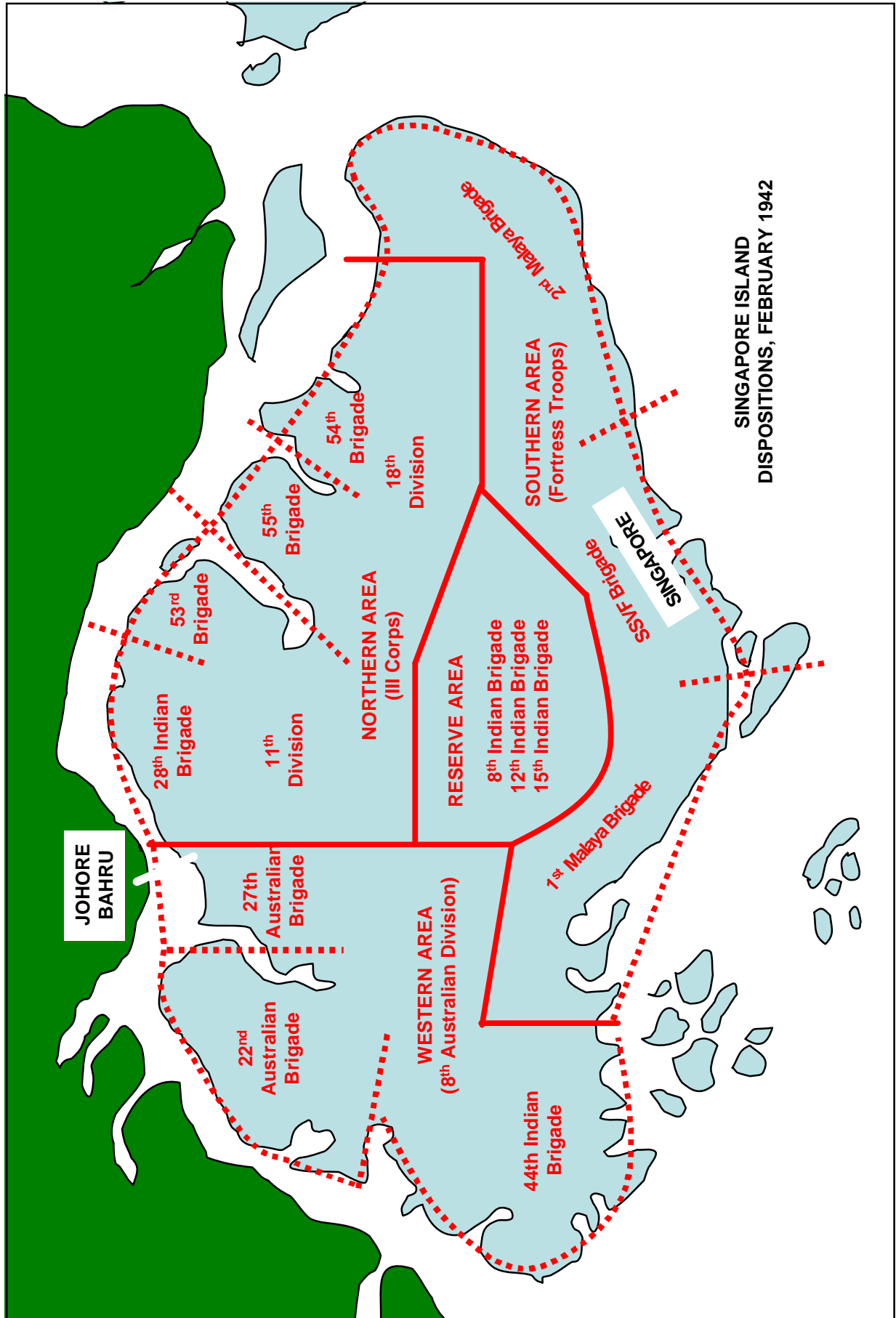


Campaign Map: Singapore Island



SINGAPORE ISLAND
DISPOSITIONS, FEBRUARY 1942

Scenario 16: Airstrip Road Game Briefing

Percival believed that the main Japanese assault would fall upon the north-eastern end of Singapore Island, and consequently deployed most of his fresh troops there. The north-west of the island was defended by the 22nd Australian Brigade, deployed in an arc between the rivers Berith at nine o'clock (imagining Singapore as a clock face) and the river Kranji at twelve o'clock. Closest to the Berith was 2/19th Battalion, then 2/18th Battalion, and finally 2/20th Battalion. The Australians had a company of the newly-landed 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion distributed along their front, and were backed up by the thirty guns of the Australian Field Artillery.

The Australians were deployed with three companies forward and one company back. Each company was deployed in dispersed platoon positions, with the platoons themselves deployed into smaller section groups. Although fields of fire often interlocked, the sheer size of the area being defended meant that each small position would have to fight on its own.

The Japanese assault began at about 8.45pm on 8th February 1942, with sixteen battalions of the Japanese 5th and 18th Divisions pouring across the straits in a variety of craft, including around fifty armoured landing craft holding about forty men each. Each division was capable of shifting around 4,000 men across the Straits at any one time: there were fewer than 3,000 defenders facing them.

The Japanese headed for the river mouths on Singapore: intending to break through and land behind the Australian front line. Six battalions of 5th Division attempted to force their way into the river Sarimbun, the border between 2/18th and 2/20th Australian Infantry Battalions; with the other three battalions hitting the far right of 2/20th's position. All seven battalions of 18th Division headed for the river Murai, the border between 2/19th and 2/18th's position.

The Australians had been given searchlights with which to illuminate the sea in front of the beaches, but unfortunately an order had gone out forbidding their use as it was feared this would give away their positions! Fortunately, a burning Japanese landing craft carrying ammunition provided plenty of light, and the first wave of the Japanese assault was mostly sunk or beaten off by the infantry; the crossfire of the machine-guns; and by anti-tank guns set up right at the waters edge. More Japanese followed, however, and the second or third waves managed to establish a landing.

Unfortunately, the cable connecting the front to the artillery positions to the rear had been cut by a Japanese preliminary bombardment, and the SOS Vercy lights used by the Australian infantry were hard to see in the close country of the area. This meant that the artillery support that should have blown the Japanese off the exposed beaches was late arriving and, although it did some damage to further waves of Japanese troops, the first landed Japanese quickly headed inland and surrounded the defensive positions of the outnumbered Australian infantry. The Australian machine-guns began to run out of ammunition, and fierce, often hand-to-hand fighting broke out along the front.

At around midnight, the dispersed Australians began, as ordered, to withdraw to battalion positions further inland. Three of the four companies of 2/20th Battalion on the right concentrated around the Namazie Estate (the other company not receiving the order and maintaining their position) but the 2/18th were too heavily engaged with the enemy, and only a small number of them made it back to Ama Keng village. Likewise, the forward companies of 2/19th had a great deal of difficulty in extracting itself and only small numbers reached the fourth company back at Choa Chu village.

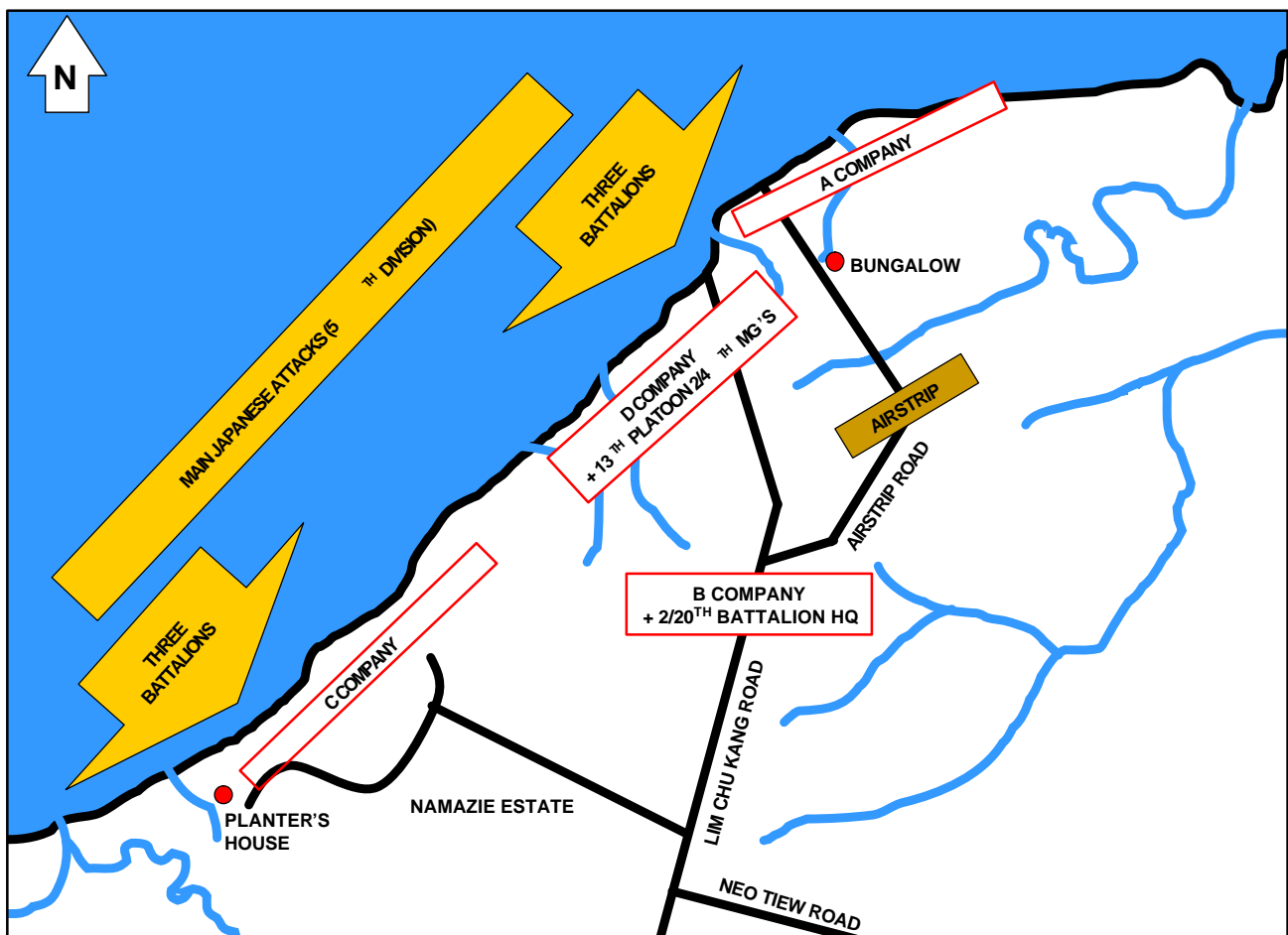
Remember that the terrain was mostly swamp, and the only effective way to move as a coherent formation was along one of the few roads in the area.

At dawn, the 2/18th were attacked at Ama Keng and fierce fighting took place. Although a counter-attack re-established the battalion's position, the Japanese were spotted moving around their flank, and they were forced to withdraw further inland to Tengah Airfield, arriving there at about 9.30am. This unfortunately meant that when the remnants of 2/20th Battalion attempted to move south down the road towards Ama Keng at around 7.30am, in order to link up with 2/18th, their way was blocked by the Japanese. The battalion attempted to break through, but became split up in the process, with only small numbers making it to brigade headquarters at Bulim, near Tengah Airfield. The Japanese began attacking the airfield itself at around 8am.

Meanwhile, 2/19th were attempting to cut their way out of their position at Choa Chu: only scattered parties reaching Tengah Airfield at about 10am. The 22nd Australian Brigade was for the time being effectively finished as a fighting formation.

Introduction

Umpires will immediately see a wealth of possible scenario ideas involving resisted landings, attacks on defended positions, fighting retreats and so on. For a detailed account of the fighting in this sector, I recommend reading Volume IV of the Australian Official History of the War, available complete and free as an online pdf from the Australian War Memorial. This scenario, however, will focus on the activities of 2/20th Australian Infantry Battalion.



The map gives their dispositions at the time of the Japanese attack at 2045hrs, 8th February 1942. By 0630hrs, the battalion had concentrated around Battalion HQ, except for D Company who had not received the order to retire and had been forced back to an isolated position east of the airstrip. At around 0730hrs, 8th and 9th Platoons of A Company attacked down Airstrip Road in an attempt to regain contact with D Company. The order for withdrawal south down the road towards Ama Keng was given at 0915hrs. Colonel Assheton, 2/20th's commanding officer, was killed personally directing the Bren gunners covering the retreat. D Company dispersed, with some men making it back to Bulim and some crossing the Kranji to the west.

The scenario will replicate A Company's attempt to regain contact with D Company. It is divided into three phases. The Japanese have formed a loose perimeter around the 2/20th Battalion HQ position, and two platoons of A Company must first punch a hole in the Japanese line in order to get a dispatch rider through to D Company. They must then hold their position against a Japanese counter-attack for long enough for D Company to return. Finally, the Australians must successfully retreat their men off the table.

Map & Terrain

The map that accompanies this scenario attempts to represent the area around the southern end of Airstrip Road. The terrain, to quote John McGrory of C Company, 2/18th Australian's, should be covered in "bush, shrubs and Japs" interspersed with areas of pure swamp and clumps of rubber trees.

The main feature is the road itself: in reasonable condition and bordered on either side by a drainage ditch. About half way up, the road is crossed by a small creek that has burst its banks and flooded the surface. Wheeled vehicles, including motorcycles, passing through this area must roll a d6: on a roll of a '6', the vehicle had skidded off the road and into one of the drainage ditches. It is not recoverable in the game.

The rest of the terrain counts as rough, waterlogged land covered in patches of scrub (dark green) and rubber trees (light green). Men and animals move at -2" per initiative dice rolled. Tracked vehicles bog down if they roll more 1's than 6's for movement, no matter how many initiative dice they are rolling. Roll to free each turn using initiative dice, succeeding if more 6's are rolled than 1's. Wheeled vehicles automatically bog down, except for motorcycles that may move as tracked vehicles. It provides a little cover from spotting and a little cover from fire (if prone).

The eastern end of the stream has formed a patch of swamp. Only men on foot may cross swamp, moving at -3" per initiative dice rolled. It provides some cover from spotting and a little cover from fire. It costs one initiative dice to cross the stream.

Phasing the Scenario

The Australian player has details of the three phases of the game i.e. that he must get a dispatch rider (DR) off the table to the north, then hold his position until D Company arrives, then retreat successfully off the table. The Japanese player knows only that he must maintain the perimeter around the enemy position.

If all goes according to plan, the Australians will successfully get the DR off the table to the north in the first phase of the game. Once the DR has left the table, the Japanese reinforcements arrive after four appearances of the Turn Card. Once the Japanese reinforcements have arrived, D

Company will arrive along the road from the north after a further five appearances of the Turn Card. The table below can be used to keep track.

DR Leaves Table				
1	2	3	4	
Japanese Reinforcements arrive				
1	2	3	4	5
D Company arrives				

If the Australians do not manage to get a DR off the table, and the players are eager for more gaming, then the Umpire should introduce either or both of D Company or the Japanese reinforcements as the flow of the game dictates. If, for example, the Australians have failed to get a DR off the table, but are winning the battle, then introduce the Japanese reinforcements immediately. Once the reinforcements have turned the tide against the Australians, either end the game there or introduce D Company. If the Australians have failed to get a DR off the table and are obviously losing the battle, then introduce D Company first etc.

Initial Deployment

The Japanese deploy their men under Blinds anywhere north of the creek. Their reinforcements arrive from the west just north of where the stream leaves the table.

The Australians enter under Blinds along Airstrip Road from the south. They may enter any or all of their remaining Blinds each time their Blinds card appears. If D Company appears, it will enter at the north-eastern corner of the table.

Objectives & Victory Conditions

The Australian player wins a great victory if he manages to get at least two thirds of A and D Companies off the table to the south. He achieves a minor victory if any of D Company makes it off the table to the south. Any other result is, for him, a loss.

The Japanese player wins a great victory if none of D Company and less than a third of A Company make it off the board to the south. He wins a minor victory if none of D Company make it off the board to the south. If neither of the above apply, and the Australian player has achieved a loss, then the Japanese player has achieved a draw. If neither of the above apply, and the Australian player has achieved a victory of some sort, then the Japanese player has lost the game.

Special Rules

Only one DR may be on the board at any one time. The Australians begin the game with one attached to one of their Blinds. As soon as that DR is either killed or his motorcycle destroyed, the Australians may enter their next DR on the next appearance of the DR card. Once a DR makes it off the board to the north, the DR card is removed from the pack. DR's have 3d6 initiative dice.

An additional rule that cropped up in play testing: DR's who drive their motorcycle into a unit of Japanese troops get a +1d6 bonus in the resultant melee. If they survive the resultant melee, they have burst through the enemy, and are placed 1d3+2 inches the other side of where the melee took place.

Japanese Squads armed with Type 89 “Knee” Mortars have no LMG, and thus fire with two dice rather than three, but may also fire their light mortars as well. The Type 89 Mortar is a direct line of sight weapon only. Note that these are full mortar squads with three mortars each, as opposed to Scout mortar squads armed with only one mortar each.

The Cards

Game Cards	Japanese Cards	British Cards
Tea Break	Blinds	Blinds
Turn Card	Big Man x 3	Big Man x 3
	Company HQ	Company HQ
	1st Platoon	8th Platoon
	2nd Platoon	9th Platoon
	Off Table Artillery	Dispatch Rider
	Rapid Deployment	Rally
	Dynamic Commander	Off Table Artillery
	Heroic Commander	
	Rally	<i>Big Man x 1</i>
	Banzai-ai-ai!	<i>Composite Platoon</i>
	<i>Big Man x 1</i>	
	<i>3rd Platoon</i>	



“For the last time, Madam, this is not the Baby Linen Counter.”