

Zealand and Fiji for the purpose of carrying Air Force supplies and personnel. In December, 1948, nine flights transporting food and medical supplies were made to islands of the Lau Group to assist in the relief of the hurricane-devastated area. Two complete transport crews remain attached to No. 24 Commonwealth Squadron in the United Kingdom.

Co-operation with Other Services.—During the year exercises were carried out by Mosquito, Catalina, and Harvard aircraft with the newly-formed squadron of R.N.Z.N. frigates. Seven Army pilots completed their basic air-observation-post training in the R.N.Z.A.F. and were converted to Auster aircraft, which are standard British equipment for that duty. Mosquito aircraft also co-operated with the Army in anti-aircraft artillery shoots. These activities demonstrated, in small measure but practical manner, the integrated role of the three Services which is receiving continued emphasis.

Liaison Visits.—Teams from the Empire Air Armament School and Central Fighter Establishment visited the R.N.Z.A.F. during the year. An R.A.A.F. Lincoln with a land/air warfare team arrived in December, 1948. These teams gave lectures and demonstrations on developments in their specialist spheres to officers of the three Services. Such visits contribute considerably to keeping the Air Force abreast of modern trends and developments.

Statistics.—A summary of flying statistics is given at Appendix A. Although the hours flown, 19,709, show a decrease from the total flown in the preceding period (20,927), they represent an increase of approximately 5,000 hours in true service flying due to the cessation of Air Force quasi-civil transport services.

MISCELLANEOUS FLYING ACTIVITIES

Extra Service tasks in conjunction with other State Departments showed some increase over last year's operations in this sphere.

The inter-departmental Committee for the co-ordination of air services required by State Departments charged the R.N.Z.A.F., in conjunction with the Soil Conservation and Rivers Control Council, with the task of investigating the practicability of aerial top-dressing marginal land in New Zealand. Preliminary experiments commenced in July, 1948, with specially modified Avenger aircraft. Field trials proved successful at Raglan and Sanson, and experimental operations on a larger scale at Masterton are now being planned. Essential air-lifts within New Zealand were provided by the General Purpose Flight, which also undertook extensive aerial fire patrols (with Auster aircraft) from Rotorua during the summer months: No. 41 Squadron (Dakota aircraft) assisted the Civil Aviation Branch in the calibration of radio navigation aids within New Zealand and the Pacific Area, provided instrument flying practice for pilots of Tasman Empire Airways Ltd., transported and air-dropped supplies in support of deer-control activities and also air-dropped prefabricated mountain huts in the North and South Islands. Daily meteorological flights were carried out from Olakea to obtain upper air temperatures to assist meteorological forecasting. Air search and rescue operations were undertaken on twenty-four occasions and in the "Kaka" search involved the use of twenty-seven Service aircraft.

AIR TRANSPORT SERVICES

The overseas air transport activities of the R.N.Z.A.F. which have been prominent since 1942 have been progressively reduced, and at present the R.N.Z.A.F. has no routine overseas air-transport schedules. After two years of continuous operation the courier service to Japan was terminated in April, 1948, and No. 41 Squadron was diverted to the urgent task of providing an air lift from Singapore to New Zealand for ex-R.A.A.F. tradesmen who had enlisted in the R.N.Z.A.F. in England. These airmen, who were transported to Singapore by the R.A.F. Transport Command, were urgently required