

Duplicate copy on 16/3/64/38 Secret

2c

18.

A 91/57

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM

NEW ZEALAND

To the Government of New Zealand

Sent 12.35 a.m., 15th October 1938

IMPORTANT

Secret No. 140.

Your telegram No.102 of 12th September and my telegram No.116 of 9th September, Pacific Islands. In view of certain aspects of the matter which have been brought to notice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in connexion with desirability of firmly establishing British claim to certain islands and the selection of civil air routes^{in the Pacific} question of priorities has been reconsidered and it is desired to submit for urgent consideration of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand the following comments and suggestions.

2. The most satisfactory civil air route from New Zealand to North America, viz. Auckland to Honolulu, will, it is thought, necessitate use of Suva, Nukunono Island, Hull Island (as potential emergency alighting place) and Christmas Island.

3. It appears essential from standpoint of negotiation with United States full reciprocity across Pacific, not only that British sovereignty should be claimed in respect of those islands where any dispute is possible but also that British interests should speedily be so firmly established as to enjoy rights de facto as well as de jure; this would forestall risk of United States interests trying to intrude there on the lines adopted at Canton Island.

4. Of the islands mentioned in paragraph 2, that which appears to be most open to dispute as to ownership is Christmas Island, and although British claim to sovereignty is regarded as strong, possible United States counter claim must be reckoned with. As is recognised in paragraph 4 of your secret despatch of 20th May, this island

island is of first class importance both for air route and defence purposes, and only the actual preparations for an airport, it is thought, would make it secure against possible United States intrusion.

5. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom think that in these circumstances it would be most desirable that marine alighting place and land aerodrome on Christmas Island should be surveyed and demarcated and adequate notices of ownership of the Island posted as soon as possible and, for this purpose, they would be grateful if His Majesty's Government in New Zealand could consider possibility of sending a party quickly and discreetly. On their return from Christmas Island it is also suggested that party should survey for similar purposes Nukonono and Hull Island thus securing satisfactory hold on latter even if not to be utilised as main landing place.

6. General effect of these proposals would be to take in hand route B described in your despatch before route A and to begin at outer end of route (Christmas Island) instead of at centre (Fiji) as suggested in your telegram No. 102.

7. It is hoped that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will agree that considerations set out above, which demonstrate importance of route B both from defence and civil aviation aspects, render such a variation advisable and that they may be prepared to undertake responsibility for immediate survey of this route in same manner as was contemplated for route A. Air Ministry would be pleased, however, to arrange for a special echo sounding apparatus, for purpose of marine surveys, to be sent by air to Sydney and ship to Fiji with experienced operator from Imperial Airways staff and for cost of this service to be borne from United Kingdom funds. This apparatus has already proved most satisfactory for rapid and accurate survey of water expanses for flying boat purposes and records depths of as little as 3 feet; it is thought that it would be found to be of the very greatest value for the present purpose. It is assumed that a motor boat of small draught and ordinary navigating instruments including plane table, telescopic alidade, portable range finder and invar tape will be available.

8. Should be grateful for very early reply; if this is favourable, operator and apparatus leaving by air 30th October might reach Suva by 17th November and proceed thence with New Zealand party to Christmas Island.