

Everybody's Got Something to Hide

Attacking a concealed, double-stacked line

by JR VanMechelen, October 10, 2016

I played Totsugeki at ASLOK, defending as the Chinese. In the first few turns I formed my squads into a solid line of two or more concealed units in the jungle, falling back two hexes each turn to prevent my opponent from assault-moving adjacent. My opponent seemed unhappy about closing with my battle line. When he did I fired one unit (six flat, leaving two residual FP) while keeping the other concealed. Since he had to use non-assault movement, he lost his concealment, which left him with the unhappy choice of advancing in for close combat when I would have an Ambush advantage. Afterward I pondered what one should do when faced with such a situation.

Having stacks of two concealed “units” is not extremely common; it is much more usual to have a line of single units. A line of single units is easier to deal with. If your opponent does not oblige you by firing as you move forward, a quick bump-scout will reveal the unit. In my case I was able to maintain a solid double line because my opponent attacked on a narrow front. I could fire one of my units in the stack and maintain concealment for the other.

The picture illustrates some of the cases you might encounter and some of the forces you have available to use in Totsugeki. The Chinese have a continuous line of two or more concealed units per hex, leaving the Japanese the problem of how to prise apart the oyster. As you can see there are typical cases you might encounter in Totsugeki: two squads, squad with leader, squad with dummy, two squads with LMG. Other combinations are possible of course; I have not included cases with halfsquads, for instance, because the Chinese may not deploy without prisoners. The Japanese had to move two hexes to get up to the Chinese line, thus incurring FFNAM and losing



Illustration 1: Typical forces

concealment for non-assault movement even if they had it to start. Some of the stacks are real threats (two squads), some are less so (squad with leader) and some are mainly bluff (squad with dummy). But while the Japanese player should suspect this, he does not know which is which.

I fired one squad when my opponent moved adjacent rather than letting my opponent bump-scout because by firing as he entered the adjacent hex, I can control the unit that was revealed instead of having a random selection surprise. The shot would typically be a six flat, leaving two residual FP. By shooting only one counter I leave my opponent trying to guess what is under the second counter when he is deciding whether to advance in for close combat. If he is unconcealed and I have a real unit, the ambush DRM for him will be +1 ATTACKER in jungle, -1 stealthy, while I will have -2 concealed. What I tried to set up is a situation where I can get at least a one-to-one exchange ratio in CC. The Chinese outnumber the Japanese, and the Japanese cannot afford to lose regularly at that ratio. During the Chinese turn the line moves back two hexes and regains concealment.

These are Japanese attacking so six flat and two flat attacks are not exactly insurmountable. But they will eat away at the force's strength, so they are not to be taken lightly either. The Japanese would like to keep casualties to a minimum. At the same time the Japanese would like to push forward as quickly as possible, preferably by breaking Chinese units but also with CC when the Japanese can gain an advantage. In most scenarios pushing forward fast will be more important than avoiding casualties, at least to a point.



Illustration 2: Place Smoke grenades adjacent

damage in the AFPh.

A second option would be to use WP grenades in the *enemy* hex. Only the Japanese elite squads can do this, but it does cause a NMC (-1 DRM for TEM) which will cause concealment loss. The Japanese would have to move with a leader (unless they start one hex away) because of the +1 drm for CX for smoke grenades, and it's an iffy tactic with elite Japanese squads because they get WP only on a dr of one. For the Japanese in Totsugegi this move may be more an "oh, by the way" tactic rather than the core of the attack. If the Americans (or assault engineers) are attacking in such a situation this will be a more reliable way to probe a solid, double-stacked line.

Obviously the Japanese can just move adjacent, take their six and two FP attacks, and hope for the best in the advancing fire phase, but the Japanese can use several devices to improve their chances. First the Japanese might consider placing smoke grenades in the adjacent hex. This complicates the Japanese move as later units either have to Double Time or move with a leader to enter the hex, but it does change any attack they might face during the MPh from up zero to up two. This is probably the go-to option when your opponent has put down large residual. By reducing the risk to moving in the attacker can move in large stacks, which will increase the chances of doing



Illustration 3: Place WP grenades on enemy

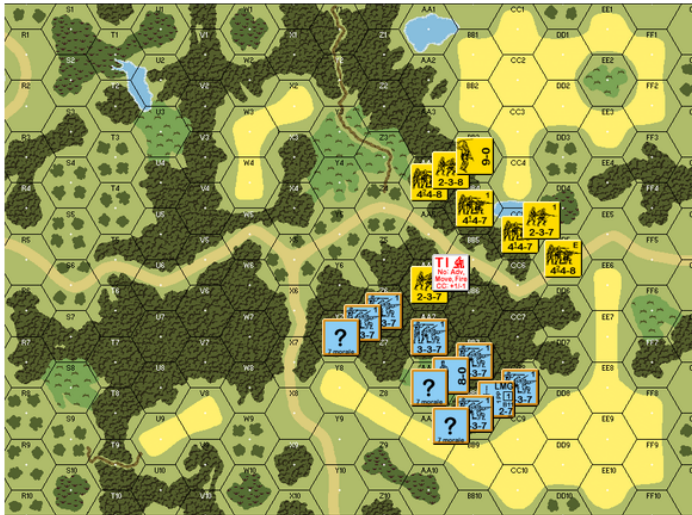


Illustration 4: Search

good idea to search only one enemy hex even if the adjacent to multiple so as to reduce potential casualties.

The Japanese have an additional twist when searching. If they use a striped squad any CR replaces it with a halfsquad. That means the Japanese can limit their losses to a quarter squad rather than a half by using a striped squad. As a bonus, the Japanese also get the -1 search drm for an extra halfsquad.

Combining these may provide even better results. A halfsquad moves in, preparing the ground with a search. Squads then put smoke grenades in a hex adjacent to the searched hex and follow-on squads enter that hex. In advancing fire the Japanese try to break or pin units, then look over the relative situation to see if close combat is a good option. The follow-on squads could use a leader to avoid the need to Double Time.

Japanese would like to strip all concealment, advance a halfsquad in per defending squad (or even one halfsquad only; the loss ratio is about the same vs. two Chinese squads). The loss ratio looks to be around three Japanese to four Chinese in the CCPh.

The Japanese also have two DCs in Totsugeki. These should be placed into the line to break it where possible. My opponent did attempt this, but he had some bad luck with the leaders he was using. He ran into six flats and rolled eleven on both MCs, wounding both. He ended the scenario with both DCs still in his possession. Again, using smoke grenades can reduce the effectiveness of Chinese Defensive First Fire, and searching may enable the attacker to find weak (or strong?) points in the line to attack. The Japanese also have the potential for DC heros, but when the Chinese back up two hexes in jungle, the Japanese will not have a great opportunity to use one. For each MF the creating unit spends, the DC hero loses two MF, so after spending four MF, any DC hero will have zero MF.

The defender is trying to slow down the pace of the game by backing up two hexes per turn and putting the attacker in a situation where he has to choose between a risky close combat because the defender is still partially concealed or not advancing. With the tactics I have shown the attacker can increase his chances of stripping concealment, which will turn the tables and force the defender to decide whether to voluntary break or not. In almost every scenario, the attacker has to be aggressive. I have presented here some ideas that combine being careful with being aggressive. These tactics won't eliminate casualties, but they can reduce them.

A third option to pry open the defensive line is to use search. The Chinese in my example might not even fire if a lone Japanese MMC moves adjacent without announcing Double Time at start because it can't bump-scout. Using a late Double Time the halfsquad can search (the +1 search drm for being CX is cancelled by a -1 drm for stealthy). Searching runs the risk of search casualties, and is especially dangerous if the searching unit finds more than one unit. But note that only *concealed* enemy units apply to the drm, so if the Chinese fire one squad, only the drm for the remaining unit would apply. As my examples above show, the concealed unit might not even be real. Note that it might be a