

17
18-22
~~6/10~~

C. O.

- Mr. Lee 12/6/39.
- Mr. Bevis 14/6
- Mr. Ambrose 16/6 fs.
- Mr. A. J. Dawe.
- Sir H. Moore.
- Sir G. Tomlinson.
- Sir J. Shuckburgh.
- Permt. U.S. of S.
- Parly. U.S. of S.
- Secretary of State.

s/o for Mr. Lee's signature.

Downing Street,

June, 1939.



SECRET

.....

O.D.C. Minute No. 343.

(1) 4(4) I enclose a draft tele-
 (5) (spide ligand (nav))
 gram which we propose to send to the
 Government of Fiji communicating to
 him the recommendations summarised
 in the above minute.

I should be very grate-
 ful if you would let me know as soon
 as possible whether you concur in
 its terms.

I understand from
 Gilbert that so far as he is concerned,
 he has no objection to the reference
 made to the proposal that His Majesty's
 Government should bear half the cost
 of the emergency landing grounds in
 Fiji, but he says that your finance
 people should also concur. I assume

that

DRAFT.

To:

- (1) Major E.H.C. Frith, M.B.E., War Office. *ansd by 31.*
- (2) Wing Commander R.M. Foster, D.F.C., Air Ministry. *S.P.*
- (3) C.W. Dixon, Esq., C.M.G., O.B.E. Cominions Office. *S.P.*
- (4) Captain D.A. Budgen, Admiralty. *S.P.*
- (5) B W Gilbert Esq CB *S.P.*
 Treasury

Amg telegrams.

(To(2)only)

2 Drafts.

FURTHER ACTION.

that you will arrange for this.

The War Office

(To (1) only)

have undertaken to consider the provision of arms in a number of cases - e.g. for the new companies of the Fiji Defence Force, for the proposed company in Tonga, and for Ocean Island. If you feel that it would be of advantage to have a discussion on these

points, I will gladly make ^{the necessary} arrangements. *for this.*

I am writing similarly to:

Gilbert

(To 1) ~~Wing Commander~~ Foster, ~~Major~~ Dixon

and ~~Captain~~ Budgen.

Gilbert

(to 2) ~~Major~~ Frith, ~~Major~~ Dixon and

~~Captain~~ Budgen.

Gilbert

(to 3) ~~Major~~ Frith, ~~Wing Commander~~ Foster and

~~Captain~~ Budgen.

Gilbert

(to 4) ~~Major~~ Frith, ~~Wing Commander~~ Foster

and ~~Major~~ C.W. Dixon.

(to 5) ~~Major~~ Frith, ~~Major~~ Budgen, ~~Major~~ Frith
.....

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(THIS DOCUMENT IS THE PROPERTY OF HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT).

S E C R E T.

O.D.C. Minute No. 343.

COPY NO. 2

COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE.

OVERSEA DEFENCE COMMITTEE.

NEW ZEALAND DEFENCE CONFERENCE, 1939.

Minute by the Oversea Defence Sub-
Committee of the Committee of Imperial
Defence.

6221/1/39

In February, 1939, the Oversea Defence Committee considered certain questions concerning defence matters in the South Western Pacific, which were put forward by the New Zealand Government, and which were referred to the Committee by the Dominions Office (O.D.C. Paper No. 1678). The views of the Committee on these matters were set out in O.D.C. Minute No. 334.

2. In April 1939, a Conference was held in New Zealand attended by Delegations from the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, to consider a number of matters of common concern. At this Conference, among other matters, the questions on which the Oversea Defence Committee had expressed their opinion in O.D.C. Minute No. 334 were fully considered. The Report of the Conference has recently been received by the Dominions Office, and Section 2, Part I, (O.D.C. Paper No. 1743), was referred to the Oversea Defence Committee for consideration. The whole of Part I of the Report had

already been under consideration by the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee, and in consequence, at the 387th Meeting of the Oversea Defence Committee, on 31st May, 1939, when Section 2 of Part I was under consideration, the guidance of the Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee was available. (O.D.C. Paper No. 1743).

3. The Committee carefully considered the recommendations of the Conference, which are summarised in paragraph 59 of Part I of the Report. These recommendations deal with measures to be taken in various Pacific Islands, both for purely local defence and to assist in strengthening the general defensive position in the South West Pacific. The views of the Oversea Defence Committee are set out below, under geographical headings. Matters figuring in the recommendations of the Conference, but which only concern the Governments of New Zealand and Australia were not dealt with by the Committee, and are therefore omitted from this Paper.

FIJI.

4. The recommendations of the Conference with regard to Fiji are as follows:-

Army.

- (i) Expand Fiji Defence Force to one complete composite battalion at Suva, and two European Companies at Lautoka - additional permanent staff, rifles, and web equipment to be provided by New Zealand, machine guns and small arms ammunition to be provided from the United Kingdom.
- (ii) Install a coast defence battery at Suva consisting of two 6-inch guns and two searchlights - material to be provided by the United Kingdom, key personnel by New Zealand, and the remaining personnel to be raised locally.

Air.

- (i) Two landing grounds to be constructed by the New Zealand Government.
- (ii) Additional capital cost of expansion of New Zealand activities in connection with Fiji to be shared equally by the United Kingdom and New Zealand.

5. The proposals for the expansion of the Fiji Defence Force have already come before the Oversea Defence Committee (O.D.C. Paper No. 1683), and they expressed their agreement with them in O.D.C. Minute No. 334. The Committee therefore endorse their previous recommendation that the proposals should be accepted, and invite the War Office to investigate the possibility of providing the machine guns and small arms ammunition required for the expansion.

6. The Committee had also considered the defence of Suva, and, for reasons which were fully set out in O.D.C. Minute No. 334, had not recommended the provision of coast defences. The views of the Committee were given full consideration by the Conference in New Zealand. In paragraph 35 of Part I of their Report, however, they show that there are reasons for placing coast defences at Suva which outweigh those advanced by the Oversea Defence Committee; and their recommendation to this effect is supported by the Chiefs of Staff. The Committee therefore accept the guidance of the Chiefs of Staff, and recommend that Suva should be classified as a Category 'A' defended port. The effect of such a recommendation will be that the coast defences will be found from United Kingdom sources, as and when these become available. It is possible that 6-inch guns may be available from Admiralty resources in Australia, and the Admiralty have undertaken to investigate this point. It must be realised, however,

that the demands on coast defences of all kinds for defended ports throughout the Empire are very heavy, and due regard has to be paid to the relative importance of each port in the scheme of Imperial Defence as a whole. Consequently, the completion of the coast defences of Suva is likely to be somewhat delayed. In the meanwhile, the Committee welcome the proposal that the New Zealand Government should provide the personnel required to train a locally raised Unit to man the defences. They recommend that steps should be taken at an early date to set on foot the formation of this Unit, so that it will be ready when the defences are provided.

7. The question of landing facilities at Fiji was considered by the Oversea Defence Committee in February, 1939, and in O.D.C. Minute No. 334 they expressed the opinion that it would be desirable that such facilities should be created, but they suggested that one landing ground would be sufficient, and that its cost should be shared between the Governments of New Zealand and Australia. The question was considered at the New Zealand Conference, and good reasons were advanced to show that two landing grounds are essential. The New Zealand Government is ready to undertake the construction of these landing grounds, provided the incidence of cost is satisfactorily settled. The Chiefs of Staff recommend that the two landing grounds should be constructed, and that the cost should be shared between the Governments of the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The Oversea Defence Committee endorse this recommendation. It is not altogether clear to them what was meant by the second recommendation,

quoted under the heading "Air" in paragraph 4 above. The Report does not explain precisely what the additional cost of expansion of New Zealand activities in connection with Fiji is likely to be. The Committee recommend that the financial contribution of the Government of the United Kingdom should be limited to half the cost of constructing the two landing grounds, and that the whole cost of the provision of any other facilities, e.g. the storage of petrol, bombs, etc. for the use of New Zealand Air Forces, should be borne by the New Zealand Government.

TONGA.

8. The Conference recommended that a Defence Force of one Infantry Company should be raised in Tonga - the necessary rifles and web equipment being provided by the Government of New Zealand, and machine guns and small arms ammunition being provided by the Government of the United Kingdom. The main object of the provision of this Defence Force would be to guard landing grounds which the Conference recommend should be established, and for which the New Zealand Government is to undertake the necessary surveys. The Oversea Defence Committee accept the principle that if landing grounds are provided they should be defended. The position of Tonga is, however, not the same as that of British Dependencies in which Defence Forces are created. The Government of the United Kingdom and the Government of Tonga are in treaty relations, and by the provisions of the Treaty the Government of the United Kingdom undertakes the defence of

Tonga. In these circumstances, the Committee do not think it possible or desirable to exert pressure on the Government of Tonga to raise a Defence Force. They recommend, therefore, that the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific should be instructed to approach the Government of Tonga in a suitable manner, with the object of ascertaining the willingness of the Government of Tonga to countenance the raising of a Defence Force. The cost of raising and maintaining the Force, apart from the initial provision of weapons, ammunition, and equipment, would have to be borne by the Government of Tonga, and it may well prove that the burden of expenditure entailed is greater than the revenue of Tonga can bear. This consideration will no doubt be fully borne in mind in the discussions between the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific and the Government of Tonga. In the meanwhile, the Committee welcome the proposal of the New Zealand Government to undertake the survey of possible sites for landing grounds.

FANNING ISLAND.

9. In February, 1939, the Government of New Zealand proposed to despatch as early as possible, and to maintain in peace time, the garrison of one company which they had hitherto agreed to send to Fanning Island on the outbreak of war. The Oversea Defence Committee, for the reasons set out in O.D.C. Minute No. 334, deprecated this course of action. The matter was further considered at the New Zealand Conference and it was ascertained that the maintenance in peace of a platoon of about 30 men on Fanning Island would present little difficulty, and would cause no hardship to the troops. The presence of even one platoon on the outbreak of war might be decisive in safeguarding this important link in the trans-Pacific cable. The Conference accordingly recommended that the New Zealand Government should station a platoon at Fanning Island in peace time, and that the food reserves for the personnel on the Island should be increased to a supply sufficient for six months.

10. The Chiefs of Staff support this recommendation; and in view of the fresh information which has come to light, the Oversea Defence Committee accept the proposal on the understanding that the whole cost involved will be borne by the New Zealand Government. With regard to the building up of reserve supplies of food, the Committee are informed that the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific is taking the matter up with the cable and plantation companies concerned.

OCEAN AND NAURU ISLANDS.

11. The Conference recommended that food reserves at these Islands should be built up to a six months' supply, and that the supply of arms and ammunition should be increased. The Oversea Defence Committee are informed that action has already been taken with a view to giving effect, if possible, to both these recommendations.

NEW HEBRIDES AND NEW CALEDONIA.

12. The Conference made certain recommendations regarding the New Hebrides and New Caledonia. The Committee are informed that the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific is visiting the New Hebrides and the French High Commissioner in New Caledonia with a view to a discussion of these recommendations. The Committee take note of this fact and recommend that further consideration should be deferred until the report of the High Commissioner for the Western Pacific is received.

(Sgd.) E.I.C. JACOB.

Secretary
Oversea Defence Committee.

Richmond Terrace, S.W.1.,

7th June, 1939.