

PARAPHRASE TELEGRAM

NEW ZEALAND

From the Governor General of New Zealand.

Dated 24th December, 1938. Received 7.24 a.m., 24th
December, 1938.

No.145. Secret.

Reference my telegram No.144 of today. I am asked by my Prime Minister to inform you that various Pacific Islands have recently been visited by New Zealand Chiefs of Staff who have now rendered a report on the defences of Fiji and Tonga. Summary of their conclusions is as follows:- Begins:- (a) They emphasise the strategical importance of the Fiji and Tongan Groups. (b) The scale of attack to be expected in these groups has risen to one infantry brigade A (c) Fiji Defence Force should be expanded from its present strength of 400 to a total of 1300 all ranks. (d) Port of Suva should be defended by two naval six inch guns. (e) A Defence Force of one battalion should be formed in Tonga. (f) New Zealand should have a brigade group in readiness in war time to reinforce the Islands as required. (g) In Suva local forces are required for minesweeping and for examination services. (h) New Zealand should be prepared to send aircraft to operate from these Islands in war. (i) Two landing grounds are required in Fiji, the necessary surveys and estimates having been made. (j) Two landing grounds are required in the Tonga Group; the surveys should now be made by a New Zealand aerodrome engineer. (k) Part of New Zealand's reserves of fuel, bombs and ammunition should be held in Fiji and part of the reserves of fuel in Tonga.

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It must be made clear that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have not yet approved recommendations (f) (h) (j) and (k).

Copy of the full report is being sent to you by despatch and copies are being sent to His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia and to the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific. It is thought that this report will naturally be discussed at the forthcoming conference on defence matters.