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The Secretary of State presents his compliments to His Excellency the British Ambassador and has the honor to refer to an Aide-Mémoire dated April 5, 1939, which Sir Ronald Lindsay left at the Department of State on April 12th last on the subject of the status and use of certain Pacific islands the sovereignty over which is in dispute.

The statements in this Aide-Mémoire have been considered carefully and the Secretary of State is now in a position to make the following observations concerning them:

Reference is made in the Aide-Mémoire to an alleged contrast between the American and British interest in these islands. It is stated that the British interest is partly to be able to utilize them for purposes of aviation, both civil and military, but also to use them

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for purposes of colonization by the inhabitants of other British islands in the Pacific. It is stated in the Aide-Mémoire that, on the other hand, if the position is correctly understood, the American interest may not be so much concerned with the "acquisition" of mere territory as such, nor with questions of resettlement, but may be confined to the "acquisition of certain outposts for aviation, perhaps both civil and military."

While it is true, as the Aide-Mémoire further suggests, that the American objectives have not hitherto been defined, it is impossible to concede that the claim of the Government of the United States to sovereignty is in any way affected by the purposes for which this Government may in the future choose to use these islands. The American Government has stated on several occasions its readiness to enter into discussions with the British Government concerning the status and use of those islands which both Governments claim, but it feels that it is important at this stage that there be no confusion of the terms of sovereignty and use.

Sir Ronald Lindsay's Aide-Mémoire correctly implies

that

that the British Government has not received a list of the islands in the Pacific claimed by the United States which are understood also to be the subject of British claims. There is transmitted herewith a list of islands in the central Pacific Ocean which, in addition to islands in the Phoenix Group, are claimed by the United States and to which, it is understood, Great Britain also asserts claims. The American Government is prepared to discuss its claim and any British claim to each and every one of these islands with the British Government at any time convenient to the latter. Pending such a discussion, it would seem premature to consider further steps to reconcile any conflicting claims of the two Governments.

Sir Ronald Lindsay's Aide-Mémoire under reference discussed again the subject of civil aviation, and after suggesting the formal adoption of the broad principle that each party should make its islands available for the purposes of civil aviation to the aircraft of the other, urged the United States Government to accept an invitation to enter into a conference with His Majesty's Governments in the United Kingdom,

Kingdom, in the Commonwealth of Australia, and in New Zealand, for the discussion of trans-Pacific aviation.

Sir Ronald Lindsay will recall that the American Government has consistently taken the position that the subject of the status of these islands and the subject of trans-Pacific flying are two wholly separate matters, only indirectly related. The Secretary of State is of the opinion that in these circumstances the two subjects should be considered separately and on their individual merits. The subject of trans-Pacific aviation raises such a variety of problems which have to be considered from so many different angles that the American Government is not yet in a position to agree at this time to accept an invitation to a conference for the consideration of Pacific air facilities.

Enclosure:
List of islands.



Department of State,
Washington, August 16, 1939.

811.0141 Phoenix Group/145

- ✓ Vostok *no use to us*
- ✓ Malden *"*
- ✓ Starbuck *"*
- ✓ Caroline Island *"*
- ✓ Flint *"*
- ✓ Christmas Island — *we need - important.*
- ✓ Atafu
- ✓ Nukunono — *we need - important*
- ✓ Fakaofo
- ✓ Penhryn (Tongareva)
- ✓ Manahiki (Humphreys)
- ✓ Rakananga (Rierson)
- ✓ Danger Islands (Puka Puka)
- ✓ Nukufetau (De Peyster)
- ✓ Funafuti
- Nurakita (Sophia)
- Nukulailai (Mitchell)

*In the Line Islands
Group*