
BLITZKRIEG COMMANDER

Fast-Play Tabletop Wargame Rules For Combined-Arms Operations, 1936-45

Scenario

Japanese Advance vs Russians, Manchuria, July 1939

It's July 1939 and the Japanese are about to launch a limited offensive against Russian positions on the east bank of the Halha River (Khalkin Gol), south west of Nomonhan. The action detailed in this report sees elements of Task Force Yasuoka advance against the Russian positions hidden amongst the sand dunes. The advance was meant to begin on the morning of the 3rd July, but the Japanese commander was under the (mistaken) impression that the Russians were withdrawing, so decided to begin the advance at 18:00 hours the evening before in the hopes of catching the Russians in retreat.

The Battlefield

The battlefield was as sparse as they come, the entire area comprised of sand dunes and not much else! There wasn't much in the way of cover and the area was quite muddy due to the heavy thunderstorms that took place at the time. All I did was dye a sheet sandy-brown, then draped this over my regular table and placed three hills underneath, just to break it up a bit.

Japanese Order of Battle

The Japanese battlegroup comprises of the following units, split into five separate formations.

Task Force Command

CO, Yasuoka (CV9)

1st Infantry Battalion, 64th Infantry Regiment, 23rd Infantry Division

HQ, Tazaka (CV8, BP10)

12 x Infantry Platoons

3 x Support Platoons (MG)

1 x Support Platoon (IG, 70mm) & Truck

1 x ATG Platoon (37mm) & Truck

3 x Engineer Platoons (1st Company, 24th Engineer Regiment)

2nd Infantry Battalion, 64th Infantry Regiment, 23rd Infantry Division

HQ, Tokumaru (CV8, BP9)

12 x Infantry Platoons

3 x Support Platoons (MG)

3 x Engineer Platoons (2nd Company, 24th Engineer Regiment)

3rd Tank Regiment, 1st Tank Corps

HQ, Yoshimaru (CV8, BP6)

1st Tank Company, 4 Medium Tank Platoons (Type 89 Chi-Go)

2nd Tank Company, 4 Medium Tank Platoons (3 x Type 89 Chi-Go, 1 x Type 97 Chi-Ha)

3rd Tank Company, 3 Light Tank Platoons (3 x Type 94 TK)

13th Field Artillery Regiment

FAO (CV6)

2nd Artillery Battalion, 1 Artillery Battery (105mm)

As it's a historical scenario, points and battlegroup limits are ignored. There are some scenario-specific rules for the Japanese:

- Infantry and armour cannot be issued orders together as a single formation
- Due to poor ground conditions, trucks only move 10cm
- Yasuoka (the CO) cannot issue orders to any units
- A command unit will get +1 to its CV if Yasuoka is within 20cm
- The task force has three separate breakpoints due to poor visibility and communication
- When testing for breakpoints, use the command value of the HQ controlling that formation
- You may use the command value of Yasuoka when testing for breakpoints provided he is within 20cm of the HQ
- Armour suffers a -1 command penalty when attempting to cross wire

Russian Order of Battle

Due to the circumstances affecting the battle, the Russian forces are selected on a random basis during the game. The Russian forces can be played solo or by another player. The following scenario-specific rules apply:

- All units are dug-in and are hit on sixes
- All units except tanks have wire 5cm to their front
- No units may charge the enemy and units under charge will open fire

Deployment

The Japanese will enter the table using mobile deployment with the HQs being placed at least 30cm apart. The Russians are handled differently in this scenario to reflect the lack of Japanese intelligence before the battle, as well as the poor visibility that characterised the evening, which was bloody awful - thunderstorms followed by more thunderstorms! As a result, the Russian forces will be deployed on a random basis during the game.

Russian Forces

To account for poor weather and lack of intelligence, the precise composition of the Russian battlegroup isn't known before the game. The Japanese thought they were facing motorised infantry, but that was about all they knew. To determine what forces the Japanese encounter during their advance, the Japanese player should roll one d6 for each of his three formations at the end of each of his turns and adjust the score for any of the modifiers that apply. The three formations are the 1st and 2nd Infantry Battalions, plus the 3rd Tank Regiment.

Modifiers

- +1 per full 20cm distance covered this turn (excluding command units)
- +1 if any troops have reached the centre third of the table
- +2 if any troops have reached the farthest third of the table

Result

- 1 Three medium artillery batteries firing concentration*
- 2 Two heavy artillery batteries firing concentration*
- 3 Nothing!
- 4 Infantry company comprising of 3 Infantry Platoons and 1 MG Platoon
- 5 37mm ATG Platoon
- 6 BT Light Tank Platoon
- 7 Medium artillery battery deployed on-table
- 8 Heavy artillery battery deployed on-table

** The artillery will target the Japanese unit belonging to the formation that is nearest the Russian baseline. Units that are further than 30cm from the command do not count. Roll for deviation the first time round, then continue firing at the same hit-point each turn until there are no Japanese units in the zone.*

Russian Unit Deployment

When deploying Russian units on the table, position the first unit the required distance away from the nearest Japanese unit, facing directly towards it. Place any remaining units 5cm apart adjacent to the first, alternating between the flanks of the unit starting on the left. Units operate as formations according to their deployment, so a Russian infantry company will count as a single formation, a BT platoon will count as a single formation, and so on.

All units except tanks have 20cm lengths of wire 5cm to their front. This causes a -1 command penalty to Japanese armour when attempting to cross. Historically, the wire got caught in the tracks of Japanese tanks, causing lengthy delays, even immobilising some of the tanks.

Russian Actions

The Russians can be controlled by another player, or you can leave it to the dice and play solo! The following rules apply to the Russians:

1. All Russian troops are dug-in and will be hit on sixes
2. No units may charge the enemy and units under charge will open fire
3. All units will open fire using their initiative where possible
4. Units will open fire at the nearest enemy unit within range
5. Tanks/ATG will fire at armour, then ATG, then infantry
6. Infantry will fire at infantry, then ATG, then armour
7. Issue orders to units one formation at a time using the command value of the HQ
8. Units in the table section nearest the Russian baseline use the command value of the CO
9. Ignore the command penalty for distance from the command
10. When a formation fails it's command roll, continue with the next formation
11. The Russian battlegroup doesn't have a breakpoint

Special Rules

The following special rules apply to the scenario:

1. Artillery will hit troops in the open on 5+ due to the soft, wet sand
2. Use the optional rules for 'Weather' as detailed on page 48 of the rule book
3. The game begins with poor weather

Objectives

The Japanese player will gain a minor victory if he occupies the centre third of the table and a major victory if he occupies the third of the table nearest the defender. To occupy a section of the table, just treat the entire section as a terrain objective (see page 36 of the rule book). The Russian player will gain a minor victory if he denies the attacker the third of the table nearest his baseline and a major victory if he denies the attacker the centre third of the table. The game is limited to 10 turns, with the attacker taking the first turn.