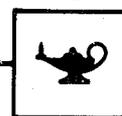


Soviet Style Blitzkrieg

5



Japanese Intelligence Failures

At 0630 on 20 August a “large formation” of enemy aircraft bombed and strafed the 2/28th Infantry’s artillery positions. The aircraft were part of as many as 250 Soviet aircraft (144 according to Soviet sources), including 150 bombers, that dramatically announced the beginning of the long-awaited Soviet general offensive.¹

From the end of July, Japanese intelligence intercepted Soviet messages relating to a general offensive. Details on the scale and timing, however, remained unclear.² Soviet attacks had occurred on 1 and 2 August as well as 7 and 8 August and some intelligence analysts believed these were the sum of the Soviet August offensives. In fact, the Soviets’ first echelon massed two rifle divisions, two motorized armored brigades, seven artillery regiments, and three cavalry divisions. Their second echelon forces consisted of another rifle division plus five motorized armored or tank brigades. These forces were spread over a fifty-kilometer front and were about double what Japanese intelligence credited them.³

Soviet logistics efforts must take a great deal of the credit for the Soviet success in achieving tactical surprise. Japanese staff officers refused to be-

lieve that the Soviets could mass the forces that they did because the great length of the Soviet logistics “tail” precluded such a commitment. Trucks enabled the Red Army to supply its troops around Nomonhan. The 1st Front Army (organized during the Nomonhan fighting) had over 2,600 trucks on hand, including 1,000 fuel trucks. The 750-kilometer logistics route from Borzya to Nomonhan, however, required almost 5,000 trucks to supply adequately the Soviet field forces. In mid-August, General Zhukov received another 1,625 trucks from European Russia and these additions enabled him to transport barely enough material for his 20 August offensive. These numbers of trucks were beyond the comprehension of Japanese planners.

Poor weather and low visibility hampered Japanese aerial reconnaissance for about two weeks before the Soviet offensive. From 12 August on, there had been but one day of clear weather. On 19 August, Japanese pilots did spot a concentration of Soviet vehicles on the Halha’s west bank, but their reports were still being evaluated at higher headquarters on 20 August.⁴ Potentially significant intelligence data gathered by lower echelon units like squads or platoons was not expeditiously reported

to higher headquarters, most likely because there was no battalion intelligence officer to evaluate or to disseminate such information.

Japanese operational planning to meet such an offensive envisioned the destruction of Soviet forces in front of the Japanese lines followed by an army level counterattack that would envelop both Soviet flanks. Thus they believed that they could smash any Soviet offensive and then resume their offensive operations against the weakened Soviet forces.⁵

Soviet Fixing Attacks

After an hour of unopposed Soviet aircraft bombing,⁶ an estimated fourteen Soviet field artillery pieces blasted the 2/28th's positions. The first few shells cut fieldphone land lines, isolating battalion units and the battalion from higher headquarters. In the absence of any cooperation between the battalion and regimental artillery, the Soviet artillery could concentrate its fire on the Japanese front lines "almost destroying them" without fear of counter-battery fire.⁷ The 3½-hour bombardment collapsed Japanese fortifications and buried their occupants in sand, dirt, and debris.

During intervals in the enemy shelling, Soviet infantrymen probed Japanese positions. At 0900 enemy infantry from the 602d Rifle Regiment advanced against Hill 742, but Sergeant Matsushita's heavy machine gun crew, Second Lieutenant Takashima's direction of the light machine gun fire, and a sergeant who fired grenades from an observation post stopped the enemy progress about 100 meters in front of the Japanese lines. The Japanese cheered

as the Soviets dumped their heavy Maxim machine gun and fled. But a split second later a high explosive round from a Soviet tank disintegrated the observation post, severely wounding the sergeant and leaving his grenade discharger a twisted pile of junk.⁸

From the south, under cover of the barrage, twelve Soviet tanks began to advance on Japanese lines from the direction of Moko Heights and threatened to turn 6th Company's flank. Battalion artillery had to brave the Soviet artillery shells in order to fire on the tanks to prevent an encirclement of the battalion's left flank. The tanks retreated but the Soviet artillery barrage continued with growing intensity. An estimated 700 enemy infantrymen backed by fifteen tanks, and seventy-five artillery weapons faced the 2/28th Infantry.

Later that afternoon, 6th Company's left platoon, anchoring the entire battalion's left flank, coordinated its fire with that of Sergeant Tanimura's machine gun platoon to pin down enemy troops who had reached a defile about 500 meters from the platoon's lines.

At 1700 four enemy tanks attacked 6th Company's lines. A Japanese anti-tank squad, under cover of battalion machine guns, managed to move close enough to the tanks, which had no infantry support, to set one ablaze with hand grenades. The remaining three tanks promptly withdrew toward Moko Heights. Four hours later, however, the three tanks reappeared to tow away the burned tank. Japanese rifle grenade fire hindered, but did not prevent, the salvage effort.

The enemy also probed the main battalion positions around Hill 754. At noon, about twenty enemy soldiers of

the 603d Rifle Regiment advanced on 5th Company's right flank, but Japanese grenade dischargers and ultimately hand grenades drove them back. About 1320 another thirty Soviet infantrymen probed the company's left flank coming within thirty meters of the company's lines before more Japanese hand grenades forced them back.

To the north about 100 Soviet infantrymen tried to move through the 1,000-meter gap separating 7th and 5th Companies. Second Lieutenant Takashima's Platoon on the high ground of Hill 742 used its light machine guns and grenade dischargers to scatter the enemy below and break up his attempt to divide the battalion's perimeter.

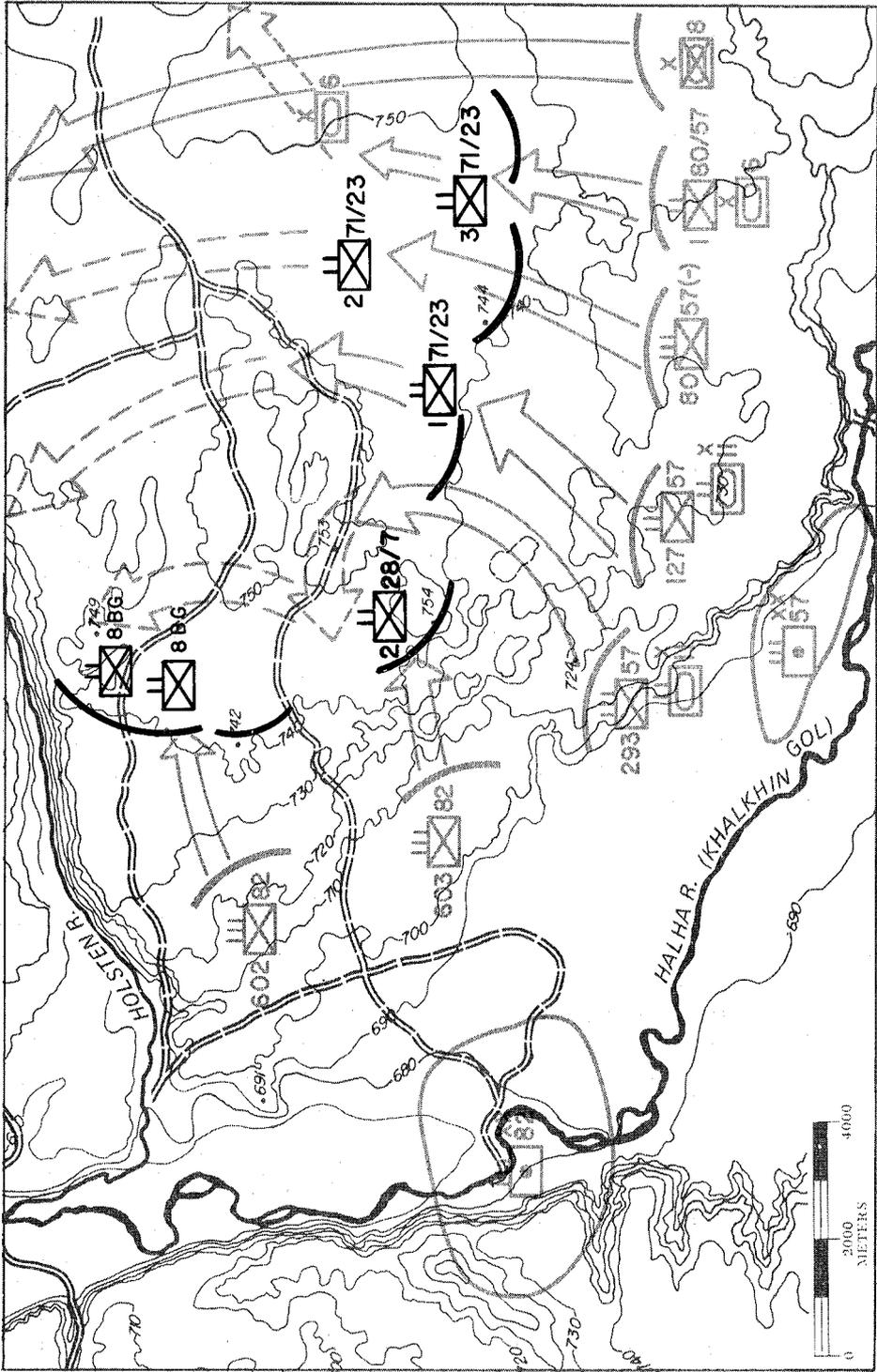
The Japanese had repulsed successfully these Soviet infantry probes, but the Soviets had accomplished their mission of "fixing" the Japanese center in place for the Soviet armor to encircle. Unknown numbers of enemy tanks from the 6th and 11th Tank Brigades and the 8th Motorized Armored Brigade had swung southeast past the left flank of the Japanese forces during the extended Soviet artillery barrage and then turned northeast to sever Japanese supply lines. Ominously, the War Diary author recorded, "Re-supply of ammunition, provisions, and water will be extremely difficult."⁹ (See Map 17.)

Around 1600 Major Kajikawa assessed the situation for his company and platoon commanders. He believed that the enemy used conventional Red Army offensive tactics, so the enemy's frontal attacks and rapid withdrawals were temporary fixing attacks designed to cover the movement of other Soviet units. That meant in turn the Soviets would withdraw under cover of darkness or use the night to move troops to

new positions providing the chance for a Japanese counterstroke. Scouts were dispatched to reconnoiter the area in preparation for a Japanese counterattack.

When the scouts returned, their news was grim. They saw a vast concentration of more than 1,000 enemy trucks and as many as 500 enemy tanks and armored cars moving all along the battalion's left flank. Furthermore, 6th Company atop Hill 754 had been watching the neighboring 71st Infantry pull back in the face of the massive Soviet onslaught. The 127th and 80th Rifle Regiments of the 57th Rifle Division and the 6th Tank Brigade combined against the IJA's 71st Regiment. Soviet armor proved especially effective because modifications of Soviet tanks made them less susceptible to conflagration. Soviet tankers, for example, used a heavier, lower grade fuel and placed wire netting or bricks over their engines to negate the potential effects of Molotov cocktails, the main Japanese anti-tank weapon. These changes and the cooler late August temperatures made it increasingly difficult for the Japanese to destroy Soviet tanks as easily as they had in early July. The withdrawal of the 71st Infantry left the 2/28th Infantry's left flank undefended. Instead of retreating, clearly the Soviets were readying a full-scale offensive that promised hard fighting.

On 21 August the Soviet artillery barrage opened at 0800. Although the fire was not so concentrated as the previous day, it was violent.¹⁰ The Soviets also varied their tactics to confuse the Japanese defenders. On 20 August, the Soviet gunners fired all along the Japanese front but on 21 August they shelled Japanese strong points identified by the previous day's probing at-



Map 17. Soviet offensive south of Holsten River 20—31 August 1939.

tacks. As artillery fire smashed into these key positions splintering wood and bone, Soviet infantrymen silently infiltrated into the Japanese lines.

The 7th Company experienced one such attack. During the morning barrage against Hill 742, Second Lieutenant Takashima crouched in the front-line trench and waited for the barrage to lift. Suddenly an enemy grenade sailed over his head and a flurry of grenades followed. The enemy was already inside Japanese lines. Takashima rallied his surprised troops and began a deadly hunt to kill the Soviet troops hiding in defiles, depressions, and dead spaces.¹¹

The Japanese lobbed hand grenades into their own trenches and then rushed dazed enemy troops, finishing them off with bayonets. The fighting continued through the morning and the Japanese predilection for hand-to-hand combat won out. Japanese infantrymen felt that their Soviet counterparts had no idea how to use the bayonet properly and that a single Japanese soldier was worth five Soviets.¹²

If the Soviet soldier did not impress his Japanese counterpart very much, the coordination and cooperation between Soviet artillery and infantry did. The artillery covered the infantry's advance and opened holes in the Japanese line for the infantry to exploit.

The Soviet tanks operating in the battalion rear had effectively cut Japanese supply lines, so that frontline Japanese infantry could not use their grenade dischargers to best effect because of a shortage of ammunition. Men were also in short supply as by 21 August a majority of the battalion's troops were dead or wounded.

According to intelligence reports from the 71st Infantry, the 23d Division launched a counterattack against the Soviets in the direction of Hill 752, about sixteen kilometers northeast of the 2/28th Infantry's position.¹³ Major Kajikawa then devised a plan to break through the Soviet encirclement and link up with the 23d Division. He sent scouts to reconnoiter a route and to check on enemy positions around Moko Heights. The effort was wasted because no Japanese offensive occurred on 21 August.

That day the 23d Division, however, did order Colonel Hasebe's detachment (8th Border Guards and 2/28th Infantry) "to maintain contact with COL Morita Tetsuji's 71st Infantry Regiment and hold its present position."¹⁴ Staff officer Major Ito personally told Hasebe to hold out until 24 August in order to allow the 23d Division and 6th Army to prepare a counteroffensive against the Soviets. After that, Ito continued, Hasebe was free to shift his position to Hill 749.

Another massive artillery bombardment fell on the battalion beginning at 0800 on 22 August. As the hot sun rose higher in the clear sky, some troops went mad amidst the choking dust hurled up by the shellfire, the screams of maimed comrades, and scorching heat. One private on Hill 742 stood up in the trench giggling hysterically and babbling for water. A corpsman who rose up to help the poor wretch caught a shell splinter in the throat.¹⁵ It was indicative of the battalion's fate should their discipline break down completely.

The Soviets meanwhile repeated the previous day's tactics, advancing under cover of, or through, artillery barrages to reach the Japanese front lines. Tank

fire and automatic weapons fire covered the Soviet troops as they moved up the slopes towards the Japanese lines. Soviet attackers showed increased determination and only hand-to-hand fighting broke their attacks at several places along the battalion's front. Battalion artillerymen and heavy machine gunners carefully selected targets in order to conserve their scarce ammunition and drove back the rest of the attackers. However, if the first Soviet assault was repulsed, the attackers regrouped and repeated the attack according to the original plan. Such tactics were stolid, but they wore down the Japanese defenders. That night the enemy dug trenches within 100 meters of 5th and 6th Companies' lines, forming an arc parallel to the Japanese perimeter and threatening to surround the Japanese. In the north, enemy troops tried to turn the left flank of 7th Company and, although repulsed, they also entrenched about 150 meters from Japanese lines.

The most serious threat remained the Soviet armor, now sweeping behind the battalion's lines. All day long battalion officers watched through binoculars the unequal struggle between Soviet armor and the 71st Infantry, whose inevitable retreat meant more Soviet armor could be expected on the 2/28th battalion's left flank. One platoon from 5th Company was detached to provide security on the exposed left flank. At 2100 about thirty enemy troops moved up the slope to 5th Company's lines but they were driven off after a hand grenade exchange and hand-to-hand combat. By this time, the Japanese estimated that 1,000 Soviet infantrymen with twenty-five tanks and thirty artillery guns were opposing them.

Enemy howitzers lobbed shells from defilade behind Moko Heights and added to the cacophony of bursting artillery rounds on 23 August. The shell-fire from Moko was especially effective and Japanese casualties continued to rise. Psychologically the seemingly limitless supply of Soviet ammunition, tanks, aircraft, and troops began to grind down Japanese morale. Although the War Diary maintained that the 2/28th Infantry's morale remained high, Japanese psychologists later found the troops discouraged and depressed by their inability to respond in kind to the Soviet onslaught.¹⁶ A medical officer serving adjacent to the 7th Company wondered, "What are our tanks and aircraft doing? I can't see the shape of a single friendly tank or plane."¹⁷

Again the Soviet infantry advanced under cover of the barrage. At 0730, taking advantage of ground fog, 150 troops with two heavy machine guns and supported by five tanks tried to break through the center of 6th Company lines. With the platoon officer wounded, NCOs took charge of the defenses and drove back the enemy attackers with machine gun fire and bayonets and swords. Battalion artillery fired point blank into the enemy, propelling their retreat down the sandy slope. Although two heavy and two light machine guns were abandoned by the retreating Soviets, Japanese battalion artillery had fired almost all its ammunition. Only a handful of rounds remained to withstand future attacks. Additionally, the 2/28th Infantry reported that the Soviets seemed to be getting reinforcements and new units had entered the fighting, bringing the enemy infantry strength to 1200 men.¹⁸

The attacks continued on Japanese lines. Both 5th and 6th Companies spent the day ducking enemy artillery shells then jumping up to drive away enemy infantry probes. At 1300 enemy mortar shells started to plunge down on the beleaguered companies' lines and more Japanese were killed and wounded. Battalion artillery remained silent, too low on ammunition to fire counterbattery rounds at the Soviet mortar positions.

Perhaps even more aggravating than the shortage of ammunition was the lack of water. Japanese troops became automatons, forgetting about food and sleep, and just fighting to survive a few more hours. Major Kajikawa tried to set an example by walking through company lines in the midst of heavy shelling. His presence as shells whistled overhead or crashed loudly nearby did help lift the troops' spirits even though they expected it. "It was important for officers to do this sort of thing."¹⁹

Yet even morale could not replace bullets. On the night of 23—24 August, five enemy tanks with a platoon of thirty infantrymen again tried to crack through the center of 6th Company's lines. Only desperate hand-to-hand fighting drove off enemy infantry who preceded the tanks apparently trying to open a breach for the armor to penetrate. More Soviet tanks and infantry assailed the 5th Company platoon, which was guarding the battalion's left flank and rear, and overran the weakly held position. The disorganized Japanese survivors withdrew southeastward into the battalion's main lines while the Soviet armor continued to roll northward. From the clank of tracks and roar of engines, the Japanese concluded that nearly a score of enemy tanks were encircling the battalion that

night. Enemy artillery fire had torn up fieldphone lines so this information could not be rapidly transmitted to regiment or division headquarters.

All night flares and illumination rounds lit up the battlefield as Soviet aircraft bombed suspected Japanese fortifications and Soviet artillery blasted away at anything that moved. The firing continued throughout the night.

Encirclement of the 2/28th Infantry

On the next morning, 24 August, Major Kajikawa discovered that the 71st Infantry had again pulled back without notifying him. Perhaps runners dispatched from the 71st had been killed or wounded in their attempts to bring the information, but the 2/28th Infantry's lack of coordination with adjacent friendly units resulted from a lack of communications equipment and the lack of a battalion staff to plan and to coordinate moves among units. A more immediate problem was the enemy howitzers lobbing shells from defilade behind Moko Heights. They extracted a steady toll of Japanese casualties, including a second lieutenant who was killed by a direct hit while observing for a machine gun crew.

More Soviet tanks appeared near the battalion front, perhaps as many as thirty altogether. Again using the concealment afforded by morning mist, Soviet infantrymen, following behind an officer waving a red flag, rushed the 5th Company's lines. Heaving grenades as they came up the slope, they grappled with the Japanese defenders who used swords and bayonets to push the attackers back down the hill.

More dangerous were the Soviet tanks that broke through the company's north flank. First Lieutenant Sadakaji, swinging his sword over his head, led several members of his machine gun company in a desperation counterattack on the tanks. According to the battalion War Diary,

Their ability to damage the enemy tanks was nil, but the attack probably panicked the tank crews who abruptly retreated. The tanks were probably part of a probe for artillery survey and registration as well as an armed reconnaissance of our positions.²⁰

From all directions, 5th Company saw only doom. To the battalion rear, seven enemy tanks fired into a Japanese supply dump, and set it afire. As the black smoke rose high in the blue sky, Soviet armored cars lurched toward 5th Company's rear and infantrymen jumped from their improvised transport to rush up the slope. Sergeant Matsushita's heavy machine gun crew mowed down those attackers and provided a momentary respite.²¹

The Soviets then resumed their concentrated artillery shelling. Between 1200 and 1400 the fire was "especially heavy." After that pounding, enemy light and heavy machine gun crews raked the crest of battalion positions. Soviet field artillery also joined in to cover yet another infantry attack, this time on 6th Company.

Enemy troops advanced to grenade-throwing range where they lobbed several hand grenades at the Japanese. Hand-to-hand combat expelled those enemy soldiers who climbed over the crest, but they regrouped and again came over the crest, repeating the same tactics against 6th Company's trenches. Each time they were hurled back, but the Japanese could no longer afford the

casualties involved in such vicious close-in combat.

There was no Japanese reserve left so all members of the battalion headquarters from Major Kajikawa down grabbed rifles and joined the desperate defense of 6th Company's perimeter. Everyone was absorbed in the wild melee as Japanese and Soviets killed and maimed each other face-to-face. Rifle fire and hand grenades drove lurking Soviet troops from cover so that the Japanese could kill them. Enemy tanks moved up the hill to support the infantry, but Japanese tank killer squads armed with Molotov cocktails drove them away. Hand-to-hand fighting raged back and forth across 1st Platoon, 6th Company's position and ceased only when the entire platoon lay dead or wounded. Similarly, the machine gun platoon, whose deadly fire had been so instrumental in stopping previous Soviet attacks, was wiped out. Kajikawa himself suffered a head wound, and finally had no choice but to abandon the position.

Battalion artillery fired its last rounds of observed fire into the Soviet troops now occupying the 6th Company's left flank and temporarily sealed off the enemy penetration. Enemy tanks, however, moved into the captured position, forcing Kajikawa to move east and reassemble his battered survivors in a nearby depression. After digging shallow foxholes around their perimeter, the battalion's baggage was burned to deny it to the enemy. Around 1700 a sergeant and forty men sent by Colonel Morita appeared as reinforcements. Six hours later, during a lull in the fighting, Kajikawa was still attempting to consolidate whatever troops remained in battalion lines and ordered Warrant Officer Takada's platoon, at-

tached to 7th Company units just south of Hill 742, to battalion headquarters.

During the 800-meter move, Takada's men accidentally ran into a lone Soviet tank which had apparently lost its way and blundered to the west of the Japanese lines. Creeping in the darkness, Takada led his men close enough to the tank so that he could explode a hand grenade on its turret and set it aflame.

Such isolated successes were small consolation because a majority of the 2/28th officers and men were dead or wounded. The survivors' ammunition was almost exhausted. Moreover, enemy troops, using the captured 6th Company position as a jumping off point, were infiltrating behind the battalion and tightening the noose of encirclement.

Before the noose was closed the battalion signals platoon managed to avoid Soviet patrols and tanks and to lay fieldphone wire to 71st Infantry Headquarters. Major Kajikawa reported his desperate situation, but was ordered to hold his positions at all costs. Kajikawa then tried to adjust his lines to make contact with 7th Company to the north. The enemy tanks and soldiers in the battalion rear, however, made that plan impossible.

The rest of the cold night passed with sporadic shelling while the Soviets apparently regrouped and prepared for the next day's offensive. At 0600 the Soviet artillery began a crossfire barrage on 5th and 6th Company positions and tanks began to clank around the Japanese left flank. Kajikawa requested regimental artillery fire on the advancing Soviet armor, but this was denied because regimental artillery had no ammunition.

When two more hours of Soviet shelling created so much dust and smoke that it was difficult even to breathe, another enemy attack began. Infantrymen, covered by light and heavy machine gun fire sweeping the Japanese ridge line, climbed the slope and, waving a red flag, tried to rush the Japanese trenches. The scattered pockets of Japanese resistance fought back savagely against the attackers. Second Lieutenant Tahara of 5th Company charged into the Soviet infantrymen and chopped down three of them with his sword. A burst of Soviet automatic weapons fire hit Tahara in the side, sending him sprawling. Gravely wounded but still alive, he shouted, "Long live the Emperor," and then killed himself with a pistol in order to avoid capture.²²

Hand grenades only slowed the Soviet wave as more and more troops poured over the ridgeline. The battalion's few survivors tried to organize a circular defense around the two remaining grenade dischargers but from all around came Japanese cries of "Pull back! Pull out!" Soviet troops overran the battalion artillery and machine gun units, killing both Japanese commanders. By 1500 the Japanese exhausted their grenade discharger ammunition, but Soviet mortar shells still fell among the remaining Japanese, killing more of them. At 1600 Soviet armor sealed off the position and enemy artillery began pounding the almost helpless Japanese.

Again Soviet infantrymen clawed their way over the ridgeline and again the Japanese met them with fixed bayonets. By this time, the Japanese ranks were so depleted that seriously wounded troops had to be left where they fell. Many died from lack of medical attention. Those wounded Japanese who man-

aged to reach cover were given grenades by the battalion doctors and ordered to stand their ground against the enemy attack.

Almost all the battalion headquarters members were wounded or dead. Major Kajikawa called on his remaining effectives to fight with him to the last. Armed with hand grenades, rifle butts, bayonets, and rocks, the Japanese somehow managed to hold out until darkness.

A handful of able-bodied, unwounded Japanese remained with no ammunition, food, or water. Even these toughest and luckiest men of 5th and 7th Companies were exhausted and unable to function in combat any longer. The survivors decided to break through the enemy ring that threatened to squeeze them to death.

At 2100 the battalion survivors and ambulatory wounded assembled for the breakout. They hoped to use the communications trench that ran to Noro Heights and Second Lieutenant Takashima's 7th Company platoon. With only a few wounded men, 5th Company moved quickly but just as rapidly outdistanced the rest of the battalion and ran into enemy troops. Attempting to move around the enemy's left flank, 5th Company became completely separated from the battalion.

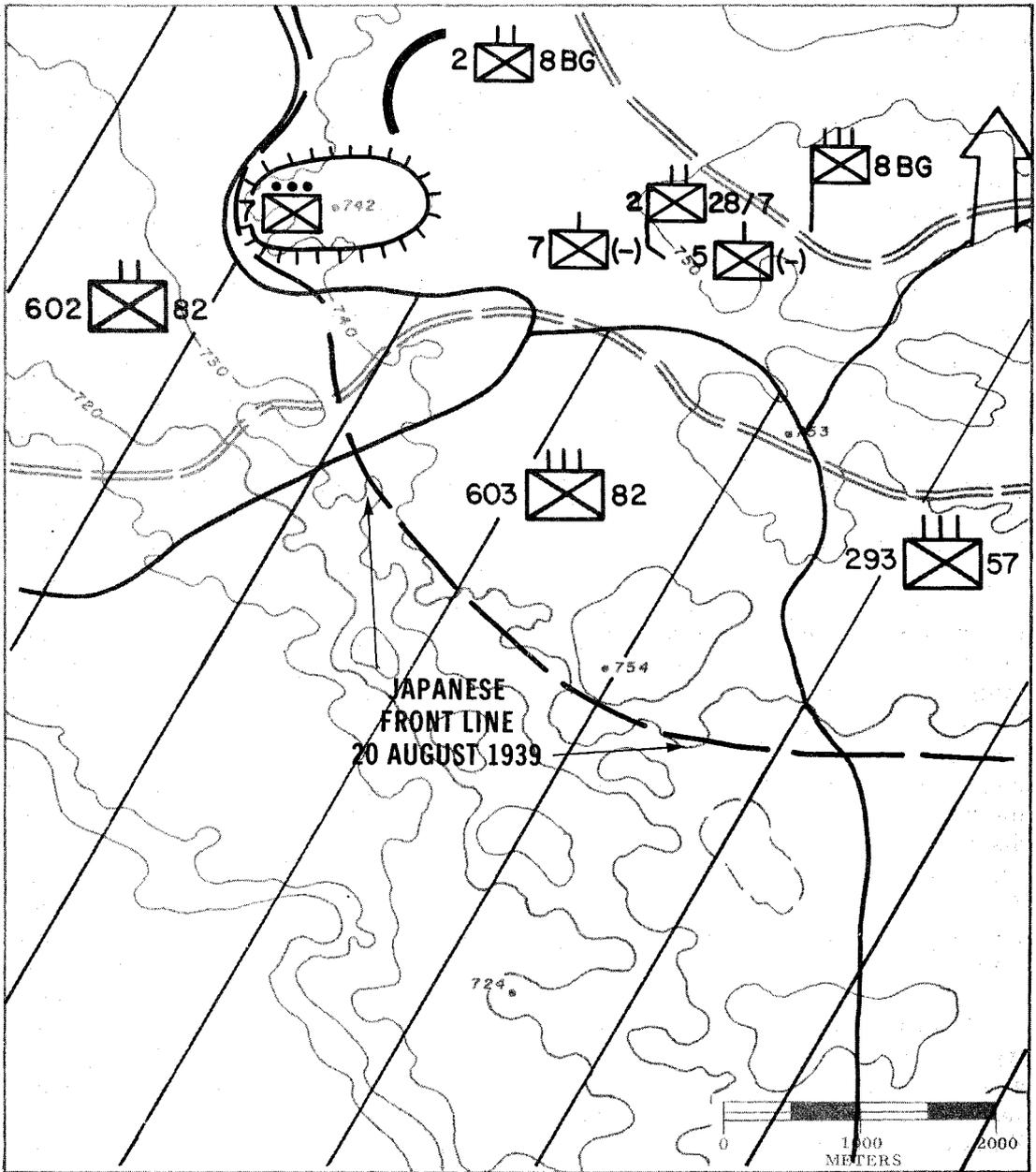
Major Kajikawa ordered a runner to try to contact 5th Company. No more was ever heard of that soldier or of a second runner given the same task. Kajikawa then ordered the men to move from the communications trench northeast to link up with Second Lieutenant Takashima's unit. Kajikawa and six NCOs took the point but in the darkness they bumped into about thirty ene-

my troops. In the confusion and firing, Second Lieutenant Saito's rear guard platoon became separated from the other Japanese, drifted farther east and managed to break through the enemy ring to reach what they thought was Second Lieutenant Takashima's position. However, Takashima's men apparently had vanished and Saito could not contact anyone.²³

Stragglers from 5th Company, after wandering about 500 meters east in the darkness, managed to infiltrate past about twenty enemy troops and make their way north to Colonel Hasebe's headquarters. A few survivors of 6th Company, also working east, were less fortunate because they ran into enemy tanks and were annihilated. Major Kajikawa led the remainder of his men west around the enemy's right flank and continued north 350 meters to 7th Company's main line. About two hours later, 0200 on 26 August Kajikawa met First Lieutenant Sawada at Hasebe's headquarters and learned that 5th Company had arrived around midnight.²⁴

The breakout from the south was only a first step. An 8th Border Guards officer told Kajikawa that Soviet troops had begun infiltrating the Hasebe detachment's left flank and that enemy artillery and mortar fire made any movement within their perimeter dangerous. The detachment itself was planning a breakout from the encirclement. At this time, the 2/28th Infantry could muster only fifty-five men, one heavy and two light machine guns, and one grenade discharger.²⁵ (See Map 18.)

While the survivors of 5th and 7th Companies made their way into the Hasebe's unit lines, Second Lieutenant Takashima faced a new enemy push on



Map 18. Soviet gains to 26 August 1939.

Hill 742. It was deathly still, no artillery fire or flares lit the night but like a dark wave black shapes moved up the hill to within fifty meters of the Japanese. Using a captured Soviet machine gun, the Japanese randomly sprayed the attackers, who pulled back in the same eerie silence in which they had come.

On the morning of 26 August Second Lieutenant Takashima scanned the Soviet lines below Hill 742 with his binoculars and spotted a Soviet lieutenant about 250 meters away. Superior Private Narita promptly shot him to death. That brought a Soviet mortar bombardment which bracketed the two men and culminated when a shell landed in their trench, shaking them but otherwise leaving them unharmed.²⁶

On the detachment's south flank 100 enemy infantrymen with four tanks tried to overrun the newly established battalion positions. The Hasebe Detachment's artillery fire damaged one tank and the others pulled back. Combined infantry and artillery attacks against 7th Company positions marked the day, but the heaviest attack came in the evening.

Around 1930 a large number of enemy soldiers crawled through the evening fog to Takashima's lines. A flurry of Soviet hand grenades exploded on the Japanese trenches. Swords and bayonets met the enemy troops as they grappled within Japanese lines. More enemy infantrymen appeared south of the platoon and a superior private manning a heavy machine gun and screaming "Bastards" at the top of his lungs shot them down until a bullet in the head killed him. Dead and wounded Japanese fell everywhere. Only the support of the Hasebe unit's four artillery

guns firing point blank broke the enemy attack.²⁷

The battalion was ordered to defend its lines to the death. After all stragglers had been collected near Hill 742 and contact had been established with Second Lieutenant Takashima, only 124 men were left to defend a 2,000-meter front.²⁸ Ammunition, food, and water were gone and all that the trapped Japanese could do was dig in and hope to take a few of the enemy with them. Mutual fire support was impossible and each pocket of Japanese troops had to fight its own lonely last stand. Wounded soldiers also were ordered to fight to the finish. Then the battalion got a reprieve. Hasebe, recalling Major Ito's injunction to hold until 24 August, believed that he could not accomplish his duty by allowing his troops to be annihilated. Thus at 2100 he issued the order to pull back.

Colonel Hasebe, by fieldphone, ordered Kajikawa to withdraw. The night was perfect for such an escape because there were no stars or moonlight and patches of fog covered the banks of the Holsten River, which the battalion had to cross to reach safety.

Joining forces with elements of the Hasebe Unit, the battalion moved out at 0100 on 27 August in an extended column formation. Second Lieutenant Takashima and twelve men preceded the column by 100 meters as point while 5th Company acted as rear guard 300 meters behind the column. During the move there was no enemy pursuit or opposition, but the point element, a medical platoon, and a company of field artillery got lost in the black, featureless desert. The battalion aide-de-camp, First Lieutenant Muranaka, also disappeared in the blackness.

Second Lieutenant Takashima and his point squad stumbled into a Soviet picket line. He tried to bluff his way through by answering a sentry's challenge in Russian, but got small arms fire in reply. The point then scattered and only a few rejoined the main column.

Most of the column reached Komu Heights, about 3,500 meters northeast of Hill 742, but found it occupied by enemy troops. A brief skirmish broke out around 0600, further disrupting the column, and contact with Major Kajikawa was lost. By luck the main column and its stragglers both turned west and soon joined forces. During the move the Japanese met a Soviet patrol but drove them off and even took a prisoner.

A superior private who had taken cover in a shell hole looked up to see a Soviet soldier peering over the crater's lip. The quick-witted Japanese trooper grabbed his surprised opponent's collar and pulled him into the shell hole where he pummeled him into unconsciousness. He then used his canteen straps to tie the prisoner's hands and dragged his quarry back to the Japanese positions.²⁹

Using ground contours and depressions to avoid detection, the battalion moved near Hill 739 by noon and about two hours later Japanese scouts found elements of the 71st Infantry. Waving a Japanese flag for recognition, the battalion crossed into their lines. But Soviet armor had also outflanked that unit so Kajikawa's men had to make yet another escape.

A reconnaissance patrol reported hearing gunfire near the pontoon bridge across the Holsten where the unit hoped to cross the river. Scouts sent to investigate the firing were never heard from

again. Similarly, a point squad, a machine gun crew, and the remaining battalion artillerymen were trapped and annihilated by Soviet armor that guarded the pontoon bridge. Fully aware by then of the attempted Japanese breakout, enemy artillery shelled their positions, killing and wounding several.

His position completely untenable, Major Kajikawa led his men in another breakout that night. The troops moved in three ranks with Kajikawa in the van. About 2200 the Japanese happened upon a broken-down Soviet supply truck and shot to death four enemy soldiers guarding it. The truck held canned meat and biscuits so the famished troops had nourishment for their continuing withdrawal.³⁰

When the Japanese reached the south bank of the Holsten, the Soviet tanks and infantry seemed to be everywhere. They spent precious time trying to find a gap in the enemy patrols but failed. By 0130 on 28 August enemy tanks had surrounded them and sporadic firing was directed their way. Waiting for daylight would mean annihilation so Kajikawa ordered the men to move toward the river.

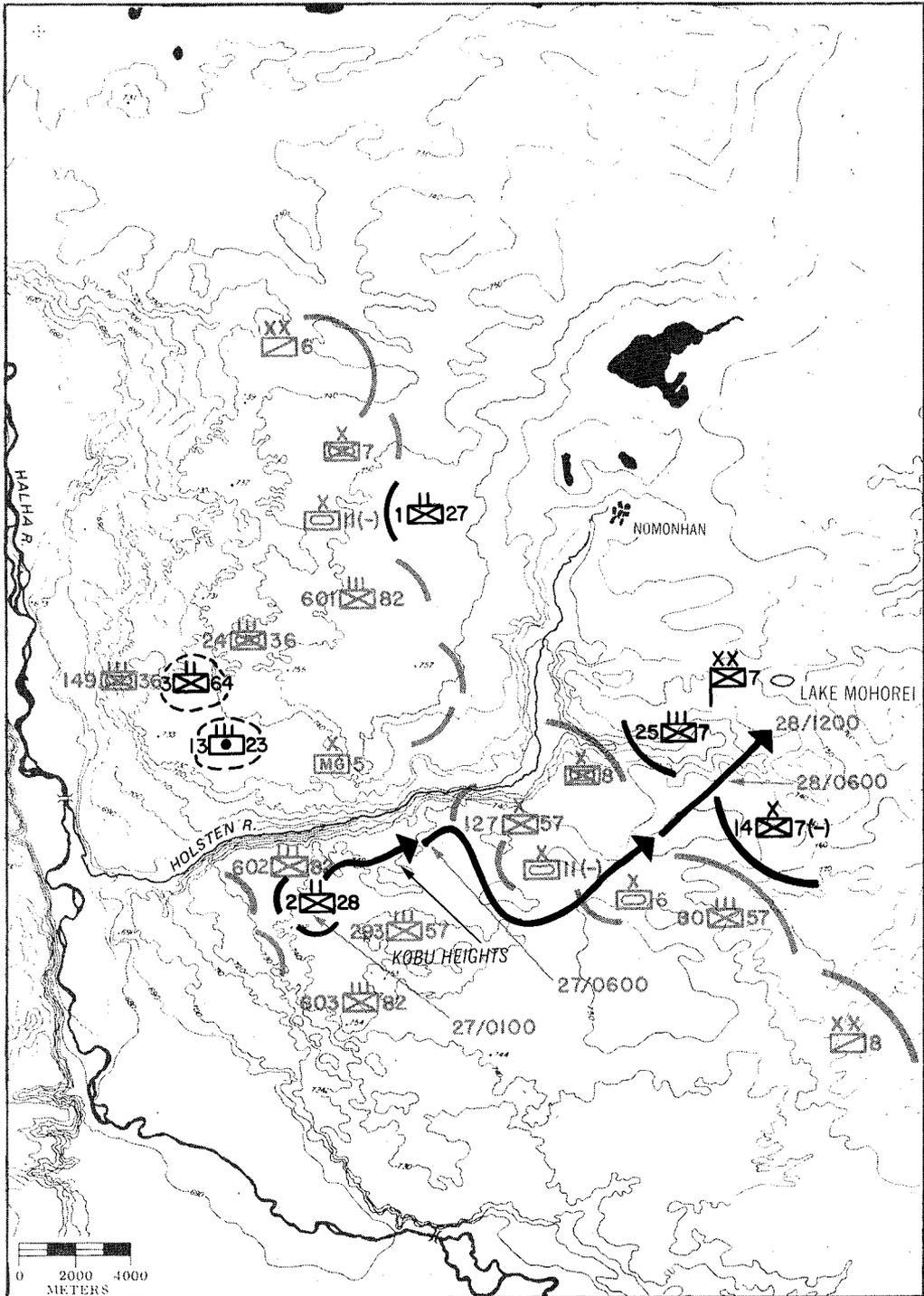
Enemy tanks on both sides of the Japanese detected the movement and along with Soviet riflemen fired wildly in the darkness hoping to hit something. Using the North Star for a guide, the Japanese quite by chance filtered through a gap in the enemy line and pushed farther east. Under the impression that they had crossed the river (they apparently skirted the swamp and marsh bordering the south bank of the Holsten), the battalion's luck continued as they met a Japanese truck convoy attached to the 25th Infantry. They had

finally broken the Soviet encirclement. (See Map 19.)

Major Kajikawa, leaving his exhausted but lucky survivors in 25th Infantry lines, reported to LTG Ogisu Rippei, commander of the 6th Army.³¹ Of 28 officers and 854 enlisted men, 13 officers and 264 soldiers had been killed in action. Among the wounded were 11 officers and 367 men and 47 enlisted men were missing.³² Of the battalion's original 24 officers, 17 were dead or wounded, both battalion artillery officers were dead, and 4 junior officers from other 28th Infantry companies who served in the battalion were dead or wounded.³³

The 2/28th Infantry was in no condition to perform any mission. The 6th Army's needs were so great, however, that the 2/28th was designated a second echelon unit, resupplied and re-equipped for a general offensive.

Although about ten kilometers from the Soviet lines, enemy artillery fire forced the battalion to move to safer positions on 30 and 31 August. Through early September the men prepared for a new offensive, but on 16 September a cease-fire agreement went into effect. The War Diary tersely concluded, "We terminated our combat operations and are awaiting orders."³⁴ Ironically, the 2/28th Infantry's next combat orders were for Guadalcanal where the battalion would be destroyed.



Map 19. Breakout of 2/28th and situation as of 28 August 1939.

Conclusion

6



Outcome

The Soviet armored attack, skillfully directed by General Georgi K. Zhukov of later World War II fame, rapidly turned the southern flank of the IJA's 23d Division. To the north, progress was slower, but after vicious fighting on Fui Heights, where flame-throwing Soviet tanks finally dislodged and routed the Japanese defenders, the "Red juggernaut" rolled up the Japanese right flank. At the village of Nomonhan, the Soviet armored columns met and sealed off the 23d Division. It seems certain that if the Soviets had pressed their pursuit operations, 6th Army would have been routed. However, the Soviets halted at the boundary line that they maintained was the border and began digging positions.¹ Diplomatic negotiations already in progress between Japan and the Soviet Union were accelerated as the fighting slackened in early September. Finally, a cease-fire went into effect on 16 September.²

It may be argued that the mobile warfare at Nomonhan was the "first battle" of Japan's anticipated "next war" against the Soviet Union. The Changkufeng battle one year earlier was not a true test of Japanese tactical doctrine because of its relatively small scale and the terrain limitations on each side's ability to maneuver. The

manifestation of Soviet combined arms doctrine, which, after all, was what the IJA had designed its tactical doctrine to counter, occurred then on Mongolian steppes in the summer of 1939. Even though the IJA lost its "first battle," the defeat had little impact on Japanese tactical doctrine.

Doctrine

The Japanese had designed a tactical doctrine to meet a specific Soviet combined arms threat. This doctrine relied heavily on the intangibles of battle—morale, fighting spirit, leadership—to compensate for the relative lack of Japanese materiel compared to the Soviets. Doctrine substituted for the heavy divisions that the Japanese could have used against the Soviet armor-heavy formations.

Like all doctrine, the IJA's would capitalize on national values and strengths to defeat a foe. It also contained specific assumptions about the capabilities of the potential enemy. The concept of a short war fought to a quick, decisive conclusion (*sokusen sokketsu*), for instance, merely expressed the IJA's realization that it lacked the manpower and materiel resources to fight a protracted war against the Soviets. The tactics to com-

plement that goal, particularly flanking maneuvers to disrupt and demoralize superior Soviet forces, were an attempt to avoid a costly head-on battle of attrition. Furthermore, the IJA did adopt doctrine to exploit qualities like extreme courage and audacity, which it identified as being uniquely Japanese. Such doctrine was unquestionably valuable against enemy infantry.

Japanese doctrine also contained certain premises about the Soviet foe. The Japanese did not underestimate the Soviet's materiel advantages, but they believed that Japanese "spiritual power"—the intangibles of the battlefield—would offset the deficiency. Soviet doctrine, they felt, was too inflexible and the Russian character too rigid to adapt quickly to Japanese tactics which stressed surprise and maneuver. If national strengths and enemy capabilities may be described as dynamics whose interaction produces doctrine, a brief review of the Nomonhan fighting will illustrate the effect of battle on such forces.

Japanese infantry doctrine presumed imaginative leadership that could adapt itself to a changing battlefield. Yet after the failure of the 23d Division's July offensives, this leadership, at least at the division and army levels, accepted a defensive role in positional warfare that ran counter to all Japanese Army doctrine. The Japanese found themselves fighting the Soviets' kind of war. Thus, the Japanese not only lacked effective materiel countermeasures against Soviet artillery and air power, but also exhibited little flexibility.

In July the Japanese offensives against the Soviet forces testified to the first psychological basis of Japanese

morale which did not waver during the hard fighting. The IJA's materiel basis, however, was inadequate for the demands of modern warfare. Doctrine could carry it only so far when there were too few Japanese tanks and too few artillery pieces to influence decisively the outcome of the battle. This left the Japanese infantrymen armed with gasoline-filled bottles to face counterattacks by Soviet tanks and infantry supported by artillery. It meant that Japanese attackers could not reach their objective, which was the enemy infantry.

Stereotypes of their Soviet opponents also hindered Japanese operations. Japanese commanders refused to believe that the Soviets could concentrate large combined arms forces so far from a railhead. They rejected the notion that the Soviets could adapt themselves to defeat Japanese tactics. At the IJA division level this meant that commanders were astounded when their unprecedented artillery preparation for the 23 July offensive provoked an even heavier Soviet counterbattery fire. At the battalion level this meant that Japanese soldiers suffered through the daily Soviet artillery bombardments because their own artillery was quantitatively incapable of silencing the Soviet guns.

The Japanese, then, underestimated their enemy. Lieutenant Colonel Azuma led his reconnaissance element into a trap because he treated his foe lightly. Similarly, the 7th Division marched to Nomonhan confident of an easy victory. Such preconceptions made defeat even more stunning. For whatever reasons, the Soviets took the Japanese very seriously and were willing to commit all the men and materiel necessary to defeat them.

While on the defensive in August, the Japanese had to fight in a doctrinal vacuum. One defended a position only in order to prepare for a counter-attack. Little wonder Japanese troops erected flimsy shelters initially because they believed that they would soon be out of those positions and on the offensive again. After Soviet artillery pounded those shelters to rubble, the Japanese dug deeper. The doctrinal void also affected intelligence. Japanese doctrine, based on maneuver and surprise, presumed an enemy off-balance and forced to react to Japanese initiatives. It was not so much that the Japanese at all levels ignored intelligence indicators of a forthcoming Soviet offensive. They failed to evaluate these indicators properly. One reason was that the Japanese were so preoccupied with the notion of counterattacking the Soviets that they neglected the possibility that a large-scale Soviet offensive might not present them with the chance to counterattack.

One Japanese misconception led to another. Since the Soviets were inflexible, their tactics were too rigid to break the Japanese defenses. Any Soviet offensive would soon collapse and then the Japanese could counterattack and destroy the Soviets. And so it went, except that the Soviets showed adaptability—especially in protecting their light tanks—while the Japanese displayed inflexibility.

But never is a battle so clear-cut. Many of the Soviet troops who initially opposed the 2/28th Infantry were of low caliber. The Soviet 82d and 57th Rifle Divisions were poorly trained, hastily organized territorial militia. They made mistakes and the 603d Rifle Regiment, 82d Rifle Division, broke and ran its first time under fire. Soviet

tactics were repetitious, like their unimaginative frontal assaults or their repeated infiltration attempts despite disastrous results. Such errors reinforced Japanese preconceptions of the Soviets and may have lulled the Japanese into a false sense of security. Soviet strength was, however, composite, depending on the combined arms mass and not the single unit.

Japanese strength, conversely, lay in small units and the epitome of Japanese doctrine was embodied in small unit tactics. Night attacks at platoon or company level and the willingness to engage in hand-to-hand combat were hallmarks of the Japanese infantryman. Indeed such tactics were very successful against individual Soviet infantry units.

Imagination and daring were prime ingredients in the 2/28th's night attacks. Officers welcomed the risks of hand-to-hand combat and counted on surprise and shock action to offset superior numbers of enemy troops. Courage and tenacity were readily apparent throughout the 2/28th's combat operations at Nomonhan. But such courage and shock tactics had only limited value against Soviet tanks and artillery. No matter how much battle-courage the men possessed, no matter how competent their officers, they could not get through the zone of Soviet artillery fire protecting the Soviet infantry. The Japanese soldier could not get close enough to his Soviet foe to use his courage and daring to best advantage. While a Japanese squad might charge headlong into a Soviet infantry platoon with a good chance for success, the same squad would be shot to pieces if they tried to rush Soviet tanks.

Battlefield courage also influenced the force structure. There was no bat-

talion staff to coordinate logistics, intelligence, operations, and personnel. Battalion commanders and their aides-de-camp had to assume these burdens. But the primary role for Japanese commanders was to inspire battlefield courage by their exemplary leadership. Leadership had precedence over the conduct of battalion affairs.

It was a system that made great demands on officers' courage and pushed officers to the limits of their abilities. The system also required junior officers with courage and initiative. It is apparent that the 2/28th Infantry had such young officers, but even their élan could not defeat Soviet tanks. The price, moreover, of such aggressive leadership was prohibitive.

The Cost of Courage

The 2/28th Infantry suffered almost 86 percent casualties, a percentage substantially higher than the staggering 73 percent overall Japanese losses. Yet the men held together as a unit. Significantly, Japanese doctrine made leadership like that displayed by Major Kajikawa* the norm, not the exception. Even had Kajikawa been killed or otherwise incapacitated, it has been argued that the surviving junior officers and NCOs would have held the unit together and perhaps even exhibited better leadership.³ It is a moot point, but one worth noting, that the 71st Infantry, for example, went through four commanding officers during the fighting, and its performance suffered accordingly.⁴ Doctrine assumed all officers could lead equally well, but the experience of the battlefield showed some led more equally than others.

Faced with devastating casualties and unimaginable hardships, the 2/28th did manage to function as a combat unit throughout the battle. The unit never enjoyed sustained logistic support. Ammunition, replacements, and supplies arrived sporadically, despite the determination and risks of the service troops. The Japanese never had the logistic support they required, but in part this resulted from the low priority assigned to logistics. The overworked battalion commander could ask higher headquarters for more artillery and more ammunition, and higher headquarters could reply that more aggressive leadership was the solution. The aggressive, at times inspired, leadership of junior officers was, in large measure, responsible for unit cohesion. As the price for such daring leadership, the battalion lost more officers in terms of percentage than their counterparts' loss rate overall. Moreover, their bitter experience undermined the survivors' faith in the higher echelons of command.⁵ The 7th Division Headquarters reported, for example, that Japanese officers and men suffered so greatly during the fighting against the Soviets that it would be difficult to restore their previous high morale.⁶ Morale, however, was central to Japanese tactical doctrine.

Individual bravery and leadership could not overcome doctrinal and material deficiencies. In fact, the Japanese emphasis on the spirit and on leadership qualities probably exacerbated Japanese losses. Attrition rates at Nonnhan were significantly higher than in previous Japanese wars.⁷ The Japanese regarded such spiritual power as the soul of tactics and as fundamental

*Kajikawa died of illness on 1 February 1941 in a field hospital in Northern Manchuria.

for modern warfare. Spiritual power was viewed as the great equalizer. Leadership qualities flowed from those tactical considerations rather than being the source of them.

Doctrinal Implications for the IJA

While the overwhelming Soviet qualitative and quantitative materiel superiority ultimately defeated the Japanese at Nomonhan, the defeat cannot be ascribed to materiel deficiencies alone. A tactical doctrine designed for infantrymen that stressed offensive action to achieve a quick victory was pitted against a doctrine which emphasized combined arms and protracted warfare. The Japanese decision to fight a war of attrition against the superior Soviet Red Army was, in retrospect, a mistake. It should be remembered that the Kwantung Army based its decision on its perception of how the Soviets would fight. In other words, the dynamism between Japanese values and assumed enemy capabilities produced a Japanese tactical doctrine that was neutralized when the Soviets did not fight according to Japanese expectations. Only the decision of a battle exposes what later generations regard as self-evident truths.

First Lieutenant Sadakaji, with his sword attacking Soviet tanks, personified the dilemma of doctrine and force structure which impaled the Japanese. A paucity of resources and money dictated a light infantry force structure. A tactical doctrine to complement this force structure emerged after decades of painstaking analysis and heated arguments. To alter drastically IJA tactical doctrine was, in effect, to pull the

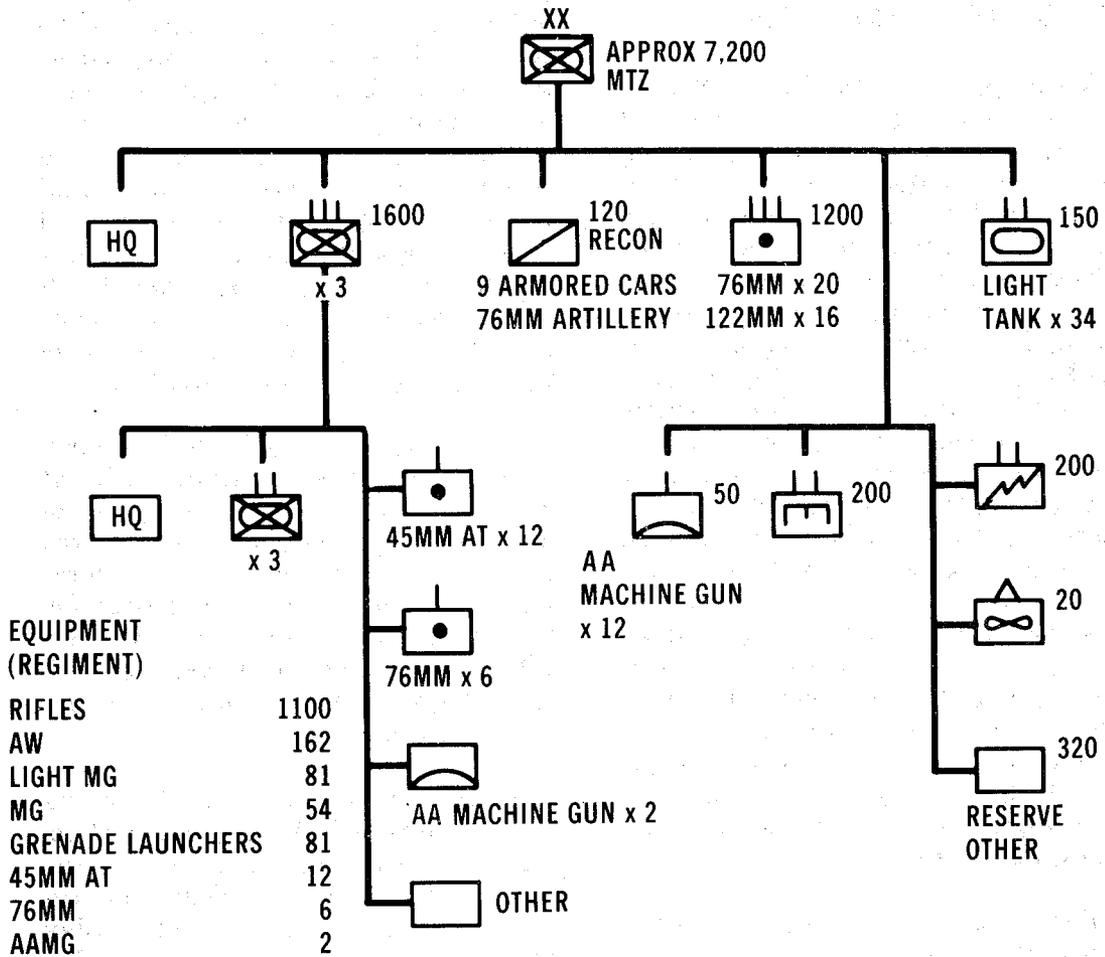
props from under Japanese spirit—the intangibles of battle—to deny the martial values themselves. Perhaps it could have been done, and the end result would have been an army with a glittering array of weaponry, but no soul.

For that reason it should not be strange that a major lesson IJA staff officers drew from Nomonhan was the value of the intangibles on the battlefield exemplified by the courage to defend a position to the death. Be it Second Lieutenant Tahara committing suicide to avoid capture, Captain Tsuji urging his tried men to press forward in a vicious night attack, or the nameless hundreds of enlisted soldiers fighting to the death, one cannot discard overnight the training and doctrine that produced such exceptional valor.

The IJA remained an infantry-heavy force. It always lacked sufficient armor because armor was unaffordable. Japanese strategic thought opted for the aircraft. Beyond that basic force structure decision (made three years before Nomonhan) the IJA never did solve the dilemma of a judicious balance of traditional martial values and modern weaponry.

Despite the numerous postmortems by field units and higher headquarters, the IJA's basic conclusion was that the greatest lesson from the Nomonhan experience was the magnificent display of traditional spiritual power as the basis of modern warfare.⁸ Naturally, fire-power would have to be increased to complement this spiritual power, but the Japanese continued to rely on intangible factors to win battles. As infantry they were excellent, but as soldiers fighting a modern war they were an anachronism, as the Pacific War would ultimately demonstrate.

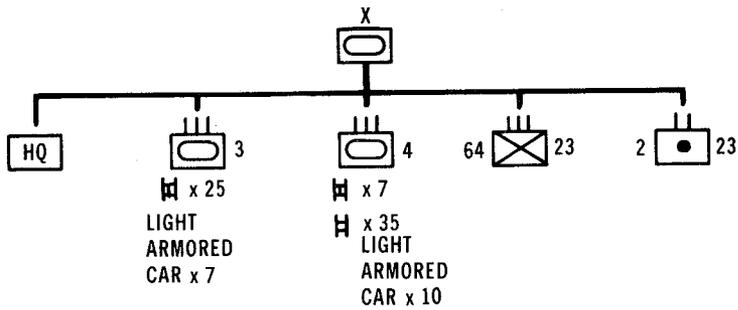
36TH SOVIET MOTORIZED RIFLE DIVISION (1939)*



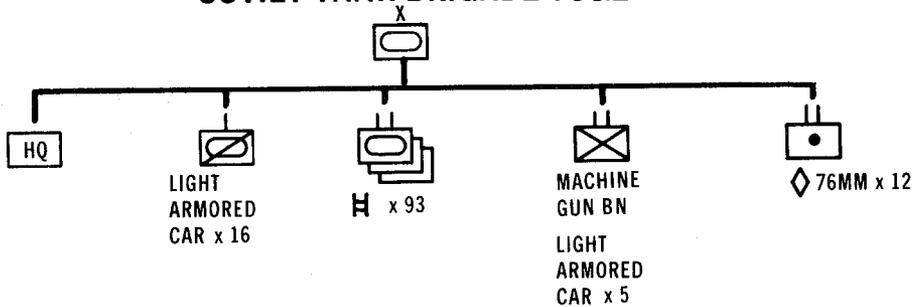
* 36TH DIVISION STRENGTH IS AT VARIANCE WITH THE 1939 TO&E OF A SOVIET MOTORIZED RIFLE DIVISION WHICH SHOWS 37 LIGHT TANKS, 58 ARMORED CARS, AND AA AND AT BATTALIONS.

SOURCE KG, 160.

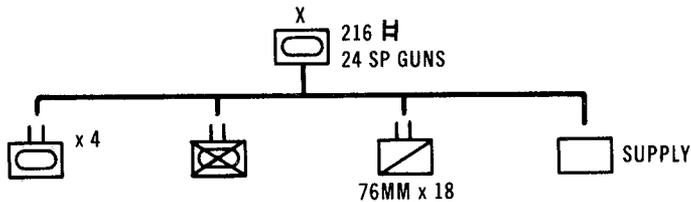
YASUOKA DETACHMENT



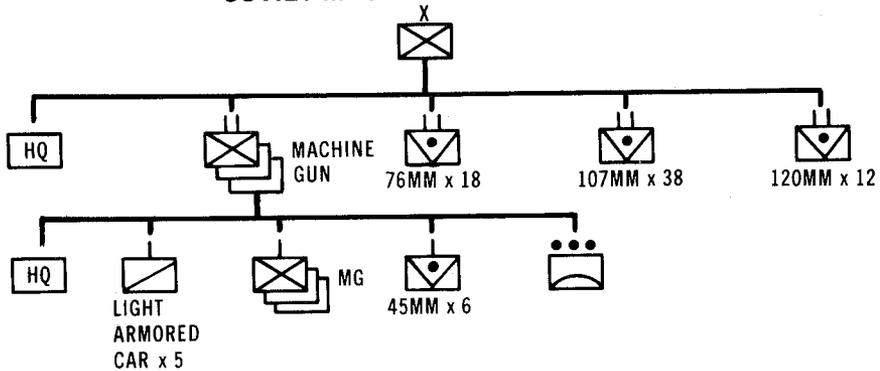
JAPANESE ESTIMATE OF 1939 SOVIET TANK BRIGADE TO&E



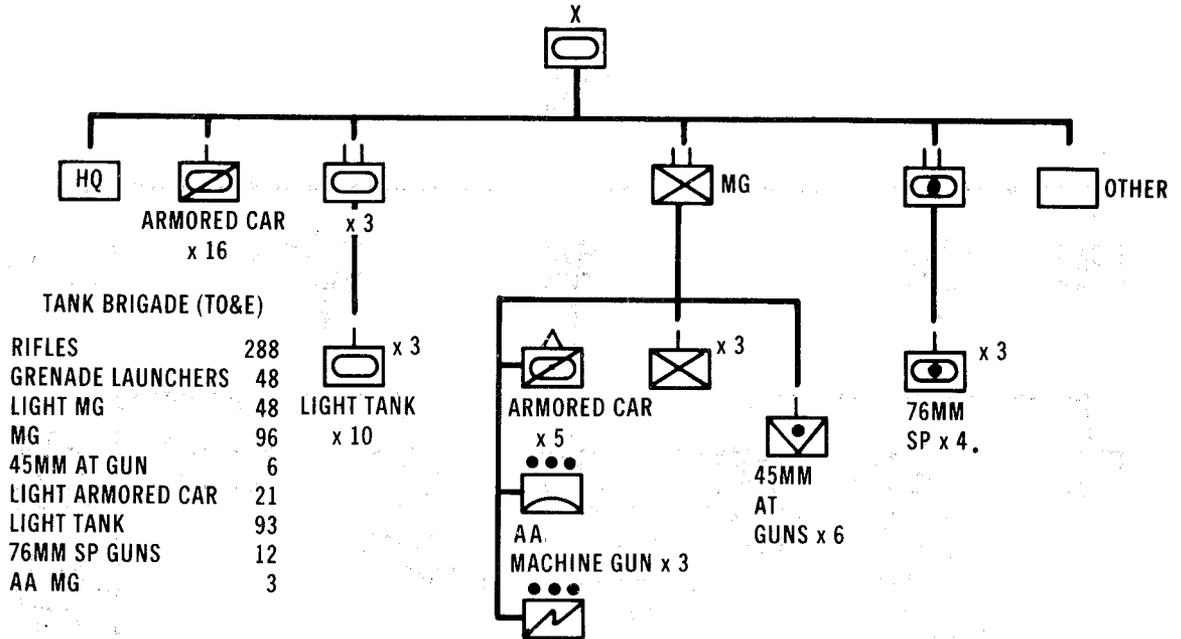
STANDARD SOVIET TANK BRIGADE TO&E (1939)



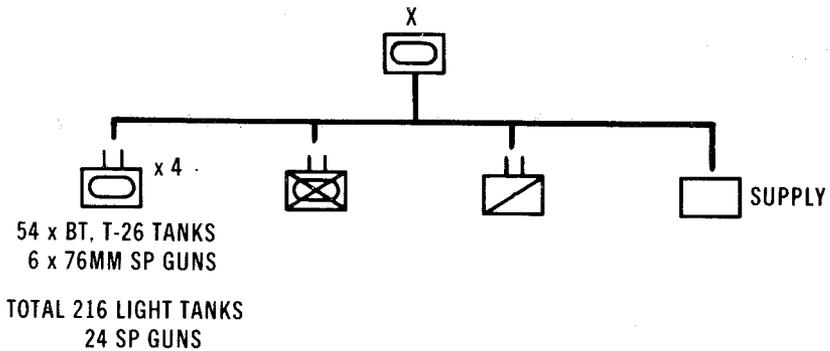
SOVIET MACHINE GUN BRIGADE



SOVIET TANK BRIGADE*



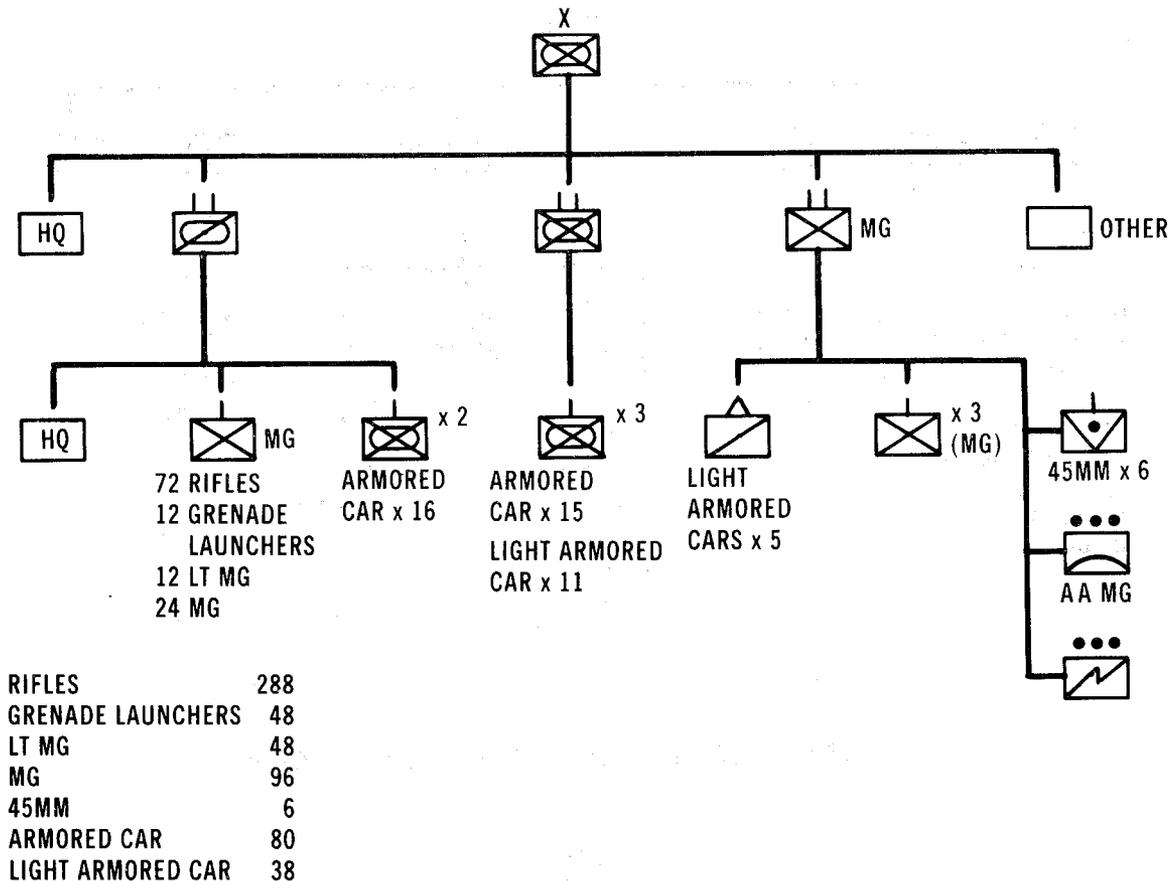
SOVIET LIGHT TANK BRIGADE (1938 TO&E)



* THIS TO&E IS SIMILIAR TO THE 1935 SOVIET SEPARATE MECHANIZED BRIGADE, SOMETIMES CALLED AN ARMORED INFANTRY BRIGADE, WHICH SUPPOSEDLY MERGED INTO A TANK BRIGADE IN 1938.

SOURCE: KURONO, "YUKEITEKI SENTO..."

SOVIET MOTORIZED ARMORED BRIGADE



SOURCE: KURONO, "YUKEITEKI SENTO..." AND KG, 161.

Appendix 2. Japanese officers cited in text

<i>Name</i>	<i>Rank</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Status</i>
Aoyagi Kinichiro	CPT	Commander, 5th Company, 2/28th Battalion	KIA
Azuma Shuji	LTC	Acting Commander, 71st Infantry Regiment	KIA
Azuma Yaozo	LTC	Commander, Reconnaissance Element, 23d Division	KIA
Hasebe Riei	COL	Commander, 8th Border Guards	Suicide
Hattori Takushiro	LTC	Staff Officer, Kwantung Army	Relieved
Kajikawa Tomiji	MAJ	Commander, 2/28th Battalion	WIA
Komatsubara Michitaro	LTG	Commander, 23d Infantry Division	Relieved
Morita Tetsuji	COL	Commander, 71st Infantry Regiment	KIA
Muranaka Shoichi	1LT	Aide-de-camp, Commander, 2/28th Battalion	WIA
Nagano Eizo	COL	Commander, 71st Infantry Regiment	WIA
Nakano Tomizo	2LT	Commander, 1st Platoon, 6th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Nishinome Shogoro	2LT	Commander, 2d Platoon, 6th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Ogisu Rippei	LTG	Commander, 6th Army	Relieved
Sadakaji Tetsuo	1LT	Commander, Machine Gun Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Saito Kiyokichi	1LT	Commander, 7th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Sano Shoji	2LT	Commander, 2d Platoon, 5th Company, 2/28th Bn	WIA
Sawada Tetsuro	1LT	Commander, Weapons Platoon, 5th Company, 2/28th	WIA
Sumi Shinichiro	COL	Commander, 26th Infantry Regiment	Relieved
Suzuki Katsushi	2LT	Commander, 3d Platoon, 7th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Tahara Tamotsu	2LT	Commander, 1st Platoon, 5th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Takashima Masao	2LT	Commander, 2d Platoon, 7th Company, 2/28th Bn	
Tsuji Kiichi	CPT	Commander, 6th Company, 2/28th Bn	KIA
Tsuji Masanobu	MAJ	Staff Officer, Kwantung Army	Relieved
Ueda Kenkichi	GEN	Commander, Kwantung Army	Relieved
Yamagata Takemitsu	COL	Commander, 64th Infantry Regiment	Suicide
Yasuoka Masaomi	LTG	Commander, Yasuoka Task Force	Relieved

Appendix 3. Japanese casualties by branch and weapons type.

I. Japanese Army Attrition by Branch (Percentage)

	Russo-Japanese War (1904-05)	Changkufeng (1938)	Nomonhan (1939)
Infantry	14.4	24.7	70.6
Cavalry	1.7	10.7	51.2
Artillery	4.1	7.7	65.0
Engineers	0.2	14.7	50.0
Transport	0.2		25.4
Sanitation	1.8	12.6	33.7

II. Japanese Wounds by Weapons Type (Percentage)

	Rifle	Artillery	Other
Russo-Japanese War			
a) non-seige warfare	81.0	13.7	5.3
b) seige warfare	60.5	22.9	16.6
Changkufeng	35.4	36.9	28.7
Nomonhan			
WIA	35.9	53.0	11.1
KIA	37.3	51.2	11.5

Notes



Abbreviations Used in Notes

Archives—*Archives of the Imperial Army, Navy, and Other Government Agencies, 1868—1945.*

KG—*Kantōgun*

NJS—*Nomonhan jikenshi: Dai 23 shidan no sentō.*

SC—“*Senjō shinri chōsa hōkoku: Senjō shinri chōsa ni motozuku shoken.*”

SWABP—*Small Wars and Border Problems.*

War Diary—*Hohei dai 28 rentai dai 2 daitai, Kōanhōku-sho shin bakuko sayōkuki fukin Nomonhan fukin sentō shōhō.*

Preface

1. *New York Times*, 20 July 1939, p. 18.
2. The most comprehensive treatment in English is U.S. Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Japanese Research Division, Military History Section, Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, *Small Wars and Border Problems*, vol. 11, pt. 3, Book B and Book C, *The Nomonhan Incident (1939)* (1956) (hereafter cited as *SWABP*). The re-appearance of IJA archival materials previously believed destroyed dates these studies. A comprehensive treatment of the Kwantung Army including an extensive examination of the Nomonhan fighting will soon be available as Alvin Coox's *The Rise and Fall of the Kwantung Army: From Portsmouth 1905 to Nomonhan 1939*, forthcoming.

Chapter 1

1. This overview is based on Bōeichō Bōeikenshūjō senshibu [Headquarters Self Defense Forces, Self Defense Forces National Defense College, Military History Department], ed., *Soren gawa shiryō kara mita Nomonhan jiken Soren no kokkyō funsō taisho* [The Nomonhan Incident viewed from Soviet documents: coping with disputes on the Soviet border], (1978), *passim*.

Chapter 2

1. For an excellent description of Japanese ambition and actions in Manchuria see Mark R. Peattie, *Ishiwara Kanji and Japan's Confrontation with the West* (Princeton University Press, 1975).
2. Hata Ikuhikō, “The Japanese-Soviet Confrontation, 1935—1939,” translated with an introduction by Alvin D. Coox in James W. Morley, ed., *Deterrent Diplomacy: Japan, Germany, and the USSR 1935—1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1976), p. 115.

3. John Erickson, *The Road to Stalingrad* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), pp. 55—56. By 1937 the Soviets had about 15,000 tanks and produced about 3,000 annually. By 1940 the Japanese a total of 573 tanks. More than 80 percent of the Soviet tanks used in the August 1939 offensive were light tanks.
4. The most comprehensive treatment of the Changkufeng Incident is Alvin D. Coox, *The Anatomy of a Small War: The Soviet-Japanese Struggle for Changkufeng/Khasan, 1938* (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1977).
5. Rikujō Jieitai kanbugakkō shūshinkai, [Ground Self Defense Forces Command and General Staff College], ed., *Kindai Nihon sensōshi gaisetsu* [An outline of modern Japanese war history] (Tokyo: Rikujō Jieitai kanbugakkō shūshinkai, 1968), p. 180.
6. Hata, "Japanese-Soviet Confrontation," p. 159.
7. Kantōgun shireikan [Kwantung Army Headquarters], "Kansakurei dai 1488 gō bessatsu. Man 'So' kokkyō funsō shori yōkō" [Principles for the settlement of Manchurian-Soviet border disputes], cited in Tsunoda Jun, ed., *Gendaishi shiryō*, vol. 10, *Nitchū Sensō*, pt. 3 [Documents on modern history, vol. 10, The Sino-Japanese War, pt. 3] (Tokyo: Misuzu shobō, 1964), pp. 106—7 (hereafter cited as *GDSSR* 10).
8. Bōeichō senshishitsu [Ground Self Defense Forces Military History Room] ed., *Nomonhan jikenshi: Dai 23 shidan no sentō* [A history of the Nomonhan Incident: the battle of the 23d Division], (1977) special study prepared for the use of students at the Japan Command and General Staff College, p. 24 (hereafter cited as *NJS*).
9. "Kohon sanden 194 sono 1—5" [Komatsubara headquarters staff transmission 194, pts. 1—5], 13 May 1939, *GDSSR* 10, pp. 107—8. Originally classified secret.
10. *NJS*, pp. 14—15.
11. *NJS*, p. 15. For a comparison of IJA square and triangular divisions see Bōeichō bōeikenshūjō senshishitsu, ed., *Senshi sōsho Kantōgun* (1) *Tai So senbi Nomonhan jiken* [Official war history series: the Kwantung Army, vol. 1, Preparations for the war against the USSR and the Nomonhan Incident] (Tokyo: Asagumo shimbunsha, 1969), pp. 166—69 (hereafter cited as *KG*).
12. *KG*, p. 145.
13. U.S. Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Japanese Research Division, Military History Section, Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, and Eighth U.S. Army (Rear), ed., *Japanese Studies on Manchuria*, vol. 5, *Infantry Operations*, 1956, p. 24.
14. *KG*, p. 167; Hohei dai 28 rentai dai 2 daitai [Second Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment], *Kōanhōku-sho shin bakuko sayokuki fukin Nomonhan fukin sentō shōhō* [Detailed report of fighting in general area of Nomonhan in Hsing-an North Province], 20 June—16 September 1939, in Library of Congress, comp., *Archives of the Imperial Army, Navy, and Other Government Agencies, 1868—1945*, Reel 133 (hereafter cited as *Archives*). The war diary compiled by the 2/28th Infantry during the Nomonhan fighting was originally classified top secret (hereafter cited as War Diary).
15. Shirokawa Yoshinori Rikugun daijin [War Minister Shirokawa Yoshinori], *Sentō kōyō* [Manual of combat principles] (Tokyo: War Ministry, 1932; reprint ed., Tokyo: Ikeda shobō, 1977), pp. 1—2. Also see *Infantry Operations*, pp. 78—81.
16. See the parallels not only in doctrine but even in wording in Rikugun kyōiku kanbu [Inspector General of Military Education], ed., *Meiji 42 nen Hohei sōten* [Infantry drill manual, 1909 edition] (Tokyo: Rikugun insatsubu, 1909), pp. 2—6; Rikugun kyōiku kanbu, ed., *Hohei sentō kyōren hensan yoshi* [Outline of the editing of the drill manual for infantry combat] (Tokyo: Rikugun insatsubu, 1945), p. 1.
17. Fujiwara Akira, *Gunjishi* [Military history] (Tokyo: Tōyō keizai shinpōsha, 1961), pp. 109—10.
18. *Sentō kōyō*, p. 12.
19. *KG*, p. 28.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
21. Fujiwara, *Gunjishi*, pp. 188-89. The number of Military Academy graduates for 1929 to 1941 was as follows:

1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937	1938	1939	1940	1941
239	218	227	315	337	338	330	388	471	466	506	635	1719

22. *Rikugun kyōiku kanbu*, ed., *Hohei sōten kaisei riyusho* [Written reasons for revision of the infantry manual] (Tokyo: Rikugun insatsubu, 1928), p. 31 ff.
23. *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 33—34.
24. *KG*, p. 36.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
26. For a detailed treatment of this fighting see Coox, *Anatomy of a Small War*, *passim*.
27. *KG*, p. 177.
28. Kantōgun heibi kenkyū chōsa iinchō [Chairman of the committee for the research and investigation of the Kwangtung Army's military preparations], *Nomonhan jiken kenkyū hōkoku* [Research report on the Nomonhan Incident], 27 November 1939, *Archives*, Reel 109. Originally classified military secret.
29. *KG*, p. 533.
30. U.S. Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, Japanese Research Division, Military History Section, Headquarters U.S. Army Forces Far East, *Japanese Night Combat*, pt. 1, *Principles of Night Combat* (1955), charts 1-a—d, 2-a—f, and 3-a—e, respectively. A comparison of these charts with the ones in the original Japanese language study *Kyū Nihon rikugun no yakan sentō* [Night combat of the former Japanese Army] written in 1954 for the Historical Section, Headquarters, U.S. Forces Far East, reveals slight differences in the training schedule.
31. *KG*, p. 176.
32. *KG*, pp. 441—43; *NJS*, pp. 24—28.
33. John G. Campbell, Major, U.S. Army, "The Khalkhin-Gol or Nomonhan Incident," (Research paper, U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 15 May 1980), pp. 10-11.
34. Terrain and climate conditions adapted from *NJS*, pp. 19—23; *KG*, p. 536.
35. *KG*, p. 536.
36. *KG*, p. 429.
37. *NJS*, pp. 21—22; *KG*, p. 493.
38. *NJS*, pp. 30—42; *KG*, pp. 447—62. Total Japanese losses amounted to 159 killed and 119 wounded. The Japanese claimed 440 Soviet or Mongolian troops killed and 21 tanks or armored cars destroyed.
39. Tsuji Masanobu, *Nomonhan* (reprint ed., Tokyo: Hara Shobō, 1975), p. 95.
40. *NJS*, p. 47.
41. *Ibid.*, p. 47; *KG*, pp. 468—69.
42. *NJS*, pp. 48—49. Tsuji, *Nomonhan*, pp. 99—100, cites Komatsubara's report.
43. *NJS*, p. 51; *KG*, pp. 469—70. Tsuji later wrote bitterly, "If I were Komatsubara, I would have slit my guts." Tsuji, *Nomonhan*, p. 104.
44. "Dai 7 shidan shōkō kōtō bunkan shokuinhyō" [A list of officers and high ranking military officials of the 7th Division], 20 March 1939. Originally classified secret. I am indebted to Mr. Arima Seiichi for providing me a copy of this list.
45. The description is adapted from Coox, *Anatomy*, p. 142.
46. "Senjō shinri chōsa hōkoku: Senjō shinri chōsa ni motozuku shoken." [Report of investigation of battlefield psychology: observation based on investigations of battlefield psychology], n.d., but clearly written in late 1939. Originally classified secret (hereafter cited as SC).
47. *Ibid.*
48. "Tai So sentō yōkō" [How to fight the Soviets], 1933, pp. 3—5. Originally classified restricted. A much abbreviated form of this manual appears in *KG*, pp. 182—85.
49. According to Alvin Coox, the Japanese judged the Soviet troops at Changkufeng as generally dull-witted or stolid soldiers who lacked an aggressive sense of responsibility. Occasionally, the Soviets were capable of obstinate resistance. See Coox, *Anatomy*, p. 171. One reason for the poor Soviet showing was the presence at Changkufeng of Lev Mekhlis, senior Army Commissar and Deputy Defense Commissar. According to John Erickson, Mekhlis "showed an almost criminal predilection for frontal assaults; the Soviet troops were charging Japanese machine guns on the heights." Erickson, *Road*, p. 22.
50. "Tai So," pp. 14—15.

Chapter 3

1. Tsuji and Hattori reconnoitered Soviet west bank positions in a light aircraft and then devised their plan.
2. The Kwantung Army had already transferred almost all of its bridging equipment to the China Front, so Japanese combat engineers had to use bridging equipment previously used for unit training exercises to throw a single pontoon bridge across the Halha.
3. Around 1940 on 2 July a Japanese reconnaissance pilot dropped a message to Yasuoka's headquarters. The message indicated that the Soviet forces were pulling back across the Halha and that rapid pursuit was necessary to trap them. However, the pilot's visibility and accuracy were affected by clouds and rain. See *KG*, p. 504.
4. *KG*, p. 505.
5. Yasuoka shitai 'Nomonhan' jiken shiryō (Shōwa 14-7-1—14-7-10) [Documents of the Yasuoka Detachment during the Nomonhan Incident, 1 July 1939—10 July 1939], "Kimitsu sakusen nikki (an)" [Operations diary (draft)], entry for 2 July 1939 originally classified secret.
6. War Diary, entry for 3 July 1939.
7. Yasuoka shitai, "Ji 7 gatsu futsuka itaru 7 gatsu toka Sentō yōhō" [Report of combat operations from 2 July to 10 July], entries for 3 and 4 July.
8. Mita Naohirō, ed., *Shichi shidan senki Nomonhan no shitō* [Battle record of the 7th Division: the death struggle at Nomonhan], n.d., p. 172. This material originally appeared in serialized form in the Hokkaido *Taimusu* from February through November 1963. A copy of the compilation is available at the Japan National Defense College Archive.
9. Rikujō Jieitai dai 28 futsūka rentai, ed., *Hohei dai 28 rentai gaishi* [A general history of the 28th Regular Infantry Regiment] (Hakodate, 1969), p. 173.
10. *KG*, p. 493.
11. War Diary, 5 July entry.
12. *Ibid.*
13. Close attack squad was a euphemism for what amounted to an almost suicidal tank killing squad. These three-man teams, armed with Molotov cocktails and antitank mines, were expected to maneuver close enough to enemy tanks to be able to detonate their weapons against the hull or tracks of the tank. As regular Japanese infantry battalions had no organic antitank weapons, these teams constituted the main form of Japanese light infantry antitank defense.
14. *SC*, p. 162.
15. See Sanbō honbuyaku [Translation section, General Staff Headquarters], *Sekigun tokuhon* [Red Army handbook] (Tokyo: Kaikōsha, 1936), pp. 169—76. This source, originally classified restricted officers use only, is a translation of A. I. Sedyakin's 1935 tactics manual and was designed as "a reference material for military education to acquaint officers with the character of Soviet tactics."
16. Kaikōsha, ed., *Sekigun yagai kyōrei* [Red Army field training regulations], 1936 ed. (Tokyo: Kaikōsha, 1937), pp. 50—51. This translation originally was classified restricted.
17. Actual casualties are not specified in this section of the War Diary. However, frequent references to soldiers "falling one after the other" suggest significant losses.
18. Rikujō bakuryōbu [Ground Self Defense Staff] ed., *Nomonhan jiken no hōheisen* [Artillery combat during the Nomonhan Incident], 1965, pp. 53—59, blames this deficiency on lack of battlefield experience among artillery officers and crews, incomplete unit training, unrealistic training, failure of artillery tacticians to keep pace with technology, artillery training cadres' being transferred to the China Front, and conservative firing instructions based on the ideal of "one-shot, one hit."
19. See *Nomonhan jiken no hōheisen*, p. 68. Logistics were not given sufficient consideration because army or division level commanders had little idea of supply tonnages or ammunition requirements.
20. *Nomonhan jiken kenkyū hōkoku*; Kotani Etsuji, *Rekishi to tomo ni arukunda Watukushi no zenhansei* [Walking with history: the first half of my life], 1963, p. 9.
21. *Kajikawa butai sentō kōdō gaisetsu* [Outline of combat operations for the Kajikawa Unit], n.d., probably 1939. Originally secret.
22. The orders are available as attachments 13 and 14 to the War Diary.

23. The following description of the 8 July fighting draws on the War Diary and *Kyōiku sōkanbu* [Inspector General of Military Education], ed., *Nomonhan Jiken shōsen reishū* [Collected examples of skirmishes during the Nomonhan Incident] (Tokyo: 1940), fig. 16. This figure contains firing diagrams and an analysis of the skirmish. Where minor discrepancies exist, I have provided the version offered in the War Diary. See also *Kajikawa butai sentō hōdō gaisetsu*.
24. Critique taken from War Diary.
25. According to Daihon'ei Rikugunbu 'Nomonhan' jiken kenkyūkai iinkai [Imperial General Headquarters, Army Department, research subcommittee on the Nomonhan Incident], 'Nomonhan' jiken kenkyū hōkoku [Research report on the Nomonhan Incident], 10 January 1940, originally classified military secret, less than 5 percent of Japanese battle casualties at Nomonhan were victims of enemy grenades.
26. SC.
27. Rikugun gijutsuteki honbu dai 1 bu dai 3 ka [First Bureau, Third Section, Army Technical Headquarters], *Heiki tōkyūkai kiji (Nomonhan jiken)* [Study of weapons and munitions in light of the Nomonhan Incident], 1939, *Archives*, Reel 133. Originally classified secret.
28. *Ibid.*
29. The 26th Infantry had participated in the west bank fighting of early July and fought the rearguard action as the Japanese retreated across the Halha. The unit was the last to leave the west bank. On 9 July (minus one battalion and two companies) it joined the fighting on the east bank.
30. Cited in *KG*, p. 539. Komatsubara's diary entry for 9 July 1939.
31. SC.
32. *KG*, pp. 555-56. Komatsubara's diary entry for 12 and 13 July.
33. See attachments 18 and 19 of the War Diary for copies of these orders.
34. This was a fairly common occurrence. Japanese scouts, unaccustomed to the expanses of the desert and the lack of landmarks, became easily disoriented or walked right into skillfully camouflaged Soviet fortifications. SC, *passim*.
35. The 26th Infantry was pulling back to reorganize for the 23 July general offensive.
36. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, p. 230.

Chapter 4

1. Cited in Hata, "Japanese-Soviet," p. 167.
2. *Nomonhan jiken no hōheisen*, pp. 70-71. The standard five-day loads for artillery batteries were as follows:

<i>Battery</i>		<i>Per Gun Per Day</i>
38 Type Field Artillery	12,000	100 rounds
12 Type Howitzer	3,600	60 rounds
90 Type Howitzer	4,000	100 rounds
10 Type Cannon	800	60 rounds
15 Type Howitzer	4,000	50 rounds
15 Type Cannon	900	30 rounds

Source: *KG*, p. 561.

3. War Diary, entry for 31 July.
4. *SWABP*, C, pp. 520, 525.

5. Shimanuki Takeji, Major, IJA, "Sakusen yōheijo yori mitaru 'Nomonhan' jiken no kyōjun" [Lessons of the Nomonhan Incident seen from operational handling of troops], 30 September 1939. Originally classified top secret.

Japanese casualties to 25

July were:

KIA 1,377 (96 officers)
WIA 3,044 (115 officers)
MIA 36 (3 officers)
ill 828 (4 officers)
KG, pp. 582, 609, 613.

By August they were:

KIA 1,860 (110 officers)
WIA 4,275 (133 officers)
MIA 87 (8 officers)
ill 1,128 (4 officers)

6. Komatsubara's diary, *KG*, p. 571.
7. *SWABP*, C, p. 522.
8. *Nomonhan jiken no hōheisen*, p. 69.
9. Col Hasebe Riei commanded the unit which had 4 infantry battalions, 1 artillery regiment (2 battalions of 24 guns), and 1 engineer battalion (2 companies), a total of about 7,000 men.
10. War Diary, entry for 5 August 1939.
11. Ōki Shigeru, *Nomonhan sansen nikki* [Diary of Nomonhan fighting] (privately published), entry for 6 August 1939. Assigned to the 1st Division (depot), Ōki was a doctor who served with its 37-mm gun crews on Noro Heights.
12. This deduction apparently was also based on signals intelligence.
13. *Heiki tōkyūkai*.
14. Description of Soviet tactics adapted from *NJS*, p. 119.
15. *Heiki tōkyūkai*.
16. War Diary, entry for 7 August 1939. See *Nomonhan jiken no hōheisen* for a more critical assessment of Japanese artillery.
17. *NJS*, pp. 137–38.
18. The SC study provides an outline of these criteria of unit morale. The regimental system could also work to a unit's disadvantage. A battalion assigned to operate with another regiment could develop a sense of isolation and independence versus cohesiveness and interdependence.
19. Lieutenant Colonel Sugitani commanded the infantry battalion attached to the 1st Sector, 8th Border Guards.
20. *Shōsen reishū*, fig. 21.
21. Shimanuki, "Sakusen yōhei."
22. Konuma Haruō, Lieutenant Colonel, IJA, "'Nomonhan' jiken yori kansatsu seru tai 'So' kindaisen no jissō" [Observations from the Nomonhan Incident on the realities of Soviet modern warfare], February 1940. Originally classified top secret. See appendix for percentage breakdown of casualties for Japan's major wars.
23. Standard company frontage was 600 meters.
24. *SWABP*, C, p. 594.
25. Ōki, *Nomonhan*, p. 59.
26. *Nomonhan jiken kenkyū hōkoku*.
27. *SWABP*, C, p. 594.
28. Description based on Coox, *Anatomy*, pp. 142–43, Japanese night combat at Changkufeng, and adapted to Nomonhan.
29. War Diary, entry for 18 August 1939.
30. *Shōsen reishū*, fig. 2.
31. The Soviets probably were standing down in anticipation of their 20 August general offensive.

Chapter 5

1. *NJS*, p. 148.
2. *KG*, p. 588.

3. Shimazaki, *Sakusen yōhei* and *NJS*, pp. 152—53. The 2/28th Infantry's estimate of enemy strength was 500 men, 5 tanks, and 20 guns on 16 August; 700 men, 16 tanks, and 25 guns on 20 August; and 1,200 men, 30 tanks, and 30 guns on 22 August.
4. *NJS*, pp. 152—53.
5. The Soviets deployed 35 infantry battalions (twice the Japanese), 216 artillery guns (three times the Japanese), 500 tanks, and 346 armored cars (to none for the Japanese). See Hayashi Saburō, *Kantōgun to kyōkutō Sorengun* [The Kwantung Army and the Soviet Far Eastern Army] (Tokyo: Fūyō shobō, 1974), p. 177.
6. The Soviets gained air superiority through a battle of attrition in which they eventually wore down the outnumbered Japanese pilots. See Bōei kenshūjō senshibu ed., *Nomonhan jiken kōkūsakusen no kyōsatsu* [Considerations of air operations during the Nomonhan incident] (1975), *passim*.
7. War Diary, entry for 21 August 1939.
8. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, p. 389.
9. War Diary, entry for 20 August 1939.
10. Ōki, *Nomonhan*, p. 62.
11. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, pp. 389—90.
12. War Diary, lessons learned section.
13. The information was incorrect. The 23d Division itself was fighting for survival north of the Holsten.
14. *NJS*, p. 158.
15. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, p. 390.
16. *SC*.
17. Ōki, *Nomonhan*, entry for 22 August 1939, p. 64.
18. Soviet sources make no mention of new units employed against Japanese units south of the Holsten on 23 August. However, that day the 7th Motorized Armored Brigade and 212th Airborne Brigade joined the fighting north of the Holsten at Fui Heights (Hill 721).
19. War Diary, entry for 23 August 1939.
20. War Diary, entry for 24 August 1939.
21. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, p. 391.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 392. Similar instances of Soviet junior officers' committing suicide to avoid capture occurred at Nomonhan.
23. Without the battalion's knowing of his action, Colonel Hasebe had ordered Second Lieutenant Takashima to attach his platoon to the 8th Border Guards.
24. *Shōsen reishū*, fig. 25.
25. The breakdown does not include Second Lieutenant Takashima's platoon.

Battalion headquarters	12 men
5th Company	15
6th Company	6
7th Company	3
Machine Gun Company	6
Battalion Artillery	13
Total	55 men

26. Mita, *Shichi shidan*, p. 393.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 394.
28. Breakdown:

Battalion headquarters	18 men
5th Company	32
6th Company	0
7th Company	63
Machine Gun Company	11
Battalion Artillery	12
Total	124 men

29. Mita, *Shichi Shidan*, p. 397.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 397–98.
31. 6th Army was organized on 4 August 1939 to conduct overall Japanese defense at Nomonhan.
32. Forty-six were later listed as killed in action.
33. All four were second lieutenants from the 2d, 9th, 10th, and headquarters companies respectively.
34. War Diary, entry for 16 September 1939.

Chapter 6

1. Hata, “Japanese-Soviet,” p. 170.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 170–75, narrates the de-escalation process at Nomonhan/Khalkhin Gol. In July 1940 the Japanese agreed almost in toto with the Soviet border claims.
3. Correspondence with Mr. Arima Seiichi and discussions with COL Matsumura Tsutomu, Japanese liaison officer at U.S. Army Command and General Staff College.
4. COL Ōkamoto Tokuzō was wounded in action and later murdered in the 1st Field Hospital by a fellow Military Academy classmate who held Okamoto responsible for the 71st’s defeat. His successor, COL Nakano Eizō, was also wounded. COL Morita Tetsuji was killed in action as was LTC Azuma Shūji during the Soviet August offensive. SC regarded the loss of an officer-leader as the most deleterious influence on unit cohesion and morale.
5. Interview with Mr. Arima Seiichi and Mr. Itō Tsuneo.
6. Dai 7 shidan shireibu [Headquarters, 7th Division], *Sentō kōdō hōkoku* [Report of combat operations], 1939. Originally classified secret.
7. *Nomonhan jiken kenkyūkai hōkoku*. See appendix for attrition rates.
8. See, for example, the Kwantung Army’s assessment appearing in *Nomonhan jihen kenkyū hōkoku*, and in IGHQ’s *Nomonhan jiken kenkyū hōkoku*.

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“Not War, But Like War”: The American Intervention in Lebanon, 1958

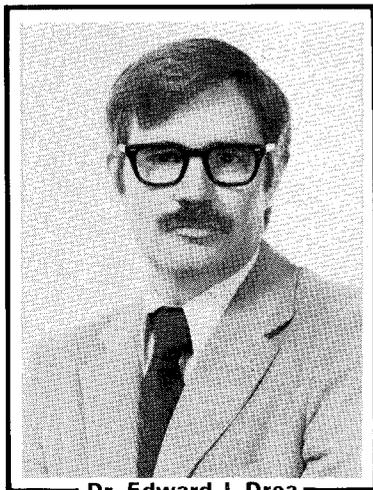
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Selected Ranger Operations in World War II



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COMBAT STUDIES INSTITUTE

Mission

The Combat Studies Institute was established on 18 June 1979 as a separate, department-level activity within the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, for the purpose of accomplishing the following missions:

1. Conduct original, interpretive research on historical topics pertinent to the current doctrinal concerns of the U.S. Army in accordance with priorities established by the Commander, U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, and to publish the results of such research in a variety of useful formats.
2. Prepare and present instruction in military history at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College and to assist other College departments in integrating applicable military history materials into their instruction.
3. Act as the proponent agency for development and coordination of an integrated, progressive program of military history instruction in the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command service school system.



SYNOPSIS OF LEAVENWORTH PAPER 2

Before World War II, the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) developed an offensive tactical doctrine designed to allow its infantry forces to fight successfully against a superior foe, the Soviet Union. A battle test of that doctrine's effectiveness occurred from June through August 1939 along the Outer Mongolian-Manchurian border. This essay follows the daily combat operations of the IJA's 2d Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 7th Infantry Division, for a two-month period. During that time, the 2/28th Infantry was in constant contact with Soviet combined arms forces.

In July the battalion participated in offensive operations against Soviet units commanded by General Georgi K. Zhukov. When Japanese tactical doctrine failed against a Soviet combined arms force, the Japanese went on the defensive. Japanese officers, however, regarded defensive doctrine as transitional in nature and adopted it only to gain time to prepare for a counterattack. Defensive doctrine dictated that terrain be held until the resumption of offensive operations that would destroy the enemy. A lack of flexibility doomed the Japanese defensive effort. General Zhukov secretly marshalled his forces and in mid-August used his armor columns to spearhead a double envelopment of the static Japanese units in a position defense. The Soviets encircled the Japanese units, including the 2/28th Infantry, and the Japanese survivors had to fight their way back to friendly lines.

The 2/28th Infantry's War Diary provides a vivid day by day account of its combat operations. This in turn allows the examination of how the Japanese applied their tactical doctrine on the battlefield. The Japanese tried to use an aggressive tactical doctrine to compensate for materiel and equipment deficiencies in their army. Such an approach was successful as long as the Japanese could conduct bold offensive operations. When they were forced to adopt a defensive posture, however, discrepancies between tactical doctrine and battlefield reality became apparent. These problems, applicable to any army, highlight fundamental difficulties of force structure, preconceptions of potential enemy capabilities, and the role of doctrine in a combat environment. An examination of small unit tactics is particularly useful to illustrate the dynamics of doctrine as expressed on the battlefield.

