

TAC NEWS

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SAVING COLONEL AZUMA

Combat during the Nomonhan Campaign: May 1939

During the late spring and summer of 1939, Japanese and Soviet forces fought an intense, undeclared war along the Mongolian steppes that resulted in a crushing defeat for the Japanese *Kwantung* Army. In May, Mongolian cavalry crossed into the disputed border region between Japanese-controlled Manchuria and the Soviet client state of Mongolia near the Halha River (or Khalkin Gol). Japanese maps showed the border being defined by the Halha, while the Soviets contended that the true border was several miles farther east, near the Manchurian village of Nomonhan.

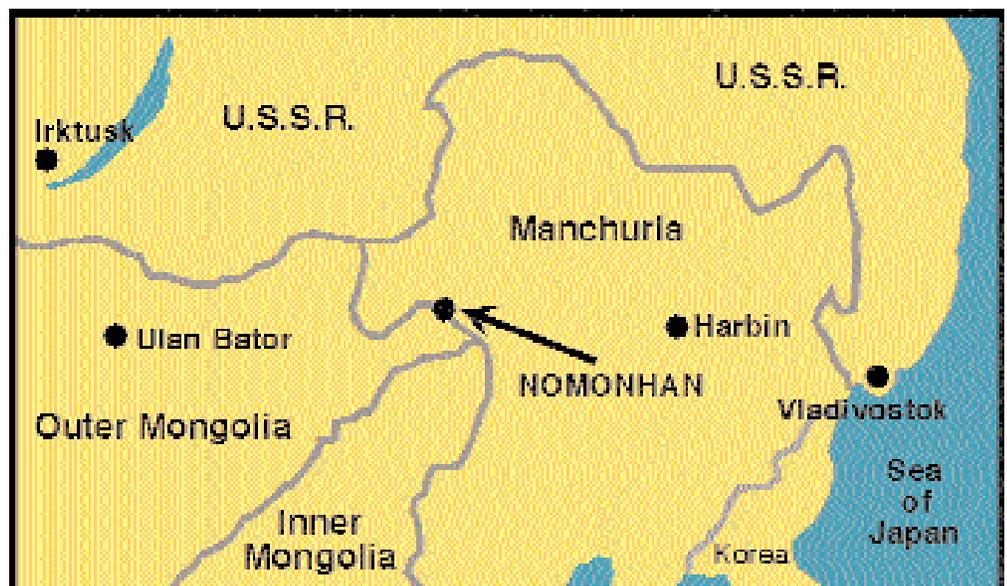
Units of the Japanese *Kwantung* Army were assigned to drive the lightly-armed Mongolian cavalry back across the river, doing so with little opposition. The Japanese, considering the matter settled, retired from the battlefield, leaving the crossings across the Halha unguarded. The border clash quickly escalated with both Japanese and Soviet forces converging on the Khalkin Gol. *Kwantung* Army commanders, refusing to believe the Soviets could reinforce on a massive scale, planned to expel the Soviet forces with elements of the untested 23rd Infantry Division. This initial

effort, depicted in the Micro Armour® scenario below, resulted in the almost total annihilation of the 23rd Infantry Division's Recon regiment by Soviet motorized infantry, armor, and artillery. But the conflict was still unsettled.

In early June, the *Kwantung* Army fed additional units of the 23rd Infantry Division into the battle, as well as the veteran 7th Infantry Division and two tank regiments. The Soviet 57th Corps, now under command of General Georgy Zhukov, received substantial reinforcements, including a full tank brigade, three infantry divisions, heavy artillery, and a considerable number of Air Force units.

Both sides spent the remainder of June consolidating their positions while air battles raged in the skies above.

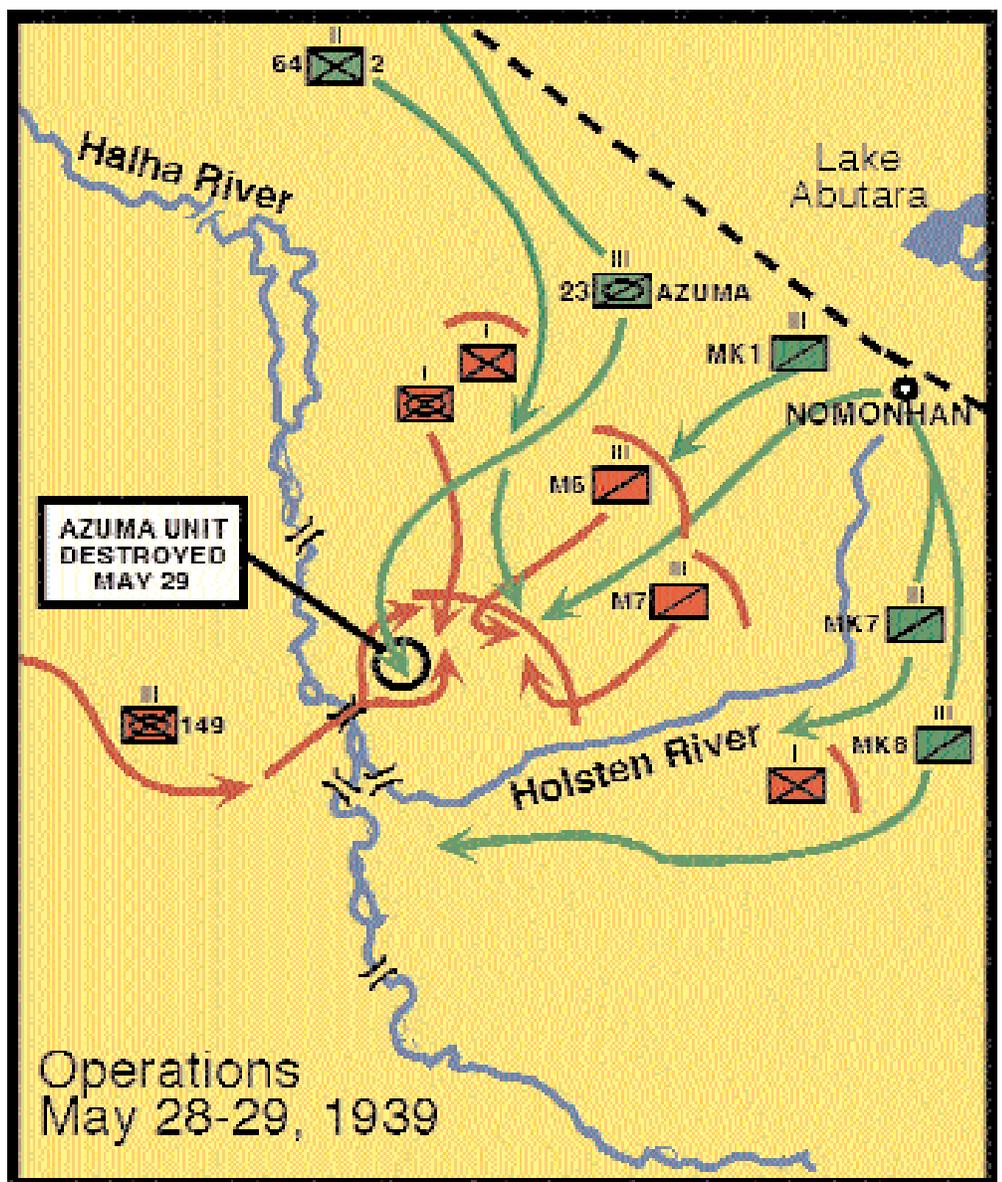
The next major Japanese effort took place during the first week in July, with a two-pronged offensive intended to drive the Soviets permanently across the Halha. The northern force, Task Force *Kobayashi*, was to cross the Halha near the Fui Heights and overrun Soviet forces on the west bank of the Halha. The southern force, Task Force *Yasuoko*, containing the *Kwantung* Army's two tank regiments, was ordered to sweep south along the east bank of the Halha and capture the bridges north of the confluence of the Halha and



Holsten rivers. The *Kobayashi* force, containing no armored units and very little anti-tank capability, managed to capture a crossing over the Halha and advance several miles through enemy positions. Counterattacking Soviet infantry and armor, strongly supported by artillery, soon stopped it cold. The Japanese were subsequently able to extract themselves from their predicament, though with high casualties. The *Yasuoko* Force tank regiments, attacking separately at night during a thunderstorm, and without infantry support, initially penetrated Soviet lines. Soviet counterattacks during the next few days decimated the lightly armored Japanese tanks, ultimately forcing the *Kwantung* Army to order their withdrawal.

Japanese efforts to force the issue continued during July, employing infantry units supported by heavy artillery regiments from the *Kwantung* Army reserve. These attacks failed as well, with Japanese casualty rates reaching alarming proportions. Soviet casualties were equally high, but their losses could be made good. The Japanese would have to continue fighting with what they had on hand. The *Kwantung* Army HQ was unwilling to part with its few remaining reserves.

General Zhukov, having received additional reinforcements of armor, infantry, and artillery during the first half of August, decided to settle the issue once and for all. His plan was to use his now overwhelming superiority on the ground and in the air to smash the Japanese in a double envelopment. For the attack, Zhukov concentrated two rifle divisions, 2 cavalry divisions, a motorized rifle division, a machine gun brigade, two tank brigades, and two motorized infantry brigades against a



Japanese force of approximately two infantry divisions. Neither Japanese division possessed much anti-tank capability. The Soviet attack began on August 20th, with a massive aerial bombardment, catching the Japanese by surprise. During the next 10 days, Japanese forces were overrun and surrounded by the Soviet *blitzkrieg*, only being able to launch abortive counterattacks. Few units of the 23rd Infantry Division were able to escape the Soviet onslaught, sustaining a casualty rate of 66%. The 7th Infantry Division lost about a third of its strength with Japanese artillery units incurring grievous losses as well.

Although the *Kwantung* Army HQ wished to fight on, the Japanese high command wisely decided to settle the issue diplomatically. The Soviets were content with driving Japanese forces east of Nomonhan, eager to concentrate their effort at dismembering Poland with their new German allies. A cease-fire was declared on September 16th. The *Kwantung* Army's Nomonhan adventure was costly for the Japanese. Their casualties from May through August were over 17,000, including almost 8500 killed. The Soviets admit to about 9300 killed and wounded.

by George Chrestensen



Saving Colonel Azuma Kholkin Gol Campaign: May 28, 1939

On May 28th, a Japanese force comprised of two separate battle groups from the 23rd Infantry Division set out to capture the bridges spanning the Halha river just north of its confluence with the Holsten river. The Japanese plan was complex. The unit assigned to the mission, designated the Yamagata Detachment, was split into 2 distinct columns. The Recon Regiment of the 23rd Infantry Division, commanded by Colonel Azuma Yaozo, was to drive south along the eastern bank of the Halha, establish a blocking position near the bridges, and cut off any Soviet retreat. Meanwhile, the second task force, centered around the 2nd Battalion of the 64th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Yamagata Takemitsu, was to drive through Soviet forces on the eastern bank of the Halha and link up with the Azuma Unit. Any Soviet forces caught between them were to be destroyed.

However, the Japanese were in for a rude surprise. Instead of encountering only lightly-armed Mongolian cavalry as they had 2 weeks before, this time they were opposed by Soviets forces reinforced with motorized infantry, armored cars, tanks, and field artillery. Although the Azuma Unit was initially able to penetrate Soviet positions, it was stopped short of the Halha bridges and surrounded on 3 sides by elements of the 149th Motorized Infantry Regiment.

At the same time, the remainder of the Yamagata Detachment, having itself split up into 2 columns, was having a difficult time forcing its way through to the Halha River. Azuma, understanding his orders were to advance to the Halha bridges, was reluctant to abandon his positions, despite being under intense fire from Soviet artillery coming from the west bank of the Halha, as well as infantry guns, mortars, and armored vehicles surrounding his positions. Out of radio contact with Yamagata, Azuma was determined to stand his ground until ordered to retreat or relieved by Yamagata's battalion.



Japanese

Elements **Cohesion**
23rd Infantry Division **14**

INITIAL FORCES COL. AZUMA'S UNIT - Recon. Rgt.
Battalion HQ 1xHQ / Truck
1xType 97 Te Ke "Type II"
#1 Company 4xCavalry
1xInfantry Support
#2 Company 2xSumina 25/93 Arm. Cars
6 x Light Improved Positions
REINFORCEMENTS arrive on Turn 1 as shown on map
Group 1 2nd BN, 64th IR
#1 Company 3xInfantry, 3xTruck
1xInfantry Support
#2 Company 2xInfantry, 2xTruck
1xInfantry Support
#3 Company 2xInfantry, 2xTruck
1x37mm AT Gun
Group 2 2nd BN, 64th IR
Bttn HQ 1xHQ (+1) (FO) 1xTruck
#1 Company 3xInfantry, 3xTruck
1xInfantry Support
#2 Company 2xInfantry, 2xTruck
1x70mm Howitzer (1)
Regimental Gun Company 1x75mm Howitzer (2), 1xTruck
1 x Forward Observer (assigned to a stand by the player)
Group 3 Elements, 1st Manchukuoan Cavalry Rgt.
3xCavalry



Soviets

Elements, 149th Motorized **Cohesion**
149th Motorized Inf. Rgt **13**

Group A
Infantry Regiment
Battalion HQ
1xGHQ (+0) (FO)
5 x Infantry '39-'41
2 x Infantry Support
1 x 76mm Infantry Gun (2)
1 x 45mm Anti-tank Gun
1 x 82mm Mortar (2)
2 x BA-10 Armored Car
(Assigned to a stand of the player's choice)
Group B Elements, 149th Motorized Infantry Regiment
4 x Infantry '39-'41
2 x Infantry Support
1 x BA-10 Armored Car
1 x 45mm Anti-tank Gun
Group C Elements, 149th Motorized Infantry Regiment
2 x Infantry '39-'41
1 x Infantry Support
2 x Heavy Truck
Group D Elements, 6th Mongolian Cavalry Regiment
9 x Cavalry
2 x Cavalry Support
1 x Mounted Headquarters
2 x BA-10 Armored Car
located off west edge of map
1x122mm Howitzer(2)
Soviet Field Works Shared by Soviet Groups A & B
11xLight Improved Positions
REINFORCEMENTS Arrive Turn 8: on road at south of map
3 x T-26
2 x Infantry '39-'41
1 x Infantry Support
2 x Heavy Truck

May 28, 1939

INITIAL DEPLOYMENT:

The Japanese player deploys his units first.

A. JAPANESE INITIAL DEPLOYMENT

The Japanese player deploys all stands of the Azuma Unit within 4 inches of Point "Z". 5 Light Improved positions are provided for the Azuma Unit.

B. SOVIET INITIAL DEPLOYMENT

- A. The Soviet player deploys all units of Group A within 8 inches of Point "A"
- B. The Soviet player deploys all units of Group B within 8 inches of Point "B"
- C. The Soviet player deploys all units of Group C within 4 inches of Point "C"
- D. The Soviet player deploys all units of Group D within 8 inches of Point "D"

SPECIAL RULES

A. Colonel Azuma was doggedly determined to hold his ground despite the failure of the remainder of the Yamagata Detachment to link-up with him. Therefore, no Azuma Unit stand may move farther than four (4) inches from Point "Z" until Col. Azuma decides to save his command from annihilation! At the end of each "Marker Removal" phase, the Japanese player must roll 1d20. If this results in a 1, all movement restrictions on Azuma Unit stands are lifted for the remainder of the game.

B. Optional rules to be used:

- 12.1 The Hot Shot!
- 12.2 The Communications Breakdown

SCENARIO LENGTH: 15 TURNS

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VICTORY CONDITIONS:

A. The Japanese player must exit at four (4) or more armed stands (the truck doesn't count) of the Azuma Unit off the North or East edge of the map by the end of turn. These stands may be Suppressed and/or Disorganized.

OR:

1. The Japanese player must have two (2) or more armed stands (trucks don't count) of the Azuma Unit remaining and "link-up" with six (6) or more armed stands of the Japanese "reinforcements". In order to effect "link-up", one (1) "reinforcement stand" and (1) Azuma Unit stand must be in base contact at the end of a Movement phase. The other five (5) required reinforcing stands may be no more than five (5) inches from the "contacted" Azuma stand for the "link-up" to be effective. Suppressed and/or Disorganized stands do count towards link-up.

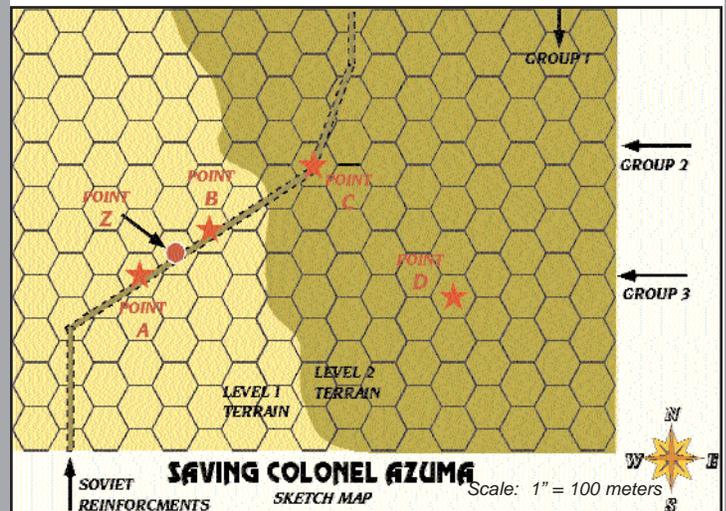
If the Japanese player achieves neither of the above conditions, the Soviet player is the victor.

TERRAIN SUGGESTIONS:

The map should be approximately 60" x 40"

The road is a Good Road

Terrain is open : Maximum sighting distance = 35"



SPECIAL TO&ES

Japanese Infantry Division Reconnaissance Regiment (1939)

Battalion HQ: 1 x HQ, 1 x Truck

Mounted Company: 4 x Cavalry

Armored Car Company: 2 x Sumida 25/93 Armored Car

In reality, this unit is no bigger than a small battalion. Although configured for reconnaissance duties, it was frequently used to hold ground or conduct offensive combat missions. When doing so, the parent division would normally reinforce it with any or all of the following: infantry, heavy weapons, and light artillery. In some divisions, the Armored Car Company would consist of two platoons of tankettes (Type94s or Type97 Te Ke Type Is or Type IIs) in place of armored cars. Note: the

Type97 Te Ke "Type I" has the identical weapons data as the Type94 tankette.

Soviet Machinegun Battalion (1939)

Battalion HQ: 1 x HQ, 1 x Truck

Armored Car Platoon: 1 x BA-10 A/C

Anti-Tank Company: 2 x 45mm ATG, 2x Truck

Anti-Aircraft Machinegun Platoon: 1 x AAMG

Machinegun Company: 3 x Infantry Support

Machinegun Battalion: 1 x Battalion HQ, 3 x Machinegun Company, 1x Anti-Tank Company, 1x Armored Car Platoon, 1 x Anti-Aircraft Machinegun Platoon
This unit was found in Soviet Tank Brigades and Motorized Infantry Brigades. Each