

Y02072

J. A. Calder, Esq.

35

No. D256/15

Subject: Defence of Pacific Islands.

Reference to previous correspondence:

No. 32. S. 3. 39.

With the compliments of Mr. Duncan

A copy has also been sent to Major Jacob,
Mr. Gilman
General Pownall
P. S. M/n

Dominions Office, Downing Street,

6 MAR 1939

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D.255/15.

CYPHER TELEGRAM

NEW ZEALAND

To the Government of New Zealand.

(Sent 12 noon 5th March, 1939).

No. 32. Most Secret.

(not to Co.)

Your telegram of 3rd February No. 15. Following is position as regards questions (1), (2), (3), (4) and 5 (a).

(1) We agree that for reasons indicated it would be undesirable to defer despatch of force to Fanning Island until after an outbreak of war. We feel however, that, having regard to difficulties involved in placing a garrison ^{on} the Island in peace time (including lack of accommodation and supplies) it would not be advisable to despatch this force at the present time. In order to avoid delay if necessity for its despatch should arise, we suggest that best course would be for His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to make as complete a plan as possible for the operation and to collect and earmark all stores, supplies, ammunition etc. which would be required. It would then be possible if at any time in the opinion of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom occasion had arisen for the despatch of the force for them to inform His Majesty's Government in New Zealand immediately. For this purpose would it be possible to let us have length of time which might be expected to elapse between receipt by New Zealand Government of such information and sailing of force.

(2) (a) Having reviewed possibilities of enemy attack on Fiji we doubt value of installation of 6 inch guns at Suva. Moreover the 6 inch guns at present held in New Zealand are
earmarked

earmarked for the arming of merchant ships. In the circumstances feeling here is that it would be preferable to retain them in New Zealand for this purpose.

(b) Proposals for expansion of Fiji defence force and generous offer of New Zealand Government to despatch to Fiji rifles and machine guns required are welcomed. Detailed working out of scheme for such expansion raises certain questions which it is thought could best be discussed at forthcoming Conference in New Zealand and if New Zealand Government agree we should propose that any action should be deferred pending such discussion.

(3) If view expressed in (2) (a) is accepted, question of construction of gun positions does not arise. Proposed establishment of air facilities in Fiji is welcomed in principle but this also raises questions which it is suggested might be discussed at forthcoming Conference.

(4) As mentioned under (2) (a) the only six inch guns in Admiralty reserve in New Zealand are earmarked for equipment of armed merchant ships. There are, however, at Sydney a number of six inch B.L. Mark XI guns complete with necessary spare parts, appurtenances, side arms and ordnance tools, on P.V. mountings with telescopes and tools. Admiralty would be happy to supply two of these to New Zealand if desired. Ammunition for these guns is available at Sydney as follows:

970 shell C.P.C. (Common Pointed Capped) fuzed

65 shell H.E. plugged

65 fuzes No. 45 P

65 cylinders packages etc.

No cartridges are available either in Australia or elsewhere and
special

special manufacture would be necessary. Approximate time required to produce 1035 cartridges would be four months from date of order. Total cost of guns, mountings and shells which could be supplied from Australia is estimated at £20,900 (sterling). Cost of specially manufactured cartridges would be about £6,330 (sterling). Cost of freight and special packing would be additional in each case. As regards gun rings, separate ring is not required with an Arrol platform since base plate of platform is drilled to fit particular type of mounting. If His Majesty's Government in New Zealand should wish to place order for manufacture of cartridges Admiralty would be glad to know as soon as possible.

(5) (a) Under existing arrangements requirements of New Zealand as regards gun ammunition have been given highest priority which is thought possible having regard to other requirements of an essential character and it is feared that no further action is possible at present. It is understood that detailed explanation of position has been given to New Zealand military authorities by Colonel Miles.

Further reply will be sent as soon as possible as regards question (5) (b).

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