
Scenario Analysis: HazMo 31 – The Cloak Of Disorder

Description

FORWARD: This article originally appeared in HazMo Horizon. I republish it here for the sake of collecting all my work into one place. This version also includes the image highlighting the plan which was inadvertently left off the Horizon version. I have also corrected a few typos which crept into the earlier article. Without further ado.



I promised Chuck an article for this issue of Horizon and then I screwed up and used the article elsewhere. Chuck offered me some ideas for articles but none of those struck my fancy. I read Horizon contained a scenario and offered to provide a scenario analysis for it. Chuck thought that was a good idea so here we are.

As always, I will use a system outlined in a blog article I authored entitled [ASL Tactical Maxims](#). I write them from the defender's perspective. This framework provides me with a consistent method for decomposing scenarios into the smallest possible elements. I examine these elements to see how they contribute to an attacker's victory and then set out to determine how to offset these. The net outcome is one way to achieve victory for both the attacker and defender.

For the first time, I am also going to speak about patterns in ASL, a topic I touched on in my article [Defenses In ASL](#). I will not delve into the patterns here, but I am going to refer to some patterns that will appear in my defense here. If you are unfamiliar with those, I recommend you go read that to see what I am talking about. Terms defined in the Defenses article will be ***bold italic*** in this article.



Let's get started.

Maxim 1: Victory Conditions

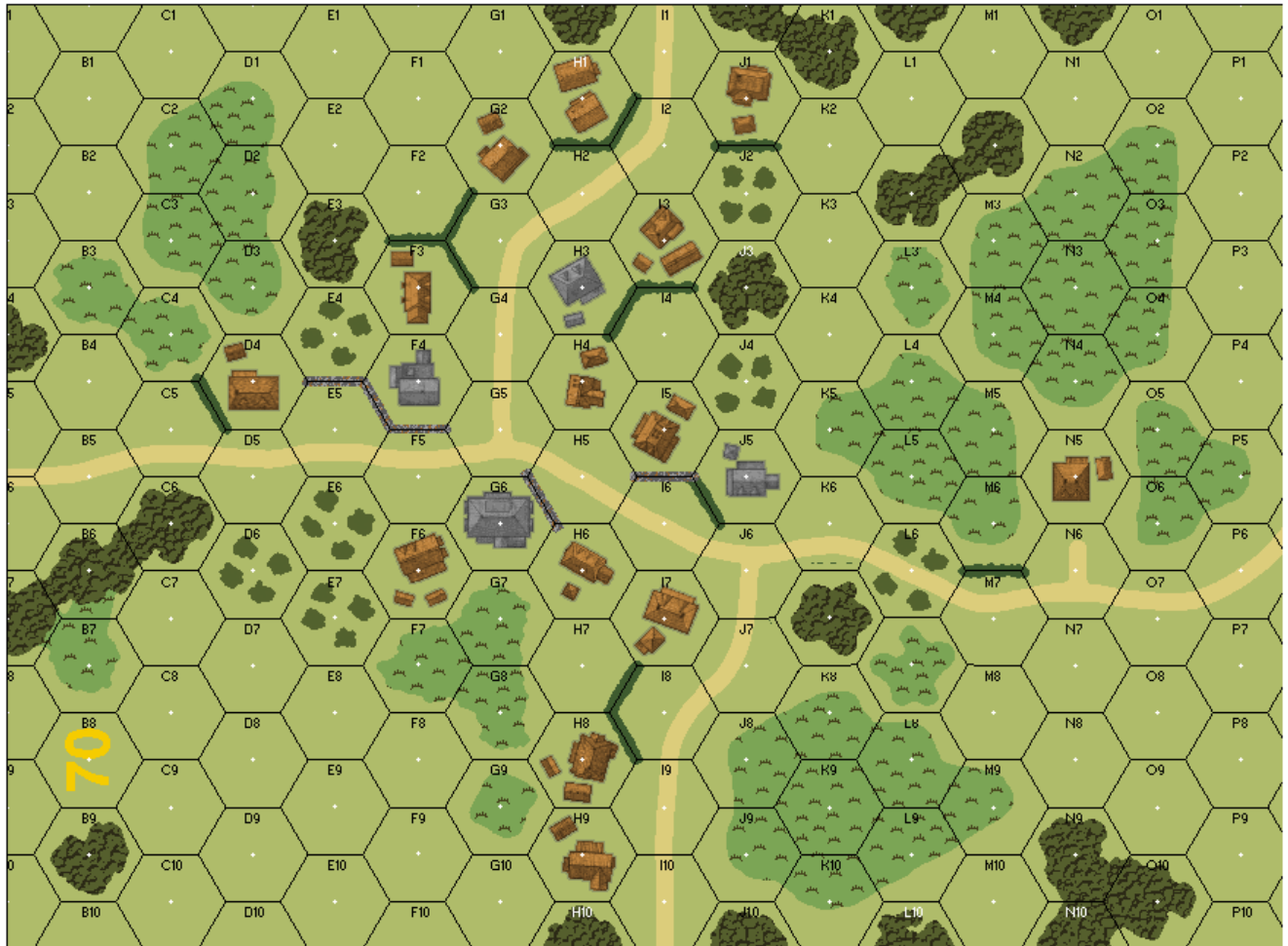
The Victory Conditions (VC) in this scenario are straightforward. The Japanese win at game end if they control the four stone building Locations on the map. If the stone buildings are rubble, then rubble Locations also count as part of the VC. This is a good scenario design when giving one or the other side DCs as a Set DC can Rubble a building making it no longer a building for VC purposes.

But as I always say, knowing the VC is only the first part of this Maxim. You also need to know how to achieve the VC. Notice, this VC is LOCATION control and not BUILDING control. Only Infantry can control a building but that is not the case here. The Japanese Type 89As can Control a Location by remaining in the Location [EXC: in Bypass]. If they leave the Location, Control over that Location returns to the Chinese. If they are desperate, the IJA can run the Type 89As into a building/rubble Location in the later turns to take control of that Location.

The only way to permanently take Control for the IJA is to have MMC Infantry occupy the Location, even temporarily. Accordingly, it is our goal to eliminate IJA MMC Infantry at every chance. Every stripe, every casualty reduction, every eliminated unit puts us one step closer to victory. If there is no IJA Infantry, there is no loss of Control over the victory Locations.

As the Chinese, I aim to hold on to at least one building. For control of the stone building Locations, I will fight like I am the third monkey on the ramp to Noah's ark and it's starting to rain.

Maxim 2: Terrain

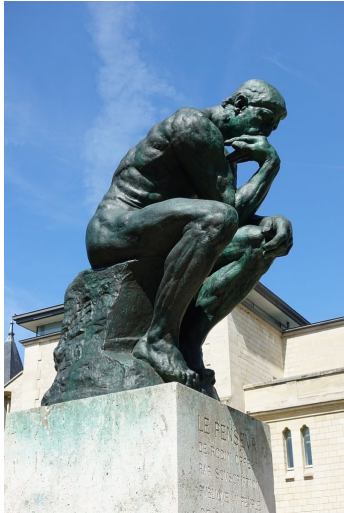


<https://jekl.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Map.png>

A road running North/South from A5 to P6 divides the playing area into halves. Three of the VC Locations are West of the road. A mix of woods and brush cover the approach to the village. The terrain north of the road is also denser, favoring the Defender until the IJA make it into the village. A road from G5 to I10 provides terrain for a **Linear Defense**. The same for the J6 to I10 road.

There are two prospects for an **Alamo**, F4 and G6. Pre-game, I prefer F4 to G6 because of the denser terrain on the western half of the board. Still, the road segment G5 – J6 also makes a nice **Linear Defense** feature making G6 attractive. A lot will depend on the IJA attack.

Additional Thoughts



Selection of the **Alamo** further complicates selection of the Chinese reinforcement's entry area. We must pick this BEFORE the IJA sets up. The Chinese Defense must protect this entry while falling back. These units MUST make it to the Alamo to have a fighting chance to win. I think either I1 or A5 are acceptable choices. If the Chinese opt for I1, they have a lot of flexibility on which hexes to enter on. They can quickly get to F4 if needed or can reinforce the G5/I1 **linear defense** if needed. Entry on I1 will force the Chinese to transition to **hold at all costs** earlier. Entry at A5 will delay the Chinese arrival to the battle and they are likely to be Counter Exhausted (CX) when they get there. Personally, I lean towards an I1 entry.

Based on the terrain, I will use a combination of **area denial** (north of the J row) and **terrain retention** (south of the row). My initial aim will be **force preservation** and **enemy destruction**. As my **fighting withdrawal** collapses around the **Alamo** my aim will increasingly become **hold at all costs**. The two east/west **linear defense** features provide a good demarcation line for transitioning from **force preservation** to **hold at all costs**. Hex F4 will be the **Alamo** although a shift to G6 might happen depending on shifting game conditions.

Influence On Infantry Movement

A good portion of the terrain costs 2 MF for Infantry movement. This will slow the IJA down, even if they *Banzai*. The terrain is mostly soft hindrances for Firelane purposes. Given the Chinese have 4 machine guns, they should use Firelanes to further influence the IJA movement. Ideally, place Firelanes SE to NW (from the bottom left to the top right) to influence the IJA to move eastward. This helps to delay the IJA approach to F4.

Influence On Vehicular Movement

Much of the terrain here is also 2 MPs for vehicles. This will slow down each side's AFV movement but isn't likely to cause too much consternation. If anything, it will force the Infantry and AFVs to remain in mutually supporting positions. As a defender, I would rather they spread out. The tight terrain may prevent the attacker from making a tactical mistake.

Visualizing The Terrain's Influence On The Battle

This is a little difficult to predict. With any other nation, you could examine the rally terrain options and predict the approach based on that. The IJA certainly should give some thought to rallying broken half squads along the way, but it isn't an initial pressing need for them.

The brush will slow down the IJA but will also negate First Fire Movement in the Open (FFMO). As it is a soft hindrance, Firelanes will get a -1 First Fire Non-Assault Movement (FFNAM) DRM if using non-Assault movement through a Firelane.

Maxim 3: Time



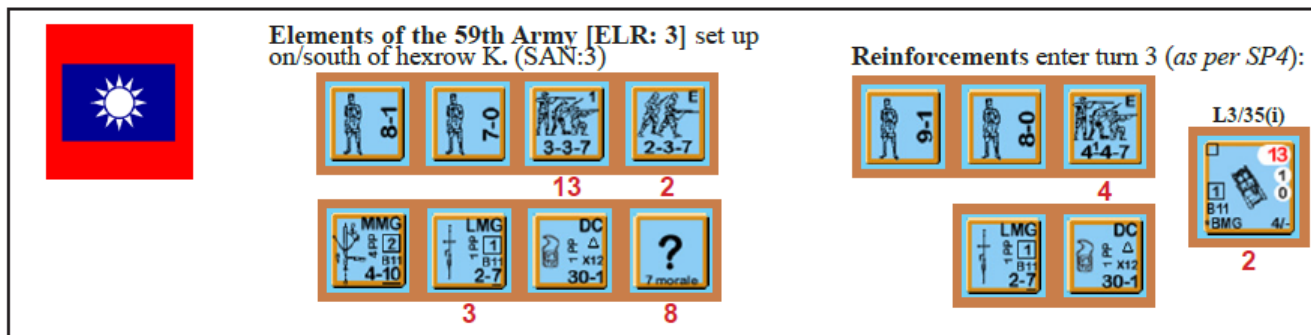
The game is six turns long. Given the distance the IJA must travel to the F4 building, they are not under too much pressure to get there. Moving 2 hexes forward a turn, combined with an Advance in the APh will get them everywhere they want to be. If anything, the Chinese are more likely to feel the time pressure at the beginning. They need to disrupt the IJA timetable.

But this time luxury is based on a straight-line distance. If the Chinese can deflect the attack to the east, they can buy themselves a turn. It also moves the IJA into more open terrain. It forces the IJA to cross the J6/I10 **linear defense** and the G5/A5 **linear defense** to get to F4. If the IJA opt to attack this way, the Chinese must hold G6 for as long as possible. The IJA must pay a price in blood transitioning through to G6/F6.

If the IJA approaches along the western half of the board, M1-K2-K6 must be treated like a **linear defense**. The IJA must pay a price to cross this terrain. If you have selected I1 as an entry, this is not a bad demarcation line for transition to **hold at all costs**.

Maxim 4: Order of Battle

The Chinese



The initial Chinese units cannot deploy. The 3-3-7s cannot use the DC without a non-qualified use penalty. Fortunately, the 2-3-7s are Elite and can use the DC. Non-elite MMC-like the 3-3-7s-must take a 1PAATC to Advance into a Japanese AFV's Location. Chinese also suffer a +1 drm on leader creation. Finally, all the Chinese MGs are B11. Not only will Firelanes fail 1 in 6 times for cowering, the MG itself will malfunction 1 in 12 times when attacking. The Chinese player is putting a lot of hope into Firelanes. Some bad DRs could make this hope misplaced.

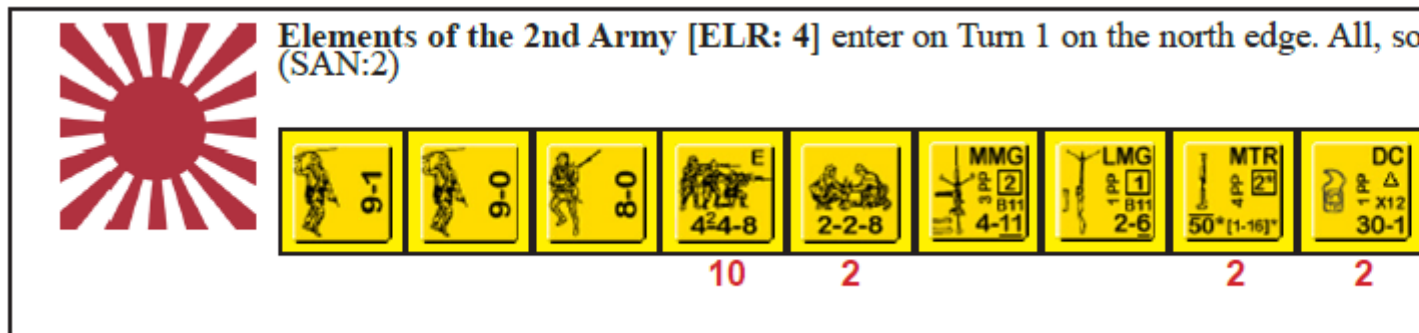
It's not all bad news for the Chinese. They have a lot of MMC. They have more Infantry units at start than the IJA does. And they bring on an additional 4 squads. Their firepower

and range are not good placing them at further disadvantage in CC. Striping the IJA MMCs levels the firepower imbalance and makes Close Combat (CC) more palatable. The IJA are more likely to win CC but if you can take an MMC with you, the IJA will run out of Infantry before you.

The Dare Death units can voluntarily go Berserk and charge enemy units. Timed correctly, this can sow confusion into Japanese thinking. Try to only charge adjacent units in TEM, and preferably Locations with Japanese leaders. The resultant CC will be H-t-H and the Dare Death unit gets a -1 DRM on H-t-H CC just like the IJA do.

Finally, the Chinese may deploy Tank Hunter Heroes by SSR. This includes deploying DC Heroes. This is the only effective anti-tank asset in the Chinese OB. I would only use a DC hero if I knew it was absolutely going to make the destination and detonate. This likely means attack through TEM and into Adjacent Locations.

The Japanese



The squads don't break; they stripe. This means Japanese units are going to get where they want to. It's just uncertain what shape they will be in once they make it. Striping will put the IJA squads on an equal firepower basis as the Chinese. They have superior morale as well. Don't be afraid to shoot into an existing Melee if the IJA MMC does not break. So long as an unbroken half squad remains, the H-t-H attack against the withdrawing Chinese units will apply a -3 DRM.

The IJA can *Banzai*, gaining 8 MFs for this turn. This will allow the IJA to quickly close on the Chinese. *Banzai* units are immune to pinning and HOB. They have a +1 increased morale. Keep in mind we can combine Impulse-type movement. Conducting a combined *Banzai*/Armored Assault will negate the -1 DRM for moving through Chinese Firelanes. Given the Chinese have more Squads of Infantry, the IJA need to be careful about how they spend their MMC units. Also, given the DCs, it is possible to "spin out" a DC Hero from a *Banzai* to soak up a lot of First Fire and Subsequent First Fire options from the

Defender.

The Japanese plan should be one of aggression. The IJA should deploy squads to cover the ground (half squads don't stripe) and recombine them for the attack once they are in TEM. This should help to preserve the IJA force into the mid- and endgame. **And force preservation should be a guiding principle for the IJA here.** They don't have any Infantry to waste.

Making a Plan



https://jekl.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HM-31_plan.png

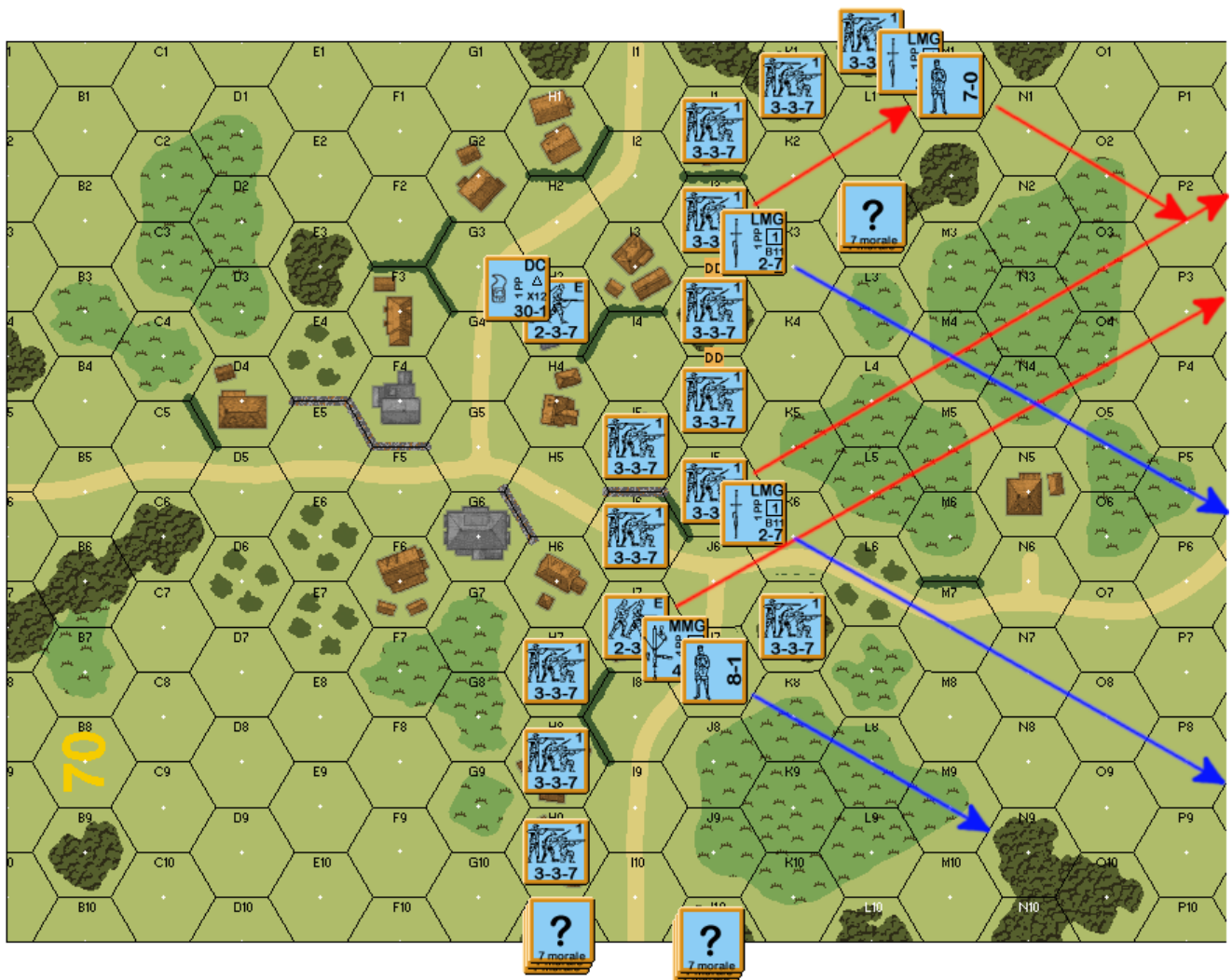
The image above synthesizes everything in this article into a plan. Accordingly, red arrows represent **liner defense** zones. I have identified the Alamo. The general plan of defense is to set up a little forward to inflict IJA casualties early. MGs will place Firelanes to influence the IJA towards eastward movement. If the IJA opt to pass through the Firelanes, they risk casualties which suit the Chinese fine. Beginning on their turn 1, the Chinese will

conduct a **fighting withdrawal**. Specifically, the plan is to fall back to each **linear defense** and inflict casualties on the IJA crossing those. Leaders stuck in CC must self-break and run away. They are too important to lose.

Dare Death squads will charge only if they have favorable TEM to move through. Ideally, they attack an MMC/leader combo. Eliminating IJA leaders reduces the risk of *Banzai* charges. Tank Hunter Heroes will focus on eliminating Japanese tanks.

With that in mind, let's look at my proposed Chinese setup.

Proposed Chinese Setup



https://jekl.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/HM-31_Chin_setup.png

The arrows represent possible Firelanes. I prefer the red lanes to the blue as those will influence the IJA to move eastward. The 3-3-7 in K7 is in an awkward position but it is

there to protect the 8-1 MMG combo. The “?” counters are all dummy stacks representing two Firelanes from the bottom edge of the map. Hex H9 is an alternative for the MMG with a Firelane extending from H9 to P5. I prefer I7 to H9 based on the ability of the MMG to bug out and get to the Alamo in F4.

The “DD” marked units are Dare Death squads. I placed them centrally so they can influence the battle on either side of the north/south divide. They likely will not charge unless they are adjacent and charging into TEM. Each Chinese unit is precious, and we must preserve as much as possible.

When falling back from the current positioning, units will shift to the west (top of the map) in order to collapse around F4. Reinforcements will enter on I1. The second line of defense will form south of the I1-G5-J6-I10 road. Japanese units crossing this road will be subject to a FFMO and FFNAM if conducting a *Banzai*. The Chinese tankettes will try to protect the G3 - G5 road segment.

If conditions dictate it, G5 can also serve as an **Alamo**. Units on the eastern half of the board will defend G5 **holding at all costs** as they collapse into the stone building. Trying to hold G5 will put pressure on the Japanese to get the force mixture correct when attacking. Forcing the Japanese to decide gives the IJA a chance to make a bad decision. This works in the Chinese favor.

Conclusion



I haven't played this scenario yet so I am not sure how well this plan will work. My best guess is this will be a tight game based on the OB and terrain. If the Chinese get some early low rolls and wither away the IJA Infantry, I can see this going south for the IJA quickly. The IJA can't win this one early, but they sure can lose it early if they aren't paying attention. The real test of the Chinese starts with the Japanese player turn 2. Beginning then, the Chinese player must adapt his plan to what the IJA player is doing and



plan accordingly. Like Mike Tyson said, “Everyone has a plan until they are punched in the mouth”. Can you adapt to being punched in the mouth?

I hope you enjoyed this article. If you want to see more like it, hop on over to my [blog](#). I write an article covering some aspect of ASL just about every two weeks. I cover scenario analysis, tactics, rules, mistakes, storage, and just about any other ASL-related topic you can think of. If there is something you would like to see me cover, I have a topic suggestion form at the top of my blog. I hope to see you there. – jim