

Judean Hills Background

This historical scenario restages the fight between the yeomanry of the British 7th Mounted Brigade and the rugged infantry of the Turkish 19th Division which took place in the early morning of the 28th November 1917 in the Judean hills about 12 miles NW of Jerusalem. To put the action into context, it took place almost exactly one month after General Allenby launched the initial attacks that would become known as the Third Battle of Gaza, during which the stubborn Turkish defenses of the Gaza-Beersheba line were finally breached. Now, pushing hard against the heels of a retreating foe, the forces of the British Empire are driving into the hills of Judea and are closing in on Jerusalem, a prize that history tells us they will eventually attain in just over a weeks time.

However, the nature of the advance combined with the difficult nature of the terrain, had meant that the Yeomanry Mounted Division had become somewhat over extended, and the small 7th Mounted Brigade, operating furthest west, was ordered to head east to shorten the line. After marching through the night of the 27th/28th, the Brigade, under the command of Brigadier General Wigan, was moving eastwards towards Tahta, where the Divisional HQ of the Yeomanry Mounted Division was located (off the SE corner of the map). The gap left to the west by the moving cavalry was being filled by the infantry of the 155th Brigade, who were slowly moving up.

Unknown to the Yeomanry, this march to the east was made directly under the guns of the Turkish 19th Division, who were gathering for a counter attack scheduled to take place at first light. At daybreak on the 28th the Turks began to move forward into the gap in the line....

British Briefing

You are Brigadier-General Wigan, commanding the 7th Mounted Brigade of the Yeomanry Division. It is 28th November 1917. For the past month Empire troops have continued to push the enemy back, firstly from his positions on the Gaza - Beersheba line, and more latterly in the Judean hills. Jerusalem is now tantalizingly close. The line of advance taken over the past few days meant that the brigade had become separated from the main body of the Division, and was ordered to march through the night to regain contact with Divisional HQ, believed to be located at Beit ur et Tahta, 12 miles NW of the city of Jerusalem. The brigade is the westernmost unit in the Division, and you are concerned that your movement east has left a gap between you and the infantry of the 52nd Division, who are only slowly filling the gap. In your move east you encountered no enemy, and now you stand at the crossroads of the track that heads to Tahta. The time is 4.45am and the men have just dismounted after their night ride and are taking breakfast. You have just returned from Tahta where you spoke with Maj-General Barrow, who wants the Brigade to continue to the east and reinforce the thinly stretched line held by the 22nd Mounted Brigade. However, no sooner have you returned to your brigade than a breathless trooper informs you that a large body of Turks is approaching from the North. A few random shots from the NW reinforce the accuracy of his report. Only the 7th Brigade, plus a lone squadron of the Lincolnshire Yeomanry (22nd Brigade) stands between the Turks and the British rear. You must make your plans quickly, for Johnny Turk has apparently breakfasted already....

Your command

7th Mounted Brigade - Brig Gen Wigan (Eton D6)

1 command base (brigade HQ)

1 signals base

1/1 Nottinghamshire yeomanry (Sherwood Rangers) – 3 x squadrons of three bases, 1 x regimental HQ, 1 x MG section - Jolly Good Fellows

1/1 Nottinghamshire yeomanry (South Notts Hussars) - 3 x squadrons of three bases, 1 x regimental HQ, 1 x MG section - Jolly Good Fellows

Attached

'A' squadron, Lincolnshire Yeomanry (22nd Brigade) – 3 x squadrons of three bases - Jolly Good Fellows

Turkish Briefing

You are Khardiff Bey, commanding the Turkish 19th Division. For the past month the Division has been moving constantly backward under severe pressure from British troops and now Jerusalem, just a dozen miles away to the SE, is in danger of falling to the enemy. Concerted plans for a counter offensive are muddled, and opportunities to prepare for such an attack have been limited. However, the past few days have allowed a brief respite and an opportunity has arisen to exploit a gap in what now appears to be an over extended British line. At first light today the remaining units of the 19th Division will launch an attack southwards with the aim of moving through this gap and forcing a wedge between the British infantry and cavalry operating on this front. Known British outposts exist near Kh Hellabi, which you must sweep aside quickly. Your objective therefore is to smash these outposts and move quickly through the gap. Speed is of the essence, the longer you take to drive in this position the more opportunity the enemy will have to close the gap.

Your force is as follows:

Elements of 19th Division:

Khardiff Bey (Young Turk D6-1)

1 command base

1 signals base

77th Alay:

1st tabur (4 companies of 3 bases, plus battalion HQ) - Johnny Turks

2nd tabur (4 companies of 3 bases, plus battalion HQ) - Johnny Turks

MG company (2 MG's)

158th Alay

1st tabur (3 companies of 3 bases, plus battalion HQ) - Johnny Turks

2nd tabur (3 companies of 3 bases, plus battalion HQ) - Johnny Turks

MG company (2 MG's)

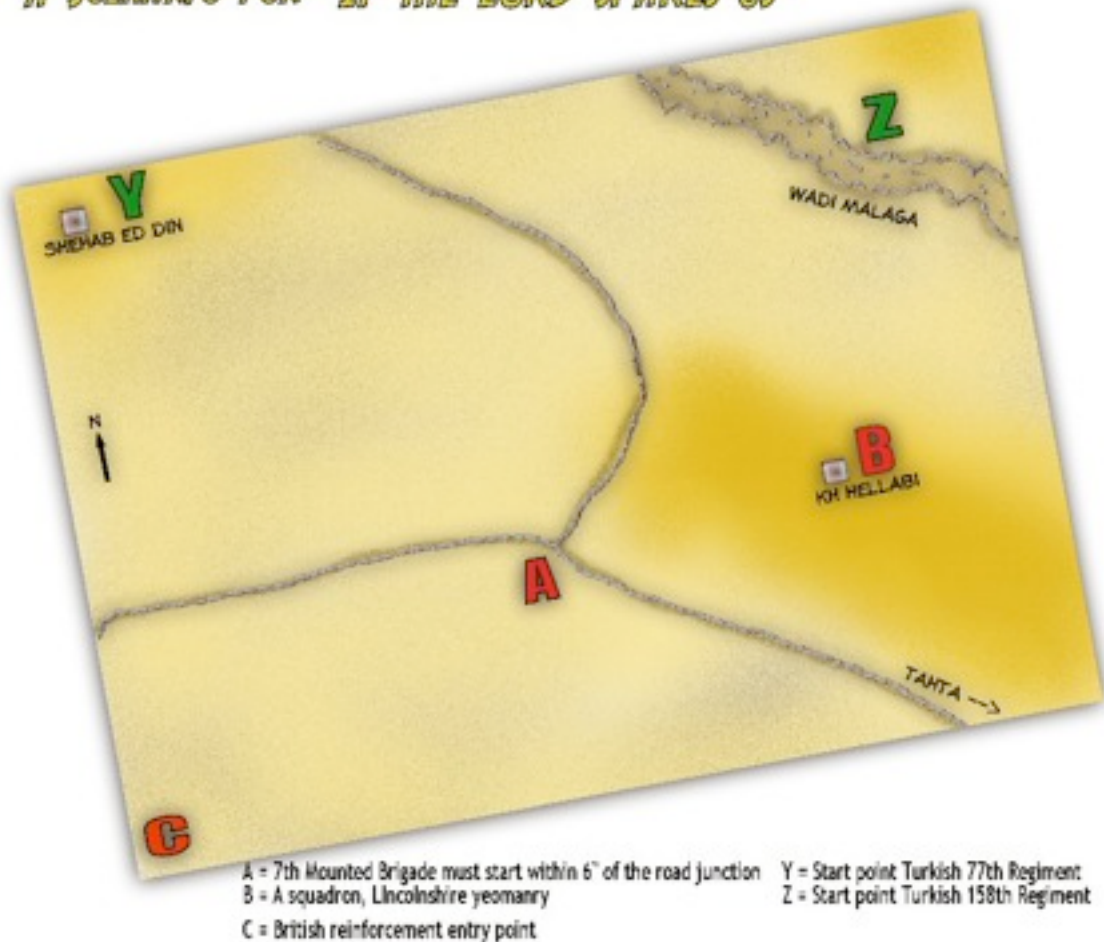
Cavalry Squadron - 1 squadron of 3 bases - Pasha bashers

Artillery field battery - 2 x models - Pasha bashers

The 77th regiment and Divisional cavalry are at Shehab ed Din (point Y on map), the tomb of a sheikh about a mile and a quarter west of Kh Hellabi. The 158th Regiment is mustering in the Wadi Malaga (point Z). They are supported by cavalry from the 3rd Cavalry Division, the main part of which will attack further east. Your artillery and command base may deploy with either unit or at any point along the northern table edge.

THE JUDEAN GAP

A SCENARIO FOR "IF THE LORD SPARES US"



The terrain here is typical of the region. Arid high ground (the action was fought 1000 feet above sea level), intersected here and there by small wadis or gulleys and dotted with small dwellings. The table should be set up as shown in the map (this assumes a table 7 feet by 5 feet). The roads are really no more than tracks, and I suggest using lone buildings to mark the villages, which were hardly substantial. The land generally slopes upwards from the NW corner to the SE corner - the ground around Kh Hellabi being 1200 feet.

A little more flavor can be gleaned from the book “Through Palestine with the 20th Machine Gun Squadron”, which describes the terrain here as follows:

“To gain a proper appreciation of the serious predicament in which the Brigade was placed at this moment, it will be necessary to understand the nature of the ground thereabouts. On both sides of the wadi were high banks, or hills, 60 to 80 feet high, the surface of these being strewn with large rocks and boulders. The wadi itself was about 20 yards wide with the road winding its tortuous way down the centre between rocks and boulders worn smooth by the passage of water which, ages ago, had run its course from the hills. Packed in this wadi was the Brigade, absolutely at the mercy of the withering fire of the enemy, almost from overhead”.

The objective of the Turkish commander is simple: he must exploit the gap in the British line and push his troops off the southern side of the table. The British must prevent this. There is some hope for the British in terms of reinforcement. Fast thinking officers in the 52nd Division ordered the lead elements of the 155th Brigade to advance NE to plug the gap as quickly as possible, and an armored car of the 2nd Light Armored Motor Battery was rushed forwards by the corps commander. A blank card is therefore placed in the pack. Once it has been turned two times the LAMB unit will appear in the SW corner. Once it has been turned five times the lead battalion of the 155th Bde (4th Royal Scots Fusiliers, 4 companies of 4 bases - Jolly Good Fellows) will arrive at the same point.

The Turkish 19th Division had been a good unit, but by November 1917 the continued punishment of the past month were beginning to show. The Turks in this scenario are rated Johnny Turks. The British CO, Br-Gen Wigan, is rated as Eton, whilst the unknown Turkish commander (whom I have imaginatively titled Khardiff Bey), is rated Young Turk. Wigan is stretched, and should have only one signals base. The Turks too should just have one base. The Turks in this scenario should count as hesitant troops.

This scenario requires cavalry, but as they generally fought on foot during this action then it is not unreasonable to substitute infantry in their place if you are struggling for numbers. Remember that cavalry units tend to be smaller than infantry ones, so I would suggest that substituting the cavalry brigade with one and a half infantry battalions (or two weak battalions) might be about right.

This scenario will require the following cards:

Turkish CO (2 cards)

Turkish Blinds

Turkish battalion 1 (1/77th)

Turkish battalion 2 (2/77th)

Turkish battalion 3 (1/158th)

Turkish battalion 4 (2/158th)

Turkish artillery 1
Turkish artillery 2
Turkish MG cards (as appropriate depending upon allocation of guns to units - see chapter 3 of rules)
Turkish Cavalry 1
Turkish Delight
Hesitant Turks
They don't like it up 'em!
British Blinds
British CO (2 cards)
British cavalry 1 (Sherwood Rangers)
British cavalry 2 (South Notts Hussars)
British cavalry 3 (Lincolnshire Yeomanry)
Stiff upper lip
Blank card

British MG's will operate on the turn of their regimental card

Plus: as necessary:

British A/Car 1

British battalion 1 (4 RSF)

Tea Break