

During the year the replacement of United States types of combat aircraft, which are now obsolete and with which the Air Force had been wholly equipped during the war, by a suitable British type received careful consideration. The primary objective was to obtain a type available in sufficient numbers and suitable for a variety of operational and training roles on which the Air Force could be reorganized and trained during the next five years. In any case, there is no new type of British military aircraft developed since the war which, apart from consideration of finance, could be safely recommended for use in New Zealand at the present time. As a result, the Government decided to order 80 Mosquitoes F/B Mk. VI, which have been obtained at greatly reduced prices from the United Kingdom. Many of these aircraft are new. Deliveries are now being effected by air with both Royal New Zealand Air Force and Royal Air Force crews. Plans for a post-war Air Force providing for the establishment of a small Regular Air Force serving on short- and long-term engagements, together with such Territorial units as can be efficiently supported, have been prepared.

During the year I have been able, as Chief of Air Staff, to participate in joint conferences and exercises in the United Kingdom which have been of great value in obtaining a sound perspective towards post-war military problems.

OPERATIONS

One squadron only, No. 14 Fighter Squadron in Japan, has been maintained on a fully operational basis. Its efficiency and morale have been the subject of high praise from the Air Officer Commanding, and notably from the Chief of Air Staff, Royal Air Force, during his visit to Japan. The squadron is employed in air patrols over the Yamaguchi and Hiroshima prefecture of Japan, and in coastal patrols against smuggling and illegal immigration. No. 5 Flying-boat Squadron at Lauthala Bay, Fiji, has been mainly on a care and maintenance basis, but has provided aircraft for air-sea rescue duties, surveys of Pacific bases, and transport of personnel employed in the High Commission for the Western Pacific. By courtesy of the Air Ministry, No. 2 (Bomber) Squadron at Ohakea has been renamed No. 75 Squadron after the famous New Zealand squadron in bomber Command, and this number will remain unallocated in the Royal Air Force. It has been mainly concerned with preparatory training for the ferrying of Mosquito aircraft from the United Kingdom to New Zealand. Fourteen aircrews were despatched to the United Kingdom by Royal New Zealand Air Force transport aircraft, and the first Mosquito aircraft were flown out from England to New Zealand in March, 1947. Six Mosquito aircraft (dual trainers) purchased from the Australian Government were also flown to New Zealand. Restricted flying activities were carried out by the Central Fighter Establishment at Ohakea and by the Instrument Flying School at Whenuapai. Other flying activities include the Forestry Patrol Flight at Rotorua, the Canterbury Project Flight (meteorological research) at Wigram, and the General Purpose Flight (transport duties) at Rongotai. The School of Air Navigation at Wigram has been limited to the training of navigators for Mosquito ferry duties. During the year liaison visits were paid to New Zealand by aircraft from the Empire Air Navigation School, the Central Bombing Establishment, the Empire Radio School, and the Empire Armament School. The visits of these teams of specialists in aircraft fitted with the latest equipment offer a unique method of keeping in touch with the latest developments in the Royal Air Force, and are of the utmost value to the Royal New Zealand Air Force.

A Commonwealth Squadron (No. 24) for world-wide Service transport duties has been formed in the Royal Air Force, to which aircrews from other members of the Commonwealth are seconded. New Zealand supplies two crews to this squadron. The objects behind the establishment of this squadron are to extend the co-operation between the Air Forces of the Commonwealth, to ensure the development of a common technique in air transport, and to provide experience in long-distance flying. The establishment of this squadron represents an important development in post-war relations between Commonwealth Air Forces.

A summary of flying statistics is given in Appendix A.