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NOTE.

At their 331st meeting, held on the 27th of July, the Committee of Imperial Defence approved in principle the proposal put forward by the New Zealand Government that four strategic air routes radiating from Fiji should be established in the South Pacific, and that, as a first step towards the establishment of those routes, the New Zealand Government should themselves undertake a full survey of Route A, from Fiji to the Gilbert Islands. The New Zealand Government were informed accordingly on the 9th of September and reported on the 12th of September that they proposed to commence early in October a survey for a landing ground in Fiji. The High Commissioner for the Western Pacific was informed of what was proposed and authorised to make the necessary arrangements for the proposed survey in direct communication with the New Zealand Government.

The High Commissioner had previously commented on the New Zealand Government's proposals and expressed doubts firstly as to the need for the provision of land aerodromes on the proposed routes when facilities for seaplanes could more easily be provided, and secondly whether the establishment of the proposed air routes, if they could not be adequately defended, might not prove to be a double-edged weapon. The High Commissioner's despatch was circulated to the Committee of Imperial Defence (C.I.D. paper 1463 B) but was not considered at the meeting of the 27th of July.

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It raises technical questions which fall to be considered by the Service Departments rather than the Colonial Office, and on which no Colonial Office comment seems necessary.

Meanwhile the Air Ministry have proposed (see 13/3164/38 and 86057/5/38), for reasons connected with civil aviation rather than with defence, that Route B, from Fiji to Christmas Island should be surveyed before Route A, starting at Christmas Island instead of at Fiji, and that early steps should be taken to survey and demarcate alighting areas for aircraft at Christmas and Hull Islands on that Route. It is understood that the Dominions Office have taken no steps to communicate this proposal to the New Zealand Government pending further consideration by the Committee of Imperial Defence, though no further paper on the subject has yet been circulated to the Committee of Imperial Defence. From the point of view of the Colonial Office there is no objection to the course proposed and the Dominions Office and Air Ministry have been informed accordingly. The Colonial Office are also in communication with the High Commissioner in regard to the steps that would be necessary to enable the Government to take possession of any land in Christmas Island that may be required for air purposes. *No difficulty is however anticipated on this account.*