HISTORY · 28 MAY 2026 · ADMIN

Battles of Khalkhin Gol

From May to September 1939, an armed conflict erupted on Mongolian territory at Khalkhin Gol between Japan and the USSR, both allies. The victory of Soviet and Mongolian forces prevented a Japanese invasion and secured Mongolia and the USSR's eastern borders at the beginning of World War II. The Japanese Kwantung Army invaded the Mongolian People's Republic, attempting to push the border back to the Khalkhin Gol River



Battles took place on land and in the air. After the Japanese failed to break through the defenses, Soviet troops under the command of Georgy Zhukov carried out a brilliant offensive operation in August 1939, completely encircling and destroying the enemy's main forces.

An armistice was signed on September 16, 1939. Japan recognized the existing border.

A severe defeat discouraged the Japanese command from capturing Monroe and attacking

the USSR.

Because of the defeat at Khalkhin Gol, Japan did not support Germany in opening a Second Front against the USSR in 1941.

The armed conflict began as follows:

On January 16, 1939, near the Nomon-Khan-Burd-Obo heights, a group of five Japanese soldiers fired at a detachment of four Mongolian People’s Republic border guards from a distance of approximately 500 meters.

On January 17, at the Nomon-Khan-Burd-Obo heights, 13 Japanese soldiers attacked a detachment of three Mongolian People’s Republic border guards, capturing the outpost commander and wounding one soldier. On January 29 and 30, Japanese and Bargut cavalrymen made further attempts to capture Mongolian People’s Republic border guard detachments.

In February and March, the Japanese and Barguts attacked Mongolian People’s Republic border guards approximately 30 times.

On the night of May 8, a group of Japanese, up to a platoon strong with a light machine gun, attempted to stealthily occupy an island in the Khalkhin Gol River belonging to the Mongolian People’s Republic. After a brief firefight with the Mongolian border guards, the group retreated, losing three soldiers killed and one captured.

Between May 22 and 28, significant forces were concentrated in the conflict zone. The Soviet-Mongolian forces included 668 bayonets, 260 sabres, 58 machine guns, 20 artillery pieces, and 39 armored vehicles. The Japanese forces, under the command of Colonel Yamagata, numbered 1,680 bayonets, 900 sabres, 75 machine guns, 18 artillery pieces, 6-8 armored vehicles, and one tank. In early June, G.K. Zhukov was appointed. Corps Commissar Zhamyangiin Lkhagvasuren became Zhukov’s assistant in command of the Mongolian cavalry.

From July 2 to July 5, the Battle of Bain-Tsagan took place between Soviet-Mongolian and Japanese forces. This was the first major tank battle in the history of the Red Army and ended in a victory for the Soviet-Mongolian forces.



After these battles, as Marshal G.K. Zhukov later noted in his memoirs, Japanese troops “no longer risked crossing to the western bank of the Khalkhin-Gol River.” All subsequent events took place on the eastern bank of the river.

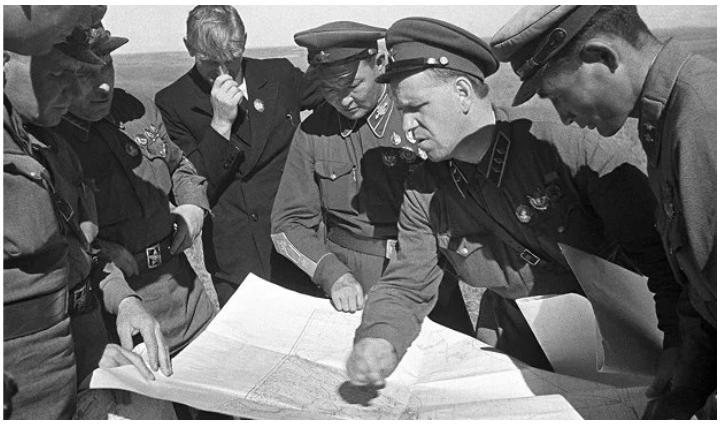
Soon, on July 19, the command of the 57th Special Corps was transformed into the command

of the 1st Army Group under the command of Division Commander G.K. Zhukov. The Soviet-Mongolian offensive began on August 20, preempting the Japanese offensive scheduled for August 24.

The advancing forces were divided into three groups—Southern, Northern, and Central.

Mongolian troops participated in the offensive—the 6th and 8th Cavalry Divisions, as well as a motor transport division under the overall command of Marshal Kh. Choibalsan.









On August 20, the offensive began at 6:15 AM with an air raid on enemy positions; 153 bombers, supported by 100 fighters, were launched. A powerful artillery barrage of 200 guns then began. Another raid by 45 bombers followed. At 9 AM, the ground forces' offensive began. The Soviet-Mongolian offensive took the Japanese 6th Army command completely by surprise. On the first day of the offensive, it failed to determine the direction of the main attack and made no attempt to support its own forces defending the flanks.

During the offensive, the Soviet command, using maneuverable mechanized and tank units, planned to encircle and destroy the enemy in the area between the Mongolian border and the Khalkhin Gol River with unexpected, powerful flanking attacks.

At Khalkhin Gol, for the first time in world military practice, tank and mechanized units were used to carry out operational missions as the main striking force of flanking groups conducting an encirclement maneuver.

Repeated attempts by the Japanese command to counterattack and relieve the encircled

group in the Khalkhin Gol area ended in failure.

After September 8, the Japanese command did not engage in ground operations, but air battles continued. In the first half of September, seven air battles took place in the skies over Mongolian territory. The largest battle, involving 120 Japanese aircraft against 207 Soviet ones, took place on September 15, the day the armistice was signed. On September 16, fighting on the border ceased.

Emperor Hirohito's decree, which ordered the commander of the Kwantung Army to suspend all hostile actions against Soviet troops, was published on September 16 at 1:10 PM.

The victory of the USSR and Mongolia in the armed conflict at Khalkhin Gol had significant geopolitical implications.

In Japan, the defeat at Khalkhin Gol led to a government crisis and the resignation of Hiranuma Kiichiro's cabinet. On September 4, the new Japanese government declared that it did not intend to intervene in any way in the conflict in Europe.

On April 13, 1941, the Soviet-Japanese Neutrality Pact was signed.

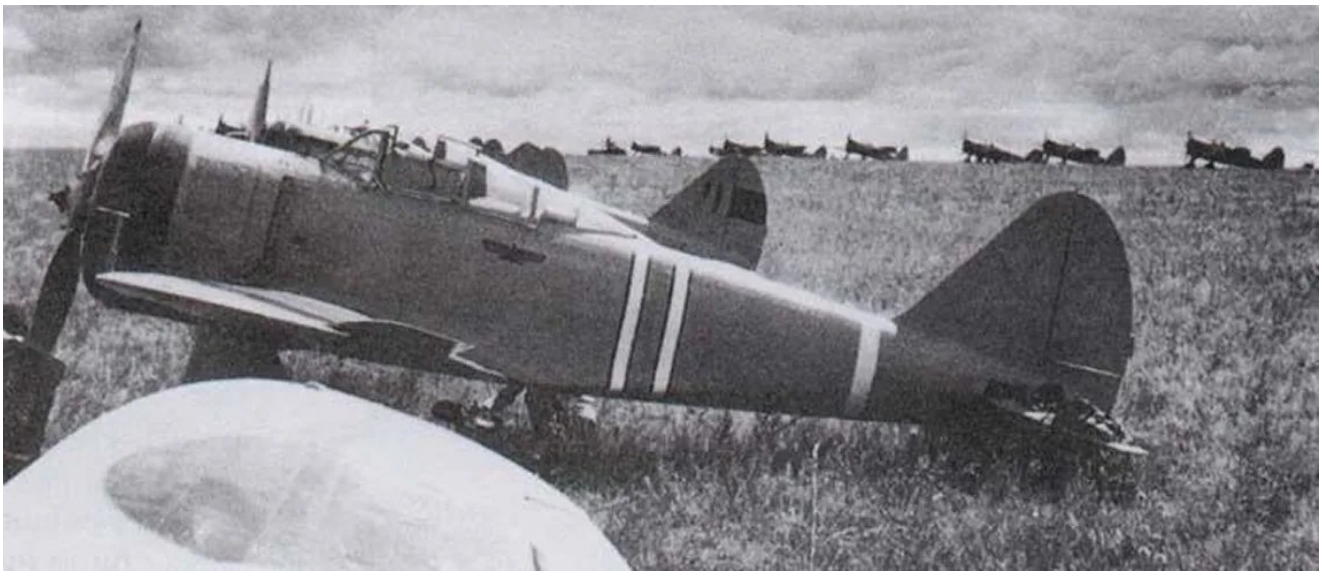
The victory of the USSR and Mongolia at Khalkhin Gol was one of the main reasons why Japan decided not to attack the USSR before the start of the Great Patriotic War.

During the battles at Khalkhin Gol, Soviet and Mongolian soldiers fought shoulder to shoulder against the invaders, forming a strong brotherhood of arms that continues to this day.

Every year, Mongolia and Russia celebrate many interstate events. Joint Russian-Mongolian search teams conduct extensive work at the sites of the battles at Khalkhin Gol. The Mongolian and Russian people remember, honor, and perpetuate the memory of the heroes of Khalkhin Gol.











Prepared by Prof. G. Choijil