

1944
NEW ZEALAND

MILITARY FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

REPORT

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

Wellington, 10th August, 1944.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the New Zealand Military Forces for the period 1st June, 1943, to 31st May, 1944.

GENERAL REMARKS

The decrease in the threat of Japanese action against New Zealand is now much more obvious to the general public than when it was mentioned in my last report. This security against attack is measured in two ways—the first, obvious to every one, being by Allied tactical successes, and the second, recognizable only by those to whom the required information is available, being by the establishment of bases and the concentrations of strength by the Allies in the theatre of operations. Marked progress has been made in both directions, and this, together with the striking improvement in the situation in Europe and the threat, which Japan must take into account, of forces of overwhelming strength from the European theatre being concentrated against her, has finally removed any risk of serious attack on New Zealand.

Army policy has closely followed, and to some extent anticipated, the strategical situation throughout the world, and especially in the Pacific. When danger threatened in 1941 and the early part of 1942 our home Forces were raised to unprecedented strength, and, in addition New Zealand troops occupied advanced points of high strategical importance in the Pacific. As Allied strength mounted in the Pacific, so the necessity for strong home Forces and island garrisons decreased, and those Forces were reduced accordingly, from time to time, until the stage was reached when the retention of manpower for anti-invasion Forces was no longer justified.

The effect of the progressive decrease in strength is emphasized in the Budget, which shows a reduction of £21,000,000 in the expenditure required for the Army. But, important as it is, this is perhaps overshadowed by the benefit resulting from the return to civil life of tens of thousands of men who had been immobilized by the threat of enemy attack. This release and the consequent reduction or cessation of defence works (including buildings), and in the manufacture of certain munitions, clothing, and other requirements of the Army, have brought relief to industry and to the civil population in several very important directions. To the extent that production has been increased by these measures, New Zealand's contribution to the war effort of the Allies has been increased. Another most important effect, both financial and as a contribution to the war effort overseas, has been the release for active theatres of war of quantities of war equipment and ammunition which had been concentrated in New Zealand. This equipment has helped to meet requirements on active fronts and incidentally has brought a credit to New Zealand finances of an estimated amount of £12,000,000 to date. No equipment is