

Enclosure No.I. in Western Pacific despatch secret  
of 30th October, 1936.

SECRET.

COPY.

SUBJECT.

Report on Pacific Islands visited by H.M. Ships  
"Achilles", "Leith" and "Wellington".

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From THE COMMODORE COMMANDING NEW ZEALAND STATION.

H.M.S. "DUNEDIN",  
at Auckland.

Date: 14th October, 1936.

No. N.Z. 26/8808.

To. The Secretary of the Admiralty, London.

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Formers. Admiralty signals 2214 of 28th April, 1936;  
2029 of 25th May, 1936; 2030 of 25th May,  
1936; 1745 of 10th July, 1936 and 2150 of  
17th July, 1936.

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Herewith is forwarded one copy of each of  
the following:-

- (i) Report of Aerial Survey of Islands visited  
by H.M.S. "Achilles". ("Achilles"  
No.1585/138 dated 2nd October, 1936).
- (ii) Report on Islands visited by H.M.S. "Leith"  
in the Gilbert, Ellice, Phoenix Groups  
and New Hebrides. ("Leith's" No.001  
dated 17th August, 1936, and No.13 dated  
25th September, 1936).
- (iii) Report on Islands visited by H.M.S.  
"Wellington". ("Wellington's" No.018  
dated 25th September, 1936).



2. Trans-Pacific Air Route.

As a result of a study of the above reports and with a view to selecting the most probable route that an air service connecting New Zealand and Canada should take, the following points stand out.

3. With the present performance of aircraft, and probably for some years to come, Honolulu will be an essential port of call for a Trans-Pacific service.

4. Between Honolulu and New Zealand there are several possible routes, and as Fiji is the most important group of islands, both commercially and strategically on this line it is considered essential that any British Air Line should call at Suva (or suitable place near Suva).

5. Between New Zealand and Fiji, there are no suitable harbours (Norfolk Island and the Kermadecs being useless) except possibly Minerva Reefs (vide report of H.M.S. "Achilles") which are situated some distance off the direct route.

6. Between Honolulu and Fiji, probably two refuelling bases would be required, as nearly equidistant as possible, one lying in the Phoenix or Union Groups and one in the Kingman Reef to Christmas Island area.

In the former groups there appear to be two possibilities - Hull Island in the Phoenix Group and Nukunono in the Union or Tokelau Group. Neither of these islands possess an anchorage for ships nor do they possess an inlet, suitable for small craft, into  
their



their lagoons, but from reports it appears that a passage for small craft could be blasted through the reef without much difficulty. Hull Island has a few coral pinnacles in the lagoon which show clearly in the photographs. Nukunono probably has the same drawback but this lagoon was not photographed by "Achilles" owing to the bad weather conditions prevailing at the time of her visit.

In the latter area, Kingman Reef and Christmas Island appear suitable. Kingman Reef is more nearly on the direct route, but Christmas Island is a British Possession and is probably equally good, if not better, as it is inhabited, and buildings can be erected ashore; whereas at Kingman Reef a depot ship would be required.

Fanning Island lagoon is apparently much too small to be of any use, without considerable blasting.

7. It is not considered that Samoa, though fairly well placed geographically, has any suitable harbour for use as an air base.

8. The Tonga Group possesses suitable harbours - Nukualofa in particular being ideal. The Group is situated about the same distance from New Zealand as Fiji, but has little commercial value.

9. The conclusion is reached that the best route from New Zealand to Honolulu would run via Suva, Hull or Nukunono, Christmas Island or Kingman Reef.

10. Other Pacific Islands.

The remarks on the other islands visited by

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H.M. Ships "Leith" and "Wellington" are of interest. It will be observed that the Gilbert and Ellice Islands have several suitable places for flying bases which, in conjunction with the Fiji Islands, may be of considerable strategic value in the future, though of no commercial value at present.

11. It is also of interest to note the remarks of the Commanding Officer of the "Wellington" about Tahitian labour in British Islands, and it is not unlikely that the same restrictions will be applied to Christmas Island in the near future.

12. Copies of these reports are being forwarded to the Naval Board, Wellington, for the New Zealand Government and to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific.

Large scale photographs taken by "Achilles" are being forwarded direct to the Admiralty.

13. It is pointed out that the present Commanding Officers of "Leith" and "Wellington" (Captain O. Bevir and Commander J.B.E. Hall) will be returning to the United Kingdom early in 1937 and will be available to give information on the majority of the Pacific Islands on the New Zealand Station which they have personally visited.

(Signed) E.R. DRUMMOND

REAR ADMIRAL.

Enclosures:-

1. "Achilles'" No.1585/138 of 2nd October, 1936.
2. "Leith's" No.001 of 17th August, 1936.
3. "Leith's" No.13 of 25th September, 1936.
4. "Wellington's" No.018 of 25th September, 1936.