

THE ROADBLOCK AT TAUKKYAN

MARCH 7, 1942

BY VIP KLYKOOM

The Situation

On March 5 1942 Lieutenant General Sir Harold Alexander, the newly appointed GOC Burma, arrived in Rangoon at noon with orders to hold the city at all costs. The situation was such that twelve hours later at midnight, he issued orders for the evacuation to begin. By the evening of March 7, the streets of Rangoon were silent and lifeless, with the last troops having left for the temporary safety of Prome.

The withdrawing garrison reached the road fork at the village of Taukkyan, some twenty-one miles north of the capital, when it was found that the Prome Road was blocked by the Japanese some miles ahead. Burma AHQ, the Rangoon Garrison, the 17th Division and the 7th Armoured Brigade were trapped. It was imperative that a breakout be achieved, for otherwise a humiliating disaster loomed ahead.

Historical Events

The Japanese 3/214 Battalion made a forced march to the village of Sathwadaw astride the road to Prome, when on the morning of March 7 its lead units observed a British column approaching from the direction of Rangoon. Major Takanobe, the battalion commander, quickly ordered his men to dig in and a roadblock was set up just south of the village.

Initial probes by B Squadron of the 7th Hussars resulted in the loss of two tanks. Even then, however, the strength of the road block was not yet realised, and at 1500 hours an attack was ordered to be put in. It was beaten back, prompting another, heavier assault to be launched. This second attempt to clear the road proved no more successful, and the situation proved bleak for the British as the sun set. An all-out, all-or-nothing, attack was to be made the next morning.

3/214 Battalion was battered to the point that a wounded Major Takanobe, unaware of the stranglehold he had on the British, deemed it appropriate for an “advance back” to be made, and the roadblock was dully abandoned in the early hours of March 8. Alexander’s column was thus able to make its way to Tharrawady, and from there onto Prome.

Sources

Burma 1942: The Japanese Invasion – Ian Lyall Grant & Kazuo Tamayama

Burma: The Longest War – Louis Allen

The Longest Retreat – Tim Carew

Official History of Indian Armed Forces in the Second World War: Retreat from Burma, 1941-1942

– Bisheshwar Prasad

The Wargame Scenario

The scenario features the second British assault at 1730 hours. The British objective is to clear the roadblock and force the Japanese off the map. Any other result is a Japanese victory.

All troops are regular.

Terrain

The roadblock was placed just south of Sathwadaw and sixty yards north of the road bend. To the east of the road is a forest of tall and short trees, and to the west a jungle.

One field gun was placed on each side of the road facing in opposite directions; a company was also deployed on either flank. Sandbag protection was provided to the guns while the infantry took cover on the roadside ditches (roads in Burma were high).

Two Stuart wrecks may be placed on the road in front of the Japanese guns.

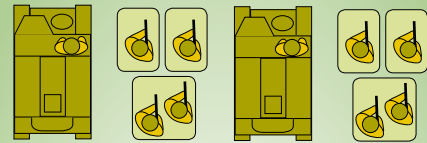
Deployment

The Japanese are dug in according to the map (which is based on actual dispositions). The 9th Company is held in reserve in Sathwadaw, alongside Battalion HQ.

The British begin at the south-eastern end of the map, coming up from Taukkyan. The tanks and carriers are restricted to the roads.

COMMONWEALTH FORCES

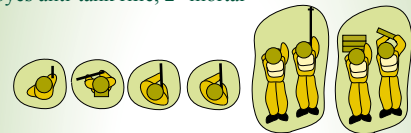
Rangoon Garrison
(1st Gloucestershire Regiment - Colonel C.E.K. Bagot)
8 figures, 2 x Bren Carrier



63 Brigade - Colonel W.D. Edward
Brigade HQ
CO + 5 figures, 2 figure OP team



2nd/13th Frontier Force Rifles - Major Elsmie
HQ
8 figures, Boyes anti-tank rifle, 2" mortar



Company
8 figures

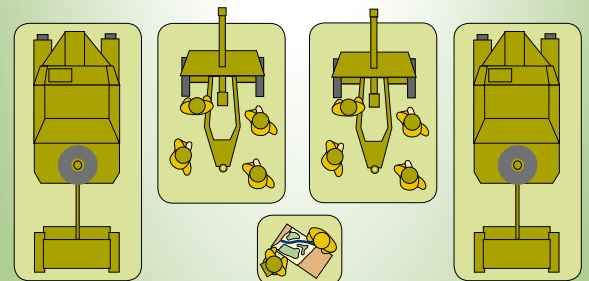


Company
8 figures

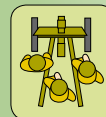


1st Indian Field Regiment
Battery

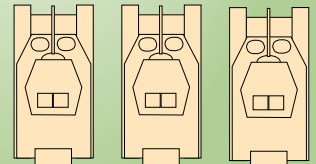
10 figures, 2 x 25 pounder field gun, 2 x Quad prime mover



12th Mountain Battery
3 figures, 3.7" howitzer

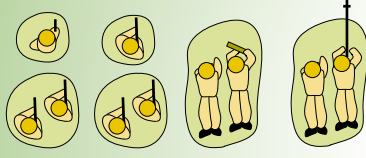
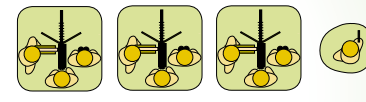
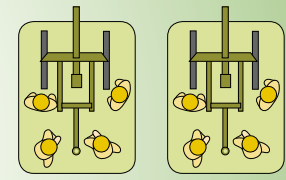



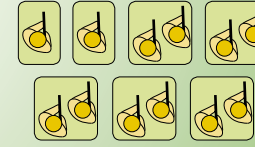


2nd Royal Tank Regiment
Squadron
3 x M3A1 Stuart (37mm)



Painting tip: the Honeys (Stuart tanks) in Burma went straight into combat upon their arrival from Egypt, meaning that they would have kept their desert paint schemes.

Japanese forces and Table Layout

| JAPANESE 3/214 BATTALION (Major Takanobe) | | | |
|---|---|--|---|
| HQ CO + 9 figures, Type 97 20mm AT rifle, 50mm mortar | | Machine Gun Company 10 figures, 3 x MMG | Regimental Gun Company 8 figures, 2 x 75mm guns |
|  | |  |  |
| 9 Company 12 figures | 10 Company 12 figures | 11 Company 12 figures | 12 Company 12 figures |
|  |  |  |  |

