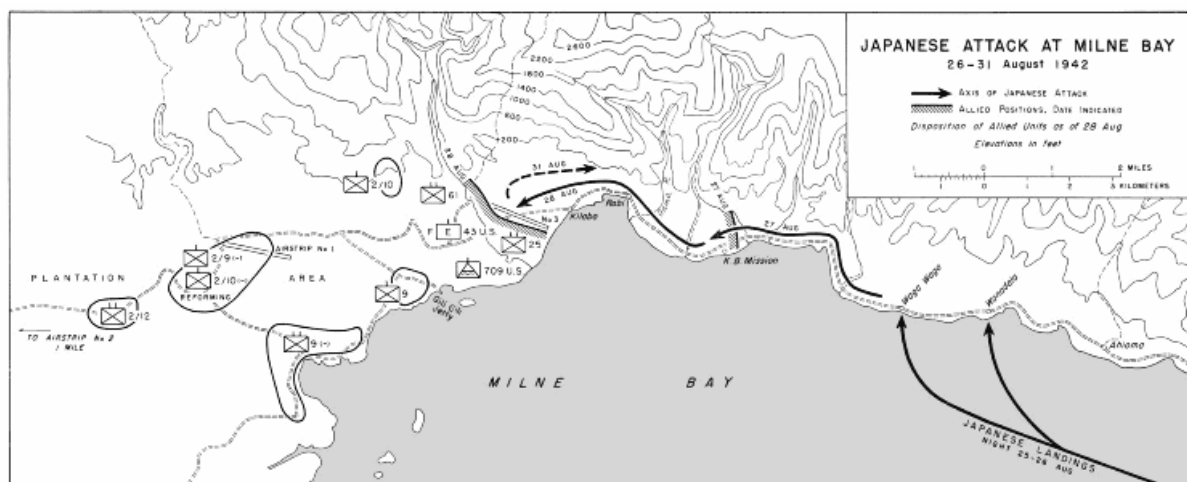


# 1. Milne Bay (August 1942)

At the time of the Japanese landings during the night of 25-26 August, the main body of Milne Force was deployed in the vicinity of the airfields in the plantation area. Two companies of the 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion were on the north shore in the path of the Japanese thrust. One of these companies was at Ahiona the other at the K. B. Mission. There was also a platoon on the northeast coast guarding against an overland attack on Milne Bay, as well as a reinforced company of the 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion farther to the northwest on Goodenough Bay. The company at Ahiona did not fare as well as the one at K. B. Mission. Some of the militia troops were lost, others infiltrated back to their own lines. Two platoons marched overland to Taupota and thence back over the mountains to Gili Gili where they rejoined their battalion several days later. These troops of the 61<sup>st</sup> and the 25<sup>th</sup> would not be available for their battalion's defence of Airfield No. 3.



The fighting at the K.B. Mission ended with the 2/10<sup>th</sup> in retreat (see KB Mission scenario). The Japanese tanks had proven too much. With the 2/10<sup>th</sup> out of the way, the Japanese continued on to No. 3 strip, arriving around dawn. The airstrip, only a few miles from Rabi, was an ideal defensive position. The runway, almost two hundred yards wide and 2,000 yards long, was cleared and there was a sea of mud at its eastern edge which made it impossible for tanks to get through. It afforded the defenders a broad, cleared field of fire, and was directly in the path of the Japanese advance.

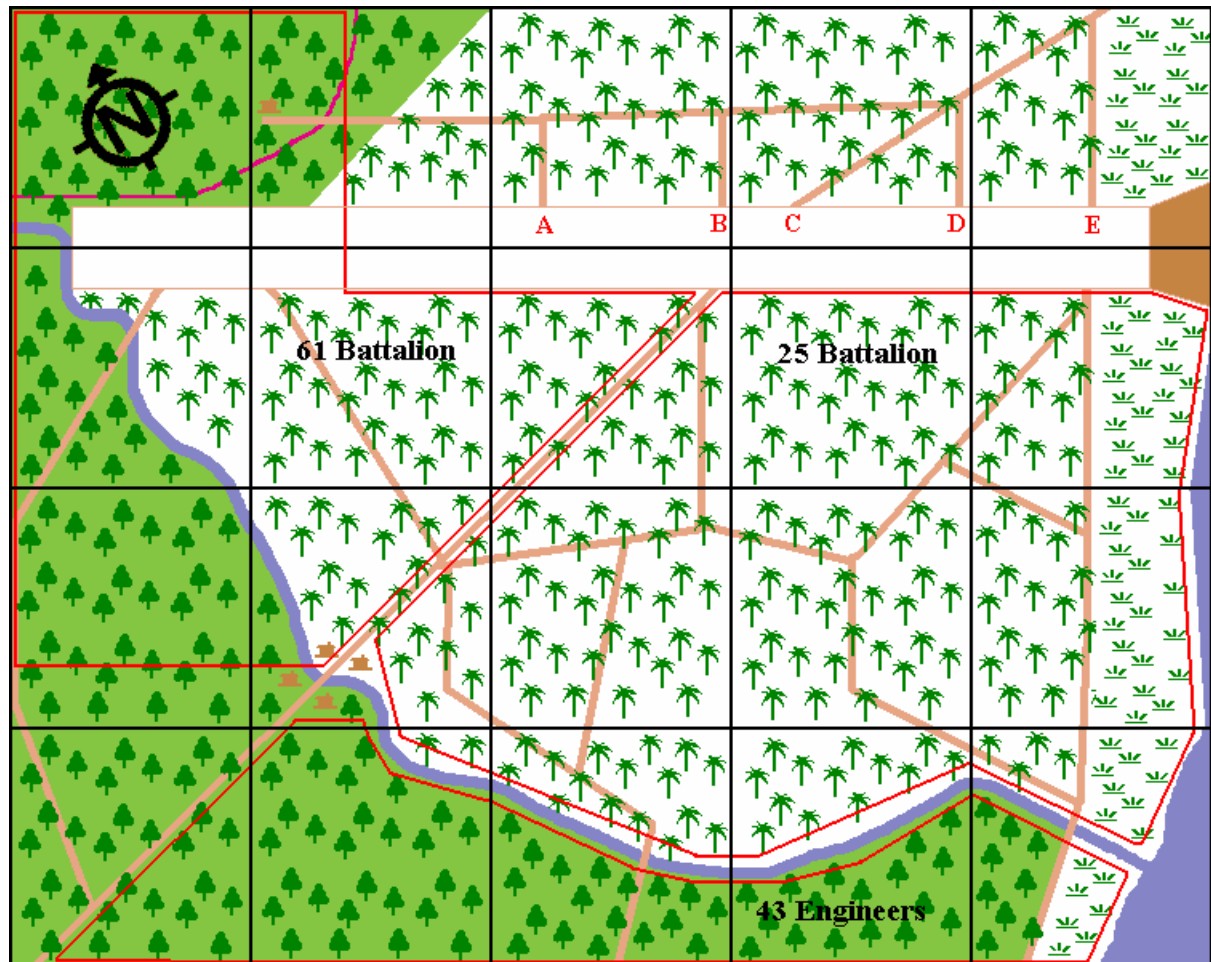
Brigadier Field, ranged his troops along the southern edge of the strip, giving the Japanese no alternative but to attack frontally. The main burden of holding the strip fell upon the brigade's 25<sup>th</sup> and 61<sup>st</sup> Battalions. The Japanese reached the strip just before dawn on the 28<sup>th</sup>. They attacked aggressively but were repulsed and forced to withdraw, the tanks having bogged down hopelessly in their advance. CMDR Hayashi decided to wait and give his troops a chance to recover before attempting to storm airstrip No. 3 again.












On the 29<sup>th</sup> August Japanese reinforcements arrived, in the shape of 2 companies of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Kure SNLF and 1 of the 5<sup>th</sup> Yokusaka SNLF under Commander Minoru Yano, who took over command of operations. The daylight hours of the following day were quiet. Milne Force sent out patrols and discovered the derelict Japanese tanks, while the Japanese consolidated for another attack on No. 3 strip. Shortly after midnight, in the early hours of 31<sup>st</sup> August, the Japanese made their move against the airstrip.

## 2. Airfield No 3

An hour or so after midnight, the troops waiting along No 3 strip heard a loud clang from the opposite side. The 5 Kure SNLF had reached the edge of the jungle, but lost contact with the 3 Kure. A red signal shell was fired and some 20 machine guns opened up on them.

### 2.1 The Battlefield



<i>Route No. 5</i>	<b>Terrain Key:</b>	<i>Wehuria Creek</i>	<i>Milne Bay</i>
 <i>Plantation</i>	 <i>Hut</i>	 <i>Ford</i>	 <i>Runway</i>
 <i>Swamp</i>	 <i>Jungle</i>	 <i>Contour Line</i>	 <i>Deployment Area</i>
 <i>Water</i>	 <i>Track</i>	 <i>Morass</i>	

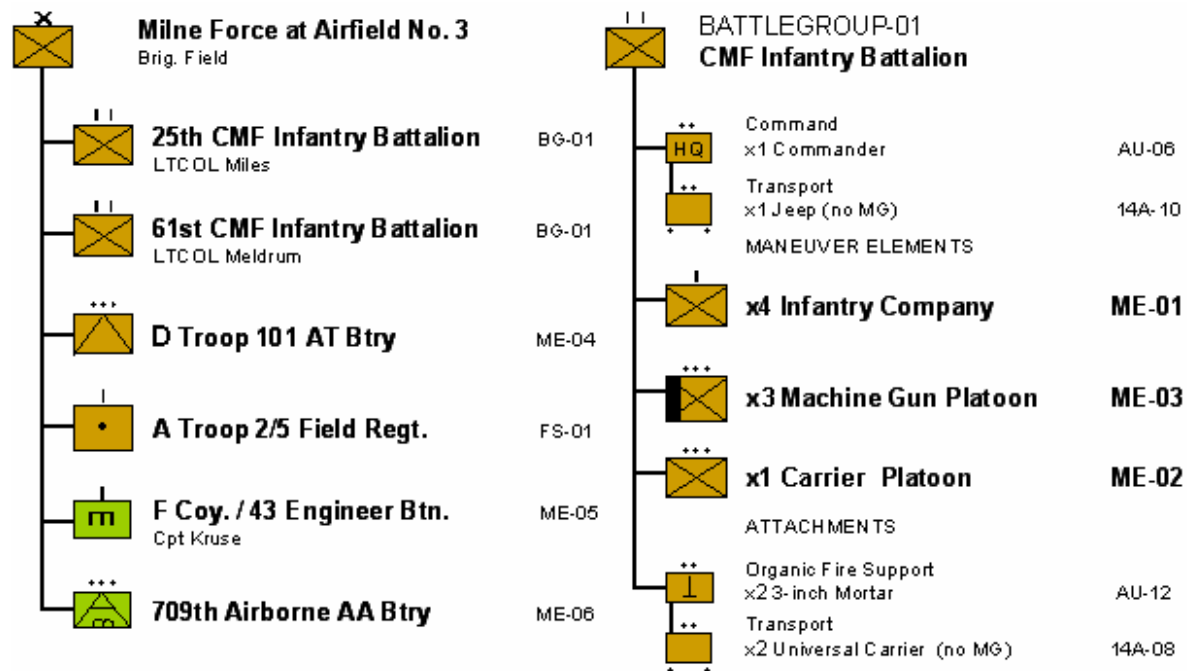
The area around Airfield No 3 is flat, wet and heavily wooded. An attacked from the north must cross the cleared ground of the airstrip. A 12" grid (15 mm scale) is shown on the map.

- Milne Bay (entire east edge) is impassable
- All Tracks are 1 element wide (about 1") UNPAVED ROADS
- Wehuria creek is a 1" wide DEEP GULLY north of the Route No. 5 ford. South of that ford it is a 1" wide WIDE AND DEEP stream.
- Fords provide easy crossing of the creeks and are part of the tracks
- Jungle is treated as SWAMP plus WOODS WITH UNDERBRUSH.

- The plantation areas at Milne Bay were more open than similar terrain elsewhere. Contemporary photographs show unobstructed lines of sight between the rows of palms. Treat the plantation as ORCHARD, but with an additional **up 1** spotting table modifier against troops in DEEP concealment. It provides SOFT cover to troops.
- The coastal mangroves are treated as SWAMP.
- The morass formed from the runway tailings is treated as MARSH.
- The canopy of both Jungle and Plantation areas is thick enough to prevent mortars from firing INDIRECT fire.
- The ground above the contour level is STEEP.
- The runway is clear and the only open ground on the battlefield and is 5" wide.
- The Huts are single sector wood Built Up Areas.
- The south edge is the Australian friendly table edge.
- The north edge is the Japanese friendly table edge.

## 2.2 The Australians

The forces potentially available for the defence of Airfield No 3 are:

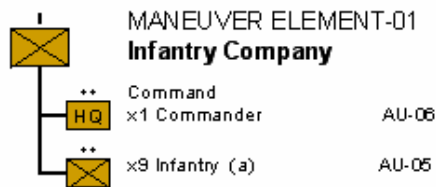


The militia of 7 Brigade (61<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> Battalions) were derided as “chocos”<sup>1</sup> and at this stage of the war, not trusted by their superiors. They had little training and experience. However, these two battalions were lead by officers of unexpected capability and had performed well in the retreat from the K.B. Mission (better than the 2/10<sup>th</sup> AIF). They are rated as EXPERIENCED but are NOT night combat trained. Both battalions had troops detached that had not rejoined at the time of the battle. Therefore only 3 companies and 2 MG platoons can be deployed.

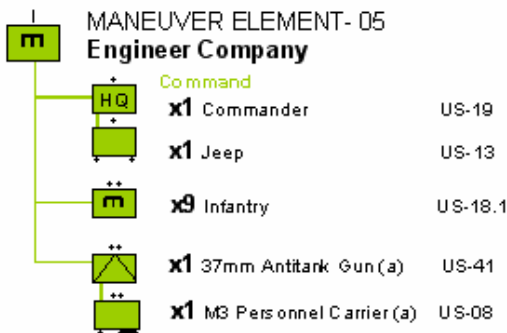
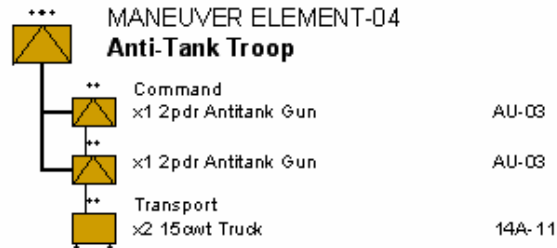
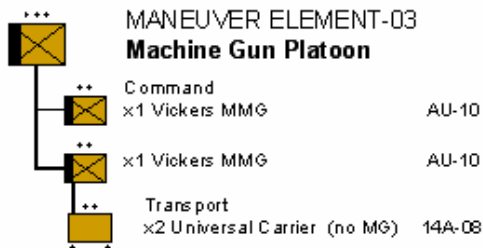
The artillery are rated as VETERAN, and are NOT night combat trained.

Of the US troops involved, the 709<sup>th</sup> are regulars and rated as EXPERIENCED, while the 43<sup>rd</sup> Engineers are new conscripts (and construction troops to boot) and rated as TRAINED.

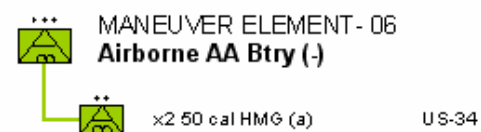
<sup>1</sup> slang for Chocolate soldiers, a derisive term for soldiers not considered to have “the right stuff”.



(a) One with anti-tank rifle



(a) Can be attached to other Maneuver Elements

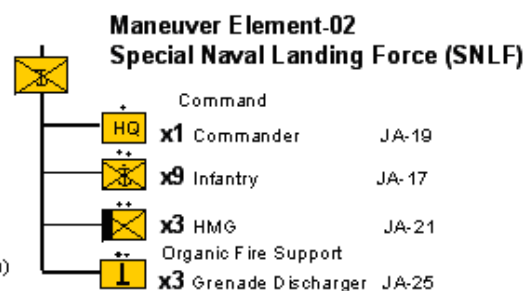
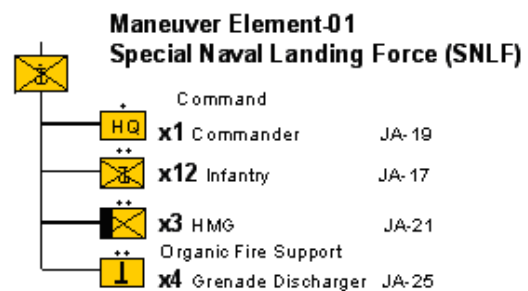
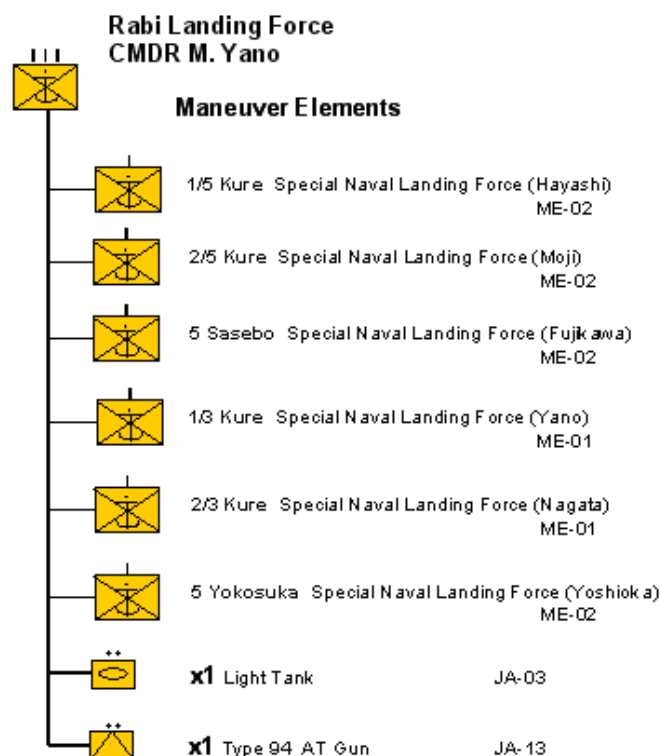


(a) Must Attach to other ME's.



(a) The troop may be called by its FO or a Battalion Commander as Direct Fire Support.

## 2.3 The Japanese



The SNLF units were an elite formation with an unsavoury reputation, with extensive combat experience and training in assault and infantry tactics. Highly motivated, they are rated as VETERAN and ARE night combat trained.

The light tank was bogged in the mud on the road from the KB Mission and should not be used.

## 2.4 Night Fighting Rules

Allied airpower at Milne Bay meant that any Japanese spotted in daylight could expect to be attacked. Consequently, they adopted a strategy of concealment in the jungle by day and moved at night. For night scenarios the standard Battlefield Rules are modified by:

- **Discipline Rating**
  - All units are rated one level lower than normal unless they are considered *night combat trained*.
- **Spotting**
  - Additional **down 2** spotting modifier
  - **No up 1 modifier** for higher elevation.
- **Direct Fire**
  - Additional modifier of -1 for all direct fire.
- **Manoeuvre**
  - No rapid advance.
  - No +1 command modifier for troops unless within 1 inch of commander.
  - No +1 command modifier for vehicles unless within 4 inches and LOS of commander.
  - No **+2 modifier** for no LOS to spotted or suspected enemy.
  - Additional -1 modifier on bog down table.

## 2.5 Special Rules.

Additional special rules that apply to this scenario are:

- The Japanese may not use flares, illumination or smoke.
- Troops may Rapid Advance while on the track or runway in this scenario.
- Elements that have **Panicked Disordered**, are treated as lost when rolling on the Manoeuvre Table until they are rallied.
- An additional modifier of -1 applies to the "Call for Fire" table when a spotter is used to call fire against "suspected" targets when the *Night Combat* rules are in effect, unless the "suspected" target is illuminated by flares or a **pre-registered** aiming point is used.
- Starting the first Australian Maneuver Phase after 4 Japanese troop stands, or the tank, crosses into the plantation south of the runway, an additional -2 modifier applies to Australian rolls on the Maneuver Table. This reflects their fear of being cut-off by the Japanese. This modifier applies to each ME until it rolls a modified score of 3 or more for all elements in that ME on a maneuver test.
- the additional -1 modifier for all direct fire at night **is not additional** to the -1 factor for emplaced MMGs that are using the grazing fire rules and template.
- Japanese MMGs may target the plantation at the south edge of the runway similar to the way that artillery engages in random shelling of likely enemy hiding places. This uses the same procedure as placing an ordinary grazing fire template, but does not

require a target (spotted or suspected) to be within the template. All modifiers including ambush (apply the suspected target modifier to unseen targets) apply. The Australian player rolls secretly for unseen targets, and does not reveal the result.

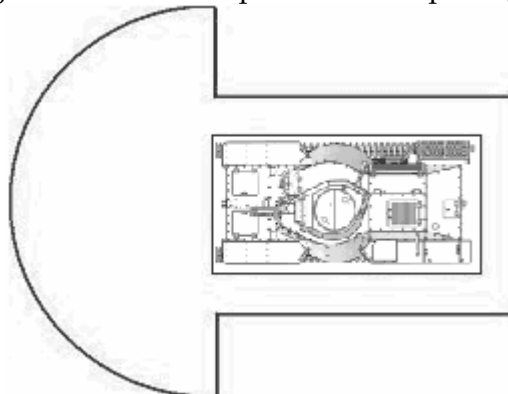
## 2.6 Flares

- Generally, a unit that can fire smoke can fire a flare out to its maximum range.
- Additionally, a commander (troop stand) may also fire a flare out to 10 inches using a small template.
- Normally, like smoke, a unit may only fire a flare once per game, although many night scenarios may have reason to allocate more.
- Flares are fired in the Indirect Fire segment, using the same procedure as for smoke.
- Flares may be fired at the same targets as smoke.
- Each firing section gets 2 templates of the same size as its indirect fire template.
- The centre of the beaten zone is placed over the target just as in normal indirect fire.
- Any unit with an aiming point within the beaten zone is considered to be in **Day - Good Visibility** when a **TARGET** of spotting and fire combat. In addition there is a modifier of +1 to the spotting table when spotting such targets.
- A flare template remains on the table until the beginning of that player's next Indirect Fire segment.
- A unit with an aiming point inside a placed flare template suffers an **ADDITIONAL "DOWN 2"** modifier on the spotting table when trying to spot an enemy target. (loss of night vision).

## 2.7 Tank Rules

The Japanese used tanks at night to good effect. These effects are simulated by:

- Any stand within 5 inches of a tanks **FRONT AIM POINT** is spotted as if illuminated by flares.
- Stands within 1 inch of a tank's side or rear are spotted as if illuminated by flares. (NB: defensive fire against infantry attempting to close combat is not subject to the -1 for direct fire at night.)
- The tank's spotting is not reduced as per the flares spotting rules.



### 3. Historical Scenario

This scenario starts at 0100 on the morning of 31 August 1942, and lasts 15 turns. The Australians set up first and the Japanese move first.

#### 3.1 Commander's Intent

The Japanese forces must advance down Route No. 5 and break into the rear base areas by daylight.

The Australian forces must hold the line of Airstrip No 3 and await the arrival of the 2/12<sup>th</sup> AIF Battalion in the morning.

#### 3.2 Victory Conditions

The Japanese must advance down Route No. 5 sweeping aside opposition and cross Wehuria Creek with at least 4 troop elements or the tank within the time allowed to achieve a strategic victory.

If the Japanese do not achieve a strategic victory by the end of the scenario, a tactical victory may be claimed if at the end of turn 15 any Japanese are in the plantation south of the runway.

All other results are an Australian victory.

#### 3.3 Deployment

The Australian forces should be deployed in the areas indicated on the map. Additionally:

- The 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion may deploy at most one company in the jungle to the North of the runway, above the contour line. They may begin DUG-IN.
- The 709<sup>th</sup>'s HMGs must be attached to MEs defending the runway.
- The 43<sup>rd</sup>'s AT gun and ½ track may be attached to MEs from the 61<sup>st</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> battalions. The ½ track's HMG was used in the runway's defence.
- The 101<sup>st</sup>'s AT guns must be attached to MEs defending the runway. As it was known that the Japanese tanks were bogged, not all the 101<sup>st</sup> had been brought forward. Only deploy 1 stand.
- The runway had a barbed wire obstacle running its entire length. Place a continuous barbed wire obstacle down the centre of the runway from Wehuria creek to Milne Bay. Japanese troops conformed to the wire should be 2 ½ " from troops lining the plantation edge. Breaching the wire constitutes an Opportunity Fire trigger.
- Australian artillery and mortar FOOs had pre-registered the runway. All fire called in against targets on the runway counts as pre-registered.
- The Australians had mined sections of the runway. Allow the Australians to secretly place four 2" x 1" anti-personnel minefields on the runway.
- The battle took place in the Australian base area, with plenty of stockpiled ammunition. The Australians have no ammunition limitations (including flares).

All Australian and US forces may begin in *Improved Positions* or *Hull Down* as appropriate, unless deployed in the swamp. Additionally, all MMG, HMG, AT guns and 3" mortars may

begin *Dug In*. The MG grazing Fire template can be used (template -1 is not additional to Night Direct Fire -1). Hidden (map) deployment is recommended for the Australians. If using hidden unit markers, allow a generous number of dummy markers.

The Japanese forces lost contact with each other during the advance and consequently attacked piecemeal. The two companies of the 5 Kure SNLF and the 5 Sasebo SNLF arrived first. They were tired from their efforts of the past week and do not receive the +1 on the Manoeuvre Table for no losses. They deploy in the plantation on the Northern edge of the runway within 6" of the roads marked **A**, **B** and **C**. They do not begin in *improved positions*.

Japanese forces may not enter the Jungle North of the runway until they have been repulsed at least once from crossing the barbed wire. To count as repulsed, an ME must either be broken (A company counts as broken if at any time the current number of destroyed, surrendered or panicked elements exceeds 75% of that company's original number.) or have had at least three elements successfully cross the barbed wire before being destroyed, leaving no elements on the Australian side of the wire. The remaining SNLF companies enter using Route No. 5, beginning from turn 1. The gun may be attached to any SNLF company.

## 4. Variations

The game can be varied using any combination of the following options:

- Allow the tank to be added to the Japanese order of battle. However, the Australians must then be allowed to use all of the 101<sup>st</sup>'s AT guns.
- Add B troop of the 2/5<sup>th</sup> Field Regt. to the Australians (same organisation as A Troop).
- Allow all Japanese companies to be available from turn 1. They may deploy anywhere in the Plantation North of the runway.
- Allow the Japanese to move into the Northern jungle from turn 1 (they must still deploy in the Plantation only).
- The Australians did not know the Japanese had no landing barges available, so one company of the 25<sup>th</sup> must begin deployed in the swamp ready for a sea landing.
- The number and location of all CMF MGs is uncertain, so restore the 3<sup>rd</sup> MG platoon to the order-of-battle.
- The CMF carrier platoons were in the process of conversion into scout platoons, so restore the platoon's Universal Carriers.

## 5. Historical Outcome

The Australian defenders produced such intense fire that not one man was able to cross the strip alive. The heaviest attack came before dawn. Like the others, it was repulsed with heavy loss to the enemy, who withdrew at first light, leaving 160 dead behind including CMDR Hayashi. At least 3 frontal attacks were repulsed and late in the day the 5 Kure tried to work around the inland flank to little effect. Around dawn the 2/12<sup>th</sup> arrived and began the counter-attack.



## 6. Player Notes

The troop density in this scenario is pretty high. If you use oversized bases you might want to increase the size of the battlefield by allowing each square on the map to represent 15" instead of 12". The runway still needs to be 5" wide.

Most games end with the Japanese being unable to make any penetration into the plantation. As such you only really need the northernmost 2 feet of the table. Do not use the engineer ME and only use 2 infantry companies per CMF battalion.

Whenever the Japanese use the historical CONOPS, the historical result inevitable results. A better approach is to take more time. Use the MGs for harassing fire for a couple of turns, while the Japanese reinforcements move into position. Do not do so for too long as the Australians can respond with artillery and mortars which you cannot counter. It is very unlikely that any stands will be destroyed, the most you can hope for is a few suppressions and you will not know how many. At some point you must send a few stands forward and try to cross the wire. They will almost certainly be shot down, but this will reveal the location of the Australian MGs as suspected targets to the rest of your forces lining the runway. These can then be engaged by your grenade dischargers which at the 5" range use IDF modifiers and so are the best unit to engage suspected targets. You must then try to cross the wire with the rest of your forces. You need both depth and breadth to maximise your chance of success. Coordinating these approaches is the key to how successful you will be. It is a bad idea to try and outflank the runway. The terrain is so bad you will probably not make it in time, and you still have to beat the enemy.

Australian tactics are simple, you must stop them on the runway, preferably at the wire. If they get into the plantation, things will only get worse. Use your emplaced MMGs to provide interlocking kill zones making the most of your grazing fire capability. Troops hung on the wire are just asking to be shot. Your best weapons are the area fire weapons (including MMGs) as these are unaffected by the night direct fire modifier. Illumination rounds are probably a waste of time, there are better things to do. Shoot, try not to move and make sure a reserve is close behind your main line of defence to mop up any stands that get through and to patch up the line.

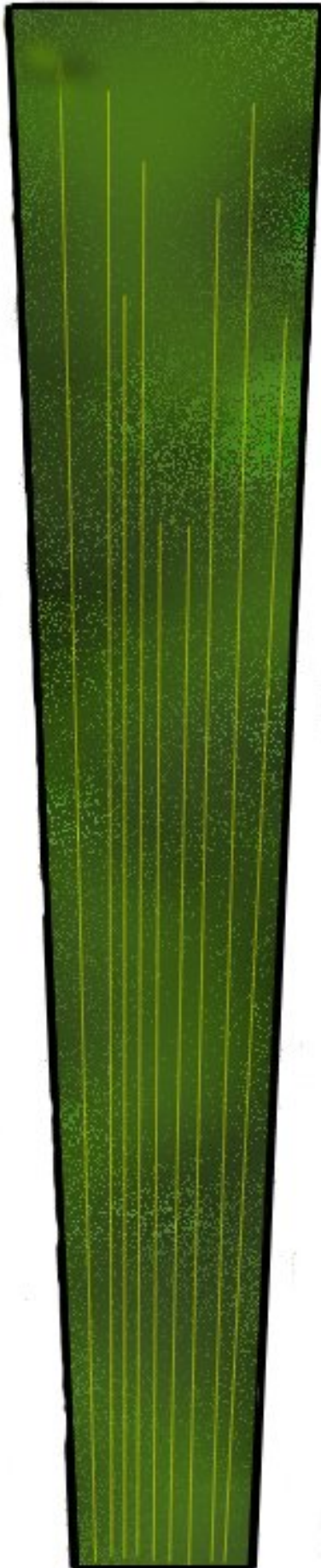
## 7. References

Author: Nigel Perry ([perryn@alphalink.com.au](mailto:perryn@alphalink.com.au))

Playtesters: Nigel Perry, Paul Ruzicka

This Battlefront scenario is based on the information presented in:

1. *Milne Bay 1942*, Clive Baker and Greg Knight, Australian Military History Publications, 2000.
2. *The War in the Pacific: Victory in Papua*, S Miller, US Army in WWII series, CMH, 1957.



The Australians can use the optional MG grazing rules for their MMGs setup in defensive positions. Use the template to the left (print it out and make a copy). To make your own, it is a trapezoid one base wide at the bottom to 2 bases wide at the top and extends 10" in 15mm.

1. The template can be placed parallel to the front edge, so that the template can be placed anywhere within its front 180 degree field of fire.
2. The effect of the template does not pass through dense area terrain. It will affect units on the edge of dense area terrain, but not deep or behind it.
3. All units, enemy and friendly, which have an aiming point within the template, are attacked with an additional -1 modifier.
4. The template can be placed in offensive, defensive, or during opportunity fire against any target that lies within the template. It also may be placed at the beginning of the enemy maneuver phase instead of defensive fire even if no targets are available. Once placed, it remains in place until the end of the current player turn and may not be moved. Note that any designated target must lie within the template. If the template is placed during:
  - Offensive fire phase: all stands attacked immediately
  - Defensive fire phase: all stands attacked immediately
  - Opportunity fire: stands attacked if and when they move, stationary stands attacked during the defensive fire phase.
  - Beginning of the enemy maneuver phase: stands attacked if and when they move, stationary stands attacked during the defensive fire phase.