

The Lost Battalion of the Pacific

A Tribute for MIA/POW Day, 2021

National POW/MIA Recognition Day was established in 1979 through a proclamation signed by President Jimmy Carter. Since then, each subsequent president has issued an annual proclamation commemorating the third Friday in September as National POW/MIA Recognition Day.

On November 18th, 1940 the United States implemented its Protective Mobilization Plan. This included the activation of 36th Infantry Division as part of the VIII Corps, 3rd Army. The 131st Field Artillery Regiment was a component of 61st Artillery Brigade within the division. The 2nd Battalion of the 131st This is a tribute to the 2/131st, and by extension, all those who languished behind barbed wire or never made back home.

The 2/131st artillery battalion shipped out to the Philippines about a year after the United States had activated its 4 field armies, on November 21st, 1941 to be exact. While en-route to to join the Philippine garrison, Pearl Harbor was attacked and the Japanese army marched into Manila. The 2/131st was diverted to Brisbane. After Christmas down under, the 2/131st boarded a Dutch freighter for Java, arriving on 11 January 1942 with 558 men. The 2nd Battalion was the only U.S. ground force to arrive in the Dutch East Indies. The mission of the Battalion was to help the Dutch defend the islands from a possible Japanese invasion, which began on 27 February 1942. During the Battle of Java, the Battalion distinguished itself supporting the Australian defense of Leuwiliang and fighting alongside the Dutch at Porong. The Battalion would later be awarded a Presidential Unit Citation.

The two light battalions of the 131st, which includes the 2nd battalion, were equipped with the 75mm 1894A4 guns, otherwise known as 'French seventy-fives'. The regimental shoulder patch is a gold flourdelis on a red shield, which itself has a gold border.



Special Rules

The rules for 4th Edition PANZER GRENADIER were used for the development of the following scenarios. It is recommended that players use that ruleset for playing these scenarios. The rules and charts the 3rd Edition of PANZER GRENADIER are probably functional for these scenarios, but that has not been evaluated.

Australian pieces may be taken from AFRIKA KORPS or KOKODA CAMPAIGN. Japanese pieces may be taken from GUADALCANAL or KOKODA CAMPAIGN. Special pieces for the 2nd Battalion, 131st Field Artillery regiment are provided, along with some additions to the KNIL counter mix. American leaders may be taken from any one game, AN ARMY AT DAWN or BATTLE OF THE BULGE are preferred. Pieces from NIHON SILK and POWER OF THE EAST will be needed (available as Gold Club downloads). Australian trucks and Mk VIb tanks from WALTZING MATILDA could be useful too. Maps from ELSNBORN RIDGE and FIRE ON THE STEPPE are used for these scenarios.

Leaders

Any Allied leaders may activate another nation's leaders through subordinate activation. They may not activate another nation's units, nor apply combat or morale modifiers to another nation's units or leaders.

Tank Leaders (6.8) and Armor Efficiency (11.2).

All tanks have inherent leaders. No armor is considered efficient.

Step Losses

Except where otherwise noted, tank steps count double, and trucks and unarmed jeeps are not counted.

BATTLE OF LEUWILIANG, THE 1ST DAY

March 2, 1942

The Japanese 2nd Division began its drive out of Merak on March 1st. The division, following Napoleon's plan of branches, split and split again. Two detachments advanced on Batavia (Jakarta). A detachment under Gen Nasu consisting of the 16th Infantry Regiment and support from the 2nd Tank Regiment, was given the task of cutting the inland road at Buitenzorg (Bogor) to prevent an Allied escape.

An adhoc Australian battlegroup, known as *Blackforce*, has moved to defend the river line Leuwiliang. With the Australians are D & F batteries of the 2/131st Field Artillery Regiment and light tanks from the 3rd Hussars.



Game Length: 16 turns

First Turn: 1500

Other: All woods and light woods are jungle and light jungle, respectively. Only hexes xx04 though xx14 are playable. The bridge has been destroyed. The river is MAJ.

Note: This scenario requires maps from FIRE IN THE STEPPE and ELSBORN RIDGE.



Black Force

Setup first, east of the river. Entrenchments may be placed in any hex with an HMG. All units in eligible terrain may begin dug in. All units are Australian unless otherwise noted.

2/2nd Pioneer and 2/3rd Machine-gun Battalion

4x INF	7x INF (reduced)
4x HMG	3x ENG
3x 3-inch	4x Truck

3rd Hussars

2x Mk. VIb (British)

Batteries D & F, 2/131st Artillery Battalion

(All U.S. from provided counters)

2x 75/97	1x Jeep .30
1x Jeep	2x Truck

Leaders: 1x Brig, 1x MAJ, 2x CAPT, 6x LT,
1x CAPT (US), 2x LT (US)

Initiative: 2, -1 for each 4 steps lost

Morale: INF 7/6, All others 8/7

Off-Board Artillery: none



16th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division

Setup second at least 5 hexes from the river and within 3 hexes of the east-west road.

24x INF	4x HMG
4x ENG	2x 70mm
4x 75mm	1x Type 94
6x Truck	

2nd Tank Regiment

2x Type 97

Leaders: 1x COL, 1x LTC, 2x MAJ, 4x CAPT, 7x LT,
1x SGT

Initiative: 3, -1 for every 6 steps lost

Morale: 9/8

Off-Board Artillery: none

Special Rules

- River crossing numbers are 6 for infantry, 4 for all others.
- Reduced Australian INF may not consolidate. (They are made up of rear area and non-combat troops.)
- Australian entrenchments represent prepared machine-gun positions. They provide a -2 modifier against direct fire at Australian HMG units occupying them, otherwise the modifier is -1.
- The Japanese Type 94 is a reconnaissance unit. Treat it as an armored car for activation and special abilities.
- If the Japanese lose 5 or more steps, the game ends at the end of that turn. (Tanks are not considered double losses in this case.)

Victory Conditions

- The Japanese win if they have 8 units at least 3 hexes east of the river, **and** no Japanese controlled river hex is within range of Allied direct fire.
- Any other result is an Australian victory.

Conclusion

The *Nasu Detachment* arrived at the Tjianten River to find the bridge had already been blown by Dutch engineers and the river swelling from rain in the mountains. Still General Nasu felt it important to force a crossing.

The Austrians put up a vigorous defense against the crossing, claiming to have caused 500 casualties. While the Japanese never admitted to the casualties the Australians said they inflicted, they were high enough for Gen. Nasu to call off the assault.

BATTLE OF LEUWILIANG, THE 2ND DAY

March 3, 1942

About 3km north of the bridge to Leuwiliang was another, which had not been destroyed. This fact troubled Brigadier Blackburn. After the failed assault and an abortive night crossing, Japanese headlights were observed moving toward the intact crossing. While *Blackforce* was feeling better about themselves they knew a hard day was coming.

Game Length: 16 turns

First Turn: 0545 (Dawn is at 0630)

Other: All woods are jungle. All hexes north of the river and south of hexes xx04 on board 7 are unplayable. Place a bridge marker in hex 0615 of board 5. The bridge on board 7 has been destroyed. The river is major.

Note: This scenario requires maps from FIRE IN THE STEPPE.



Black Force

Setup after the initial Japanese placement, east of the river. Place 7 entrenchments east of the river, at least 4 must be placed on board 7. All units in eligible terrain may begin dug in. All units are Australian, unless otherwise noted.

2/2nd Pioneer and 2/3rd Machine-gun Battalion

6x INF	5x INF (reduced)
4x HMG	3x ENG
3x 3-inch	4x Truck

3rd Hussars

2x Mk. VIb

2/131st Artillery Battalion

2x 75/97	1x Jeep .30
1x Jeep	2x Truck

Leaders: 1x Brig, 1x MAJ, 2x CAPT, 6x LT,
1x CAPT (US), 2x LT (US)

Initiative: 2, -1 for each 4 steps lost

Morale: 8/7

Off-Board Artillery: none



16th Infantry Regiment, 2nd Infantry Division

First place up to 3 INF, ENG or HMG and up to 2 leaders in any river or bridge hex (they are considered to be on the east side). Setup remainder of units after the Australians setup.

15x INF	4x INF (reduced)
3x HMG	2x ENG
2x 70mm	4x 75mm
6x Truck	

2nd Tank Regiment

2x Type 97

Leaders: 1x COL, 2x MAJ, 3x CAPT, 5x LTt; 1x SGT

Initiative: 3, -1 for every 5 steps lost

Morale: 9/8

Off-Board Artillery: none

Special Rules

1. River has continued to swell, crossing numbers are 5 for infantry, 3 for all others.
2. Reduced Australian INF may not consolidate. (They are made up of rear area and non-combat troops.)
3. Australian entrenchments represent prepared machine-gun positions. They provide a -2 modifier against direct fire at Australian HMG units occupying them, otherwise the modifier is -1.

Victory Conditions

- The Japanese win if they can exit 6 units off the east side via either road hex. (Tanks count double)
- The Australians win if fewer than 4 Japanese units are able to advance more than 3 hexes east the river.
- Any other result is a draw.

Conclusion

The Australians were as ready as they could be. They still could not prevent the Japanese from getting across the river, but they kept them contained. Battery D of the 2/131st Field Artillery Regiment was credited with knocking out several tanks. The cooks, drivers and others pressed into front line service also performed well.

On the north coast, Batavia fell to the 2nd *Infantry Division*. Soon to be pressed on two sides, *Blackforce* withdrew to Soekaboemi in good order. They had suffered about 100 casualties in two days of fighting.

DEFENSE OF PORONG

MARCH 8, 1942

As the 2nd Infantry Division landed in Western Java, the 48th Division went ashore at Kragan, in East Java. A detachment named the *Abe Unit*, formed around the 47th Infantry Regiment, was assigned to move toward the south of Surabaya.

The Dutch command intended to defend Surabaya, garrisoning several towns outside the city proper. Porong is such a town, on the south side of the Kali(river) Sadar.

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Game Length: 18 turns

First Turn: 2230

Other: All woods and light woods are jungle and light jungle, respectively. The river is major and may only be crossed at the bridge. Ignore town hexes on board 23.

Note: This scenario requires maps from FIRE IN THE STEPPE and ELSNBORN RIDGE.



8th & 13th Battalions, 6th Regiment, 3rd Division and 3rd Cavalry Unit

All units are KNIL unless otherwise noted. Setup first within 3 hexes of a town hex on board 3.

12x INF	3x HMG
2x 81mm	1x 47mm AT
1x AAMG	1x Opal
2x Truck	

Battery E, 2/131st Artillery Battalion

(All U.S. from provided counters)

1x 75/97	1x Truck
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Leaders: 1x LTC, 1x MAJ, 2x CAPT, 4x LTt, 1x LT (U.S.)

Initiative: 1, -1 for every 4 steps lost.

Morale: INF and HMG 7/6, all others 8/7

Off-Board Artillery: none



47th Infantry Regiment, 48th Infantry Division

18x INF	3x HMG
2x 70mm	4x 75mm
6x Truck	2x Type 95

Leaders: 1x LTC, 2x MAJ, 4x CAPT, 6x LLT; 1x SGT

Initiative: 3, -1 for every 5 steps lost.

Morale: 8/7

Off-Board Artillery: none

Special Rules

When a KNIL Leader, INF or HMG unit has a Japanese unit move adjacent to it for the first time, it must make a morale check at the start of the next Dutch activation. Add +1 to the dice roll if a Japanese tank is adjacent. (There are many native troops who have little interest in their Dutch masters.)

Victory Conditions

- The Japanese win a Minor Victory if they control at least 4 town hexes at the end of play.
- The Japanese win a Major Victory if they control all town hexes and all hexes adjacent to the bridge.
- The Dutch win a Minor Victory if they control either the bridge or a majority of the town hexes.
- The Dutch win a Major Victory if they control the majority of town hexes and the bridge and all hexes adjacent to it on the west side of the river.

Conclusion

Major-General Koichi Abe, commanding the *Abe Unit*, decided on a night attack. When the Japanese forces (including tanks) attacked Porong in the evening of March 6th, the KNIL troops had managed to destroy a railway bridge, yet the other bridge was captured intact by the Japanese troops, since most KNIL native troops fled, or better to say deserted. Most resistance was offered by a 47mm AT gun under the command of KNIL Sergeant H.F. Pasch and a AT rifle, which managed to destroy three Japanese tanks. Ritmeester C.W. de Iongh recalled: "The retreat of the KNIL troops from Porong and Pandakan was a complete "stampede". Panic without any organization. Officers and troops of the division yelled at us: "Flee, flee, the Japanese tanks are coming!". Battery E of the 131st Field Artillery Regiment was caught in the retreat. The Americans of the "E" Battery, with their flanks overrun, gave more than they got as they withdrew in close order.

Aftermath

On 8 March 1942, the allies in the Dutch East Indies surrendered to the Japanese. Among the 32,500 soldiers taken prisoner, mostly Dutch, British, and Australian, were 534 members of the U.S. battalion, 21 men of the original 558 having been transferred and three killed in action.

American authorities had no information about the fate of the lost battalion until September 16, 1944. On that date, American submarines sank two Japanese freighters which were transporting more than 2,000 British and Australian POWs to Japan. The surviving POWs told the U.S. that American soldiers from the Second Battalion and sailors from USS Houston had worked with them on the Burma railroad. After the end of the war in August 1945, the POWs of the lost battalion were repatriated from their various locations to the United States. Of 534 personnel of the 2nd Battalion taken prisoner, 86 (16%) died in captivity.