

R.N.Z.A.F. AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES

The Air Force has during the year provided air transport requirements coming within the following categories, namely :—

- (a) Air support for the New Zealand component of the British Commonwealth Occupation Forces in Japan.
- (b) Operation of a quasi-civil service within New Zealand and the South Pacific pending transfer to the New Zealand National Airways Corporation.
- (c) Special flights to the United Kingdom for the transport of Mosquito aircraft ferry crews, as well as a number of special flights arranged for the carriage of Ministerial and departmental officials on various missions.

At the commencement of the year the Royal New Zealand Air Force air transport squadrons were equipped with 27 C. 47 Dakotas, 4 Lodestars, and 4 Sunderlands.

Quasi-civil Services.—During the year facilities have been afforded those members of aircrew desirous of making a career in civil aviation to train and be examined for special civil certificates—namely, First and Third Postmaster-General's Licences, First and Second Navigation, and "A" and "B" Flying endorsements. As a result of this scheme, aircrews on transfer to New Zealand National Airways Corporation are already in possession of the necessary civil qualifications.

During the year the percentage of fare-paying traffic increased rapidly until by December, 1946, 90 per cent. of all passengers carried by No. 40 Squadron and the Sunderland Squadron were civilians.

In December, 1946, the New Zealand Railways, in conjunction with the Air Force, operated a series of special inter-Island air freighting flights in order to meet the shipping emergency. The success of this series of flights was clearly demonstrated when the New Zealand Railways in February, 1947, arranged with the Air Force to operate C. 47 freight aircraft between Paraparaumu and Woodbourne. Up to 31st March, 1947, 2,893 shipping tons of freight had been transported between the two Islands.

Special flights by Sunderland aircraft have been made between Wellington and the Chatham Islands for the carriage of Public Works and other Government officials in connection with the roading scheme.

At the request of the French Minister, a survey flight was made between Aitutaki, in the Cook Islands, and Bora Bora, French Oceania. Following on this trip two further special flights have been made.

Arrangements were well in hand at the close of the year for the transfer of the quasi-civil services to the Corporation. The booking-offices within New Zealand were taken over by the Corporation on the 3rd March, 1947; the aircrews and certain ground personnel of the squadrons were transferred at the end of the month; and the aircraft will pass to the Corporation as soon as the necessary certificates of airworthiness have been issued.

No. 41 Squadron.—Valuable experience has been gained by the aircrews of No. 41 Squadron on the courier service to Japan. Five services a month were maintained until September, when a shortage of trained maintenance personnel necessitated a reduction to four services a month.

The entire personnel of No. 14 Squadron in Japan were repatriated to New Zealand by air and replacement effected between November, 1946, and 31st March, 1947.

The acquisition of Mosquito aircraft by the Air Force and the decision to ferry these aircraft to New Zealand necessitated arrangements for the return of aircrews to the United Kingdom. In consequence, up to 31st March three special flights had been made to England with Dakota aircraft.

Special flights carrying Ministers of the Crown, Chiefs of Staff, and Treasury officials have been made to various points throughout the Pacific area.

A summary of air transport statistics is shown in Appendix C.