

Scenario 11: Payagyi Game Briefing

Even before the Sittang Bridge disaster, changes were being made in the way the British would fight for Burma. Firstly, military operations were moved back into India's remit, with Wavell resuming his appointment as C-in-C India. Secondly, Hutton was told that General Alexander would be brought in as GOC Burma, with Hutton remaining as his chief-of-staff.

This, of course, meant nothing to the men of the battered 17th Division, who had been withdrawn to Pegu to recover from the Bilin and Sittang actions. As part of the process, several battalions were amalgamated and 46th Brigade broken up: henceforth the division would comprise 16th and 48th Brigades only.

Meanwhile, 7th Armoured Brigade (Brigadier J.H. Anstice, DSO) had begun to disembark at Rangoon. The brigade was battle-experienced: having fought both in the Dunkirk and Western Desert campaigns. It comprised 7th Queen's Own Hussars; 2nd Battalion Royal Tank Regiment; 414th Battery Royal Horse Artillery (from 104th Regiment RHA, the Essex Yeomanry, and often referred to as such by contemporary sources), two support troops and an anti-tank battery. Both armoured regiments were equipped with Stuart (Honey) tanks, and the RHA had 25-pounders.

Also now committed to the defence of Rangoon were three British battalions sent from India. They were the 1st West Yorkshire Regiment; 1st Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers (flown into Magwe later); and 1st Battalion, Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders. The Cameronians were almost immediately attached to 7th Armoured Brigade. Another British Battalion, 1st Gloucestershire Battalion, was already in the area: forming part of the Rangoon garrison.

Two more British formations were also about to arrive on the scene. Coming down from the north via Toungoo was 1st Burma Division, comprising three weak brigades (1st-3rd Burma Brigades). Their original task of holding the Shan States had been passed to VI Chinese Army, and the division had steadily been moving south since then. The Chinese had also promised to send V Chinese Army south as well.

Finally, 63rd Indian Brigade would soon be arriving at Rangoon, although their ships had been turned back once by Hutton, who had decided that he could not hold Rangoon, but whose orders had been countermanded by Alexander after he had taken command and been ordered by Wavell to at least try to hold Rangoon, only retreating once it was clear the city was lost. The Brigade consisted of 1/11th Sikhs; 2/13th Frontier Force Rifles (FFR); and 1/10th Gurkha Rifles, but was unfortunately only half-trained and unblooded. As an example, none of the 1/11th Sikhs, including officers, had ever seen a 2" mortar, an anti-tank grenade or a Bren gun before!

Fortunately for the British, the Japanese 15th Army were in no position to immediately exploit either their own success or their enemy's need for reinforcements and re-organisation. At the end of a long supply chain that stretched over rough, jungle tracks right the way back to Thailand, both 33rd and 55th Divisions were in need of both food and ammunition before the campaign could be continued. Both divisions also needed time to regroup, and crossing the Sittang in force would require heavier equipment than was currently available. Through prodigious efforts, however, a road had now been built from Raheng to Moulmein and by the beginning of March the Japanese were ready to resume their advance.

General Iida was determined to capture Rangoon, despite the wishes of his high command, who had suggested that he should turn north and deal with the Chinese coming south before returning to deal

with the already largely defeated British. Iida, however, wanted to make absolutely certain of an effective route for re-supply and reinforcement by taking Rangoon, with its port, and his view prevailed.

The Japanese Resume Their Advance

During the night of 2nd March, a detachment from 55th Division (the Kawashima Detachment) consisting of 2nd Battalion, 143rd Regiment; 55th Cavalry Regiment and a battery of mountain artillery crossed the Sittang at Kunzeik and drove forward to occupy Daik-U in order to protect the flank and rear of the army from any interference from the north via Toungoo. By 4th March, they had reached their objective and established a roadblock at Pyuntaza. By this time, 2nd Burma Brigade had reached Nyaunglebin, with 1st Burma Brigade at Kyauktaga, fifteen miles further north.

33rd Division crossed the Sittang on the evening of 3rd March near Myitkyo (half way between Sittang and Kunzeik), with 215th Regiment on the right and 214th Regiment on the left, aiming to drive through to the line of Hmawbi and Hlegu: able both to assault Rangoon from the north and to guard against any interference from the other main road leading from Prome.

55th Division (less the Kawashima Detachment, but with a light tank company and an anti-tank company brought up, with some difficulty, from Raheng) crossed the Sittang on 3rd March, with 112th Regiment on the right aiming for Payagyi and 143rd Regiment on the left aiming at Pegu. An advanced guard of one battalion had already crossed on 1st March and occupied Waw; and another battalion (from 112th Regiment) had been sent south to capture the refineries at Syriam. Whilst 143rd Regiment were engaged attacking Pegu from the north, 112th Regiment would loop south and aim to cut the Pegu-Rangoon railway and road, surrounding and isolating any enemy troops in Pegu.

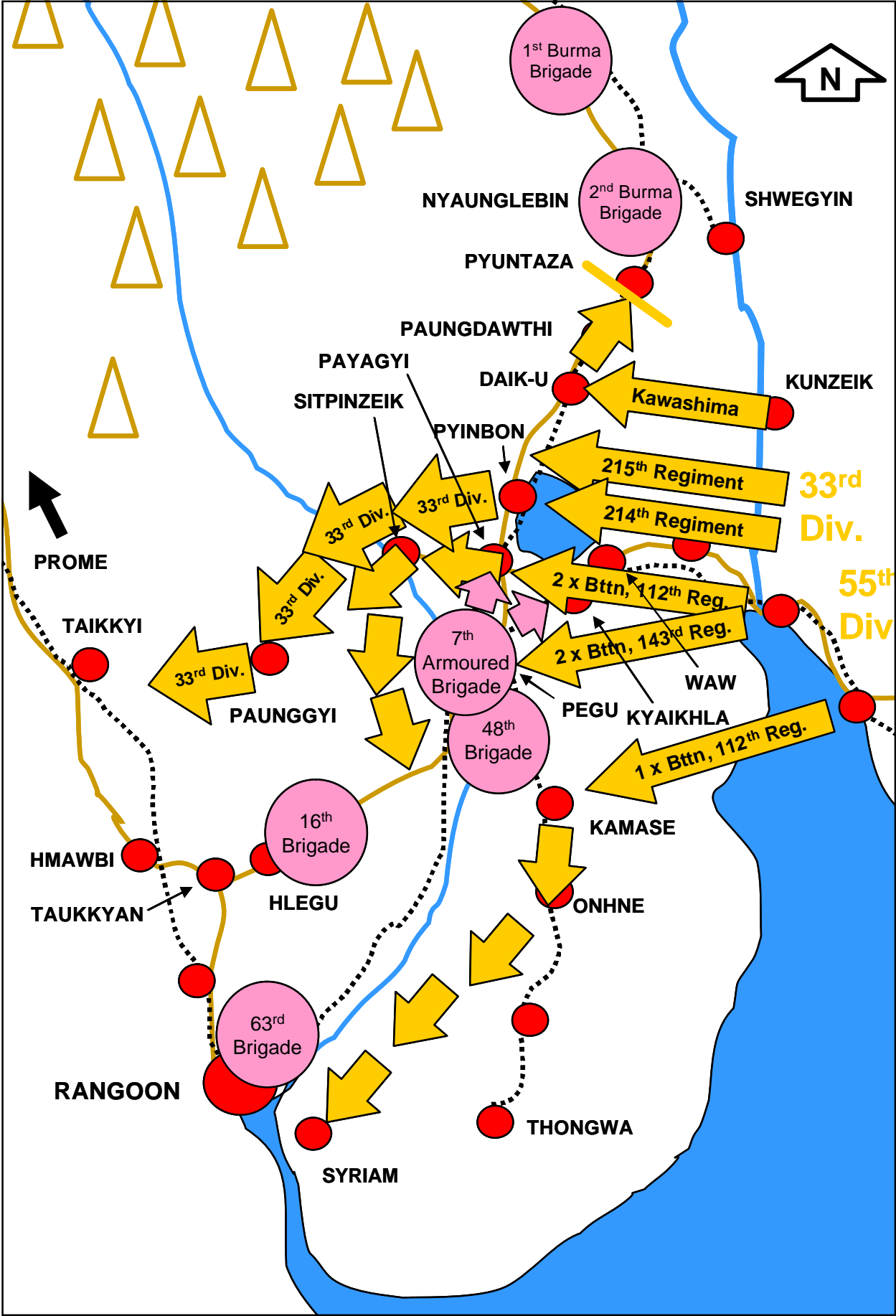
Following Alexander's reversal of Hutton's decision to immediately abandon Rangoon, the British prepared to defend it. 7th Armoured Brigade was ordered to reoccupy Waw and drive forward to Payagyi. When they moved forward on 2nd March, however, they found Waw had already been occupied by troops from the Japanese 55th Division, and two Stuarts were knocked out from fire from enemy 75mm guns. A company of Cameronians (or from the West York's: the various sources differ) attacked in the afternoon, but failed to take the town.

On 3rd March 1942, units from the brigade encountered the Japanese on the main road south of Pyinbon and at Kyaikhla, and once again a company-sized attack from the Cameronians failed to dislodge them.

On the 4th, near Kyaikhla, Japanese infantry attacked the tanks of C Squadron, 2nd RTR, (under Major M.F.S. Rudkin) under cover of a heavy mist. The Stuarts were overrun, with the Japanese carrying explosives on long poles which they would try and drop into the open turrets of the tanks. Resorting to their machine guns and the Tommy guns carried by the tank commanders, C Squadron scattered and made their way back to Regimental HQ individually: the tanks feeling their way through the mist over very bad terrain. With Japanese patrols also being encountered north and west of Pegu, it was obvious that some kind of outflanking manoeuvre was in progress.

By 5th March 1942, the Japanese had cut the road between Hlegu and Pegu at Payathonzu (effectively isolating the British troops at Pegu); and a column, including tanks, had been seen heading towards the Rangoon-Prome road. Hutton, knowing that a withdrawal from Rangoon was looking more and more difficult, ordered 16th Brigade withdrawn to Taukkyan and 48th Brigade to Hlegu in preparation for a more general retreat. Before these orders could be carried out, however,

Campaign Map: Scenario 11



Alexander arrived on the scene and again countermanded Hutton. Faced with either abandoning Rangoon or attempting to close the gap between his troops and 1st Burma Division coming from the north, Alexander wanted to at least try the latter. He ordered 1st Burma Brigade to advance south from Nyaunglebin, and 17th Division, supported by 7th Armoured Brigade and 63rd Indian Brigade, to drive forward to the north and east again.

At first light on 6th March 1942, therefore, the 7th Hussars left Pegu and headed north. B Squadron of the 7th Hussars (under Major G.C. Davies-Gilbert) arrived in Payagyi to find the area also occupied by the Japanese. With a heavy mist reducing visibility to ten yards, the Japanese managed to attack the squadron HQ before withdrawing, but no damage was done.

Once the mist had burnt off, B Squadron occupied the crossroads in the centre of the village whilst A Squadron (under Major C.T. Llewellyn-Palmer) with a company of West York's cleared Japanese infiltrators from a nearby wood. Two Japanese tanks (Type 95 Ha Go's) then appeared in front of the village, but were easily dispatched. The regimental history of the 7th Hussars comments that the Japanese tankers didn't seem very experienced compared to their own crews, and had no idea of how to use cover or of fire and manoeuvre tactics: preferring to shoot from stationary positions right out in the open.

Elsewhere, however, the Japanese had managed to bring up four anti-tank guns, and had opened fire on 7th Hussars HQ, disabling the tank of the CO, Lieutenant-Colonel F.R.C. Fosdick. A troop from B Squadron was sent to assist, but all three tanks were driven back by concentrated fire from the guns. An FO from the Essex Yeomanry called in a "stonk" on the enemy position and, under cover of that, a tank from A Squadron and a company of the West York's mounted an attack and captured the guns.

The Japanese then brought up three more tanks, but these were easily knocked out by the Stuarts. For the moment, Payagyi would remain in British hands.

Introduction

This scenario will cover the somewhat confused action at Payagyi involving elements of 7th Hussars and the West Yorks. The British will have to respond to a number of threats from the Japanese, with units appearing on table almost throughout the game. I am also going to change history a little and make the final Japanese attack on Payagyi a little more substantial than just three tanks - purists are at liberty to change things back again!

Because of the nature of the action, the game might suit other forms of game rather than the usual two-opposing-players-and-an-Umpire format. Solo gamers could play the game as the British, with the Japanese units "programmed" to act as they did historically. Similarly, the players could each take one of the British forces, with the Umpire playing the Japanese.

Map & Terrain

The large gray area at the top of the map is the village of Payagyi. It has already been burnt to the ground (by the British a few days ago) so should consist only of ruins of wooden huts with maybe the odd low stone wall. The gray square to the south west is the remains of the railway station: one burnt out building and a rough platform. All roads are built up on low embankments, but may still have flooded or washed away areas.

The darker green area in the north west corner is a wood, with a track running through the middle of it. Off the track, the wood subtracts 1" from the total score of any dice rolled by infantry for

movement, and 2" per dice rolled by vehicles for movement. The wood provides good cover from spotting and fire.

The rest of the map is rough, open terrain interspersed with paddy fields, banks of earth, little streams etc. Paddy fields subtract 1" from each dice rolled for movement. Prone infantry should be counted as in good cover. Tanks that spend an entire turn doing so should be able to get into a hull down position. Note that the British briefing contains this information, but the Japanese briefing doesn't. Historically, the Japanese tanks did not use cover, but the British tanks did. See also the Special Rules section for vehicles moving across this terrain.

Note that there should be a clear line of fire through the terrain from where the Japanese anti-tank guns will enter the table and the tanks of the 7th Hussars Regimental HQ. Umpire's may therefore need to put a small rise in the south-west corner of the battlefield that the anti-tank guns can use to "see over" the intervening terrain.

British Deployment

The British 7th Hussars Regimental HQ is positioned just south of the railway station to the south of Payagyi. Note that there should be a clear line of fire from the south-west corner of the map to their position. Umpire's may therefore choose to deploy these tanks themselves, knowing how they have set up the terrain, saying to the British player that the position they are in is the only one in which the wireless sets work.

As for the rest of the 7th Hussars on table at the beginning of the game, B Squadron HQ is positioned around the cross-roads to the south of the burnt-out area; with 1st Troop in front of them along the sides of road to the north; and 2nd Troop covering where the railway line crosses the main east-west road.

All the British tanks, above, are under Blinds that are immediately placed on the table at the beginning of the game. The Japanese are aware of their approximate location even if not their exact composition.

The tank from A Squadron and the men from A Company, 1st West York's will appear anywhere along the northern edge of the wood in the north-west corner of the map. They have three Blinds available, and may enter one Blind each time the British Blinds card appears, starting on the sixth appearance of the Turn Card. Technically these troops should appear only if the British player remembers to call for reinforcements, so around the time that the Japanese anti-tank guns appear, Umpire's might like to remind the British player that reinforcements are available!

Do not give the British Player B briefing to the appropriate player until his troops are about to appear on the table.

Japanese Deployment

The game begins with the Japanese Phase One troops entering the table from the northern edge anywhere between the edge of the wood and the main north-south road.

Their Phase Two troops will appear in the south-west corner of the table on the fourth appearance of the Turn Card.

Their Phase Three troops will enter the table from the northern edge anywhere between the edge of the wood and the main north-south road on the tenth appearance of the Turn Card.

All your troops will enter the table under Blinds. Phase One have two Blinds available (one real, one false). Phase Two also have two Blinds available (both real). Phase Three have six Blinds available (four real, two false).

Special Rules

Reminder: do not give the British Player B briefing to the appropriate player until his troops are about to appear on the table.

When the FOO's card appears for the first time, he is allowed to call in a ranging shot: put the British Off-Table Artillery card into the pack, with the ranging shot dropping when that card appears. A further appearance of the FOO card allows either (a) another ranging shot; or (b) the fall of the first ranging shot to be corrected by up to 6", provided the point of impact can be "seen" by the FOO; or (c) a complete fire mission to be called in. Whichever is chosen would occur next time the British Off-Table Artillery card appears.

If the Bugged Down card appears, check to see whether any vehicles are moving across open terrain. If any are, roll a d6. On a '6' one vehicle (roll randomly to see which one) has become bogged down and cannot move until it rolls another '6' on a d6 to free itself (one roll per initiative dice used to free itself).

Objectives and Victory Conditions

The British win the battle if, at the end of the game, they still hold the crossroads in Payagyi village. The Japanese win the game if they manage to take the crossroads.

The Cards

Game Cards	Japanese Cards	British Cards
Tea Break	<i>Phase 1</i>	<i>A Briefing</i>
Turn Card	Blinds	Big Man x 4
Bogged Down	Tank 1 - 2	RHQ
	<i>Add for Phase 2</i>	B Squadron HQ
	Big Man x 1	B Squadron 1st Troop
	1st Engineer Platoon	B Squadron 2nd Troop
	Anti-Tank x 4	Armoured Bonus Move
	Sniper	<i>Add for B Briefing</i>
	Scout	Big Man x 4
	<i>Add for Phase 3</i>	A Squadron Tank
	Banzai-ai-ai!	Platoon 7
	Heroic Commander	Platoon 8
	Big Man x 4	Platoon 9
	Engineer Co. HQ	FOO
	2nd Engineer Platoon	Off-Table Artillery
	Tank 3 - 7	Rally
	Rally	Dynamic Commander
	Armoured Bonus Move	Armoured Bonus Fire

Turn Card	Units Entering Table
1	
2	
3	
4	Japanese Phase 2
5	
6	British West Yorks
7	
8	
9	
10	Japanese Phase 3