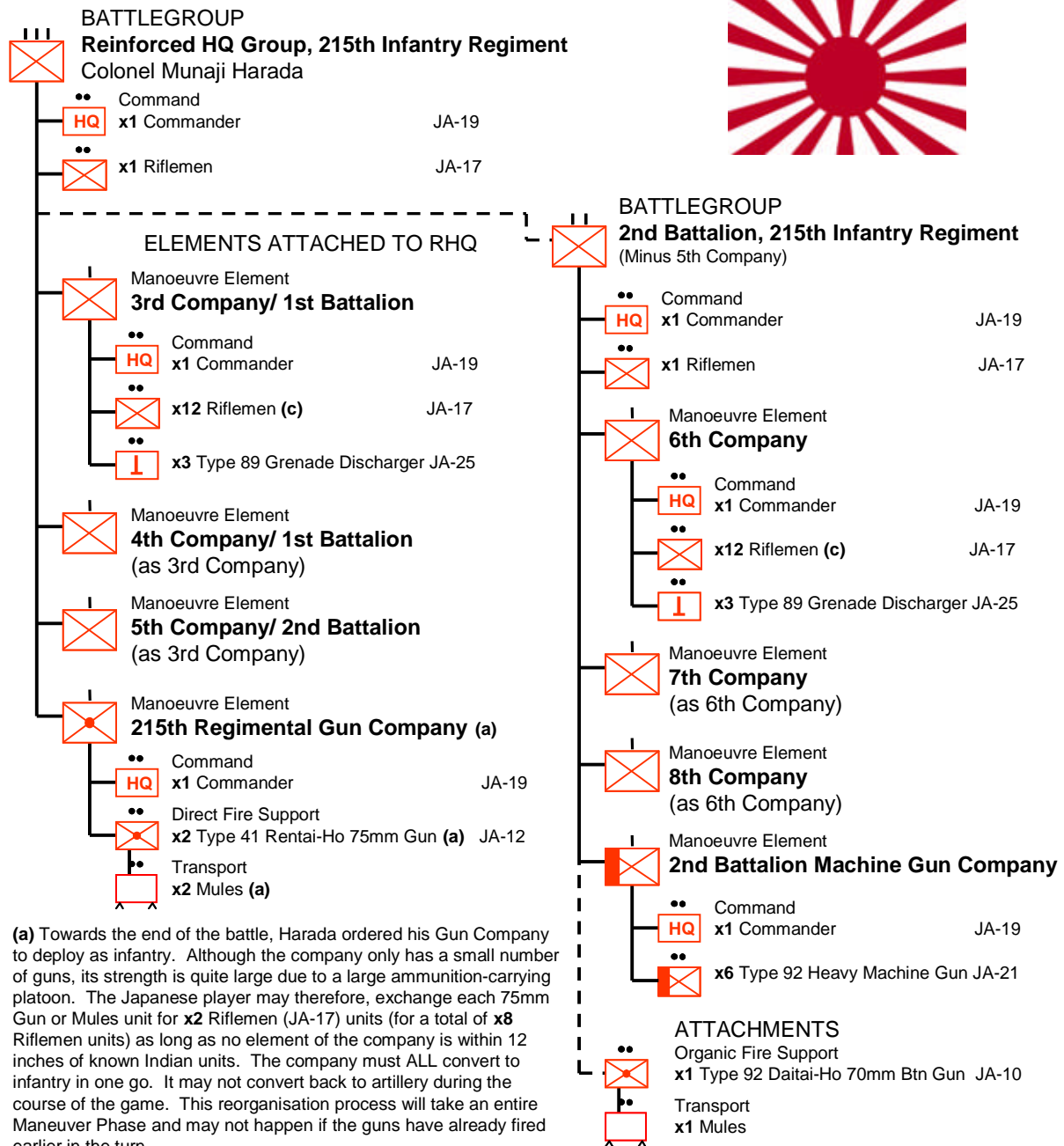
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 - Unpaved Road
 - Track (treat as Open Terrain for movement)

Japanese Order Of Battle

Elements, 33rd Infantry Division – Lieutenant General Seizo Sakurai



(a) Towards the end of the battle, Harada ordered his Gun Company to deploy as infantry. Although the company only has a small number of guns, its strength is quite large due to a large ammunition-carrying platoon. The Japanese player may therefore, exchange each 75mm Gun or Mules unit for x2 Riflemen (JA-17) units (for a total of x8 Riflemen units) as long as no element of the company is within 12 inches of known Indian units. The company must ALL convert to infantry in one go. It may not convert back to artillery during the course of the game. This reorganisation process will take an entire Maneuver Phase and may not happen if the guns have already fired earlier in the turn.

(b) All elements are rated as 'Elite'. However, if the Gun Company is converted to infantry, it will drop to 'Veteran'.

(c) The rifle companies of 33rd Division had each been increased in strength to around 200 men for the invasion of Burma (the strength of a company in a Type B division was normally 168 men). I have therefore increased the company strength to x12 as for a Type A division. I think this is justified, as Kuzeik was the first major action of the campaign for the 215th Regiment.

Terrain Effects

- Dry Paddy** - Mainly Open terrain, though criss-crossed with large numbers of Low Banks that obstruct movement across country (half speed for Troops and half speed & Breach for Guns), but also provide Soft Cover and Sparse Edge Concealment to units conformed to them.
- Woods** - Dense Area Concealment. Soft Cover. Full speed for Troops, though no rapid advance. Half speed & Bog-Down Check for guns.
- River** - The Salween is impassable.
- Track** - Units moving along the track may do so at full Cross-Country movement rate.
- Road** - Classed as 'Unpaved' – full Road movement speed.
- B.U.S.** - Wooden buildings, often built of very flimsy materials, but the locals would often surround them with banks and hedges and even air raid shelters. These are rambling settlements, so there is no 'Street' terrain type in between them. However, settlements were usually heavily vegetated to provide shade, so the village is within an area of Woods.
- Pagoda** - A stone Built-Up Sector.

Effects of Night Turns

- Maximum visibility in clear terrain is reduced to 10 inches during night turns. 4 inches in Dense Concealment, as usual.
- Apply -2 modifier to all Spotting attempts during night turns.
- Apply -1 modifier to all British Manoeuvre rolls during night turns.
- Apply -1 modifier to all Call for Fire rolls during night turns, except for British pre-registered DF targets.

Umpire's Notes

- Allow Hidden Unit/Dummy Markers to move, but replace with actual units once they become Suspected or Spotted. Dummy units are removed as soon as this occurs.
- Once three British MEs reach 50% casualties, change their mission: The battalion is to break contact and escape in small parties, with the intention of fighting another day. British units may exit the table via any edge. The British player will receive 5 VPs if no other ME reaches 50% VPs after this order is given.
- The MG Grazing Fire rule is essential in this scenario, though only the British player may use it.

Scenario Balancing Factors

Favouring the British

- Allow the mountain artillery to fire Indirect Fire Missions as Direct Fire Support. Add a FO to the orbit.
- Add **x6** Infantry to the Battalion HQ, to represent the HQ Company [Trained].
- When day breaks, the battalion commander may attempt to call for an air strike. If successfully called, roll a D10 to see what sort of air support arrives:

1-4 – AVG P-40 Warhawk	CH-P02
5-8 – RAF Buffalo Mk 1	BR-P89
9-0 – RAF Hurricane Mk II	14A-26