

1944
NEW ZEALAND

AIR DEPARTMENT

(REPORT ON THE) FOR THE YEAR 1943-44

Presented in pursuance of Section 7 of the Air Department Act, 1937

REPORT BY THE HONOURABLE F. JONES, MINISTER IN CHARGE OF THE AIR DEPARTMENT, FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1944

MR. SPEAKER,—

I have the honour to present to Parliament the report of the Air Department for the year ended 31st March, 1944.

As it is not practicable to publish detailed information on defence programmes during wartime, and also because of the continued shortage of paper, it has again been decided to reduce the scope of the Department's report.

I desire to express my appreciation to all concerned for the efficient manner in which the many problems have been met and for the energy with which their duties have been carried out.

REPORT BY THE CHIEF OF THE AIR STAFF FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1944

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

I have the honour to submit the following report on the Royal New Zealand Air Force for the year ended 31st March, 1944.

Personnel.—The personnel required for the R.N.Z.A.F. squadrons which War Cabinet had agreed to maintain in the Pacific area necessitated a further expansion during the year. This has approximated to 20 per cent. over the strength at 31st March, 1943. The ability to meet requirements was due partly to the transfer of personnel from the Army, for both aircrew and non-flying duties, and partly to the response made to various recruiting campaigns.

Awards.—The following table details the awards to New Zealand air personnel granted annually during the period 1st April, 1940, to 31st March, 1944:—

Awards.	Twelve Months ending				Total.
	31st March, 1941.	31st March, 1942.	31st March, 1943.	31st March, 1944.	
Victoria Cross	..	1	..	1	2
Distinguished Service Order	..	6	9	19	34
Conspicuous Gallantry Medal	..	..	1	2	3
Military Cross	..	..	1	..	1
Second Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross	..	..	..	1	1
Bar to Distinguished Flying Cross	2	5	13	16	36
Distinguished Flying Cross	62	53	98	202	415
Bar to Distinguished Flying Medal	..	..	1	..	1
Distinguished Flying Medal	5	28	45	70	148
George Medal	3	..	..	1	4
Bar to Air Force Cross	..	1	..	1	2
Air Force Cross	8	11	8	10	37
Air Force Medal	..	2	2	..	4
British Empire Medal	1	1	2	5	9
American Distinguished Flying Cross	..	..	..	5	5
United States Air Medal	..	..	..	5	5
Croix de Guerre (French)	1	..	..	2	3
Croix de Guerre (Belgian)	..	..	..	1	1
Order of Lenin	..	..	1	..	1
Order of Crown of Yugoslavia	..	..	2	..	2
White Eagle of Yugoslavia	..	..	1	..	1
Czech War Cross	..	..	..	1	1
	82	108	184	342	716*

* Of this total, 509 awards have been won by personnel of the R.N.Z.A.F. and 207 by New-Zealanders serving as members of the R.A.F. In addition, 77 have been Mentioned in Despatches and 3 have been commended.

A total of 17 honours has been granted to R.N.Z.A.F. personnel since the outbreak of war to 31st March, 1944. This total consists of—

Commander of the Order of the British Empire	3
Officer of the Order of the British Empire	5
Member of the Order of the British Empire	9

Casualties.—(a) Overseas: From the outbreak of war to 31st March, 1944, 3,062 personnel have been reported as casualties. Additional casualties for the year totalled 1,061.

The analysis for each year is as follows:—

—	Total to 31st March, 1941.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1942.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1943.	Increase or Decrease for Year.	Total to 31st March, 1944.
Killed or presumed dead ..	156	373	529	677	1,206	1,004	2,210
*Missing, believed killed ..	20	31	51	124	175	82	93
*Missing	59	76	135	172	307	7	314
*Prisoner of war or interned ..	50	82	132	155	287	158	445
*Missing, believed prisoner of war	..	6	6	20	26	26	Nil
Total from outbreak of war	285	..	853	..	2,001	..	3,062
Increase for year	..	568	..	1,148	..	1,061	..

* Figures in these categories fluctuate from time to time as personnel are reclassified on receipt of additional information.

Analysis of total casualties from outbreak of war to 31st March, 1944:—

Killed or presumed dead	2,210
Missing, believed killed	93
Missing	314
Prisoner of war or interned	445
Total	3,062†

† Of this total, 2,716 casualties have been reported to personnel of the R.N.Z.A.F. and 346 to New-Zealanders serving with the R.A.F. at the outbreak of war. In addition, 77 have been reported seriously ill/injured and remain on the list at 31st March, 1944. The comparative total last year was 66.

(b) In New Zealand: During the year there were thirty fatal flying accidents, involving the loss of 52 lives. The following table gives the annual death-rate from 1st April, 1940, to 31st March, 1944:—

Cause of Death.	As at 31st March, 1941.	As at 31st March, 1942.	As at 31st March, 1943.	As at 31st March, 1944.	Total.
Aircraft accidents	37	57	75	52*	221
Motor and other non-flying accidents	7	4	11	11	33
Natural causes	5	2	14	30†	51
	49	63	100	93	305

* Includes 1 W.A.A.F.

† Includes 5 W.A.A.F.

Empire Air Training Scheme.—The Empire Air Training Scheme has continued to function during the year and the output of trained aircrew has been fully maintained at the agreed figures. The results of this remarkable programme are now everywhere in evidence on the war fronts of the United Nations.

Training Organization.—(a) Flying Training: Satisfactory reports received from overseas and from operational units within New Zealand, together with the success achieved by New Zealand aircrew personnel operating in the Pacific area, prove that the training of aircrews is thorough and is keeping pace with present-day operational requirements. The standard of flying training in New Zealand compares most favourably with that maintained elsewhere throughout the Empire.

Enlistments for aircrew duties have been sufficient to ensure full outputs in all categories of pilot, navigator, air bomber, and wireless operator/air gunner.

Supplies of aircraft, spare parts, and equipment have been reasonably well maintained during the year.

The reduced accident rate in flying training schools reflects credit on all those concerned with flying training. It has been reduced to a relatively low level, and this improvement is no doubt largely due to a vigorous anti-accident campaign which has been conducted during the year.

(b) Technical Training: A high standard has been maintained, involving a wide range of trades, in spite of the lower qualifications of personnel under training. The training staffs have executed their duties with commendable enthusiasm.

(c) Physical Education and Recreational Training: In 1943 a trained staff was appointed to bring into operation a scientifically-planned programme of physical training. The improvement in the physique and mental outlook of personnel has been a tribute to the work of the instructors.

(d) General and Service Training: Units leaving New Zealand for service overseas are now capable of taking their places with other branches of the Services with the knowledge that their general and service training is in accordance with the latest methods. All recruits now receive training in defence against gas.

Educational Services.—Facilities for general educational welfare have been available since April, 1943, and R.N.Z.A.F. educational facilities are also available to all naval personnel.

Through educational progress sheets and cards, which follow Air personnel from station to station, a complete record is kept of the courses of study satisfactorily completed. Air Force personnel will, on application on discharge, be given a Royal New Zealand Air Force Educational Certificate setting out the progress made. These certificates should prove of considerable value in connection with rehabilitation.

Air Training Corps.—The Air Training Corps has doubled its strength since March, 1942. Training efficiency has been greatly improved as the result of increased supplies of equipment and the appointment of a staff of instructors, many of whom have returned from operational experience abroad. The introduction of the Mobile Instructional Unit and the Air Training Corps Touring Flight has created much additional interest in the A.T.C., from which come most of the new recruits for the R.N.Z.A.F.

Women's Auxiliary Air Force.—The Women's Auxiliary Air Force has continued to play an important part in the work of the R.N.Z.A.F., with airwomen efficiently performing their duties in all of the trades in which they have been employed.

Medical Branch.—The service ceased to be a branch of the New Zealand Medical Corps in April, 1943, and was incorporated in the R.N.Z.A.F. Due to the limited number of professional and fully-trained staff available, the staff has been working under pressure. Although the expansion of the R.N.Z.A.F. in the Pacific area has presented many new medical problems, the general health has been maintained at a high standard.

Dental Services.—As in past years, the dental aspect of Service personnel has been carefully maintained.

Operations.—The past year has witnessed not only a considerable expansion in the number of operational squadrons, but has also satisfactorily demonstrated in the South Pacific area the standard of training achieved by the R.N.Z.A.F.

A year ago the R.N.Z.A.F. was still in the process of passing from a defensive to an offensive role. The successes attained by Admiral Halsey and his Forces in the Solomons area during 1943 enabled the bulk of R.N.Z.A.F. squadrons to be sent overseas, where they have played a worthy part in the recapture of the Solomon Islands and in sweeping Japanese aircraft from Rabaul.

The R.N.Z.A.F. Pacific Ferry has flown a large number of service aircraft from Honolulu to New Zealand without loss or mishap.

The formation of a transport organization to convey air and ground personnel, together with urgently-required equipment, to and from the forward area has proved an outstanding success.

Works and Buildings.—Works activities have been mainly concerned in three new phases: (i) the replanning of stations and camps to implement the policy of segregating all training in the South Island, (ii) replanning of stations and camps under the new conditions following the recession of the threat of invasion, and (iii) the expansion of the R.N.Z.A.F. in the Pacific area.

Equipment.—The year has again been one of continuous expansion, involving the formation and equipping of a number of new squadrons to operate in the Pacific area. With the exception of a few items, such as machine and hand tools, the supply position has been satisfactory.

Operational and training aircraft allocated to the R.N.Z.A.F. during 1943 were delivered, with minor exceptions, which are being released during 1944.

The policy of placing local contracts has been followed, and although the change-over to the American supply system reduced the demands on Dominion manufacturers, there is still a considerable volume of work being placed with local contractors.

Difficulty continues to be experienced in securing the requirements of clothing from local manufacturers.

Maintenance.—In New Zealand the standard of repair and maintenance has been kept at a high standard, and the technical services in the Pacific area have been improved by the formation of a Forward Repair Depot handling combat damage and major inspection work.

Supply.—The installation of bulk fuel depots near stations, together with the use of water transport in some areas, has assisted in maintaining an efficient supply system with the least drain on man-power.

Vegetable gardens on R.N.Z.A.F. stations have been reduced during the year.

Catering officers have been established on larger stations, thus improving the standard of messing and messing administration.

An increase in flying-boat commitments has resulted in the provision of additional marine craft facilities.

Aeronautical Production.—Local manufacture of a wide range of miscellaneous items of aeronautical, electrical, and ground equipment was necessary throughout the year. The production and repair of training-type aircraft, wooden propellers, aircraft tires, and types of aircraft accumulators continue as before.

The overhaul and repair of training type and communication aircraft, and the reconditioning of engines and wooden propellers, is still carried out by private contracts.

Signals.—The changed strategic situation in the South Pacific area has had considerable effect on the Signals organization. Whereas in 1942 it was necessary to plan communications required for the defence of the Dominion, the removal of the threat of enemy action against this country and the consequent despatch of operational units to the forward area have necessitated an extensive revision of Signals planning.

Meteorological.—The Meteorological Branch continues to meet requirements for the three Armed Services and for the civilian population.

Band of the R.N.Z.A.F.—The Band of the R.N.Z.A.F. has spent a considerable time on Air Force stations, providing entertainment to Service personnel and assisting in campaigns for recruiting, National Patriotic Funds, and war loans.

Public Relations.—Recruiting campaigns for the Royal New Zealand Air Force, Air Training Corps, and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were inaugurated and carried out by the Directorate of Public Relations, which is also responsible for the handling of casualty reports affecting New Zealand air personnel.

Conclusion.—I desire to express my thanks and appreciation to all members of the Royal New Zealand Air Force and to the civilian staff for their efforts during the past year.

I have, &c.,

L. M. ISITT, Air Vice-Marshal,
Chief of the Air Staff.

REPORT OF THE ACTING CONTROLLER OF CIVIL AVIATION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st MARCH, 1944

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

New operational flying problems and the consideration of post-war aviation development problems have engaged the attention of the Branch during the past year.

The work of the inter-departmental Air Transport Committee set up by Cabinet was completed and a report has now been submitted to Government.

Commercial Aircraft Services.—Scheduled operations were maintained on the following routes:—

- (1) Auckland—Palmerston North—Wellington:
- (2) Wellington—Christchurch—Dunedin:
- (3) Wellington—Blenheim:
- (4) Wellington—Nelson:
- (5) Nelson—Westport—Greymouth—Hokitika:
- (6) Hokitika—Weheka:
- (7) Hokitika—Haast—Okuru—Jacksons Bay.

Routes (1) to (4) were operated by Union Airways of New Zealand, Ltd., while the remaining services were maintained by Air Travel (New Zealand), Ltd. The total route mileage flown was 1,248. Details of traffic carried on these services are as follows, the previous year's figures being quoted for comparative purposes:—

Year ended	Passengers.	Freight.	Mail.
		lb.	lb.
31st March, 1944 ..	37,435	191,114	244,614
31st March, 1943 ..	30,634	174,753	220,527

The average number of aircraft employed during the year was 5.75.

International services were represented by the operations of Tasman Empire Airways, Ltd., which maintained regular schedules between Auckland and Sydney with two Short S.30 flying-boats.

During the year ended 31st March, 1944, 2,294 passengers, 40,024 lb. of freight, and 94,106 lb. of mail were carried, the figures for the previous year being 2,256, 35,195, and 101,741 respectively.

Licensing.—During the year new regulations were issued governing the issue of licenses to personnel operating radio equipment installed in aircraft, and also prescribing the qualifications and licensing of those engaged in the overhaul and inspection of radio equipment. These regulations will serve the purpose of setting a definite standard for the personnel concerned.

I have, &c.,

J. M. BUCKERIDGE, Flight Lieutenant,
Acting Controller of Civil Aviation.

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