

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

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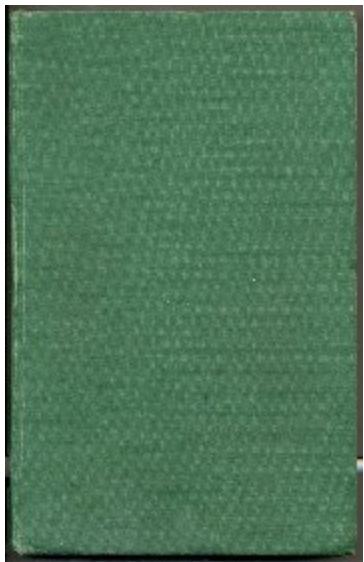
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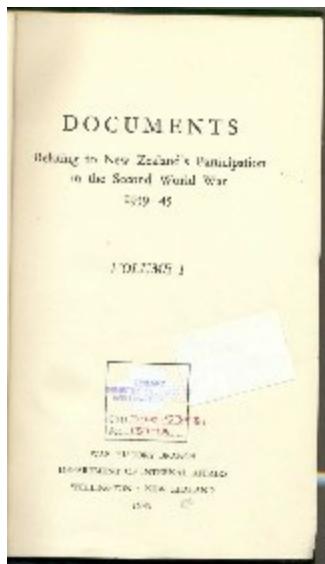
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DOCUMENTS

Relating to New Zealand's Participation in the Second World War 1939-45

VOLUME I

WAR HISTORY BRANCH

**DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL AFFAIRS WELLINGTON : NEW ZEALAND
1949**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

PREFACE

PREFACE

THE DECISION to publish this series of documents and communications between the New Zealand Government and the Governments of the United Kingdom and Australia, and between the New Zealand Government and the General Officer Commanding the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force and official representatives abroad, was taken by the New Zealand Government shortly after my appointment as Editor-in-Chief of the New Zealand War Histories in 1946. It was necessary to do so in order to record fully New Zealand's part in the Second World War, with special emphasis on the problems which confronted the New Zealand Government and War Cabinet, the information which was before them, their views, and the decisions taken. Some delay has occurred in publication owing to the necessity of securing the consent of overseas Governments.

The original documents are held in the Prime Minister's Department and in the Service Departments. All the despatches received and sent during the war years are not being published, but all important messages relevant to the different topics are included; those omitted are of a trivial or personal nature. There has been no censorship. Most despatches in the first two volumes deal with the 2nd NZEF in the Middle East; the third volume concerns the Pacific theatre.

An arbitrary numbering has been adopted for the convenience of readers, but the despatches are otherwise in their original form and order except where they have been paraphrased to comply with security requirements.

A problem was posed in the arrangement of the documents: whether they should be (a) in chronological order, or (b) according to subject.

The former method would present the documents strictly according to date and without regard to their contents and subject-matter. Such a course would allow the reader to see the business of the New Zealand Government and **War Cabinet** as it appeared at the time with its daily ramifications. But the disadvantages of the chronological method are too obvious to need mention, and this arrangement would have been most irksome to a reader attempting to follow the history of any one problem.

After full consideration a compromise of the two systems was decided on. The material in this series is arranged under subject headings, in chronological order; footnotes have been added and an index has also been provided.

The point at which to commence the first volume also received attention and it was decided to start with the Declarations of War. Declarations against **Japan** and **Thailand** will appear in a later volume.

New Zealand's pre-war foreign policy will be dealt with in a separate volume of the Official History. In later volumes there will be sections dealing more fully with Naval and **Air Force** problems.

H. K. KIPPENBERGER

Editor-in-Chief,
New Zealand War Histories

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

OUTBREAK OF WAR AND DECLARATIONS – GERMANY

Outbreak of War and Declarations

GERMANY

1

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Governor-General of New Zealand²

1 September 1939

Defence.

Precautionary stage³ adopted against Germany and Italy.

¹ Secretaries of State for Dominion Affairs in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

28 Jan 1939 – 3 Sep 1939 Rt. Hon. Viscount Caldecote, PC, CBE, KC
(then Sir Thomas Inskip).

3 Sep 1939 – 12 May 1940 Rt. Hon. Robert Anthony Eden, PC, MC.

12 May 1940 – 5 Oct 1940 Viscount Caldecote.

5 Oct 1940 – 21 Feb 1942 Rt. Hon. Viscount Cranborne, PC.

21 Feb 1942 – 28 Sep 1943 Rt. Hon. Clement Richard Attlee, PC, CH.

28 Sep 1943 – 3 Aug 1945 Viscount Cranborne.

3 Aug 1945 – 7 Oct 1947 Rt. Hon. Viscount Addison, KG, PC.

On 2 Jul 1947 the title of this office was changed to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

² Governors-General of New Zealand during the war were:

1935– Rt. Hon. George Vere Arundell Monckton-Arundell, 8th 41 Viscount Galway, PC, GCMG, DSO, OBE; died 1943.

1941– Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Cyril Louis Norton 46 Newall, GCB, OM, GCMG, CBE, AM. (Created Baron, 1946.)

³ Precautionary Stage. Paper ONS 135, issued by the Organisation for National Security, Prime Minister's Department, Wellington, on 11 Aug 1939, contains a list of messages to be received from the Government of the United Kingdom on the threat of war. These were the normal abbreviated messages which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would address to the Dominion Governments in the event of the initiation of precautionary and war measures. The meaning of the warning telegram, 'Defence. Precautionary stage adopted against (Power(s))' was as follows:

- (Relations with (Power(s)) have become so strained that His
 - a) Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have found it necessary to adopt precautions against possible surprise attack and to initiate preparations for war, including precautionary stage of defence schemes at defended ports.
 - (Your Government is asked to co-operate and to notify His
 - b) Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom by telegraph of the precautionary measures taken.
-

2

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand¹

1 September 1939

This morning Cabinet met and considered the position. It was decided that, subject to consultation with the French Government, we should address a communication to the German Government to the effect that we had received reports of the German invasion of Poland, and that unless we received immediate assurances that the German forces were being withdrawn from Polish territory our obligations to Poland would be fulfilled.

¹ Prime Ministers of New Zealand during the war were:

28 Nov 1935 – death, 26 Mar 1940 Rt. Hon. Michael Joseph Savage, PC.

3

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

2 September 1939

Your telegram of 1 September (No. 1). The acting Prime Minister ² desires me to inform you that the precautionary stage has been adopted in New Zealand and that the Mandated Territory of **Western Samoa** and the Island Dependencies ³ have been duly advised. In addition, examination services are being established forthwith, all Regular reservists and a proportion of the Special Reserve (Class 2) ⁴ are being called out, coastal defences are being manned with skeleton crews, and guards are being placed at all vital points.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand entirely concur with, and warmly endorse, the action taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, including that specified in your latest telegram (No. 2).

² Hon. P. Fraser. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser had been Minister of Education, Health, and Marine and acting Prime Minister during Mr. Savage's illness.

³ New Zealand's island dependencies are the **Cook Islands** (thirteen islands in two groups), Niue, and the Tokelau or Union Group. The Chatham, **Auckland**, Campbell, and Kermadec Islands are included in the Dominion group proper for both administrative and statistical purposes.

⁴ The Territorial Force Special Reserve was formed in 1937. Single men between the ages of 18 and 25 years (later changed to 30 years) were eligible for enlistment and were given three months' continuous training in camp, during which facilities were provided for free vocational training. (In 1939 the period of training was increased to five months, half of this time being spent in vocational training.) At the end of the training period

the men were given the opportunity to enlist in the Regular Force to fill vacancies, and assistance was given to others to obtain permanent civilian employment. The reservists were posted to Territorial units and undertook to attend a course of ten days' training once a year for a period of three years and to report for service in New Zealand in an emergency if required.

4

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

2 September 1939

The following is the text of a statement in the House of Commons at 7.45 p.m. this evening by the Prime Minister:¹

Sir Nevile Henderson² was received by Herr von Ribbentrop³ at half past nine last night and he delivered the warning message which was read to the House yesterday. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he must submit the communication to the German Chancellor.⁴ Our Ambassador declared his readiness to receive the Chancellor's reply. Up to the present no reply has been received. It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal, which meanwhile had been put forward by the Italian Government, that hostilities should cease and that there should then immediately be a conference between the Five Powers—Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany, and Italy. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government for their part would find it impossible to take part in a conference whilst Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment, and Danzig is being made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force. His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such a withdrawal. If the German

Government should agree to withdraw their forces, His Majesty's Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the frontier, that is to say, the way would be open to discussion between the German and Polish Governments on the matters at issue between them, on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured

¹ Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom during the war were:

28 May 1937 – 11 May 1940	Rt. Hon. Arthur Neville Chamberlain, PC.
11 May 1940 – 26 Jul 1945	Rt. Hon. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, PC, OM, CH.
26 Jul 1945 – to date	Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, PC, CH.

² Rt. Hon. Sir Nevile Meyrick Henderson, PC, GCMG; United Kingdom Ambassador at Berlin, 1937–39.

³ Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop; German Ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1936–38; German Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1938–45; convicted of war crimes, and hanged, Nuremberg, Oct 1946.

⁴ Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, 1933–death, 1945; Head of the German State, 1934–45.

by an international guarantee. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other powers should be associated with them in the discussion, then His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree.

There is one other matter to which allusion should be made in order that the present situation should be perfectly clear. Yesterday Herr

Forster,¹ who on 23 August had, in contravention of the Danzig constitution, become the Head of the State, decreed the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and the dissolution of the constitution. Herr Hitler was asked to give effect to this decree by German law. At a meeting of the Reichstag yesterday morning a law was passed for the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. The international status of Danzig as a Free City is established by a Treaty² of which His Majesty's Government are a signatory, and the Free City was placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The rights given to Poland in Danzig by Treaty are defined and confirmed by Agreement concluded between Danzig and Poland. The action taken by the Danzig authorities and the Reichstag yesterday is the final step in the unilateral repudiation of these international instruments, which could only be modified by negotiation. His Majesty's Government do not, therefore, recognise either the validity of the grounds on which the action of the Danzig authorities was based, the validity of this action itself, or of the effect given to it by the German Government.

¹ Herr Albert Forster, Nazi District Leader of Danzig; appointed by Hitler on 23 Aug 1939 to be Head of the State of the Free City of Danzig.

² The status of Free City was conferred upon Danzig by Articles 100–8 of the Treaty of Versailles. Its separation from the German Empire became effective on 10 Jan 1920, although the formal proclamation to that effect was not made until 15 Nov 1920, when the new status of the city was officially proclaimed by the representative of the League of Nations. A High Commissioner appointed by the League was resident in the Free City. The position of the city was strengthened by the Danzig-Polish Treaty, 9 Nov 1920, and by the Warsaw Convention, 24 Oct 1921. The Danzig Constituent Assembly handled the internal administration of the Free City, but the conduct of its foreign relations was in the hands of the Polish Government.

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 September 1939

With reference to my telegram (No. 4) containing the Prime Minister's statement, Cabinet, meeting after midnight, decided that the British Ambassador in Berlin should at once ask to see Ribbentrop at 9 a.m. today, Sunday, and at that interview inform him that unless the Chancellor's reply is received by 11 a.m. today His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will from that hour regard themselves as at war with Germany.

The Prime Minister proposes to make a statement in the House of Commons at noon today.

6

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 September 1939

With reference to my earlier telegram (No. 5). The text of the communication to be handed to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, or other representative of the German Government, by His Majesty's Ambassador at 9 a.m. today is as follows:

Sir,

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on 1 September, I informed you, on instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,¹ that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland, and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations towards Poland.

Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago, no reply has been received, but German attacks have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m., British summer time, today satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that hour.

If the desired German assurance is received, the Ambassador must inform His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom before 11 a.m. Failing receipt by that hour, the German representative in London² will be informed that, as from that hour, a state of war exists, and His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin is to act accordingly.

This information should be treated as very secret until the expiry of our time limit.

¹ Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

**1 Mar 1938 – 23 Rt. Hon. the Earl of Halifax, KG, PC, OM, GCSI,
Dec 1940 GCIE (then Viscount Halifax).**

23 Dec 1940 – Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden.

26 Jul 1945

26 Jul 1945 – to Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, PC.

date

² Dr. Herbert von Dircksen, German Ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1938–39; German Ambassador at Moscow, 1928–33, at Tokyo, 1933–38.

3 September 1939

My earlier telegram (No. 6). No reply received by eleven.

8

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 September 1939

Defence.

War has broken out with Germany.

9

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

4 September 1939

(Despatched 1.55 a.m.)

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire immediately to associate themselves with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in honouring their pledged word. They entirely concur with the action taken, which they regard as inevitably forced upon the British Commonwealth if the cause of justice, freedom, and democracy is to endure in this world. The existence of a state of war with Germany has accordingly been proclaimed in New Zealand,¹ and His Majesty's Government in New Zealand

¹ The text of the Proclamation, published in a *New Zealand Gazette* Extraordinary on 4 Sep 1939, was as follows:

Wellington, Monday, 4 September, 1939

His Excellency the Governor-General has it in command from His Majesty the King to declare that a state of war exists between His Majesty and the Government of the German Reich, and that such a state of war has existed from 9.30 p.m., New

Zealand Standard Time, on the third day of September, 1939.*
Given at Wellington this third day of September, 1939.

GALWAY, Governor-General

* *So making New Zealand's declaration of war simultaneous with the United Kingdom's declaration, 11 a.m. British summer time, 3 Sep 1939.

would be grateful if His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would take any steps that may be necessary to indicate to the German Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand associate themselves in this matter with the action taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.¹

The New Zealand Government wish to offer to the British Government the fullest assurance of all possible support. They are convinced that the step that has been taken will meet with the approval of the people of this Dominion, and they will in due course give the fullest consideration to any suggestion of the British Government as to the method, or methods, by which this Dominion can best assist in the common cause.

¹ At the request of the United Kingdom Government, the notification of the existence of a state of war between New Zealand and the German Reich was transmitted to the German Government by the United States Ambassador in Berlin. On 7 Dec 1945, in reply to an inquiry, the United States Political Adviser for Germany informed the United States Department of State that the archives of the United States Embassy in Berlin were largely destroyed by fire during the war, and that copies of the note transmitted to the German Government on behalf of the New Zealand Government, and of the German Government's acknowledgment, were therefore not available.

3 September 1939

Your telegram of 4 September (No. 9). The generous pledges of support given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have been received with the deepest appreciation by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. It is of the greatest encouragement in this difficult hour to know that the people of New Zealand share our view that no other course was open than to take up arms for the re-establishment in the world of good faith and the renunciation of force. We will take appropriate steps to communicate New Zealand's attitude to the German Government, and will let your Government have as soon as possible any suggestions which we can make regarding New Zealand's co-operation.

11

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

[Extract]

4 September 1939

Your telegram of 3 September (No. 8). My Ministers desire me to state that a Proclamation has been issued notifying a state of war with Germany as from 9.30 p.m., New Zealand standard time, on 3 September. The following action has been taken by the Armed Services:

NAVY: Three vessels for mine-sweeping are being taken up. Two defensively equipped merchant ships are being armed and the necessary Naval Reserves are being called up to initiate the various war services.

ARMY: Coast and anti-aircraft defences are being manned in full, the necessary Territorial Force coast and anti-aircraft units being mobilised for the purpose.

AIR: The Royal New Zealand Air Force is being mobilised and Regulations ¹ have been issued authorising the requisitioning of civil

aircraft and aerodromes, and imposing certain restrictions on civil flying.... ²

¹ Aviation Emergency Regulations 1939.

² Details of emergency regulations issued, covering alien control, change of name, impressment of motor-vehicles, passport control, supply control, enemy trading, detention and seizure of ships, oil fuel, &c., have been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

1 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS¹ TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND²

1

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Governor-General of New Zealand²

1 September 1939

Defence.

Precautionary stage³ adopted against Germany and Italy.

¹ Secretaries of State for Dominion Affairs in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

28 Jan 1939 – 3 Sep 1939 Rt. Hon. Viscount Caldecote, PC, CBE, KC
(then Sir Thomas Inskip).

3 Sep 1939 – 12 May 1940 Rt. Hon. Robert Anthony Eden, PC, MC.

12 May 1940 – 5 Oct 1940 Viscount Caldecote.

Oct 1940

5 Oct 1940 – 21 Feb 1942 Rt. Hon. Viscount Cranborne, PC.
Feb 1942

21 Feb 1942 – 28 Sep 1943 Rt. Hon. Clement Richard Attlee, PC, CH.
Sep 1943

28 Sep 1943 – 3 Aug 1945 Viscount Cranborne.
Aug 1945

3 Aug 1945 – 7 Oct 1947 Rt. Hon. Viscount Addison, KG, PC.
Oct 1947

On 2 Jul 1947 the title of this office was changed to Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations.

² Governors-General of New Zealand during the war were:

1935– Rt. Hon. George Vere Arundell Monckton-Arundell, 8th

41 Viscount Galway, PC, GCMG, DSO, OBE; died 1943.

1941– Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Cyril Louis Norton

46 Newall, GCB, OM, GCMG, CBE, AM. (Created Baron, 1946.)

³ **Precautionary Stage.** Paper ONS 135, issued by the Organisation for National Security, Prime Minister's Department, Wellington, on 11 Aug 1939, contains a list of messages to be received from the Government of the United Kingdom on the threat of war. These were the normal abbreviated messages which His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would address to the Dominion Governments in the event of the initiation of precautionary and war measures. The meaning of the warning telegram, 'Defence. Precautionary stage adopted against (Power(s))' was as follows:

(Relations with (Power(s)) have become so strained that His

a) Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have found it necessary to adopt precautions against possible surprise attack and to initiate preparations for war, including precautionary stage of defence schemes at defended ports.

(Your Government is asked to co-operate and to notify His

b) Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom by telegraph of the precautionary measures taken.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

2 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND¹

2

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand¹

1 September 1939

This morning Cabinet met and considered the position. It was decided that, subject to consultation with the French Government, we should address a communication to the German Government to the effect that we had received reports of the German invasion of Poland, and that unless we received immediate assurances that the German forces were being withdrawn from Polish territory our obligations to Poland would be fulfilled.

¹ Prime Ministers of New Zealand during the war were:

28 Nov 1935 – death, 26 Mar 1940 **Rt. Hon. Michael Joseph Savage, PC.**

1 Apr 1940 – 13 Dec 1949 **Rt. Hon. Peter Fraser, PC, CH.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

3 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

3

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

2 September 1939

Your telegram of 1 September (No. 1). The acting Prime Minister ² desires me to inform you that the precautionary stage has been adopted in New Zealand and that the Mandated Territory of Western Samoa and the Island Dependencies ³ have been duly advised. In addition, examination services are being established forthwith, all Regular reservists and a proportion of the Special Reserve (Class 2) ⁴ are being called out, coastal defences are being manned with skeleton crews, and guards are being placed at all vital points.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand entirely concur with, and warmly endorse, the action taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, including that specified in your latest telegram (No. 2).

² Hon. P. Fraser. Prior to becoming Prime Minister, Mr. Fraser had been Minister of Education, Health, and Marine and acting Prime Minister during Mr. Savage's illness.

³ New Zealand's island dependencies are the Cook Islands (thirteen islands in two groups), Niue, and the Tokelau or Union Group. The Chatham, Auckland, Campbell, and Kermadec Islands are included in the Dominion group proper for both administrative and statistical purposes.

⁴ The Territorial Force Special Reserve was formed in 1937.

Single men between the ages of 18 and 25 years (later changed to 30 years) were eligible for enlistment and were given three months' continuous training in camp, during which facilities were provided for free vocational training. (In 1939 the period of training was increased to five months, half of this time being spent in vocational training.) At the end of the training period the men were given the opportunity to enlist in the Regular Force to fill vacancies, and assistance was given to others to obtain permanent civilian employment. The reservists were posted to Territorial units and undertook to attend a course of ten days' training once a year for a period of three years and to report for service in New Zealand in an emergency if required.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

4 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

4

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

2 September 1939

The following is the text of a statement in the House of Commons at 7.45 p.m. this evening by the Prime Minister:¹

Sir Nevile Henderson² was received by Herr von Ribbentrop³ at half past nine last night and he delivered the warning message which was read to the House yesterday. Herr von Ribbentrop replied that he must submit the communication to the German Chancellor.⁴ Our Ambassador declared his readiness to receive the Chancellor's reply. Up to the present no reply has been received. It may be that the delay is caused by consideration of a proposal, which meanwhile had been put forward by the Italian Government, that hostilities should cease and that there should then immediately be a conference between the Five Powers—Great Britain, France, Poland, Germany, and Italy. While appreciating the efforts of the Italian Government, His Majesty's Government for their part would find it impossible to take part in a conference whilst Poland is being subjected to invasion, her towns are under bombardment, and Danzig is being made the subject of a unilateral settlement by force. His Majesty's Government will, as stated yesterday, be bound to take action unless the German forces are withdrawn from Polish territory. They are in communication with the French Government as to the limit of time within which it would be necessary for the British and French Governments to know whether the German Government were prepared to effect such a withdrawal. If the German Government should agree to withdraw their forces, His Majesty's

Government would be willing to regard the position as being the same as it was before the German forces crossed the frontier, that is to say, the way would be open to discussion between the German and Polish Governments on the matters at issue between them, on the understanding that the settlement arrived at was one that safeguarded the vital interests of Poland and was secured

¹ Prime Ministers of the United Kingdom during the war were:

28 May 1937 – 11 May 1940	Rt. Hon. Arthur Neville Chamberlain, PC.
11 May 1940 – 26 Jul 1945	Rt. Hon. Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill, PC, OM, CH.
26 Jul 1945 – to date	Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, PC, CH.

² Rt. Hon. Sir Nevile Meyrick Henderson, PC, GCMG; United Kingdom Ambassador at Berlin, 1937–39.

³ Herr Joachim von Ribbentrop; German Ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1936–38; German Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1938–45; convicted of war crimes, and hanged, Nuremberg, Oct 1946.

⁴ Adolf Hitler, Chancellor of the German Reich, 1933–death, 1945; Head of the German State, 1934–45.

by an international guarantee. If the German and Polish Governments wished that other powers should be associated with them in the discussion, then His Majesty's Government for their part would be willing to agree.

There is one other matter to which allusion should be made in order that the present situation should be perfectly clear. Yesterday Herr Forster,¹ who on 23 August had, in contravention of the Danzig

constitution, become the Head of the State, decreed the incorporation of Danzig in the Reich and the dissolution of the constitution. Herr Hitler was asked to give effect to this decree by German law. At a meeting of the Reichstag yesterday morning a law was passed for the reunion of Danzig with the Reich. The international status of Danzig as a Free City is established by a Treaty² of which His Majesty's Government are a signatory, and the Free City was placed under the protection of the League of Nations. The rights given to Poland in Danzig by Treaty are defined and confirmed by Agreement concluded between Danzig and Poland. The action taken by the Danzig authorities and the Reichstag yesterday is the final step in the unilateral repudiation of these international instruments, which could only be modified by negotiation. His Majesty's Government do not, therefore, recognise either the validity of the grounds on which the action of the Danzig authorities was based, the validity of this action itself, or of the effect given to it by the German Government.

¹ Herr Albert Forster, Nazi District Leader of Danzig; appointed by Hitler on 23 Aug 1939 to be Head of the State of the Free City of Danzig.

² The status of Free City was conferred upon Danzig by Articles 100–8 of the Treaty of Versailles. Its separation from the German Empire became effective on 10 Jan 1920, although the formal proclamation to that effect was not made until 15 Nov 1920, when the new status of the city was officially proclaimed by the representative of the League of Nations. A High Commissioner appointed by the League was resident in the Free City. The position of the city was strengthened by the Danzig-Polish Treaty, 9 Nov 1920, and by the Warsaw Convention, 24 Oct 1921. The Danzig Constituent Assembly handled the internal administration of the Free City, but the conduct of its foreign relations was in the hands of the Polish Government.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

5 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

5

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 September 1939

With reference to my telegram (No. 4) containing the Prime Minister's statement, Cabinet, meeting after midnight, decided that the British Ambassador in Berlin should at once ask to see Ribbentrop at 9 a.m. today, Sunday, and at that interview inform him that unless the Chancellor's reply is received by 11 a.m. today His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will from that hour regard themselves as at war with Germany.

The Prime Minister proposes to make a statement in the House of Commons at noon today.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

6 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

6

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 September 1939

With reference to my earlier telegram (No. 5). The text of the communication to be handed to the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, or other representative of the German Government, by His Majesty's Ambassador at 9 a.m. today is as follows:

Sir,

In the communication which I had the honour to make to you on 1 September, I informed you, on instructions from His Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs,¹ that unless the German Government were prepared to give His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom satisfactory assurances that the German Government had suspended all aggressive action against Poland, and were prepared promptly to withdraw their forces from Polish territory, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would, without hesitation, fulfil their obligations towards Poland.

Although this communication was made more than twenty-four hours ago, no reply has been received, but German attacks have been continued and intensified. I have accordingly the honour to inform you that unless not later than 11 a.m., British summer time, today satisfactory assurances to the above effect have been given by the German Government and have reached His Majesty's Government in London, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from that

hour.

If the desired German assurance is received, the Ambassador must inform His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom before 11 a.m. Failing receipt by that hour, the German representative in London² will be informed that, as from that hour, a state of war exists, and His Majesty's Ambassador in Berlin is to act accordingly.

This information should be treated as very secret until the expiry of our time limit.

¹ Secretaries of State for Foreign Affairs in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

**1 Mar 1938 – 23 Rt. Hon. the Earl of Halifax, KG, PC, OM, GCSI,
Dec 1940 GCIE (then Viscount Halifax).**

23 Dec 1940 – Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden.

26 Jul 1945

**26 Jul 1945 – to Rt. Hon. Ernest Bevin, PC.
date**

² Dr. Herbert von Dircksen, German Ambassador to the Court of St. James, 1938–39; German Ambassador at Moscow, 1928–33, at Tokyo, 1933–38.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

7 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

7

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 September 1939

My earlier telegram (No. 6). No reply received by eleven.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

8 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

8

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 September 1939

Defence.

War has broken out with Germany.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

9 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

9

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

4 September 1939

(Despatched 1.55 a.m.)

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire immediately to associate themselves with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in honouring their pledged word. They entirely concur with the action taken, which they regard as inevitably forced upon the British Commonwealth if the cause of justice, freedom, and democracy is to endure in this world. The existence of a state of war with Germany has accordingly been proclaimed in New Zealand,¹ and His Majesty's Government in New Zealand

¹ The text of the Proclamation, published in a *New Zealand Gazette* Extraordinary on 4 Sep 1939, was as follows:

Wellington, Monday, 4 September, 1939

His Excellency the Governor-General has it in command from His Majesty the King to declare that a state of war exists between His Majesty and the Government of the German Reich, and that such a state of war has existed from 9.30 p.m., New Zealand Standard Time, on the third day of September, 1939.^{*} Given at Wellington this third day of September, 1939.

GALWAY, Governor-General

^{*} *So making New Zealand's declaration of war simultaneous

with the United Kingdom's declaration, 11 a.m. British summer time, 3 Sep 1939.

would be grateful if His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would take any steps that may be necessary to indicate to the German Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand associate themselves in this matter with the action taken by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.¹

The New Zealand Government wish to offer to the British Government the fullest assurance of all possible support. They are convinced that the step that has been taken will meet with the approval of the people of this Dominion, and they will in due course give the fullest consideration to any suggestion of the British Government as to the method, or methods, by which this Dominion can best assist in the common cause.

¹ At the request of the United Kingdom Government, the notification of the existence of a state of war between New Zealand and the German Reich was transmitted to the German Government by the United States Ambassador in Berlin. On 7 Dec 1945, in reply to an inquiry, the United States Political Adviser for Germany informed the United States Department of State that the archives of the United States Embassy in Berlin were largely destroyed by fire during the war, and that copies of the note transmitted to the German Government on behalf of the New Zealand Government, and of the German Government's acknowledgment, were therefore not available.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

10 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

10

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 September 1939

Your telegram of 4 September (No. 9). The generous pledges of support given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have been received with the deepest appreciation by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. It is of the greatest encouragement in this difficult hour to know that the people of New Zealand share our view that no other course was open than to take up arms for the re-establishment in the world of good faith and the renunciation of force. We will take appropriate steps to communicate New Zealand's attitude to the German Government, and will let your Government have as soon as possible any suggestions which we can make regarding New Zealand's co-operation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

11 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS – [EXTRACT]

11

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

[Extract]

4 September 1939

Your telegram of 3 September (No. 8). My Ministers desire me to state that a Proclamation has been issued notifying a state of war with Germany as from 9.30 p.m., New Zealand standard time, on 3 September. The following action has been taken by the Armed Services:

NAVY: Three vessels for mine-sweeping are being taken up. Two defensively equipped merchant ships are being armed and the necessary Naval Reserves are being called up to initiate the various war services.

ARMY: Coast and anti-aircraft defences are being manned in full, the necessary Territorial Force coast and anti-aircraft units being mobilised for the purpose.

AIR: The Royal New Zealand Air Force is being mobilised and Regulations ¹ have been issued authorising the requisitioning of civil aircraft and aerodromes, and imposing certain restrictions on civil flying.... ²

¹ Aviation Emergency Regulations 1939.

² Details of emergency regulations issued, covering alien control, change of name, impressment of motor-vehicles, passport control, supply control, enemy trading, detention and seizure of

ships, oil fuel, &c., have been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

ITALY

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

26 May 1940

During the recent week Italy has been preparing for war. The Italian Army has been mobilised for the last fortnight, and she has increased the number of her troops in Libya and has brought those in Albania up to war strength. The Italian Navy is fully prepared and reinforcements have been sent to the Dodecanese. Movements of the mercantile marine are to some extent controlled. The Italian Air Force will be ready for war by the end of the month; ARP² measures, however, are not well developed. Endeavours have also been made to whip up public opinion by organising demonstrations and by an inspired press campaign.

Signor Mussolini,³ on whose decision all depends, has publicly placed himself on Germany's side. He wishes to obtain rectification of Italy's position in the Mediterranean. He is deeply impressed by Germany's strength and seems to believe that the Allies cannot win. He is afraid of Germany.

German influence over the Italians, already great since the Italo-German military alliance,⁴ is increasing through control of Italy's police system and fifth column activities. All these considerations point to Italy's entry into the war against the Allies at the moment which suits her or, more accurately, suits Germany. The likelihood of this taking place in the next few days will probably depend on whether in that period Germany achieves a sweeping victory or suffers a set-back.

In view of certain factors, these considerations might, however, equally point to Mussolini's intention to satisfy Germany, and perhaps gain his own ends in the Mediterranean, by exercising the maximum pressure on the Allies, short of war. Among these

¹ Viscount Caldecote, who had succeeded Mr. Eden in the Cabinet re-shuffle earlier in May 1940.

² Air Raid Precautions.

³ The portfolios held by Mussolini were: Head of the Government, Prime Minister, Secretary of State, 1926–43; Minister of Internal Affairs, 1922–24, 1926–43; Minister of War, 1926–29, 1933–43; Minister of Marine and for Air, 1943; Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1943.

⁴ Signed in Berlin on 22 May 1939.

factors are the known reluctance of the King ¹ and prominent persons like Marshals Balbo ² and Badoglio ³ to fight England; the desire of public opinion for peace (though this cannot be stressed too far in view of Mussolini's hold over the public); the relative lack of reserves of material in all three fighting services; and the extreme vulnerability of Italy from an economic standpoint, and of the Italian Empire from a military standpoint.

Viewed as a whole and independently of other considerations, these factors would constitute an argument for believing that Signor Mussolini will confine his activities to extreme pressure short of war. They almost suggest that it might be possible at a price to postpone temporarily the entry of Italy into the war against the Allies. It is quite possible that demands of a far-reaching nature may be presented shortly to the Master of the Rolls ⁴ during negotiations on contraband control.

The evidence suggests, however, that Mussolini has reached the conclusion that it is possible and/or necessary for him to override the difficulties which stand in the way of Italy going to war with the Allies. If this is so, he is to some extent under German control. In that event, the actual date of Italy's entry into the war will depend almost entirely on the moment when it best suits Germany. Only then will it be possible

to see whether the German hold over Italy is so strong that Italy is unable to stay out, even if in the circumstances she desires to do so.

Italy has now reached such a stage of dangerous equilibrium between peace and war that a minor incident, which she would construe as an affront, might well precipitate her into war.

The indications are that Signor Mussolini has at present made up his mind to enter the war on the side of Germany, but there is no evidence available from which the date of that entry may be deduced.

¹ King Victor Emmanuel III. Abdicated 9 May 1946; died in Egypt, 28 Dec 1947.

² Air-Marshal Italo Balbo; Italian Minister of Aviation, 1929–33; Governor-General, of Libya, 1933–death, Jun 1940 (in aircraft accident).

³ Field-Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Marchese del Sabotino, Duke of Addis Ababa; Governor-General of Libya, 1928–33; Viceroy of Abyssinia, 1936; Italian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jul 1943–Jun 1944.

⁴ Master of the Rolls. Originally chief of the twelve clerks or masters in chancery, and as such, keeper of the rolls, especially of the register of original writs and of all patents and grants under the Great Seal. With later modifications in his duties, the Master of the Rolls became in fact the deputy of the Chancellor; he is now also chairman of the State Papers and Historical Manuscripts Commissions. The present Master of the Rolls is Lord Greene (Rt. Hon. Wilfrid Arthur Greene, PC, OBE, MC) who was appointed in May 1937.

10 June 1940

Although it is not yet officially confirmed, Signor Mussolini is reported to have stated at 6 p.m. today that a declaration of war had already been handed to the Ambassadors of Great Britain and France. A further telegram will be sent as soon as possible.

14

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 June 1940

Official intimation has been received that the King of Italy will consider himself at war with Great Britain and France as from midnight tonight.

15

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 June 1940

Defence.

War has broken out with Italy.

16

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

11 June 1940

In consequence of the official intimation that the King of Italy will consider himself at war with Great Britain and France as from midnight on 10 June, the existence of a state of war with Italy has been proclaimed here as from the equivalent time, namely 10.30 a.m. New Zealand standard time. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be grateful if such steps as are necessary may be taken to indicate to the

Italian Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand associate themselves in this matter with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and with the Government of France.¹

This cynical and cold-blooded attack by Italy at a moment plainly chosen in the belief that it will afford the maximum embarrassment to the Allied arms and in the hope, which we know will be dispelled, that it will result in an easy triumph and prompt gains for Italy, will call forth here, as elsewhere throughout the Commonwealth and in those countries that are banded together to resist aggression, the strongest feelings of indignation. At this moment His Majesty's Government in New Zealand wish to renew in the fullest measure the assurance of their firm determination, and that of the people of this Dominion, to assist by every means within their power until the menace of ruthless and unprincipled aggression has been finally and completely destroyed.²

¹ At the request of the United Kingdom Government, the New Zealand declaration was transmitted to the Italian Government by the United States Ambassador in Rome. Under the date of 28 Jan 1946, the United States Department of State was informed by the American Ambassador in Rome that the records regarding New Zealand's declaration of war on Italy were burned on 8 Dec 1941 and that no copies exist. On 17 Jan 1946 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the American Embassy at Rome that no trace of the pertinent correspondence could be found in the remains of the ministry's archives.

² In a *New Zealand Gazette Extraordinary* published on 5 Jan 1948, termination of the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland was announced, such termination synchronising with the respective dates of deposit by New Zealand of the instruments of ratification of the treaties of peace with each of those countries. Since the instrument of ratification of the treaty of peace with Italy was deposited on 24 Dec 1947, the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with Italy was deemed to have terminated on that date.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

12 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

12

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

26 May 1940

During the recent week Italy has been preparing for war. The Italian Army has been mobilised for the last fortnight, and she has increased the number of her troops in Libya and has brought those in Albania up to war strength. The Italian Navy is fully prepared and reinforcements have been sent to the Dodecanese. Movements of the mercantile marine are to some extent controlled. The Italian Air Force will be ready for war by the end of the month; ARP² measures, however, are not well developed. Endeavours have also been made to whip up public opinion by organising demonstrations and by an inspired press campaign.

Signor Mussolini,³ on whose decision all depends, has publicly placed himself on Germany's side. He wishes to obtain rectification of Italy's position in the Mediterranean. He is deeply impressed by Germany's strength and seems to believe that the Allies cannot win. He is afraid of Germany.

German influence over the Italians, already great since the Italo-German military alliance,⁴ is increasing through control of Italy's police system and fifth column activities. All these considerations point to Italy's entry into the war against the Allies at the moment which suits her or, more accurately, suits Germany. The likelihood of this taking place in the next few days will probably depend on whether in that period Germany achieves a sweeping victory or suffers a set-back.

In view of certain factors, these considerations might, however, equally point to Mussolini's intention to satisfy **Germany**, and perhaps gain his own ends in the **Mediterranean**, by exercising the maximum pressure on the Allies, short of war. Among these

¹ Viscount Caldecote, who had succeeded Mr. Eden in the Cabinet re-shuffle earlier in May 1940.

² Air Raid Precautions.

³ The portfolios held by Mussolini were: Head of the Government, Prime Minister, Secretary of State, 1926–43; Minister of Internal Affairs, 1922–24, 1926–43; Minister of War, 1926–29, 1933–43; Minister of Marine and for Air, 1943; Minister and Secretary of State for External Affairs, 1943.

⁴ Signed in **Berlin** on 22 May 1939.

factors are the known reluctance of the King ¹ and prominent persons like Marshals Balbo ² and Badoglio ³ to fight England; the desire of public opinion for peace (though this cannot be stressed too far in view of Mussolini's hold over the public); the relative lack of reserves of material in all three fighting services; and the extreme vulnerability of Italy from an economic standpoint, and of the Italian Empire from a military standpoint.

Viewed as a whole and independently of other considerations, these factors would constitute an argument for believing that Signor Mussolini will confine his activities to extreme pressure short of war. They almost suggest that it might be possible at a price to postpone temporarily the entry of **Italy** into the war against the Allies. It is quite possible that demands of a far-reaching nature may be presented shortly to the Master of the Rolls ⁴ during negotiations on contraband control.

The evidence suggests, however, that Mussolini has reached the

conclusion that it is possible and/or necessary for him to override the difficulties which stand in the way of Italy going to war with the Allies. If this is so, he is to some extent under German control. In that event, the actual date of Italy's entry into the war will depend almost entirely on the moment when it best suits Germany. Only then will it be possible to see whether the German hold over Italy is so strong that Italy is unable to stay out, even if in the circumstances she desires to do so.

Italy has now reached such a stage of dangerous equilibrium between peace and war that a minor incident, which she would construe as an affront, might well precipitate her into war.

The indications are that Signor Mussolini has at present made up his mind to enter the war on the side of Germany, but there is no evidence available from which the date of that entry may be deduced.

¹ King Victor Emmanuel III. Abdicated 9 May 1946; died in Egypt, 28 Dec 1947.

² Air-Marshal Italo Balbo; Italian Minister of Aviation, 1929–33; Governor-General, of Libya, 1933–death, Jun 1940 (in aircraft accident).

³ Field-Marshal Pietro Badoglio, Marchese del Sabotino, Duke of Addis Ababa; Governor-General of Libya, 1928–33; Viceroy of Abyssinia, 1936; Italian Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jul 1943–Jun 1944.

⁴ Master of the Rolls. Originally chief of the twelve clerks or masters in chancery, and as such, keeper of the rolls, especially of the register of original writs and of all patents and grants under the Great Seal. With later modifications in his duties, the Master of the Rolls became in fact the deputy of the Chancellor; he is now also chairman of the State Papers and Historical Manuscripts Commissions. The present Master of the Rolls is Lord Greene (Rt. Hon. Wilfrid Arthur Greene, PC, OBE, MC) who was appointed in May 1937.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

13 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

13

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 June 1940

Although it is not yet officially confirmed, Signor Mussolini is reported to have stated at 6 p.m. today that a declaration of war had already been handed to the Ambassadors of Great Britain and France. A further telegram will be sent as soon as possible.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

14 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

14

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 June 1940

Official intimation has been received that the King of Italy will consider himself at war with Great Britain and France as from midnight tonight.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

15 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

15

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 June 1940

Defence.

War has broken out with Italy.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

16 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

16

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

11 June 1940

In consequence of the official intimation that the King of Italy will consider himself at war with Great Britain and France as from midnight on 10 June, the existence of a state of war with Italy has been proclaimed here as from the equivalent time, namely 10.30 a.m. New Zealand standard time. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be-grateful if such steps as are necessary may be taken to indicate to the Italian Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand associate themselves in this matter with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and with the Government of France.¹

This cynical and cold-blooded attack by Italy at a moment plainly chosen in the belief that it will afford the maximum embarrassment to the Allied arms and in the hope, which we know will be dispelled, that it will result in an easy triumph and prompt gains for Italy, will call forth here, as elsewhere throughout the Commonwealth and in those countries that are banded together to resist aggression, the strongest feelings of indignation. At this moment His Majesty's Government in New Zealand wish to renew in the fullest measure the assurance of their firm determination, and that of the people of this Dominion, to assist by every means within their power until the menace of ruthless and unprincipled aggression has been finally and completely destroyed.²

¹ At the request of the United Kingdom Government, the New Zealand declaration was transmitted to the Italian Government

by the United States Ambassador in Rome. Under the date of 28 Jan 1946, the United States Department of State was informed by the American Ambassador in Rome that the records regarding New Zealand's declaration of war on Italy were burned on 8 Dec 1941 and that no copies exist. On 17 Jan 1946 the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the American Embassy at Rome that no trace of the pertinent correspondence could be found in the remains of the ministry's archives.

² In a *New Zealand Gazette Extraordinary* published on 5 Jan 1948, termination of the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland was announced, such termination synchronising with the respective dates of deposit by New Zealand of the instruments of ratification of the treaties of peace with each of those countries. Since the instrument of ratification of the treaty of peace with Italy was deposited on 24 Dec 1947, the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with Italy was deemed to have terminated on that date.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

**AXIS SATELLITE POWERS IN EUROPE – FINLAND, HUNGARY,
ROUMANIA, AND BULGARIA**

AXIS SATELLITE POWERS IN EUROPE

Finland, Hungary, Roumania, and Bulgaria

17

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand²

6 December 1941

DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST FINLAND, HUNGARY, AND ROUMANIA

The following is the text of instructions which are being sent forthwith to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington:³

Please ask the United States Government to instruct the United States Ministers at Helsingfors,⁴ Budapest,⁵ and Bucharest⁶ to convey the following message to the Finnish, Hungarian, and Roumanian Governments:

On (Finland only, 28 November; remainder, 29 November) His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom conveyed to the Finnish (Hungarian, Roumanian) Government through the United States Minister at Helsingfors (Budapest, Bucharest) a message to the effect that unless by 5 December the Finnish (Hungarian, Roumanian) Government had ceased military operations and had in practice withdrawn from all active participation in hostilities against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, His Majesty's Government would have no choice but to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries.

(Finland only). Since the Finnish Government's reply makes it clear that they have not complied with the above conditions and do not intend immediately to do so a state of war will exist between the two countries as from 12.1 a.m. GMT on 7 December.

¹ Viscount Cranborne had succeeded Viscount Caldecote at the

Dominions Office in Oct 1940.

² The Hon. P. Fraser had been Prime Minister of New Zealand since the death of the Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage in Mar 1940.

³ The Earl of Halifax (then Viscount Halifax) had relinquished the Foreign Secretaryship in Dec 1940 to assume the position of His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington. which he held until 1946.

⁴ H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld.

⁵ Herbert C. Pell.

⁶ Franklin Mott Gunther.

(Hungary and Roumania only). Since the Hungarian (Roumanian) Government have returned no reply to this communication, and since information at the disposal of His Majesty's Government affords no indication that they intend to comply with the above conditions, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from 12.1 a.m. GMT on 7 December.

It is essential that these messages should be delivered before the time specified above and I should be grateful if the time of delivery could be reported.

The Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have been informed of these instructions. You will be informed if the New Zealand Government wish you to request the United States Government to inform the Finnish, Hungarian, and Roumanian Governments that a state of war will similarly exist between New Zealand and those countries. Canada's ¹ and Australia's ² Ministers may receive instructions to concert action with you if time permits, but you should not on this account delay your action on behalf of His Majesty's

Government in the United Kingdom. So far as (South Africa ?) are concerned, we understand that owing to necessary preliminaries concerted action will not be possible.

¹ Hon. Leighton G. McCarthy, KC.

² Rt. Hon. Richard Gardiner Casey, PC, CH, DSO, MC; Australian Minister to the United States, 1940–42; Minister of State Resident in the Middle East and member of the United Kingdom War Cabinet, 1942–43; Governor of Bengal, 1944–46.

18

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

7 December 1941

The existence of a state of war with Finland, Hungary, and Roumania has been proclaimed here as from one minute after noon, New Zealand summer time, on 7 December 1941.³

³ The New Zealand declarations were again timed to synchronise with those of the United Kingdom. New Zealand's declaration of war on Finland was communicated to the Finnish Government by the American Minister to Finland on 8 Dec 1941; that on Hungary was transmitted to the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs by the American Minister at Budapest on 7 Dec 1941; and that on Roumania by the American Minister at Bucharest on 6 Dec 1941. The *New Zealand Gazette* Extraordinary dated 5 Jan 1948 announced that the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with Italy, Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland, should be deemed to terminate on the date of deposit by New Zealand of the instruments of ratification of the treaties of peace with those countries. The treaties of peace between New Zealand on the one hand and Roumania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and Finland on the other were ratified by New Zealand on 31 Dec 1947. The state of war with those countries was therefore deemed to terminate on that date.

19

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

15 December 1941

BULGARIA. No official confirmation of the press report that Bulgaria has declared war on us and the United States of America has yet been received, possibly because Bulgarian interests are not represented in this country. His Majesty's Ambassador has therefore been instructed to inquire from the United States Government what is the position and what action they have taken regarding the protection of our interests in Bulgaria.

20

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 December 1941

My telegram of 15 December (No. 19).

A reply has been received from His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington advising that the only report so far received from the United States Minister at Sofia ¹ is that the declaration of war on both Great Britain and the United States of America has been announced in the Bulgarian Parliament, and that he is expecting to receive official confirmation at any moment. Meanwhile the Minister is already handing over to Switzerland the British and United States interests in Bulgaria.

¹ George Howard Earle.

21

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

24 December 1941

My telegram of 17 December (No. 20).

The official notification of Bulgaria's declaration of war expected by the United States Minister at Sofia has so far not been received, but the United States Government have told us that they consider themselves in a state of war with Bulgaria on the strength of the announcement in the Bulgarian Parliament. Owing to the absence of official information, we have so far felt unable formally to recognise that a state of war exists with Bulgaria, and this attitude is causing us considerable embarrassment since, although the Turkish Government might prefer that we should not be formally at war with Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and particularly the Greek Government have steadily pressed us to declare war on Bulgaria.

In these circumstances we have reached the conclusion that it will be necessary to announce that we regard a state of war as having existed since the date of the announcement in the Bulgarian Parliament, and notification to this effect will be published in the *London Gazette* not earlier than 27 December; the text of the notification is contained in my immediately following telegram.

22

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

24 December 1941

The text of the notification of a state of war with Bulgaria is as follows:

His Majesty's Government have been informed by the Government of the United States, who were in charge of British interests in Bulgaria, that a declaration of war by that country on Great Britain was announced in the Bulgarian Parliament on 13 December. His Majesty's Government have so far received no official communication to this effect from the Bulgarian Government, but in view of the above

information it is hereby notified that a state of war exists between the two countries as from 13 December.

23

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

29 December 1941

The existence of a state of war with Bulgaria has been declared as from 13 December.¹

¹ The New Zealand Government's notification of a state of war with Bulgaria from 13 Dec 1941 was, at the request of the United Kingdom Government, communicated to the Bulgarian Minister for Foreign Affairs by the Swiss Minister at Sofia late in Jan 1942.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

17 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND² – DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST FINLAND, HUNGARY, AND ROUMANIA

17

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Prime Minister
of New Zealand²*

6 December 1941

DECLARATION OF WAR AGAINST FINLAND, HUNGARY, AND ROUMANIA

The following is the text of instructions which are being sent forthwith to His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington:³

Please ask the United States Government to instruct the United States Ministers at Helsingfors,⁴ Budapest,⁵ and Bucharest⁶ to convey the following message to the Finnish, Hungarian, and Roumanian Governments:

On (Finland only, 28 November; remainder, 29 November) His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom conveyed to the Finnish (Hungarian, Roumanian) Government through the United States Minister at Helsingfors (Budapest, Bucharest) a message to the effect that unless by 5 December the Finnish (Hungarian, Roumanian) Government had ceased military operations and had in practice withdrawn from all active participation in hostilities against the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, His Majesty's Government would have no choice but to declare the existence of a state of war between the two countries.

(Finland only). Since the Finnish Government's reply makes it clear that they have not complied with the above conditions and do not

intend immediately to do so a state of war will exist between the two countries as from 12.1 a.m. GMT on 7 December.

¹ Viscount Cranborne had succeeded Viscount Caldecote at the Dominions Office in Oct 1940.

² The Hon. P. Fraser had been Prime Minister of New Zealand since the death of the Rt. Hon. M. J. Savage in Mar 1940.

³ The Earl of Halifax (then Viscount Halifax) had relinquished the Foreign Secretaryship in Dec 1940 to assume the position of His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington. which he held until 1946.

⁴ H. F. Arthur Schoenfeld.

⁵ Herbert C. Pell.

⁶ Franklin Mott Gunther.

(Hungary and Roumania only). Since the Hungarian (Roumanian) Government have returned no reply to this communication, and since information at the disposal of His Majesty's Government affords no indication that they intend to comply with the above conditions, a state of war will exist between the two countries as from 12.1 a.m. GMT on 7 December.

It is essential that these messages should be delivered before the time specified above and I should be grateful if the time of delivery could be reported.

The Governments of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa have been informed of these instructions. You will be informed if the New Zealand Government wish you to request the United States Government to inform the Finnish, Hungarian, and Roumanian

Governments that a state of war will similarly exist between New Zealand and those countries. Canada's ¹ and Australia's ² Ministers may receive instructions to concert action with you if time permits, but you should not on this account delay your action on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. So far as (South Africa ?) are concerned, we understand that owing to necessary preliminaries concerted action will not be possible.

¹ Hon. Leighton G. McCarthy, KC.

² Rt. Hon. Richard Gardiner Casey, PC, CH, DSO, MC; Australian Minister to the United States, 1940–42; Minister of State Resident in the Middle East and member of the United Kingdom War Cabinet, 1942–43; Governor of Bengal, 1944–46.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

18 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

18

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

7 December 1941

The existence of a state of war with **Finland**, **Hungary**, and **Roumania** has been proclaimed here as from one minute after noon, New Zealand summer time, on 7 December 1941.³

³ The New Zealand declarations were again timed to synchronise with those of the **United Kingdom**. New Zealand's declaration of war on **Finland** was communicated to the Finnish Government by the American Minister to **Finland** on 8 Dec 1941; that on **Hungary** was transmitted to the Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs by the American Minister at Budapest on 7 Dec 1941; and that on **Roumania** by the American Minister at Bucharest on 6 Dec 1941. The **New Zealand Gazette Extraordinary** dated 5 Jan 1948 announced that the state of war which had existed in New Zealand with **Italy**, **Roumania**, **Bulgaria**, **Hungary**, and **Finland**, should be deemed to terminate on the date of deposit by New Zealand of the instruments of ratification of the treaties of peace with those countries. The treaties of peace between New Zealand on the one hand and **Roumania**, **Bulgaria**, **Hungary**, and **Finland** on the other were ratified by New Zealand on 31 Dec 1947. The state of war with those countries was therefore deemed to terminate on that date.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

19 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

19

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

15 December 1941

BULGARIA. No official confirmation of the press report that Bulgaria has declared war on us and the United States of America has yet been received, possibly because Bulgarian interests are not represented in this country. His Majesty's Ambassador has therefore been instructed to inquire from the United States Government what is the position and what action they have taken regarding the protection of our interests in Bulgaria.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

20 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

20

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 December 1941

My telegram of 15 December (No. 19).

A reply has been received from His Majesty's Ambassador at Washington advising that the only report so far received from the United States Minister at Sofia ¹ is that the declaration of war on both Great Britain and the United States of America has been announced in the Bulgarian Parliament, and that he is expecting to receive official confirmation at any moment. Meanwhile the Minister is already handing over to Switzerland the British and United States interests in Bulgaria.

¹ George Howard Earle.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

21 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

21

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

24 December 1941

My telegram of 17 December (No. 20).

The official notification of Bulgaria's declaration of war expected by the United States Minister at Sofia has so far not been received, but the United States Government have told us that they consider themselves in a state of war with Bulgaria on the strength of the announcement in the Bulgarian Parliament. Owing to the absence of official information, we have so far felt unable formally to recognise that a state of war exists with Bulgaria, and this attitude is causing us considerable embarrassment since, although the Turkish Government might prefer that we should not be formally at war with Bulgaria, Yugoslavia and particularly the Greek Government have steadily pressed us to declare war on Bulgaria.

In these circumstances we have reached the conclusion that it will be necessary to announce that we regard a state of war as having existed since the date of the announcement in the Bulgarian Parliament, and notification to this effect will be published in the London Gazette not earlier than 27 December; the text of the notification is contained in my immediately following telegram.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

22 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

22

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

24 December 1941

The text of the notification of a state of war with Bulgaria is as follows:

His Majesty's Government have been informed by the Government of the United States, who were in charge of British interests in Bulgaria, that a declaration of war by that country on Great Britain was announced in the Bulgarian Parliament on 13 December. His Majesty's Government have so far received no official communication to this effect from the Bulgarian Government, but in view of the above information it is hereby notified that a state of war exists between the two countries as from 13 December.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

23 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

23

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

29 December 1941

**The existence of a state of war with Bulgaria has been declared as
from 13 December.** ¹

¹ The New Zealand Government's notification of a state of war with Bulgaria from 13 Dec 1941 was, at the request of the United Kingdom Government, communicated to the Bulgarian Minister for Foreign Affairs by the Swiss Minister at Sofia late in Jan 1942.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

**NEGOTIATIONS REGARDING PARTICIPATION OF NEW ZEALAND'S ARMED
FORCES**

Negotiations Regarding Participation of New Zealand's Armed Forces

24

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) ¹

8 September 1939

Your telegram of 4 September. ²

The views of Defence authorities here on the forms of cooperation ³ which would be most helpful are as follows:

NAVY: The following suggestions are based on the assumption that Japan will be neutral.

By placing HMS *Achilles* ⁴ and two escort vessels under the orders of the Admiralty, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have made the maximum possible strategic contribution at sea under the present circumstances, since HMS *Leander* ⁵ requires to be retained on the station to guard against the threat of attack on shipping by armed raiders. Previous suggestion of maintenance of a third cruiser cannot be considered as an immediate requirement.

As regards naval personnel, we should like to avail ourselves of the following:

- (Trained naval reserves surplus to New Zealand requirements to be
 - a) made available for the Royal Navy.
- (Officers recruited from civil life, either trained civil pilots for
 - b) service in the Fleet Air Arm or yachtsmen or former Mercantile Marine officers suitable for Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve Commissions.

¹ Sir Harry Fagg Batterbee, GCMG, KCVO, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, 1939–45.

² Not published. In this telegram the High Commissioner stated that the New Zealand Government would be glad to receive as soon as possible the United Kingdom Government's suggestions on the form of New Zealand's co-operation; he also transmitted the views of the acting Prime Minister on the channel of communication.

³ See telegram from Governor-General of New Zealand to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs of 4 Sep (No. 9) and reply (No. 10).

⁴ HMS *Achilles*, 6-inch cruiser, 7030 tons, subsequently to play an important part in the action against the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* off the River Plate, 13 Dec 1939. The *Achilles* had left New Zealand to join the West Indies Force on 29 Aug 1939.

⁵ HMS *Leander*, 6-inch cruiser, 7270 tons, badly damaged by a torpedo in night action off Kolombangara, 12–13 Jul 1943; she went to the United States for repairs and rearming and afterwards reverted to the Royal Navy.

(Telegraphists and signalmen, artificers, scientists (electrical and c) wireless telegraphy), and skilled electrical workmen recruited from civil life.

It would be appreciated if the New Zealand Government could furnish the approximate numbers of personnel likely to be available under the above categories and could indicate capacity for increasing numbers of trained personnel which will become available as the war progresses.

New Zealand to accept responsibility for fitting out and manning one armed merchant cruiser, the provision of a second ship being left for subsequent consideration.

New Zealand to undertake the equipping of the most suitable ships available as fast liners and defensively equipped merchant ships. There are equipments for four fast liners and forty-two defensively equipped

merchant ships at Auckland.

New Zealand to consider the provision of gun-layers (defensively equipped merchant ships) as these cannot be provided from United Kingdom resources. Defensively equipped merchant ships' instructional staffs to be provided if possible from local sources at Auckland and at any other New Zealand port which His Majesty's Government in New Zealand consider desirable.

Consideration to be given to the building of whale-catchers and trawlers for local defence in private yards. (Requirements of trawlers are large but the extent cannot be estimated.)

ARMY: The measures already taken by New Zealand to guard the cable station at Fanning Island ¹ are much appreciated. As regards other measures, it is thought desirable to consider the position under alternative hypotheses:

- (that Japan is neutral and is adopting a friendly attitude towards
 - a) the democratic countries;
- (that Japan is neutral and is adopting an attitude of reserve
 - b) towards the democratic countries.

As regards (a), while we hope that the war will be of short duration, we must prepare for a long war which will call for the employment of all our resources. We therefore hope that New Zealand will be able to exert her full national effort, including the preparation of her forces with a view to the despatch of an expeditionary force.

We are committed to sending a military force to France, and its reinforcement by a New Zealand contingent would be very welcome

¹ See Volume III. A force of two officers and 30 other ranks had embarked for Fanning Island in HMS *Leander* on 30 Aug 1939. This force was the first platoon of A Company, specially formed to garrison the island, the importance of which lay in its value as a cable station. Each of the company's three platoons served for six months on the island before being relieved by the next platoon for duty. In Apr 1942 the garrison was relieved by

both to us and to the French. We might, however, become engaged in other theatres, and it is therefore not possible at present to suggest to New Zealand the destination and composition of any expeditionary force which she might think fit to provide. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will no doubt consider whether they would prefer to relieve United Kingdom units in, for example, Singapore, Burma, and India, as and when brigades become available, or to delay the despatch of a smaller formation until a complete division could be made available for a main theatre of war.

Should individuals from New Zealand wish to come here to enlist in United Kingdom units it should be pointed out that our policy is to avoid a rush of volunteers, such as occurred in the early days of the last war, and to expand by means of a controlled intake. At present we cannot therefore accept volunteers for the infantry and artillery, but we should welcome at once technical personnel and particularly electricians, instrument mechanics, fitters, mechanics, and motor transport drivers. Officers with similar qualifications and medical officers would also be of great value.

Under hypothesis (b) we feel that it would be unwise for New Zealand to despatch an expeditionary force overseas, but New Zealand could assist by holding formations ready at short notice for the reinforcement of Singapore and Fiji or of British and French islands in the South-West Pacific.

AIR FORCE: The generous offer made by New Zealand in placing at our disposal personnel and aircraft in the United Kingdom,¹ and the action already being taken by New Zealand under the agreed training scheme,² which we much appreciate, meets our own requirements, and we would only suggest that these be pressed on with all possible speed. We will supply aircraft as soon as possible.

In order to speed up and expand the agreed organisation, we assume

that the fullest possible use will be made of civil aviation resources.

¹ On 26 Aug 1939 His Majesty's Government in New Zealand had offered to place at the disposal of the Royal Air Force the New Zealand Squadron personnel and aircraft at Marham and New Zealand Air Force personnel in the United Kingdom on interchange or attachment.

² In a telegram on 4 Sep 1939 to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the New Zealand Government had announced its intention of modifying the existing Air Force training scheme for war training purposes. The organisation would utilise to the full the aircraft in or expected in the Dominion within the next three months, but emphasis was placed on the necessity for the supply at the earliest possible date of obsolete aircraft from the Royal Air Force to enable the increased output of trained aircrews to be maintained.

25

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

13 September 1939

Having had the opportunity, which they warmly appreciate, of perusing your telegram of 8 September (No. 24) to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have the following observations to offer on the course which they propose to take to enable them to play their full part in the war.

NAVY: They note with appreciation that HMS *Leander* will be retained on this station and, on her return from Fanning Island on 13 September, she will be ready to take up her duties before the end of this week.

It is believed that very few trained naval reserves surplus to New

Zealand requirements could be made available for the Royal Navy. Steps are being taken immediately to ascertain the number, which it is not expected will exceed fifty or sixty.

It is considered that no trained civil pilots could be made available for service in the Fleet Air Arm, their services being required here to facilitate the programme referred to by you in the section on the Air Force.

Inquiries are being made for yachtsmen and former Mercantile Marine officers suitable for Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve commissions. It is anticipated that a substantial number could be made available and a further communication on this subject will be sent in due course.

Inquiries are being made as to telegraphists and signalmen, artificers, scientists (electrical and wireless telegraphy), and skilled electrical workmen, and the number available surplus to local requirements will be notified in due course. It is not considered that many will be available, but the possibilities of increasing the number of such trained personnel are being investigated.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand accept the responsibility for fitting out and manning one armed merchant cruiser, the provision of a second ship being left for subsequent consideration, and they propose that they should assume liability for the *Monowai*¹ when the necessary instructions have been received from the Admiralty.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand accept the responsibility for equipping ships as fast liners and defensively equipped merchant

¹ Union Steam Ship Company, 10,852 tons.

ships. They take it that their responsibility will be limited to equipping these ships as they become available here and providing guns' crews. An instructional staff for this purpose is already provided at Auckland and it is not considered, in the meantime at any rate, that an

instructional staff at any other port would be advantageous.

Inquiries are being made as to the possibility of building whale-catchers and trawlers, and the result will be communicated to you later. A few existing boats, which are now being inspected, may be available, but it is not felt that local facilities will be adequate for any material production under this head.

ARMY: As indicated in my telegram of 9 September,¹ the steps already being taken are entirely appropriate as the preliminary steps required to meet the position under either of the alternative hypotheses (*a*) and (*b*) in your telegram to the High Commissioner. The training of the first echelon² will commence on 3 October next. After the first echelon has done two months' training, it is proposed to call up a second echelon consisting of 5000 officers and men and a third echelon of 5000 two months later, *i.e.*, four months after the beginning of the training of the first echelon. This will complete the personnel (officers and other ranks) for one infantry division.

Under hypothesis (*a*) it is considered, subject to the receipt of adequate equipment for training in mechanised warfare (or alternatively, subject to an opportunity being afforded for such training after departure from New Zealand) and provided always of course that safe and adequate means of transport is available, that a fully trained division could leave the Dominion for service in France, or any theatre of war which at the time might be indicated as more appropriate, within a period of eight months from today. Within the limits specified in this paragraph, troops sufficiently trained for garrison duty could be made available within a period of two months from today up to a strength of 6000, within four months up to a strength of 11,000, and within six months up to a strength of 16,000.

The question whether troops under training should be held in this Dominion until a full division is available for active service in a theatre of war, or whether in the meantime, or alternatively, troops should be despatched for relief of United Kingdom units, for example, in

Singapore, Burma, or India, as and when brigades become available, is a matter which His Majesty's Government in

¹ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon and Arrival in Egypt* (No. 41).

² The term 'echelon' was first officially used in an Army Headquarters memorandum of 29 Aug 1939. The term was displaced by 'contingent' in the **Middle East (2nd NZEF Routine Order No. 7, 23 Sep 1940)**, but by the decision of the Adjutant-General 'echelon' remained in use in New Zealand (Defence 300/1/33, 8 Dec 1940). Throughout this series the more familiar term 'echelon' is retained.

New Zealand propose to consider in the light of circumstances as they arise and of any views or advice which they would be grateful to receive from time to time from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will take an early opportunity of pointing out the inadvisability of individuals attempting themselves to proceed to the **United Kingdom to enlist in the infantry or the artillery, and they will take immediate steps to ascertain the number of technical personnel, particularly electricians, mechanical workmen, mechanics, motor transport drivers, also officers with similar qualifications, and medical officers, who are surplus to necessary requirements here and available for service in the **United Kingdom**. A further communication on this matter will be forwarded in due course.**

Under hypothesis (b) the **New Zealand Government will be guided by circumstances and by the advice of His Majesty's Government in the **United Kingdom**, and within the limits of the programme laid down they will hold formations ready at short notice to reinforce **Singapore, Fiji, and British and French islands in the South-Western Pacific**.**

AIR FORCE: Every possible step will be taken to press on with the

agreed training scheme. It is noted that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will supply aircraft as soon as possible, and in the meantime every possible use will be made of civil aviation reserves available here as and when those reserves can be brought into effective use.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are deeply grateful for the helpful and carefully reasoned appreciation of the steps which they might take, as set out in your telegram to the High Commissioner, and at no time will they fail to make every effort to comply with the suggestions in that telegram and with any further suggestions that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom may make.

26

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

13 September 1939

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are very grateful for your telegram (No. 25) and most warmly appreciate the ready response of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

24 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON)¹

24

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High
Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) ¹*

8 September 1939

Your telegram of 4 September.²

The views of Defence authorities here on the forms of cooperation³ which would be most helpful are as follows:

NAVY: The following suggestions are based on the assumption that Japan will be neutral.

By placing HMS *Achilles*⁴ and two escort vessels under the orders of the Admiralty, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have made the maximum possible strategic contribution at sea under the present circumstances, since HMS *Leander*⁵ requires to be retained on the station to guard against the threat of attack on shipping by armed raiders. Previous suggestion of maintenance of a third cruiser cannot be considered as an immediate requirement.

As regards naval personnel, we should like to avail ourselves of the following:

(Trained naval reserves surplus to New Zealand requirements to be
a) made available for the Royal Navy.

(Officers recruited from civil life, either trained civil pilots for
b) service in the Fleet Air Arm or yachtsmen or former Mercantile
Marine officers suitable for Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve
Commissions.

¹ Sir Harry Fagg Batterbee, GCMG, KCVO, High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, 1939–45.

² Not published. In this telegram the High Commissioner stated that the New Zealand Government would be glad to receive as soon as possible the United Kingdom Government's suggestions on the form of New Zealand's co-operation; he also transmitted the views of the acting Prime Minister on the channel of communication.

³ See telegram from Governor-General of New Zealand to Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs of 4 Sep (No. 9) and reply (No. 10).

⁴ HMS *Achilles*, 6-inch cruiser, 7030 tons, subsequently to play an important part in the action against the German pocket battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* off the River Plate, 13 Dec 1939. The *Achilles* had left New Zealand to join the West Indies Force on 29 Aug 1939.

⁵ HMS *Leander*, 6-inch cruiser, 7270 tons, badly damaged by a torpedo in night action off Kolombangara, 12–13 Jul 1943; she went to the United States for repairs and rearming and afterwards reverted to the Royal Navy.

(Telegraphists and signalmen, artificers, scientists (electrical and
c) wireless telegraphy), and skilled electrical workmen recruited from civil life.

It would be appreciated if the New Zealand Government could furnish the approximate numbers of personnel likely to be available under the above categories and could indicate capacity for increasing numbers of trained personnel which will become available as the war progresses.

New Zealand to accept responsibility for fitting out and manning one armed merchant cruiser, the provision of a second ship being left for subsequent consideration.

New Zealand to undertake the equipping of the most suitable ships available as fast liners and defensively equipped merchant ships. There are equipments for four fast liners and forty-two defensively equipped merchant ships at **Auckland**.

New Zealand to consider the provision of gun-layers (defensively equipped merchant ships) as these cannot be provided from **United Kingdom** resources. Defensively equipped merchant ships' instructional staffs to be provided if possible from local sources at **Auckland** and at any other New Zealand port which His Majesty's Government in New Zealand consider desirable.

Consideration to be given to the building of whale-catchers and trawlers for local defence in private yards. (Requirements of trawlers are large but the extent cannot be estimated.)

ARMY: The measures already taken by New Zealand to guard the cable station at **Fanning Island**¹ are much appreciated. As regards other measures, it is thought desirable to consider the position under alternative hypotheses:

- (that **Japan** is neutral and is adopting a friendly attitude towards
 - a) the democratic countries;
- (that **Japan** is neutral and is adopting an attitude of reserve
 - b) towards the democratic countries.

As regards (a), while we hope that the war will be of short duration, we must prepare for a long war which will call for the employment of all our resources. We therefore hope that New Zealand will be able to exert her full national effort, including the preparation of her forces with a view to the despatch of an expeditionary force.

We are committed to sending a military force to **France**, and its reinforcement by a New Zealand contingent would be very welcome

¹ See Volume III. A force of two officers and 30 other ranks had embarked for **Fanning Island** in **HMS Leander** on 30 Aug 1939. This force was the first platoon of A Company, specially

formed to garrison the island, the importance of which lay in its value as a cable station. Each of the company's three platoons served for six months on the island before being relieved by the next platoon for duty. In Apr 1942 the garrison was relieved by United States troops.

both to us and to the French. We might, however, become engaged in other theatres, and it is therefore not possible at present to suggest to New Zealand the destination and composition of any expeditionary force which she might think fit to provide. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will no doubt consider whether they would prefer to relieve United Kingdom units in, for example, Singapore, Burma, and India, as and when brigades become available, or to delay the despatch of a smaller formation until a complete division could be made available for a main theatre of war.

Should individuals from New Zealand wish to come here to enlist in United Kingdom units it should be pointed out that our policy is to avoid a rush of volunteers, such as occurred in the early days of the last war, and to expand by means of a controlled intake. At present we cannot therefore accept volunteers for the infantry and artillery, but we should welcome at once technical personnel and particularly electricians, instrument mechanics, fitters, mechanics, and motor transport drivers. Officers with similar qualifications and medical officers would also be of great value.

Under hypothesis (b) we feel that it would be unwise for New Zealand to despatch an expeditionary force overseas, but New Zealand could assist by holding formations ready at short notice for the reinforcement of Singapore and Fiji or of British and French islands in the South-West Pacific.

AIR FORCE: The generous offer made by New Zealand in placing at our disposal personnel and aircraft in the United Kingdom,¹ and the action already being taken by New Zealand under the agreed training scheme,² which we much appreciate, meets our own requirements, and

we would only suggest that these be pressed on with all possible speed.
We will supply aircraft as soon as possible.

In order to speed up and expand the agreed organisation, we assume that the fullest possible use will be made of civil aviation resources.

¹ On 26 Aug 1939 His Majesty's Government in New Zealand had offered to place at the disposal of the Royal Air Force the New Zealand Squadron personnel and aircraft at Marham and New Zealand Air Force personnel in the United Kingdom on interchange or attachment.

² In a telegram on 4 Sep 1939 to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the New Zealand Government had announced its intention of modifying the existing Air Force training scheme for war training purposes. The organisation would utilise to the full the aircraft in or expected in the Dominion within the next three months, but emphasis was placed on the necessity for the supply at the earliest possible date of obsolete aircraft from the Royal Air Force to enable the increased output of trained aircrews to be maintained.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

25 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

25

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

13 September 1939

Having had the opportunity, which they warmly appreciate, of perusing your telegram of 8 September (No. 24) to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have the following observations to offer on the course which they propose to take to enable them to play their full part in the war.

NAVY: They note with appreciation that HMS *Leander* will be retained on this station and, on her return from Fanning Island on 13 September, she will be ready to take up her duties before the end of this week.

It is believed that very few trained naval reserves surplus to New Zealand requirements could be made available for the Royal Navy. Steps are being taken immediately to ascertain the number, which it is not expected will exceed fifty or sixty.

It is considered that no trained civil pilots could be made available for service in the Fleet Air Arm, their services being required here to facilitate the programme referred to by you in the section on the Air Force.

Inquiries are being made for yachtsmen and former Mercantile Marine officers suitable for Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve commissions. It is anticipated that a substantial number could be made available and

a further communication on this subject will be sent in due course.

Inquiries are being made as to telegraphists and signalmen, artificers, scientists (electrical and wireless telegraphy), and skilled electrical workmen, and the number available surplus to local requirements will be notified in due course. It is not considered that many will be available, but the possibilities of increasing the number of such trained personnel are being investigated.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand accept the responsibility for fitting out and manning one armed merchant cruiser, the provision of a second ship being left for subsequent consideration, and they propose that they should assume liability for the *Monowai*¹ when the necessary instructions have been received from the Admiralty.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand accept the responsibility for equipping ships as fast liners and defensively equipped merchant

¹ Union Steam Ship Company, 10,852 tons.

ships. They take it that their responsibility will be limited to equipping these ships as they become available here and providing guns' crews. An instructional staff for this purpose is already provided at Auckland and it is not considered, in the meantime at any rate, that an instructional staff at any other port would be advantageous.

Inquiries are being made as to the possibility of building whale-catchers and trawlers, and the result will be communicated to you later. A few existing boats, which are now being inspected, may be available, but it is not felt that local facilities will be adequate for any material production under this head.

ARMY: As indicated in my telegram of 9 September,¹ the steps already being taken are entirely appropriate as the preliminary steps required to meet the position under either of the alternative hypotheses (*a*) and (*b*) in your telegram to the High Commissioner. The training of

the first echelon ² will commence on 3 October next. After the first echelon has done two months' training, it is proposed to call up a second echelon consisting of 5000 officers and men and a third echelon of 5000 two months later, i.e., four months after the beginning of the training of the first echelon. This will complete the personnel (officers and other ranks) for one infantry division.

Under hypothesis (a) it is considered, subject to the receipt of adequate equipment for training in mechanised warfare (or alternatively, subject to an opportunity being afforded for such training after departure from New Zealand) and provided always of course that safe and adequate means of transport is available, that a fully trained division could leave the Dominion for service in France, or any theatre of war which at the time might be indicated as more appropriate, within a period of eight months from today. Within the limits specified in this paragraph, troops sufficiently trained for garrison duty could be made available within a period of two months from today up to a strength of 6000, within four months up to a strength of 11,000, and within six months up to a strength of 16,000.

The question whether troops under training should be held in this Dominion until a full division is available for active service in a theatre of war, or whether in the meantime, or alternatively, troops should be despatched for relief of United Kingdom units, for example, in Singapore, Burma, or India, as and when brigades become available, is a matter which His Majesty's Government in

¹ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon and Arrival in Egypt* (No. 41).

² The term 'echelon' was first officially used in an Army Headquarters memorandum of 29 Aug 1939. The term was displaced by 'contingent' in the Middle East (2nd NZEF Routine Order No. 7, 23 Sep 1940), but by the decision of the Adjutant-General 'echelon' remained in use in New Zealand (Defence 300/1/33, 8 Dec 1940). Throughout this series the more familiar

term 'echelon' is retained.

New Zealand propose to consider in the light of circumstances as they arise and of any views or advice which they would be grateful to receive from time to time from His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will take an early opportunity of pointing out the inadvisability of individuals attempting themselves to proceed to the United Kingdom to enlist in the infantry or the artillery, and they will take immediate steps to ascertain the number of technical personnel, particularly electricians, mechanical workmen, mechanics, motor transport drivers, also officers with similar qualifications, and medical officers, who are surplus to necessary requirements here and available for service in the United Kingdom. A further communication on this matter will be forwarded in due course.

Under hypothesis (b) the New Zealand Government will be guided by circumstances and by the advice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and within the limits of the programme laid down they will hold formations ready at short notice to reinforce Singapore, Fiji, and British and French islands in the South-Western Pacific.

AIR FORCE: Every possible step will be taken to press on with the agreed training scheme. It is noted that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will supply aircraft as soon as possible, and in the meantime every possible use will be made of civil aviation reserves available here as and when those reserves can be brought into effective use.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are deeply grateful for the helpful and carefully reasoned appreciation of the steps which they might take, as set out in your telegram to the High Commissioner, and at no time will they fail to make every effort to comply with the suggestions in that telegram and with any further suggestions that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom may make.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

26 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

26

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

13 September 1939

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are very grateful for your telegram (No. 25) and most warmly appreciate the ready response of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

**APPOINTMENT OF COMMANDER, 2ND NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY
FORCE**

Appointment of Commander, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force

27

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

[Extract]

16 September 1939

...² Major-General Freyberg³ offers his services to New Zealand and would be glad to serve with compatriots again.

¹ Rt. Hon. W. J. Jordan, PC; from 1936 to date.

² Text omitted concerned employment of Colonel Sir Stephen Allen, KBE, CMG, DSO, Military Secretary 2nd NZEF, 1940–41.

³ Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Cyril Freyberg, VC, GCMG, KCB, KBE, DSO, LL D. In Sep 1939 was General Officer Commanding, Salisbury Plain Area, with the rank of Major-General; appointed to command 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Nov 1939, and continued to do so until Nov 1945; Governor-General of New Zealand from 17 Jun 1946 to date.

28

The acting Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

[Extract]

2 October 1939

Your telegram of 16 September (No. 27)⁴ Advise Major-General Freyberg that his offer is warmly appreciated and that the Government are at present considering how best they could utilise his services.

⁴ Text omitted concerned employment of Sir Stephen Allen.

29

*The Hon. P. Fraser (London)*⁵ to Major-General Freyberg, General Officer Commanding, Salisbury Plain Area

4 November 1939

Will you come to London and consult with me about the NZEF?

PETER FRASER,

Deputy Prime Minister,

New Zealand

⁵ Then attending a conference of Dominion ministers in London.

30

Letter from General Freyberg to Mr. C. A. Berendsen,¹ Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department

General Officer Commanding,

Salisbury Plain Area,

Bulford Barracks,

Wiltshire

6 November 1939

MY DEAR BERENDSEN,

I realise how difficult it must be for you and your Minister at the present time, and my only wish is to do anything I can to be of any assistance to the New Zealand Government.

Perhaps my best contribution would be to put upon paper my views upon the two problems we discussed at our meeting last night:

- (1) The choosing of the GOC for the New Zealand Forces.
- (2) The problem of mobilising, training, and maintaining the New Zealand Division in the field.

The latter question is a very big one, involving many problems that must affect the speed and efficiency by which the Division can be prepared for war. All these problems and the decisions that must be taken carry with them serious financial repercussions. I have discussed this in attached [Appendix II](#).²

After my talk with the Deputy Prime Minister, I was diffident about discussing the question of your choice of GOC. But since these are such unusual times, I feel that you will appreciate that any advice I give you is from an entirely detached point of view.

The choosing of a GOC is so much a matter of opportunity. As you will realise, the number of first-class, experienced, and fully trained Commanders in a small Regular Army, such as we possess here in England, is relatively not great. The New Zealand Division certainly deserves to get a Commander who will appreciate and understand the wonderful material with which he is being entrusted. Further, and this is most important, he should be a man who will weld the Division into one large happy family. I am sure that it is only upon these lines that best results can be achieved.

With such a Commander and building upon the traditions that already exist, the New Zealand Division will be second to none. Mr. Fraser was kind enough to inquire whether I would like to be considered as a possible Commander. I need hardly say that I feel highly honoured. If, after due consideration, the [New Zealand Government](#) wanted my services, the [New Zealand Government](#) would have to apply to the [War Office](#) for me. I for my part would come to you even if it meant giving up the command of an Army Corps to do so.

I have put as [Appendix I](#) my views upon some of the essential qualities necessary for a GOC.

In any case, whatever your decision may be, I hope that you get the GOC that you want and that he will do full justice to the New Zealand Division.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX I

In view of the fact that the New Zealand Division will have far fewer officers from the Imperial Forces than had its predecessor of 1914, and also of the fact that a large proportion of the officers that they will bring with the Division will have had little opportunity of commanding troops in the field, even upon manœuvres, great responsibility will fall upon the GOC and his staff during the collective training period before going to France. This, in my opinion, is a very important consideration. This is, I know, offset by a leavening of officers who served in the war [1914–18].

The GOC, whoever he may be, should have been trained upon manœuvres in the command of a force of all arms, and in addition should have a wide war experience of command during the war. In my opinion, he should have commanded an Infantry Brigade, or similar Artillery Command, for the last years of the war. I suggest this because it is important that he should have practical experience of making and carrying out artillery fire plans in the various phases of battle. He should have actual experience in command during:

- (A retreat under heavy enemy pressure;
- a)
- (b) A counter-stroke;
- (c) The forcing of a river line against opposition;
- (Operations in open warfare involving the co-operation of all
- d) arms.

So much for the minimum requirements from a tactical and training point of view.

Apart from this the Commander should also have practical and very

detailed knowledge in the care and comfort of his troops. He must understand the complicated structure of Army life, and be able to teach his officers and men how best to make use of the excellent arrangements and material generally, such as the ration and cooking equipment, stores, &c., with which he will be issued upon mobilisation.

¹ Sir Carl A. Berendsen, KCMG, New Zealand Minister at Washington since 1944. At the time of this reference, Mr. C. A. Berendsen, CMG, Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, Wellington; later New Zealand High Commissioner in Australia, 1943–44. Mr. Berendsen had accompanied Mr. Fraser to the United Kingdom in Oct 1939.

² Not published. This appendix dealt with the mobilisation and collective training of the New Zealand Division. It envisaged the United Kingdom as the probable training area and France as the setting for subsequent operations.

31

The Hon. P. Fraser (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

7 November 1939

I have discussed the command of the New Zealand forces with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff ¹ and Mackesy. ² The Chief of the Imperial General Staff speaks most highly of Freyberg both from the point of view of command in the field and administration. He thinks we could not do better and indeed states that Freyberg will be given an English division in France at a very early date, though he would be happy to release him if we wanted him. I gather that Freyberg would be glad to accept the New Zealand Division though I have not discussed this with him. I have satisfied myself about Freyberg's fitness and personal qualities by long personal interview.... ³

¹ Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff during the war were:

7 Sep Field-Marshal Lord Ironside, GCB, CMG, DSO (then
1939 – General Sir William Edmund Ironside).

26 May

1940

May-Dec Field-Marshal Sir John Greer Dill, GCB, CMG, DSO
1941 (then General Sir John Dill). Head of British Joint
Staff Mission, Washington, 1942–death, 4 Nov 1944.

Dec Field-Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, KG, GCB, OM, DSO
1941 – (in 1940, General Sir Alan Francis Brooke).

Jan

1946

² Major-General Pierse Joseph Mackesy, CB, DSO, MC;
Commander 49th (West Riding) Division and Area, Territorial
Army, 1938; commanded land forces in Narvik area 1940; visited
New Zealand in 1939 at request of New Zealand Government and
made a report on the New Zealand Military Forces.

³ Text omitted concerned the proposed retention in New Zealand
of Major-General J. E. (later Sir John) Duigan as Chief of the
General Staff.

32

The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]

10 November 1939

I left for France last night and expect to return on Wednesday or Thursday. Before leaving I saw Allen and my conversation with him strengthens my conclusion that Freyberg is the best man for the command of the New Zealand Division.... ¹

¹ In the text omitted Mr. Fraser requested an early reply to his telegram of 7 Nov (see *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon, No. 46*), and gave his views on a speech on war aims by the Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, then Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons.

33

The Hon. W. Nash² (Wellington) to the Hon. P. Fraser

15 November 1939

The Government have decided, after full consideration of his record and brilliant service, to offer the appointment of General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Major-General Freyberg. This decision should remain confidential until further advice and no public reference or announcement should be made in the meantime.

² Rt. Hon. Walter Nash, PC, Minister of Finance and Customs from 1935 to date; Deputy Prime Minister since Mar 1940; New Zealand Minister at Washington, 1942–44.

34

*The Hon P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

17 November 1939

.... ³ With reference to your telegram of 16 November, ⁴ your offer of the command of the 2nd NZEF has been conveyed confidentially to Major-General Freyberg and has been accepted by him. I have still to obtain the official approval of War Office. When this is obtained, but not before, I suggest an official announcement be made by you. Freyberg has submitted certain proposals for his movements but I will consult War Office before forwarding my recommendations to you.... ⁵

³ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 48) for rest of text.

⁴ Mr. Nash's telegram to Mr. Fraser of 15 Nov 1939 (No. 33) offering the command of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary

Force to Major-General Freyberg is undoubtedly the telegram referred to.

⁵ Administrative detail omitted.

35

*The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser
[Extract]*

18 November 1939

.... It is hoped that a public announcement can be made either over the air on Tuesday evening at seven o'clock or in the evening press of the same day. This statement will also announce the appointment of General Freyberg and the desire of the Government to retain General Duigan ¹ in New Zealand, and that this has been made possible by the availability of Freyberg who has been offered, and has accepted, the command of the New Zealand forces overseas.... ²

¹ Major-General Sir John Evelyn Duigan, KBE, CB, DSO, Chief of the General Staff in New Zealand, 1937–41. Created KBE in 1940.

² See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 49) for rest of text.

36

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

18 November 1939

Your telegram of 18 November (No. 35) has been received and noted. The High Commissioner will publish the announcement here simultaneously. Today I saw Ironside who expressed his entire concurrence and approves of Freyberg's appointment. He has telegraphed

the Secretary of State for War ³ for formal approval. I expect to receive this on Monday and shall telegraph you immediately. In the meantime you will of course not publish the appointment until you have received my telegram. Ironside and Gort ⁴ both consider that Freyberg should immediately spend a period in France with the British Expeditionary Force, and Ironside has promised a suggested programme of his movements, which I shall telegraph to you on receipt.... ¹

³ Secretaries of State for War in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

29 May 1937 Rt. Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha, PC.

- 6 Jan 1940

6 Jan 1940 - Rt. Hon. Oliver Frederick George Stanley, PC,

13 May 1940 GCSI, MC.

13 May 1940 Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden, PC, MC.

- 23 Dec

1940

23 Dec 1940 Rt. Hon. Viscount Margesson, PC, MC (in 1940,

- 23 Feb Captain the Hon. Henry David Reginald
1942 Margesson).

23 Feb 1942 Rt. Hon. Sir (Percy) James Grigg, PC, KCB, KCSI.

- 4 Aug 1945

4 Aug 1945 - Rt. Hon. John James Lawson, PC.

5 Oct 1946

⁴ Field-Marshal Viscount Gort, VC, GCB, CBE, DSO, MVO, MC; Chief of the Imperial General Staff 1937–39; Commander-in-Chief, British Field Force, 1939–40; Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Gibraltar, 1941–42; Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Malta, 1942–44; High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief, Palestine, 1944–45. Died 31 Mar 1946.

¹ Notification of the despatch in a later telegram of biographical details of General Freyberg's career has been omitted.

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

30 November 1939

.... ² Freyberg has already spent a short but, in the opinion of the Chief of the General Staff, adequate period in France, and both he and the Chief of the General Staff consider it essential that he should go to New Zealand at the earliest possible moment to make contact with the Government and Duigan, see for himself the officers and men, and generally familiarise himself with all problems. He will leave London by air for Alexandria direct on 6 December, and will leave Alexandria and arrive in New Zealand with us by the *Niagara*, ³ leaving Sydney on 21 December. He then proposes after a few weeks in New Zealand to proceed immediately to Egypt, though this must depend on the date of the First Echelon's departure.

² See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon (No. 61)* for rest of text.

³ RMS *Niagara*, Canadian-Australasian Line, 13,415 tons, sunk by a mine in the Hauraki Gulf, 19 Jun 1940.

38

*REPORT BY THE HON. P. FRASER ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1939
[Extract]*

APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

.... ⁴ This again was one of the matters which I felt it essential to take up at the earliest possible moment and by the courtesy of the British authorities I was enabled to have a very early interview with General Ironside.

Before this interview, however, I had an opportunity of a discussion

with Major-General Freyberg, who was kind enough to come to London especially for the purpose, and I was at once struck

⁴ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 66) for rest of text. As the original of this report could not be traced, this draft was supplied by courtesy of Mr. Fraser, who has partially reconstructed the report from notes made at the time.

not only by his personality and by his obvious experience and confidence, but particularly by the supreme importance which he clearly attached to the proper treatment of the troops and to the necessity of proper and timely administrative measures to ensure their welfare and their safety. I have, since that interview, seen a great deal of General Freyberg and I am convinced that my first impressions are right and that he is clearly the best choice for the post that is open to us. General Mackesy was good enough to come to London from Yorkshire and he also spoke highly of General Freyberg. I also made an opportunity, in accordance with your suggestions, for an interview with Sir Stephen Allen, who spoke in the highest terms of General Freyberg and assured me that in his view it would be impossible to get a better man.

Armed with these views and opinions, when I saw General Ironside I told him that we were considering him (Freyberg) for the post of General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He at once made it plain that in his opinion we could not make a better choice. He also spoke in the highest terms of Freyberg, whom he had known for a very lengthy period, and he expressed the opinion that Freyberg invariably took care of his men even at the risk of his own safety. He referred also to the wide experience which Freyberg had, not only in fighting but in the organisation of large bodies of men on a war basis. He regarded him as an admirable man to command a division, and indeed he had Freyberg on his own list, with five others, to be given command of an English division at a very early date. He made it plain that if we wanted Freyberg he would certainly allow us to have him, and that if we did not he would shortly be appointed to command an English division.

Subsequently, when in France, I had an opportunity of mentioning the matter to Lord Gort who also spoke in terms of high praise of Freyberg, though he thought he should have at least two months in France before assuming command of a division. At a later discussion I raised this aspect of the matter with General Ironside. He deprecated this on three grounds, firstly, that Freyberg would learn enough of the present method of operations in France in a week; secondly, that the present methods were as yet untried and might not be held to; and, thirdly, it was not impossible that the New Zealand Division would have to be employed in a totally different form of warfare in a totally different theatre of war.

When I saw Mr. Winston Churchill ¹ just prior to my departure he told me that upon my arrival in the United Kingdom he had sought an opportunity to see me with a view to pressing me to urge upon the New Zealand Government the desirability of appointing

¹ Then First Lord of the Admiralty.

Freyberg, whom he regarded as pre-eminently suitable to command such magnificent troops as the New Zealand Division had always proved themselves to be in the past and would, he felt, continue so to do. Further confirmation came from Sir Charles Fergusson ¹ who went out of his way to express his satisfaction at the appointment and his admiration for Freyberg's qualities. Indeed, I think it proper to say that I have heard no criticism of the appointment and nothing but praise, and that I am entirely satisfied that the right thing has been done. My colleagues will, of course, have an opportunity of judging for themselves during the short period that the General will be in New Zealand. I should add that on the way out he proved to have a most business-like manner of formulating and preparing lists of the matters which he wished to discuss and the steps he thinks should be taken to ensure the welfare, comfort, and safety of the troops under his command.

¹ General Sir Charles Fergusson, GCB, GCMG, DSO, MVO,
Governor-General of New Zealand, 1924–30.

39

Memorandum from the Prime Minister to General Freyberg ²

5 January 1940

The General Officer for the time being
Commanding the 2nd New Zealand
Expeditionary Force Overseas

The General Officer Commanding will act in accordance with the instructions he receives from the Commander-in-Chief under whose command he is serving, subject only to the requirements of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. He will, in addition to powers appearing in any relevant Statute or Regulations, be vested with the following powers:

- (In the case of sufficiently grave emergency or in special circumstances, of which he must be the sole judge, to make decisions as to the employment of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and to communicate such decisions directly to the **New Zealand Government**, notwithstanding that in the absence of that extraordinary cause such communication would not be in accordance with the normal channels of communication indicated in the following paragraphs and which for greater clearness are also indicated in an attached diagram. ³
- (To communicate directly with the **New Zealand Government** and b) with the Army Department concerning any matter connected with the training and administration of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.
- (To communicate directly either with the **New Zealand Government** or with the Commander-in-Chief under whose command he is serving, in respect of all details leading up to and arising from policy decisions.
- (In all matters pertaining to equipment, to communicate with the d) **War Office** through normal channels, and through the liaison officer of the High Commissioner's office in **London**, the former to be the official channel.

- (In matters of command, to adhere to the normal military
e) channels between the War Office and the General Officer
Commanding the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force overseas.
- (To establish such administrative headquarters and base and line
f) of communication units as are necessary for the functions of
command, organisation [including training], and administration with
which he has been invested.
- (To organise, [train], ¹ change, vary, or group units and formations
g) in such manner as he considers expedient from time to time.
- (To fix and alter the establishment and composition of units and
h) formations as the exigencies of service may in his opinion require
from time to time.

After the Third Echelon has left New Zealand no officer above the substantive rank of captain will be sent overseas without the concurrence of the General Officer Commanding.

M. J. SAVAGE,

Prime Minister

² This is General Freyberg's charter from the New Zealand Government.

³ Not published.

¹ The references to training in square brackets in paragraphs (f) and (g) have been added at General Freyberg's request. They are not included in the text of this memorandum in the files of the Prime Minister's Department, but were later added to the memorandum at the GOC's request.

General Officer Commanding,

2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Overseas,

Wellington

The General Officer Commanding is hereby vested with the following powers:

- (1) Authority to increase the scale of ration, if necessary.**
- (2) Authority to procure equipment (shown on equipment tables) that cannot be supplied through official channels. Such equipment to be bought through Ordnance channels where possible.**
- (3) Authority to incur expenditures which cannot be foreseen at present, and which the General Officer Commanding considers necessary, for protection of the health of the Force.**
- (4) Authority to incur expenditure, not exceeding £500 for any one transaction, for the recreation or other amenities of the Force.**
- (5) Authority to disburse, at the discretion of the General Officer Commanding, from an entertainment fund which will be provided, to an amount not exceeding £1000 per annum.**

F. JONES,

Minister of Defence

¹ Hon. Frederick Jones, Minister of Defence from 1935 to date.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

27 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND – [EXTRACT]

27

*The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand
[Extract]*

16 September 1939

...² Major-General Freyberg³ offers his services to New Zealand and would be glad to serve with compatriots again.

¹ Rt. Hon. W. J. Jordan, PC; from 1936 to date.

² Text omitted concerned employment of Colonel Sir Stephen Allen, KBE, CMG, DSO, Military Secretary 2nd NZEF, 1940–41.

³ Lieutenant-General Sir Bernard Cyril Freyberg, VC, GCMG, KCB, KBE, DSO, LL D. In Sep 1939 was General Officer Commanding, Salisbury Plain Area, with the rank of Major-General; appointed to command 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Nov 1939, and continued to do so until Nov 1945; Governor-General of New Zealand from 17 Jun 1946 to date.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

28 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND – [EXTRACT]

28

The acting Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

[Extract]

2 October 1939

Your telegram of 16 September (No. 27) ⁴ Advise Major-General Freyberg that his offer is warmly appreciated and that the Government are at present considering how best they could utilise his services.

⁴ Text omitted concerned employment of Sir Stephen Allen.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

29 – THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON)⁵ TO MAJOR-GENERAL FREYBERG, GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, SALISBURY PLAIN AREA

29

The Hon. P. Fraser (London)⁵ to Major-General Freyberg, General Officer Commanding, Salisbury Plain Area

4 November 1939

Will you come to London and consult with me about the NZEF?

PETER FRASER,

Deputy Prime Minister,

New Zealand

⁵ Then attending a conference of Dominion ministers in London.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

30 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO MR. C. A. BERENDSEN, 1 PERMANENT HEAD OF THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT

30

Letter from General Freyberg to Mr. C. A. Berendsen, 1 Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department

General Officer Commanding,

Salisbury Plain Area,

Bulford Barracks,

Wiltshire

6 November 1939

MY DEAR BERENDSEN,

I realise how difficult it must be for you and your Minister at the present time, and my only wish is to do anything I can to be of any assistance to the New Zealand Government.

Perhaps my best contribution would be to put upon paper my views upon the two problems we discussed at our meeting last night:

- (1) The choosing of the GOC for the New Zealand Forces.
- (2) The problem of mobilising, training, and maintaining the New Zealand Division in the field.

The latter question is a very big one, involving many problems that must affect the speed and efficiency by which the Division can be prepared for war. All these problems and the decisions that must be taken carry with them serious financial repercussions. I have discussed this in attached Appendix II.²

After my talk with the Deputy Prime Minister, I was diffident about discussing the question of your choice of GOC. But since these are such

unusual times, I feel that you will appreciate that any advice I give you is from an entirely detached point of view.

The choosing of a GOC is so much a matter of opportunity. As you will realise, the number of first-class, experienced, and fully trained Commanders in a small Regular Army, such as we possess here in England, is relatively not great. The New Zealand Division certainly deserves to get a Commander who will appreciate and understand the wonderful material with which he is being entrusted. Further, and this is most important, he should be a man who will weld the Division into one large happy family. I am sure that it is only upon these lines that best results can be achieved.

With such a Commander and building upon the traditions that already exist, the New Zealand Division will be second to none. Mr. Fraser was kind enough to inquire whether I would like to be considered as a possible Commander. I need hardly say that I feel highly honoured. If, after due consideration, the **New Zealand Government** wanted my services, the **New Zealand Government** would have to apply to the **War Office** for me. I for my part would come to you even if it meant giving up the command of an Army Corps to do so.

I have put as **Appendix I** my views upon some of the essential qualities necessary for a GOC.

In any case, whatever your decision may be, I hope that you get the GOC that you want and that he will do full justice to the New Zealand Division.

Yours sincerely,

APPENDIX I

In view of the fact that the New Zealand Division will have far fewer officers from the Imperial Forces than had its predecessor of 1914, and also of the fact that a large proportion of the officers that they will

bring with the Division will have had little opportunity of commanding troops in the field, even upon manœuvres, great responsibility will fall upon the GOC and his staff during the collective training period before going to France. This, in my opinion, is a very important consideration. This is, I know, offset by a leavening of officers who served in the war [1914-18].

The GOC, whoever he may be, should have been trained upon manœuvres in the command of a force of all arms, and in addition should have a wide war experience of command during the war. In my opinion, he should have commanded an Infantry Brigade, or similar Artillery Command, for the last years of the war. I suggest this because it is important that he should have practical experience of making and carrying out artillery fire plans in the various phases of battle. He should have actual experience in command during:

- () A retreat under heavy enemy pressure;
 - (a) A counter-stroke;
 - (b) The forcing of a river line against opposition;
 - (c) Operations in open warfare involving the co-operation of all arms.

So much for the minimum requirements from a tactical and training point of view.

Apart from this the Commander should also have practical and very detailed knowledge in the care and comfort of his troops. He must understand the complicated structure of Army life, and be able to teach his officers and men how best to make use of the excellent arrangements and material generally, such as the ration and cooking equipment, stores, &c., with which he will be issued upon mobilisation.

¹ Sir Carl A. Berendsen, KCMG, New Zealand Minister at Washington since 1944. At the time of this reference, Mr. C. A. Berendsen, CMG, Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department, Wellington; later New Zealand High Commissioner in Australia, 1943-44. Mr. Berendsen had accompanied Mr.

Fraser to the United Kingdom in Oct 1939.

² Not published. This appendix dealt with the mobilisation and collective training of the New Zealand Division. It envisaged the United Kingdom as the probable training area and France as the setting for subsequent operations.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

SALISBURY PLAIN AREA, — BULFORD BARRACKS, — WILTSHIRE — 6
NOVEMBER 1939

General Officer Commanding,

Salisbury Plain Area,
Bulford Barracks,
Wiltshire
6 November 1939

MY DEAR BERENDSEN,

I realise how difficult it must be for you and your Minister at the present time, and my only wish is to do anything I can to be of any assistance to the New Zealand Government.

Perhaps my best contribution would be to put upon paper my views upon the two problems we discussed at our meeting last night:

- (1) The choosing of the GOC for the New Zealand Forces.
- (2) The problem of mobilising, training, and maintaining the New Zealand Division in the field.

The latter question is a very big one, involving many problems that must affect the speed and efficiency by which the Division can be prepared for war. All these problems and the decisions that must be taken carry with them serious financial repercussions. I have discussed this in attached Appendix II.²

After my talk with the Deputy Prime Minister, I was diffident about discussing the question of your choice of GOC. But since these are such unusual times, I feel that you will appreciate that any advice I give you is from an entirely detached point of view.

The choosing of a GOC is so much a matter of opportunity. As you

will realise, the number of first-class, experienced, and fully trained Commanders in a small Regular Army, such as we possess here in England, is relatively not great. The New Zealand Division certainly deserves to get a Commander who will appreciate and understand the wonderful material with which he is being entrusted. Further, and this is most important, he should be a man who will weld the Division into one large happy family. I am sure that it is only upon these lines that best results can be achieved.

With such a Commander and building upon the traditions that already exist, the New Zealand Division will be second to none. Mr. Fraser was kind enough to inquire whether I would like to be considered as a possible Commander. I need hardly say that I feel highly honoured. If, after due consideration, the **New Zealand Government** wanted my services, the **New Zealand Government** would have to apply to the **War Office** for me. I for my part would come to you even if it meant giving up the command of an Army Corps to do so.

I have put as **Appendix I** my views upon some of the essential qualities necessary for a GOC.

In any case, whatever your decision may be, I hope that you get the GOC that you want and that he will do full justice to the New Zealand Division.

Yours sincerely,

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX I

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In view of the fact that the New Zealand Division will have far fewer officers from the Imperial Forces than had its predecessor of 1914, and also of the fact that a large proportion of the officers that they will bring with the Division will have had little opportunity of commanding troops in the field, even upon manœuvres, great responsibility will fall upon the GOC and his staff during the collective training period before going to France. This, in my opinion, is a very important consideration. This is, I know, offset by a leavening of officers who served in the war [1914-18].

The GOC, whoever he may be, should have been trained upon manœuvres in the command of a force of all arms, and in addition should have a wide war experience of command during the war. In my opinion, he should have commanded an Infantry Brigade, or similar Artillery Command, for the last years of the war. I suggest this because it is important that he should have practical experience of making and carrying out artillery fire plans in the various phases of battle. He should have actual experience in command during:

- () A retreat under heavy enemy pressure;
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- (d) arms.

So much for the minimum requirements from a tactical and training point of view.

Apart from this the Commander should also have practical and very

detailed knowledge in the care and comfort of his troops. He must understand the complicated structure of Army life, and be able to teach his officers and men how best to make use of the excellent arrangements and material generally, such as the ration and cooking equipment, stores, &c., with which he will be issued upon mobilisation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

31 – THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND – [EXTRACT]

31

*The Hon. P. Fraser (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand
[Extract]*

7 November 1939

I have discussed the command of the New Zealand forces with the Chief of the Imperial General Staff ¹ and Mackesy. ² The Chief of the Imperial General Staff speaks most highly of Freyberg both from the point of view of command in the field and administration. He thinks we could not do better and indeed states that Freyberg will be given an English division in France at a very early date, though he would be happy to release him if we wanted him. I gather that Freyberg would be glad to accept the New Zealand Division though I have not discussed this with him. I have satisfied myself about Freyberg's fitness and personal qualities by long personal interview.... ³

¹ Chiefs of the Imperial General Staff during the war were:

7 Sep Field-Marshal Lord Ironside, GCB, CMG, DSO (then
1939 – General Sir William Edmund Ironside).

26 May
1940

May-Dec Field-Marshal Sir John Greer Dill, GCB, CMG, DSO
1941 (then General Sir John Dill). Head of British Joint
Staff Mission, Washington, 1942–death, 4 Nov 1944.

Dec Field-Marshal Viscount Alanbrooke, KG, GCB, OM, DSO
1941 – (in 1940, General Sir Alan Francis Brooke).
Jan
1946

**2 Major-General Pierse Joseph Mackesy, CB, DSO, MC;
Commander 49th (West Riding) Division and Area, Territorial
Army, 1938; commanded land forces in Narvik area 1940; visited
New Zealand in 1939 at request of New Zealand Government and
made a report on the New Zealand Military Forces.**

**3 Text omitted concerned the proposed retention in New Zealand
of Major-General J. E. (later Sir John) Duigan as Chief of the
General Staff.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

32 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

32

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

10 November 1939

I left for France last night and expect to return on Wednesday or Thursday. Before leaving I saw Allen and my conversation with him strengthens my conclusion that Freyberg is the best man for the command of the New Zealand Division.... ¹

¹ In the text omitted Mr. Fraser requested an early reply to his telegram of 7 Nov (see *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon, No. 46*), and gave his views on a speech on war aims by the Rt. Hon. C. R. Attlee, then Leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

33 – THE HON. W. NASH² (WELLINGTON) TO THE HON. P. FRASER

33

The Hon. W. Nash² (Wellington) to the Hon. P. Fraser

15 November 1939

The Government have decided, after full consideration of his record and brilliant service, to offer the appointment of General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Major-General Freyberg. This decision should remain confidential until further advice and no public reference or announcement should be made in the meantime.

² Rt. Hon. Walter Nash, PC, Minister of Finance and Customs from 1935 to date; Deputy Prime Minister since Mar 1940; New Zealand Minister at Washington, 1942-44.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

34 – THE HON P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

34

The Hon P. Fraser to the Prime Minister [Extract]

17 November 1939

.... ³ With reference to your telegram of 16 November, ⁴ your offer of the command of the 2nd NZEF has been conveyed confidentially to Major-General Freyberg and has been accepted by him. I have still to obtain the official approval of War Office. When this is obtained, but not before, I suggest an official announcement be made by you. Freyberg has submitted certain proposals for his movements but I will consult War Office before forwarding my recommendations to you.... ⁵

³ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 48) for rest of text.

⁴ Mr. Nash's telegram to Mr. Fraser of 15 Nov 1939 (No. 33) offering the command of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force to Major-General Freyberg is undoubtedly the telegram referred to.

⁵ Administrative detail omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

35 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON. P. FRASER – [EXTRACT]

35

The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser
[Extract]

18 November 1939

.... It is hoped that a public announcement can be made either over the air on Tuesday evening at seven o'clock or in the evening press of the same day. This statement will also announce the appointment of General Freyberg and the desire of the Government to retain General Duigan ¹ in New Zealand, and that this has been made possible by the availability of Freyberg who has been offered, and has accepted, the command of the New Zealand forces overseas.... ²

¹ Major-General Sir John Evelyn Duigan, KBE, CB, DSO, Chief of the General Staff in New Zealand, 1937–41. Created KBE in 1940.

² See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 49) for rest of text.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

36 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

36

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

18 November 1939

Your telegram of 18 November (No. 35) has been received and noted. The High Commissioner will publish the announcement here simultaneously. Today I saw Ironside who expressed his entire concurrence and approves of Freyberg's appointment. He has telegraphed the Secretary of State for War ³ for formal approval. I expect to receive this on Monday and shall telegraph you immediately. In the meantime you will of course not publish the appointment until you have received my telegram. Ironside and Gort ⁴ both consider that Freyberg should immediately spend a period in France with the British Expeditionary Force, and Ironside has promised a suggested programme of his movements, which I shall telegraph to you on receipt.... ¹

³ Secretaries of State for War in the United Kingdom Government during the war were:

29 May 1937 Rt. Hon. Leslie Hore-Belisha, PC.
– 6 Jan 1940

6 Jan 1940 – Rt. Hon. Oliver Frederick George Stanley, PC,
13 May 1940 GCSI, MC.

13 May 1940 Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden, PC, MC.
– 23 Dec
1940

23 Dec 1940 Rt. Hon. Viscount Margesson, PC, MC (in 1940,
– 23 Feb Captain the Hon. Henry David Reginald
1942 Margesson).

23 Feb 1942 Rt. Hon. Sir (Percy) James Grigg, PC, KCB, KCSI.

- 4 Aug 1945

4 Aug 1945 - Rt. Hon. John James Lawson, PC.

5 Oct 1946

⁴ Field-Marshal Viscount Gort, VC, GCB, CBE, DSO, MVO, MC; Chief of the Imperial General Staff 1937-39; Commander-in-Chief, British Field Force, 1939-40; Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Gibraltar, 1941-42; Governor and Commander-in-Chief, Malta, 1942-44; High Commissioner and Commander-in-Chief, Palestine, 1944-45. Died 31 Mar 1946.

¹ Notification of the despatch in a later telegram of biographical details of General Freyberg's career has been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

37 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

37

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

30 November 1939

.... ² Freyberg has already spent a short but, in the opinion of the Chief of the General Staff, adequate period in France, and both he and the Chief of the General Staff consider it essential that he should go to New Zealand at the earliest possible moment to make contact with the Government and Duigan, see for himself the officers and men, and generally familiarise himself with all problems. He will leave London by air for Alexandria direct on 6 December, and will leave Alexandria and arrive in New Zealand with us by the *Niagara*, ³ leaving Sydney on 21 December. He then proposes after a few weeks in New Zealand to proceed immediately to Egypt, though this must depend on the date of the First Echelon's departure.

² See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 61) for rest of text.

³ RMS *Niagara*, Canadian-Australasian Line, 13,415 tons, sunk by a mine in the Hauraki Gulf, 19 Jun 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

38 – REPORT BY THE HON. P. FRASER ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1939 – [EXTRACT] – APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

38

REPORT BY THE HON. P. FRASER ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1939

[Extract]

APPOINTMENT OF GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

.... ⁴ This again was one of the matters which I felt it essential to take up at the earliest possible moment and by the courtesy of the British authorities I was enabled to have a very early interview with General Ironside.

Before this interview, however, I had an opportunity of a discussion with Major-General Freyberg, who was kind enough to come to London especially for the purpose, and I was at once struck

⁴ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon* (No. 66) for rest of text. As the original of this report could not be traced, this draft was supplied by courtesy of Mr. Fraser, who has partially reconstructed the report from notes made at the time.

not only by his personality and by his obvious experience and confidence, but particularly by the supreme importance which he clearly attached to the proper treatment of the troops and to the necessity of proper and timely administrative measures to ensure their welfare and their safety. I have, since that interview, seen a great deal of General Freyberg and I am convinced that my first impressions are right and that he is clearly the best choice for the post that is open to us. General Mackesy was good enough to come to London from Yorkshire and he also

spoke highly of General Freyberg. I also made an opportunity, in accordance with your suggestions, for an interview with Sir Stephen Allen, who spoke in the highest terms of General Freyberg and assured me that in his view it would be impossible to get a better man.

Armed with these views and opinions, when I saw General Ironside I told him that we were considering him (Freyberg) for the post of General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. He at once made it plain that in his opinion we could not make a better choice. He also spoke in the highest terms of Freyberg, whom he had known for a very lengthy period, and he expressed the opinion that Freyberg invariably took care of his men even at the risk of his own safety. He referred also to the wide experience which Freyberg had, not only in fighting but in the organisation of large bodies of men on a war basis. He regarded him as an admirable man to command a division, and indeed he had Freyberg on his own list, with five others, to be given command of an English division at a very early date. He made it plain that if we wanted Freyberg he would certainly allow us to have him, and that if we did not he would shortly be appointed to command an English division.

Subsequently, when in France, I had an opportunity of mentioning the matter to Lord Gort who also spoke in terms of high praise of Freyberg, though he thought he should have at least two months in France before assuming command of a division. At a later discussion I raised this aspect of the matter with General Ironside. He deprecated this on three grounds, firstly, that Freyberg would learn enough of the present method of operations in France in a week; secondly, that the present methods were as yet untried and might not be held to; and, thirdly, it was not impossible that the New Zealand Division would have to be employed in a totally different form of warfare in a totally different theatre of war.

When I saw Mr. Winston Churchill¹ just prior to my departure he told me that upon my arrival in the United Kingdom he had sought an opportunity to see me with a view to pressing me to urge upon the New

¹ Then First Lord of the Admiralty.

Freyberg, whom he regarded as pre-eminently suitable to command such magnificent troops as the New Zealand Division had always proved themselves to be in the past and would, he felt, continue so to do. Further confirmation came from Sir Charles Fergusson ¹ who went out of his way to express his satisfaction at the appointment and his admiration for Freyberg's qualities. Indeed, I think it proper to say that I have heard no criticism of the appointment and nothing but praise, and that I am entirely satisfied that the right thing has been done. My colleagues will, of course, have an opportunity of judging for themselves during the short period that the General will be in New Zealand. I should add that on the way out he proved to have a most business-like manner of formulating and preparing lists of the matters which he wished to discuss and the steps he thinks should be taken to ensure the welfare, comfort, and safety of the troops under his command.

¹ General Sir Charles Fergusson, GCB, GCMG, DSO, MVO,
Governor-General of New Zealand, 1924–30.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

39 – MEMORANDUM FROM THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG²

39

Memorandum from the Prime Minister to General Freyberg²

5 January 1940

The General Officer for the time being
Commanding the 2nd New Zealand
Expeditionary Force Overseas

The General Officer Commanding will act in accordance with the instructions he receives from the Commander-in-Chief under whose command he is serving, subject only to the requirements of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. He will, in addition to powers appearing in any relevant Statute or Regulations, be vested with the following powers:

- (In the case of sufficiently grave emergency or in special circumstances, of which he must be the sole judge, to make decisions as to the employment of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and to communicate such decisions directly to the **New Zealand Government**, notwithstanding that in the absence of that extraordinary cause such communication would not be in accordance with the normal channels of communication indicated in the following paragraphs and which for greater clearness are also indicated in an attached diagram. ³
- (To communicate directly with the **New Zealand Government** and b) with the Army Department concerning any matter connected with the training and administration of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force.
- (To communicate directly either with the **New Zealand Government** or with the Commander-in-Chief under whose command he is serving, in respect of all details leading up to and arising from policy decisions.
- (In all matters pertaining to equipment, to communicate with the

d) War Office through normal channels, and through the liaison officer of the High Commissioner's office in **London**, the former to be the official channel.

(In matters of command, to adhere to the normal military

e) channels between the War Office and the General Officer

Commanding the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force overseas.

(To establish such administrative headquarters and base and line

f) of communication units as are necessary for the functions of command, organisation [including training], and administration with which he has been invested.

(To organise, [train], ¹ change, vary, or group units and formations

g) in such manner as he considers expedient from time to time.

(To fix and alter the establishment and composition of units and

h) formations as the exigencies of service may in his opinion require from time to time.

After the **Third Echelon** has left New Zealand no officer above the substantive rank of captain will be sent overseas without the concurrence of the General Officer Commanding.

M. J. SAVAGE,

Prime Minister

² This is General Freyberg's charter from the New Zealand Government.

³ Not published.

¹ The references to training in square brackets in paragraphs (f) and (g) have been added at General Freyberg's request. They are not included in the text of this memorandum in the files of the Prime Minister's Department, but were later added to the memorandum at the GOC's request.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

40 – MEMORANDUM FROM THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE¹ TO GENERAL FREYBERG

40

Memorandum from the Minister of Defence¹ to General Freyberg

5 January 1940

Major-General B. C. Freyberg,

General Officer Commanding,

2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force Overseas,
Wellington

The General Officer Commanding is hereby vested with the following powers:

- (1) Authority to increase the scale of ration, if necessary.
- (2) Authority to procure equipment (shown on equipment tables) that cannot be supplied through official channels. Such equipment to be bought through Ordnance channels where possible.
- (3) Authority to incur expenditures which cannot be foreseen at present, and which the General Officer Commanding considers necessary, for protection of the health of the Force.
- (4) Authority to incur expenditure, not exceeding £500 for any one transaction, for the recreation or other amenities of the Force.
- (5) Authority to disburse, at the discretion of the General Officer Commanding, from an entertainment fund which will be provided, to an amount not exceeding £1000 per annum.

F. JONES,

Minister of Defence

¹ Hon. Frederick Jones, Minister of Defence from 1935 to date.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

FORMATION AND DESPATCH OF FIRST ECHELON AND ARRIVAL IN EGYPT

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

41 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

41

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

9 September 1939

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have decided to raise a special military force for service within or beyond New Zealand. Enlistment will be entirely voluntary and will be confined to men and non-commissioned officers between the ages of 21 and 35.¹ In the case of officers the maximum age limits will be Subalterns, Captains 35, Majors 40, Lieutenant-Colonels 45. Medical standard requires fitness for active service in any part of the world.

Enlistments will be received from 9 a.m. on Tuesday 12 September. Preference will be given to single men not engaged in essential industries in the following order: (a) serving members of the Territorial Force; (b) members of the infantry section of the Special Reserve;² (c) members of Class I of the National Military Reserve;³ (d) other single men with or without military training.

Enlistment will be for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter or until lawfully discharged.⁴ The first step in the

¹ An Army Headquarters instruction of 5 Oct 1939, while maintaining the 21-35 age limit generally, left it to the discretion of Officers Commanding Districts to extend the age limit to 40 years in the case of warrant officers, non-commissioned officers, specialists, and certain tradesmen specially suitable for employment overseas, on condition that they were classified as physically fit for service in any part of the

world. On 11 Apr 1940 the age limit for other ranks was increased to 40 years.

² Men who had undergone a five months' course of combined military and vocational training, after which, for the three following years, they were required to spend ten days a year in camp.

³ Men who had undergone not less than two years' Territorial training.

⁴ Terms of enlistment. An opinion on the legal liability of members of the Defence Forces to serve, and the duration of that liability, is given by the then Adjutant-General, Brigadier A. E. Conway, in a letter dated 21 Sep 1945 to the Prime Minister of New Zealand, an extract of which is quoted here:

DURATION OF LEGAL LIABILITY OF MEMBERS OF DEFENCE FORCES TO SERVE

I think the position is as follows:

Volunteers

1. Volunteers enlisted 'for the duration of the war and twelve months thereafter or until lawfully discharged'.

Conscripts

2. Persons compelled to serve under the National Service Emergency Regulations, must remain, until lawfully discharged, members of the Armed Forces to which they are transferred, in the same manner as if they had voluntarily enlisted therein and taken the oath of allegiance (Regulation 17 (3)). Unless by inference the 'duration plus twelve months' of the volunteer is imported into this clause, there is no legal limit to the duration of a conscript's liability to serve under these Regulations.

3. Regulation 4 of Expeditionary Force Emergency Regulations 1940, provides that members of 2nd NZEF shall be enlisted 'for service ... for the duration of the present war and for twelve months thereafter'.

This provision was passed in the days of voluntary enlistment but has not been repealed....

Conclusion

4. The earliest limits to the duration of the legal liability of volunteers or conscripts whether in 2nd NZEF or other sections of the Defence Forces is twelve months after the duration of the war.

(Signed) A. E. CONWAY,

**Brigadier,
Adjutant-General**

establishment of this force will be the enlistment of 6600 officers and men, and the organisation will consist of Divisional troops and one infantry brigade and will be taken into training in special camps at Papakura, Ngaruawahia, Trentham, and Burnham. Training will be for a minimum period of three months. It is hoped to have the First Echelon in training within three weeks of opening enlistment. ¹

¹ Enlistment began on 12 Sep 1939. Prior to the general mobilisation of recruits, which began on 3 Oct, officers and NCOs provisionally selected for the First Echelon underwent special courses of instruction commencing on 27 Sep 1939.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

42 – THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON) TO THE WAR OFFICE – [EXTRACT]

42

*The Chief of the General Staff (Wellington) to the War Office
[Extract]*

26 September 1939

The first contingent will comprise: **Divisional Headquarters**, **Employment Platoon**, **Divisional Section Intelligence Corps**, **Headquarters Infantry Brigade**, **Headquarters Divisional Artillery**, **Headquarters Divisional Engineers**, **Divisional Cavalry Regiment** (less two squadrons), **Field Regiment of Artillery** (three 18-pounder batteries and one 4.5-inch howitzer battery); **Field Park Company**, **Field Company of Engineers**, **Divisional Signallers** *, **three Infantry Battalions**, **one Machine Gun Battalion**, **Divisional Ammunition Company** *, **Divisional Petrol Company** *, **Divisional Supply Column** *, **Reserve Mechanical Transport Company**, **one Field Ambulance**, **one Field Hygiene Section**, **one Provost Company**, **Divisional Postal Unit**, **Base Details—Total 324 officers, 6227 other ranks....** ¹

Force is as per latest British war establishments, excepting: 18-pounder and 4.5-inch howitzers in lieu of 25-pounder, Vickers Machine Gun Battalion in lieu of Bren carrier platoons, Lewis guns in lieu of Bren, no anti-tank guns or rifles, **Divisional Cavalry Regiment** motorised including six only Bren carriers and no light tanks.... Would be glad to have your recommendation with regard to any Corps or Army Troop units which should be provided in proportion. Certain matters of policy affecting mechanical transport and equipment are the subject of a separate telegram (No. 43) from the Governor-General.

* *Less proportion for two infantry brigades and two artillery regiments.

* *Less proportion for two infantry brigades and two artillery regiments.

* *Less proportion for two infantry brigades and two artillery regiments.

* *Less proportion for two infantry brigades and two artillery regiments.

¹ The numbers of officers and other ranks in each unit were included in the cable but, as in many cases these were not the numbers embarked, they have been omitted. A schedule of the various types of mechanical transport to be sent with the contingent has also been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

43 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

43

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

26 September 1939

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have considerable doubt as to the desirability of despatching with the Expeditionary Force that is contemplated when circumstances permit, the mechanical transport and much of the equipment referred to by the Chief of the General Staff in his telegram to the War Office (No. 42). The mechanical transport available here is of an improvised character consisting of Fords, Chevrolets, Bedfords, and Leylands, adapted as near as possible to War Office types, and in view of what would appear to be the paramount necessity of conserving shipping space His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are inclined to the view that much might be gained were it possible for His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to provide full equipment of mechanical transport of War Office type at the point of arrival of this contingent.

Similarly, much of the artillery and automatic equipment of the force is obsolescent or obsolete, and, quite apart from the desirability of leaving a reasonable portion of such equipment in New Zealand to meet contingencies, it would appear to be desirable to re-equip the force with modern equipment at its point of arrival.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be grateful for the views of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on this matter.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

44 – WAR OFFICE TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

44

War Office to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

3 October 1939

With reference to the questions raised in your telegram of 26 September (No. 42). The intention is to provide all War Department types of mechanical transport in the theatre of war by the time the concentration of the entire Division is completed. Training vehicles and equipment will be provided as the brigades arrive. The existing equipment in New Zealand must suffice for immediate training requirements and should remain in New Zealand for security reasons.

Corps troops most needed in the Middle East are: Medium Regiment of Royal Artillery, with existing equipment and tractors or haulage vehicles now in use, and one Survey Battery based on War Establishment III/1931/13/4. ¹

Also personnel for any of the following units which you may care to provide:

Headquarters Corps Troops, Royal Army Service Corps.

One Corps Troops Ammunition Company.

One Corps Troops Supply Column.

One Corps Petrol Park.

One Corps Ammunition Park.

One Anti-Aircraft Brigade Company, Royal Army Service Corps. ²

¹ See *Special Units—Survey Battery (No. 313)*.

² The New Zealand Government replied on 6 Nov 1939, that it had deferred the formation of these units until information on the future of the New Zealand Division was available.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

45 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

45

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

6 October 1939

With reference to your telegram of 26 September (No. 43). The policy in relation to the equipment of the contemplated New Zealand Expeditionary Force has been considered by the Army Council,¹ who agree that in the circumstances it would be undesirable to despatch with the force the mechanical transport and other equipment referred to in your telegram. The New Zealand Chief of the General Staff is being informed of the equipment which it is suggested should be sent.

It will be appreciated that in view of the numerous calls on military equipment provided by the United Kingdom, it will not be possible to supply much, if any, equipment from the United Kingdom for the force while it remains in New Zealand, and it will therefore be necessary to rely upon existing [equipment?] for training during that period. The Army Council will, however, do their utmost to provide adequate equipment for the further training of each New Zealand contingent at its point of arrival overseas. It will be the Council's aim to complete the equipment of the whole formation by the date when the three contingents proposed have finished their training and are able to take the field in formation.

¹ The control of the British Army is vested in the Army Council. The Secretary of State for War is its President. The Army members are the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, the Adjutant-General to the Forces, the Quartermaster-General to

**the Forces, the vice-Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the
deputy Chief of the Imperial General Staff.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

46 – THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

46

The Hon. P. Fraser (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 November 1939

I have discussed with the Secretary of State for War, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff,² and the War Office Staff the movements of the New Zealand Military Forces.³ The general opinion is that while the matter is for the New Zealand Government to judge, the international situation *vis-à-vis Japan* is sufficiently clear to warrant the despatch at any rate of the First Echelon. The unanimous opinion is that Egypt is most suitable from the point of view of both training facilities and strategical position. Inquiries are now under way as to dates, and it seems probable that the First Echelon could be moved to Egypt on the conclusion of their three months' training, which we assume (and please confirm by telegraph) will be towards the end of January, although the actual date must, of course, depend on the Admiralty's provision of ships. If you desire an immediate and firm decision in order to take in the men of the Second Echelon, please telegraph your views on this matter.

² General Sir William Ironside.

³ See Appendix 1, *Agreed Conclusions of Discussions held at the War Office on 2 Nov 1939*, and Appendix 2, *Note of a Meeting held at the War Office on 6 Nov 1939*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

47 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON. P. FRASER

47

The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser

11 November 1939

In reply to your telegram of 7 November (No. 46), Cabinet has agreed to the despatch of the First Echelon to Egypt. Its three months' training and final leave will be completed by 20 January. Transport will be required for 354 officers and 6416 other ranks, making a total of 6770.¹ This number includes 26 officers and 608 other ranks as a first reinforcement for the First Echelon. The War Office have already been informed concerning the units which will compose this force (No. 42). So far as the Second Echelon is concerned, the officers are already in training,² NCOs enter camp at the end of the month, and other ranks when the First Echelon leaves New Zealand.³ Should the sailing date in January be adhered to the Second Echelon could then be ready for transport in mid-April, but we do not contemplate consideration of arrangements for the transport of the Second Echelon until the disposition of troops has been approximately determined.

The Government would be glad if you could discuss arrangements with the Director of Sea Transport⁴ in the United Kingdom, who will act in collaboration with the responsible official here in providing the necessary vessels for the transport of the force. Please ascertain whether the fitting-out of vessels could be done overseas. It should be borne in mind that neither horses nor the equipment referred to in the telegram from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General—No. 45 of 6 October—are to be taken overseas. It is presumed you will discuss with the Admiralty the nature and adequacy of the escort to be used for the safe conduct of the force.

We will have to announce almost immediately our intention to despatch the force overseas and the publicity procedure is now being prepared.

Your telegram of 10 November has just been received.⁵ A further message will be sent to you within the next few days.

¹ The numbers actually embarked were: 354 officers, 6175 other ranks: total, 6529.

² Officers of the Second Echelon entered camp on 8 Nov 1939.

³ The first draft of other ranks for the Second Echelon entered camp on 12 Jan 1940.

⁴ Sir William George Hynard, Kt, CB, CBE; Director of Sea Transport, 1939–42; Assistant Director-General, Ministry of War Transport, 1942–44; representative of the Ministry of War Transport in Canada, 1944–46.

⁵ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 32).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

48 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

48

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

17 November 1939

I have discussed your telegram of 11 November (No. 47) with the War Office. All arrangements for the move will be made in the first instance by them in collaboration with the Admiralty and Ministry of Shipping, and it is not necessary to approach the last two Departments separately. It is fully appreciated here that adequate escort is an essential [contingency?].

As it is not clear from your telegram whether you desire the fitting-out of transports to be done in the United Kingdom or in New Zealand please communicate further on this point. As regards public[ity], care should be taken to keep the destination and date of sailing secret. I suggest that you confine the public statement to the fact that the force will proceed overseas shortly for further training, but please see next paragraph of this telegram.

In view of the importance of the decision indicated in your telegram under reference, I consider that the information should be conveyed officially by telegraph as from Prime Minister to Prime Minister and that the public announcement should be delayed until then. In the meantime I have informed the authorities here unofficially of the substance of your telegram....¹

¹ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 34), for rest of text.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

49 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON. P. FRASER – [EXTRACT]

49

*The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser
[Extract]*

18 November 1939

In accordance with the advice contained in your telegram of 17 November (No. 48) a telegram will be sent on Monday direct to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom informing him of the decision to send the First Echelon overseas, and requesting that no publicity should be given in the United Kingdom until the decision has been announced in New Zealand. We will arrange to advise him of the time of announcement here. It is hoped that a public announcement can be made either over the air on Tuesday evening at seven o'clock or in the evening press of the same day.... ²

Arrangements to fit up all the transports in the United Kingdom would be most convenient and helpful to us, but if this cannot be done we must be advised at once so that we may advance arrangements here. It is possible that the Admiralty Sea Transport Regulation Standards may not be entirely acceptable and a committee here is examining this question. ¹

² See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 35), for text omitted.

¹ In point of fact they were not acceptable, and the New Zealand Government requested that additional shower and sanitary facilities be provided.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

50 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

50

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

20 November 1939

With reference to the offer made by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, which was contained in my most secret telegram of 13 September,² and following upon discussions between the Hon. P. Fraser and Ministers and officials of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, I understand that the international situation is sufficiently clear to warrant the despatch of the First Echelon of the New Zealand [Expeditionary Force] and that Egypt is the most suitable point to which it can be trans-shipped. I have to inform you that, in these circumstances, the despatch of the First Echelon overseas has been decided upon by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. It is understood that the troops will proceed to Egypt for the completion of their training and there await the arrival of the Second and Third Echelons. It is also understood that all arrangements for the move will be made in the first instance by the War Office in collaboration with the Admiralty and the Ministry of Shipping.

The First Echelon's three months' training and final leave will be completed by 20 January, and, to ensure the completion of arrangements, your early advice as to the availability of ships and escort would be appreciated. The New Zealand General Staff have already informed the War Office concerning the numbers and units composing this force.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire to make this decision public within the next day or so, but as a number of related matters have not yet been completed the exact time and date of this statement cannot at present be determined. They would be glad if you will defer any publicity in the United Kingdom until you are advised of the exact time of announcement here. The destination and approximate time of sailing will of course be kept secret.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire to re-affirm the determination of the people of this Dominion to sustain to the fullest extent of their resources the war effort upon which they have now engaged. They desire also to re-affirm their pledge of wholehearted support for the British Commonwealth of Nations and France in the struggle for international security and for democratic freedom. It is the solemn hope and heartfelt wish of the people of New Zealand that the aims for which they have engaged in this struggle will result in that new world order, solidly based on principles of peace and security for individuals and nations alike, without which the enjoyment of living would not be possible.

² See *Negotiations regarding Participation of New Zealand's Armed Forces* (No. 25).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

51 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

51

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

20 November 1939

My colleagues and I are deeply appreciative of the decision of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, communicated in your telegram of 20 November (No. 50), to despatch the First Echelon of the New Zealand Division. This further example of New Zealand's whole-hearted determination to play her full part in the struggle in which we are engaged will be most warmly [welcomed?] here. In accordance with your request no prior announcement will be made here, but I should be glad if you would arrange to let us know as far as possible in advance the terms of the proposed announcement in New Zealand, and the time at which it is to be made, so that arrangements can be made for suitable publicity here.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

52 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

52

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

21 November 1939

Cabinet has been considering the very difficult questions which arise in relation to sending troops out of Australia. As you know,

¹ Prime Ministers of the Commonwealth of Australia during the war were:

Apr 1939 – Aug 1941	Rt. Hon. Robert Gordon Menzies, PC, KC.
Aug 1941 – Oct 1941	Rt. Hon. Arthur W. Fadden, PC.
Oct 1941 – death, Jul 1945	Rt. Hon. John Curtin, PC.
Jul 1945 – to date	Rt. Hon. Joseph Benedict Chifley, PC.

we have a division enlisted for service at home or abroad on terms similar to your own. Our general view is that, in spite of a reassuring survey of the Far Eastern position just received from the Foreign Office and promises made by the Admiralty in relation to the defence of Singapore,¹ there is still some real uncertainty about the position of Japan, which might become more acute if Germany invaded Holland and the Netherlands East Indies were cut from their mother country. Further, while Australian public opinion would warmly support sending troops abroad if land warfare in Europe assumed a critical character, there is a feeling that in the present state of affairs—with only five British divisions in France and as yet no casualties—the despatch of

Dominion troops cannot be very urgent. Another consideration which has puzzled us is that whereas we are finding the greatest possible difficulties in obtaining even a fraction of the shipping needed for some of our export commodities, it seems to be assumed that there would be no difficulty in securing ships and naval convoy for a military force. To sum up, our judgment is that we should watch developments of the next three or four weeks before committing ourselves to the despatch of our division overseas. At the same time, we do not wish to be out of step with you as we think that from every point of view the closest co-ordination between our policies is essential. Any comments you care to make on this matter would be greatly appreciated.

¹ See Volume III, *Appreciation of Probable Japanese Policy in the Far East*, dated 15 Nov 1939; also memorandum on the Naval Defence of Australia and New Zealand, 23 Nov 1939.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

53 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

53

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

22 November 1939

In giving effect to the decision contained in my telegram of 20 November (No. 50) I desire to inform you that it seems essential that the actual despatch of the First Echelon must, in the light of circumstances at the time, be determined by the New Zealand Government itself. Before the First Echelon leaves for its destination my colleagues and I feel that we must satisfy ourselves that the seas through which the transports shall pass are considered to be free of submarines or of a heavily armed raider such as the *Admiral Scheer*. ² We are compelled for instance to take into account the effect on public opinion of such matters as press statements current at the present time that Germany is negotiating for the purchase of Russian submarines in the Far East. It is also possible that the situation *vis-à-vis Japan* may have deteriorated. These and similar factors must necessarily be taken into account by His Majesty's Governments in New Zealand and Australia in the interests of the security of their own peoples. I am sure that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will fully appreciate the force of the above reservations.

² German pocket battleship, 10,000 tons, six 11-inch guns; capsized after being damaged in Royal Air Force bombing attack on Kiel on the night of 9–10 Apr 1945.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

54 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

54

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia

22 November 1939

The questions raised by you in your telegram dated 21 November (No. 52), concerning the despatch of an overseas force, have been considered by my colleagues and myself. Acting on advice received from the United Kingdom Government and from our delegate at the Ministerial Conference in London,¹ we have decided to send the First Echelon of our Special Force overseas, and on the day before your telegram was received had so informed the United Kingdom Government. I had intended to inform you and the other Dominion Prime Ministers of our action today as soon as the time of publication between the United Kingdom and ourselves had been arranged.

I fully appreciate the difficulties with which you are faced in Australia. Our particular problems are, I think, of a different nature. Because of our limited training facilities and the lack of modern equipment it is not possible for us to train more than one echelon at a time. We decided to send the first body overseas as soon after their elementary training is completed as transport and naval escort facilities are available, in order to make room for the next body, and also to enable the men to complete their training on the modern equipment which we do not possess. Moreover, we feel that the retention of our voluntary system of recruiting² is to some extent dependent on the knowledge and the fact that the men will serve overseas. I regret that your telegram did not come earlier to enable discussions to take place, but I had assumed that the matter was one of common arrangement

with our Ministers in London. I would be greatly obliged if you would keep this information secret until advised by us of the date of publication here. I assure you that no troops will leave New Zealand until we are completely satisfied that any possible danger of attack by any force is eliminated. This condition has been strongly emphasised in our communications to the United Kingdom.

¹ Hon. P. Fraser.

² The last day of voluntary enlistment for overseas service was 22 Jul 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

55 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON)

55

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Hon. P. Fraser (London)

28 November 1939

After careful consideration by the Army Board, and acting on its recommendation, the Minister of Defence proposes to make the following appointments: Colonel E. Puttick to command the 1st Infantry Brigade; ¹ Lieutenant-Colonel K. L. Stewart, General Staff Officer, 1st Grade; Major W. G. Gentry, GSO 2; Lieutenant-Colonel W. G. Stevens, AA & QMG; Major D. T. Maxwell, DAAG; Major A. W. Greville, DAQMG; Colonel R. Miles, commanding New Zealand Artillery; Major C. S. J. Duff, Brigade Major; Major G. H. Clifton, Headquarters Divisional Engineers; Lieutenant-Colonel S. H. Crump, commanding New Zealand Army Service Corps. ² Battalion and other officers for the First Echelon have already been selected. The Minister would normally make appointments as mentioned, but he, with General Duigan, would prefer that you should inform General Freyberg before the appointments are finalised this week.

¹ Although this was the first infantry brigade of the 2nd NZEF to be formed, it was subsequently named the 4th New Zealand Infantry Brigade.

² Lieutenant-General Sir Edward Puttick, KCB, DSO. Commanded 4th New Zealand Infantry Brigade 1940-41 and New Zealand troops in Egypt in 1940 during absence of General Freyberg in United Kingdom; commanded New Zealand troops (4th and 5th Brigades) in Crete, May 1941; Chief of the General Staff and General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Military Forces, 1941-45.

Major-General Keith Lindsay Stewart, CB, CBE, DSO. General Staff Officer, 1st Grade, 2nd NZ Division, 1940–41; Deputy Chief of the General Staff (in New Zealand), 1941–43; commanded 5th Brigade, Aug–Nov 1943, 4th Armoured Brigade, Nov 1943 – Mar 1944, and 5th Brigade, Mar – Aug 1944, when taken prisoner of war near [Florence](#); commanded 9th Infantry Brigade (J Force), Nov 1945 – Jul 1946; Adjutant-General, **New Zealand Military Forces**, Aug 1946 – Mar 1949, Chief of the General Staff, Apr 1949 – to date.

Brigadier William George Gentry, DSO, OBE. GSO 2, 1940; AA & QMG, 1940–41; GSO 1, 1941–2; commanded 6th Brigade, 1942–43; Deputy Chief of the General Staff (in New Zealand), 1943–44; commanded New Zealand Troops in Egypt, 6th NZ Division, and **NZ Maadi Camp**, Aug 1944 – Feb 1945; commanded 9th Brigade (in [Italy](#)), 1945; appointed New Zealand representative on Joint Chiefs of Staff Organisation in [Australia](#), Apr 1946; Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Jul 1946 – Nov 1947; Adjutant-General, Apr 1949 – to date.

Major-General William George Stevens, CB, CBE. Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster-General, 2nd NZ Division, 1940; Officer in charge of Administration, 2nd NZEF, 1940–45, including period as Commandant, **NZ Maadi Camp**, and GOC 6th NZ Division; GOC 2nd NZEF, 22 Nov 1945 – 6 Jul 1946 (after [General Freyberg](#) relinquished command).

Colonel Douglas Todd Maxwell, OBE. Deputy Assistant Adjutant-General, 1940; GSO 2, Oct 1940 – Jan 1941; GSO 2 and later AA & QMG, 2nd NZEF Base, 1941; AA & QMG, 2nd NZ Division, Oct 1941 – Jun 1942; returned to New Zealand for duty Aug 1942 and held various senior staff appointments, including Commandant, New Zealand Staff College, Aug 1943 – Mar 1944; posted to 2nd NZEF ([Japan](#)), Mar 1946, seconded to HQ BCOF; returned to New Zealand, 27 Jul 1947.

Lieutenant-Colonel Alec Wilkie Greville. Commanded advanced party 2nd NZEF, 1939; Deputy Assistant Quartermaster-General, 1940–41; CO 24th Battalion, Dec 1941 – Jul 1942; killed in action, [Alamein](#), 22 Jul 1942.

Brigadier Reginald Miles, CBE, DSO, MC. Commander Royal New Zealand Artillery, 1940–41; commanded 2nd NZEF ([UK](#)) 1940; taken prisoner of war, Dec 1941; escaped to Switzerland with

Brigadier J. Hargest from prison camp near Florence, Mar 1943; died in Spain on way to United Kingdom, Oct 1943.

Brigadier Charles Staunton John Duff, DSO. CO 34th Anti-Tank Battery, 1939–40, 7th Anti-Tank Regiment, 1940–41; commanded Artillery Training Depot, 1941; CO 4th Field Regiment, 1941–42; returned to New Zealand on duty, Jun 1942; Commander Royal Artillery, 3rd NZ Division, 1942–44; held various staff appointments in New Zealand, 1945–47; NZ Military Liaison Officer, Melbourne, 1947–48.

Brigadier George Herbert Clifton, DSO, MC. Brigade Major, 5th Brigade, 1940; Commander Royal Engineers, 2nd NZ Division, 1940–41; Chief Engineer, 30th Corps, 1941; commanded 6th Brigade, Feb – Sep 1942, when taken prisoner; escaped in Germany, Mar 1945; liaison officer with organisation for Recovery of Allied Prisoners of War and Internees (Far East), 1945; seconded to HQ BCOF (Japan), 1946–47.

Brigadier Stanley Herbert Crump, CBE, DSO. CRASC, 2nd NZ Division, 1940–45; commanded rear party organisation in Mediterranean, 1946–47; commanded 2nd NZEF (Japan), 1947; on staff of HQ BCOF and NZ representative on Disposals Board in Japan 1948–49.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

56 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

56

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

28 November 1939

The advice contained in your telegram of 22 November (No. 54) is acknowledged with thanks. I fully appreciate that the course of action taken is entirely a matter for your Government. In view, however, of principles (1) and (5) proposed in your letter of 23 September 1938,¹ and concurred in by one of my predecessors, that they ought to exchange decisions on defence policy and, for mutual advice, the fullest possible information in time of war, I regret that earlier consultation was not possible. My Government is of the view that further clarification of the situation in regard to Holland and possible repercussions on the Netherlands East Indies is necessary. Further local training of our forces affords a period for this without prejudicing our strength here or later co-operation when the forces are ready to take the field. I am announcing to the House tomorrow that our Special Division, which was raised for service at home or abroad as occasion might require or permit, will proceed overseas when it has reached a suitable stage in its training. It is anticipated that this will be early in the New Year. After further training overseas the Division should be able to take its place in a

¹ See Appendix 3.

theatre of war in the European spring. It has been suggested to Casey¹ that he consult with the United Kingdom Government and your representative on the co-ordination of our force's shipping requirements

with New Zealand arrangements.

¹ Rt. Hon. R. G. Casey, Australian delegate to the Ministerial Conference in London.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

57 – THE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON)² TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

57

The New Zealand Military Liaison Officer (London)² to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

28 November 1939

War Office state that owing to difficulties of shipping and provision of escorts no convoys are possible from Australia and New Zealand between 28 December and 1 March. This entails the date of sailing of the New Zealand first group being advanced three weeks or delayed six weeks. No other alternative is possible. It is essential that the New Zealand Government's decision of the sailing date for the first group be cabled immediately.

² Brigadier R. S. Park, CBE, New Zealand Military Liaison Officer, London, throughout the war; at the time of reference a Lieutenant-Colonel. In Feb 1942 he was appointed New Zealand representative on the Joint Planning Staff, Chiefs of Staff Committee, London.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

58 – THE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON) TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

58

The New Zealand Military Liaison Officer (London) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

29 November 1939

General Freyberg requests that appointments to commands and staff of the first group be no longer delayed as he has full confidence in your selection. However, he would like to be consulted over appointments for the second and third groups.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

59 – THE HON. W. NASH (WELLINGTON) TO THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON)

59

The Hon. W. Nash (Wellington) to the Hon. P. Fraser (London)

29 November 1939

The New Zealand Government's decision to send the First Echelon overseas appears to have embarrassed the Australian Government, and for your information in discussions with Casey the following facts may be of value:

On 21 November, the day following our formal offer to the United Kingdom,¹ Menzies cabled stating that they were considering the very difficult questions connected with sending troops out of Australia and suggesting that the despatch of Dominion troops could not be very urgent. The reasons he gave were the uncertain position in the Far East, the possible effect on the Dutch East Indies should Holland be invaded by Germany, and the unenthusiastic state of public opinion in Australia arising from the comparative inactivity on the Western Front and the small number of British divisions in France.

Menzies also commented that they were finding the greatest difficulties in obtaining even a fraction of the shipping needed for some of their exports, while there seemed to be no difficulty in securing ships and naval convoy for a military force.

For all these reasons they intended to watch the developments of the next three or four weeks before committing themselves to the despatch of their division overseas, but, not wanting to be out of step with us, they asked for our comments. We replied to Menzies on the next day informing him that we had already told the United Kingdom

Government that we had decided to send the First Echelon overseas and were then waiting for the time of publication to be arranged before informing him of our action. We regretted that we had not discussed the matter earlier but had assumed that it was one of common arrangement with our respective Ministers in London. We told him that we too had our particular problems, such as limited training facilities, lack of modern equipment, the desirability of sending the First Echelon overseas for advanced training, and the fact that the departure of the First Echelon would also make the initial training facilities available for those volunteering for the Second Echelon. We said, further, that the retention of our voluntary system of recruitment was to some extent dependent on the public knowledge of the fact that the men would serve overseas. We informed Menzies of the time of the announcement in London and New Zealand as soon as we received your telegram on 23 November.² It would appear that this action on our part was not welcome, and we are informed unofficially that Menzies considered that he should have been consulted before our decision was taken. It may be that he was embarrassed politically since Curtin³ had just stated publicly that he was opposed to the despatch of troops overseas, and our announcement may have forced the Government's hand.

Today we have received another telegram from him (No. 56) pointing out the desirability of exchanging information and decisions on defence policy and regretting that earlier consultation on the Expeditionary Force had not been possible. He stated that he was announcing today that he anticipated sending the Special Division overseas early in the New Year, and that he had suggested to Casey that he consult with the United Kingdom Government and with you regarding the co-ordination of shipping requirements for their forces with New Zealand arrangements. In view of the information contained in Park's telegram to Duigan this morning (No. 57) it may be that some transport arrangements have already been made for Australia and New Zealand. I would be glad if you would consult with the United Kingdom Government urgently and let me have your comments in time for Cabinet's meeting tomorrow morning.

1 No. 50.

2 Not published. In this telegram Mr. Fraser stated that the announcement had been issued to the press.

3 Mr. Curtin was at this time Leader of the Opposition in the Australian Federal Parliament.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

60 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

60

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

29 November 1939

I regret that I am unable to confer with the United Kingdom Government or Casey in time for your Cabinet meeting tomorrow, but the War Office who have already had under consideration the co-ordination of transport of the Australian and New Zealand forces state that the position is as follows: Owing to the desirability of Australian troops relieving British troops in Palestine by the end of January it is essential that the first Australian group should leave not later than the beginning of January. The Australian troops for early transport consist of three groups, and the New Zealand First Echelon one group. The shipping available for transport can carry two groups only and the remaining two groups must therefore be carried on the second voyage. The first two groups will probably leave on or about the end of December and the second two groups probably on or about the beginning of March. The First Echelon of New Zealand troops can proceed either with the first or second voyage, and the War Office would be grateful for the very early expression of your wishes.... ¹

¹ The text omitted requested an immediate reply to an earlier telegram and explained a delay in replying to points raised in other telegrams from the Prime Minister dated 28 and 29 Nov.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

61 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

61

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

30 November 1939

With reference to your telegram of 29 November (No. 59). While I much regret the apparent misapprehension in Australia, and although we should encourage all possible discussions and exchange of information, I have no doubt whatever about the correctness of the decision of the New Zealand Government to despatch the First Echelon overseas, nor do I feel that there can be any suggestion of want of frankness with Australia. Negotiations for the despatch of the Australian forces have been proceeding here simultaneously with those for the despatch of the New Zealand forces, and indeed, after receipt of your telegram of 11 November (No. 47), I stated on 16 November at a meeting with War Cabinet, in the presence of Casey, our intention to despatch the force. Neither then nor at any other time did Casey give me any indication that Australia was [not?] taking the same course, and, while at that meeting and subsequently Casey asked for further assurances with reference to the Far East situation and naval protection for Australian (territory?), he left no doubt as to the intention of Australia to despatch the force. I have at all times made it plain, as have you, that even the First Echelon will not be despatched without adequate naval escort nor should circumstances at the time not warrant it. You should note also that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have emphasised in the strongest possible terms the great importance they attach from the moral and psychological point of view to the association of Dominion troops with those of the Mother country.

The question of co-ordinating shipping has been dealt with in my

telegram of 29 November (No. 60). I understand that the Australian Government have not yet accepted the proposed dates.

I expect to leave London on Wednesday next with Berendsen and Waugh ¹ and to catch the *Niagara* at Sydney on 21 December.

Your telegram of 28 November (No. 55). Freyberg feels that he must accept the recommendations of military advisers in New Zealand but considers that all over 40 years of age should submit to careful medical examination by a cardiologist. He suggests also, and I concur, that all appointments be subject to confirmation after Divisional training in Egypt.... ²

¹ John Thomson Waugh, private secretary to the Prime Minister; later joined the Royal New Zealand Air Force and lost his life in an aircraft presumed to have crashed into the sea *en route* from Fiji to New Zealand on 20 Aug 1944.

² For rest of text see *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 37).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

62 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON. P. FRASER

62

The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser

2 December 1939

I acknowledge your telegrams of 29 and 30 November (Nos. 60 and 61). The Government have decided to send the First Echelon overseas on the first voyage. Your suggestion relative to Freyberg's visit ¹ coincides with Duigan's recommendation but his arrival on 24 December in Auckland is very close to the present projected date of departure of the echelon, 28 December. However, if the departure is delayed by one week, which Batterbee says may be possible, this would give Freyberg approximately ten days in the Dominion before the men left. Moreover, a delay of a week would be particularly valuable in view of normal Christmas holiday arrangements and the transport difficulties connected therewith.

We have been advised by Duigan that all matters relating to disembarkation, preparation of encampment and assembly of equipment for training, and other matters connected with the reception of troops in Egypt, would be Freyberg's responsibility, and we are presuming that he will make the necessary arrangements before his arrival in New Zealand. Assuming that this could be done, we would be glad to know whether Freyberg wishes an advance party ² to proceed from New Zealand to assist in this work. While we assume that all the necessary arrangements have been made by the United Kingdom authorities in consultation with the Australian and New Zealand representatives overseas, we should be glad to know definitely that all fitting-out and equipment of transports will have been done before they arrive in New Zealand. We would also like to have explicit advice on the nature of the naval escort proposed. Presumably the only arrangements required of us

here concern the men's clothing, blankets, and the provision of the thirty days' reserve food supplies asked for by the War Office. These matters are already in hand.

Whilst all staff positions will be subject to change if desired by Freyberg, the best procedure would be for the appointments already notified to be gazetted. Freyberg has already informed Duigan (No. 58) that he has full confidence in Duigan's selection of officers to fill these appointments.

¹ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 37).

² The advanced party of the First Echelon, under the command of Major A. W. Greville, NZSC, DAQMG, 2nd NZEF, left New Zealand on 11 Dec 1939 and disembarked at Port Said on 7 Jan 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

63 – THE HON. P. FRASER TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

63

*The Hon. P. Fraser to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

5 December 1939

Your telegram of 3 December. ¹

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have now agreed to Saturday, 6 January, as the date of departure of the First Echelon from New Zealand, and arrangements are being made accordingly. The following ships, with their present passenger-carrying capacity shown in parentheses, have now been allotted to the New Zealand contingent: *Dunera* (1400), *Rangitata* (533), *Orion* (1112), *Sobieski* (1150), *Empress of Canada* (800), *Strathnaver* (1123). This list is subject to adjustment.

The ships will be victualled by their owners and the troops will be carried as passengers. Additional accommodation required will be installed and details of distribution among the convoy will be telegraphed later. Park will inquire as to vehicles and will telegraph you as soon as possible.

It is essential that the date and all arrangements in connection with departure, including escort, should be kept in the highest degree of secrecy.

I was not at first satisfied with the escort proposed but have today seen the First Lord ² and he is now making arrangements which I regard as satisfactory. I shall convey details on my return.... ³

¹ Not published. In this telegram the Prime Minister suggested Saturday, 6 Jan 1940, as the date of departure of the First

Echelon.

² Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty.

³ The text omitted concerned the extension of Lord Galway's term of office as Governor-General, the use of secret cipher, &c.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

64 – THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT⁴ (CAIRO) TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON) – [EXTRACT]

64

*The General Officer Commanding, British Troops in Egypt⁴ (Cairo)
to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)*
[Extract]

9 December 1939

General Freyberg, in his first communication [to the Minister of Defence] as the official chief, reports that all arrangements relating

⁴ Field-Marshal Lord Wilson, GCB, GBE, DSO; in 1940 Lieutenant-General Sir Henry Maitland Wilson. GOC-in-C, British Troops in Egypt, 1939–40; Military Governor and GOC-in-C, Cyrenaica, 1941; GOC-in-C, British Troops in Greece, 1941; GOC, British Forces in Palestine and Trans-Jordan, 1941; C-in-C, Allied Forces in Syria, 1941 (GOC 9th Army); C-in-C, Persia-Iraq Command, 1942–43; C-in-C, Middle East, 1943; Supreme Allied Commander, Mediterranean Theatre, 1944; Head of British Joint Staff Mission in Washington, 1945–47.

to the disembarkation and reception of New Zealand troops in Egypt and standing camps for accommodation are in hand. The question of the early assembly of arms, equipment, and vehicles in Egypt for training is being urged on the War Office. There was little latitude in the selection of the concentration area as other divisions are already here.

After consultation with the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Troops in Egypt, two sites appear possible: on the Suez Canal or near Cairo. Certain serious defects make the Suez Canal site unsuitable.

Training areas are soft sand, unsuitable for vehicles without desert equipment; no amenities nearer than 23 miles; some risk of malaria. Cairo sites: El Maadi—6 miles from Cairo. Helwan—15 miles from Cairo with a ten-minute train service. El Maadi will take the whole of the First Echelon, and Helwan the Second and Third Echelons.

These sites have serviceable training areas, with hard desert, are healthy, and relatively free from mosquitoes and sandflies. Their proximity to Cairo affords adequate amenities. Have inspected Cairo sites.

An early decision is essential as eight weeks only remain and time is the important factor. It will be necessary to arrange water, sanitation, and buildings; large numbers of huttet cookhouses, dining halls, and institutes. Owing to the late start hutting cannot be completed before the arrival of the First Echelon.

After taking all available advice in the short time possible, have agreed, on your behalf, to General Wilson's proposal that the Cairo sites be approved. Am certain this action is in the best interests and I have made every effort to obtain full information before deciding.

Accommodation in tents—four men each—with bed-boards, palliasses, and mosquito nets when necessary. Huts for dining halls, kitchens, men's institutes, officers' and sergeants' messes, stores huts, offices, and bath houses. Owing to the late decision not all will be completed by the time of arrival, but I have given orders for priority of buildings to ensure the minimum interference with comfort.... ¹

British Troops in Egypt using NAAFI service, which, if wanted, is available for us. It is in no way obligatory for the New Zealanders to employ NAAFI but it may be advantageous owing to the limited stay here. Maadi Camp will have nine large canteens, each catering for 700.... Suggest, therefore, that no decision should be reached upon the question of employment of NAAFI

¹ The text omitted dealt with the advantages of the NAAFI

(Navy, Army, and Air Force Institutes) canteen service and enumerated equipment required from New Zealand for officers' and sergeants' messes.

before I give a detailed explanation of the situation to unit commanders on my arrival.

Cheap postal concessions on letters ex Egypt being arranged for the New Zealand Division. ¹

¹ The above text, taken from the GOC's files, differs in many places from that of the telegram received by the Chief of the General Staff.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

65 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER – [EXTRACT]

65

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister

[Extract]

13 December 1939

Further to Mr. Fraser's telegram of 5 December (No. 63), the Ministry of Shipping now advise that the ships allotted to the First Echelon are *Dunera* (capacity 1476) due *Wellington* 24 December, *Otranto* (1484) due 2 January, *Orion* (1500) due 2 January, *Rangitata* (535), *Sobieski* (1150) due 22 December, *Empress of Canada* (800) due 31 December.² The New Zealand Naval Board are being advised by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of their responsibility concerning convoy arrangements, &c. The actual allocation of personnel to vessels will be the responsibility of the military authorities....³ So far as can be seen, all vessels will be available at the port of embarkation at least three days before the programmed dates of sailing in order to allow adequate time for embarkation, &c. The *Sobieski* belongs to the Polish mercantile marine and has been chartered by the Ministry of Transport as a troop transport. To prevent any inconvenience in administration a British Master and nucleus staff are being placed on board for liaison duties with personnel. Please telegraph as early as possible your agreement in general with these proposals.

² The allocation was later changed. The six transports which conveyed the First Echelon to Egypt were *Orion*, 23,371 tons, Orient Line; *Strathaird*, 22,281 tons (which replaced *Otranto*), Peninsular and Oriental Line; *Empress of Canada*, 21,517 tons, Canadian- Pacific; *Rangitata*, 16,737 tons, New Zealand

**Shipping Company; *Sobieski*, 11,030 tons, Gdynia-America Line;
Dunera, 11,162 tons, British India Steam Navigation Company.
The *Empress of Canada* was torpedoed by a U-boat in the South
Atlantic and sunk, 13 Mar 1943.**

**³ Details of messing scales and charges for troop transports, and
of cargo and equipment to be carried, have been omitted.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

66 – REPORT BY THE HON. P. FRASER ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1939 – [EXTRACT]

66

REPORT BY THE HON. P. FRASER ON HIS VISIT TO ENGLAND IN 1939

[Extract]

Arrangements were being finalised for the despatch of New Zealand forces towards the end of January but in the first place the question arose as to where they should go.

Expert opinion was completely unanimous on this subject. While there was a general appreciation of the advantages that would be gained by bringing New Zealand and Australian troops to the United Kingdom, particularly from the psychological point of view of the association of the men with their kinsfolk in Great Britain, nevertheless there were two main reasons which out-weighed these advantages: the first was the undesirability of bringing the troops from a New Zealand summer to a winter in the United Kingdom into probably unprepared quarters, and the second and deciding factor was the desirability of keeping a strategical reserve in the Middle East, where, in addition, the climate was stated to be reasonably healthy, and where training facilities and training areas could readily be made available. The deciding factor was, of course, that of the strategical reserve, and I had no difficulty in coming to the conclusion that we should accept the request of the British Government that our troops should proceed to Egypt and the Australians to Palestine. This having been arranged, the next step was a somewhat surprising one relating to the date of departure. This was, of course, complicated by the necessity, firstly, of having the necessary shipping available to transport large bodies of men and, secondly, and this was the important factor in this connection, the escort. Shipping difficulties prevented the whole of the Australian forces and the New

Zealand First Echelon being moved at the same time, and the provision of the necessary escort rendered it essential, in the opinion of the Admiralty, that the combined Australian and New Zealand forces should move in two bodies, the first towards the end of December or the beginning of January, and the second towards the beginning of March. The awkwardness of the situation that thus developed was realised in London, but the British authorities felt that they had no alternative in the matter, and the best they could do for New Zealand was to give us the option of joining either the first or the second voyage. I should like to say here that the prompt decision of the New Zealand Government in admittedly difficult circumstances was greatly appreciated in London by the British authorities, and indeed, by myself, and the arrangements that have now been made are, I think, on the whole satisfactory. In particular, the ships to be provided as transports and the accommodation for the troops seemed to be very good.

On the question of escort,¹ I had in the first place some small difficulties. The original suggestion, so far as the New Zealand First Echelon was concerned, was that the convoy should be escorted to Australia by HMS *Leander* only, and, from Sydney onwards, that the escort should be strengthened by HMS *Ramillies* and by Australian cruisers. I at once made representations to the Admiralty that I could not regard the *Leander* as sufficient escort across the Tasman, and although the naval officers who saw me on the matter informed me that the Admiralty were convinced that there was no risk involved, I remained firm....²

I think we may be satisfied that the escort now provided is adequate against any scale of attack that is at all likely to be made, but the First Lord gave me the assurance that if there were at the time any fear of submarines being in the vicinity of the route to be taken (which he thought in the highest degree unlikely) he would at once arrange for the despatch of the necessary destroyers to deal with such a menace.

I should perhaps add here, as I have mentioned previously, that the

First Lord (Mr. Winston Churchill) was immensely appreciative of the steps that were taken by the New Zealand Government, not only to play an early part in general operations but also to meet the admittedly difficult situation that had developed in regard to the time of departure. Indeed, he spoke in terms of emotion and expressed an obviously genuine gratitude for and admiration of the attitude of co-operation which the New Zealand Government had so generously adopted.... ³

¹ Naval escort for the First Echelon convoy, later joined by Australian troopships, was: Wellington– Sydney, *Canberra*, *Ramillies*, *Leander*; Sydney- Fremantle, *Canberra*, *Australia*, *Ramillies*; Fremantle–Colombo, *Ramillies*, *Kent*, and French cruiser *Suffren*; Colombo – Aden – Port Tewfik, *Ramillies*, *Sussex*, *Hobart*, *Westcott*, and *Eagle*. (HMS *Ramillies*, battleship, 29,150 tons, eight 15-inch guns; HMAS *Canberra*, 8-inch cruiser, 9850 tons; HMS *Leander*, 6-inch cruiser, 7270 tons; HMAS *Australia*, 8-inch cruiser, 9870 tons; HMS *Kent*, 8-inch cruiser, 10,000 tons; *Suffren* (French), 8-inch cruiser, 10,000 tons; HMS *Sussex*, 8-inch cruiser, 9830 tons; HMS *Eagle*, aircraft-carrier, 22,600 tons (sunk by torpedo in Mediterranean, Aug 1942); HMAS *Hobart*, 6-inch cruiser, 7105 tons; HMS *Westcott*, destroyer, 4-inch guns, 1100 tons.)

² The original of the report is missing. This draft was supplied by courtesy of Mr. Fraser.

³ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 38) for rest of text.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

67 – GENERAL FREYBERG (WELLINGTON) TO HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGVPT

67

General Freyberg (Wellington) to Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt

3 January 1940

I have inspected the First Echelon. Its training has suffered from lack of equipment, ammunition, vehicles, and weapons. The force will require a further period of individual training and cannot be ready for war for three months.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

68 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

68

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

13 January 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are in some doubt whether the naval escort proposed for the First Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force from Aden to its destination ¹ is adequate, and they would be grateful for an assurance from the Admiralty to that effect.

¹ Port Tewfik.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

69 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

69

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

24 January 1940

Your telegram of 13 January (No. 68). The Admiralty state that the escort arrangements communicated to the New Zealand Naval Board in their telegram of 28 December,² and concurred in by the Board in their message of 30 December,³ are still considered adequate. Should the situation change, the necessary measures will be taken by the Admiralty to provide whatever additional protection the circumstances may require.

In addition to the agreed escort of one cruiser for each group after passing Aden, the Admiralty state further that arrangements have been made to double the Perim patrol while the convoy is in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea.

² Not published. Admiralty instructions for the conduct of the convoy, covering its composition, escort, command, route, itinerary, and fuelling arrangements, were given in this telegram.

³ Not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

70 – GENERAL FREYBERG, GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, 2ND NZEF, TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND – [EXTRACT]

70

*General Freyberg, General Officer Commanding, 2nd NZEF, to the
Prime Minister of New Zealand*

[Extract]

15 February 1940

I have to report that I have come from Suez where I have been round the last two ships of the convoy which brought the New Zealand troops to Suez. You will have seen the official report which Reuters cabled.¹ It is my wish that you should have now a more detailed statement dealing entirely with the New Zealand point of view.

The work of guarding the convoy was carried out by the Royal Navy, assisted by a powerful escort comprising ships of the Royal Navy, the Royal Australian Navy, the New Zealand Division of the Royal Navy, and the French Navy. No member of the force will ever forget the wonderful and imposing sight of that fleet of great liners and warships as day by day it forged unmolested towards its goal. The imposing spectacle was photographed from the air by the official cameraman, who circled round the leading ships as they steamed up the Red Sea.

The whole trip will be remembered by all ranks. It is the first time that troops leaving New Zealand have travelled in great liners of British and foreign mercantile marines. It was very different from travelling in the holds of cargo ships, as their predecessors travelled. On this journey the men had the spacious decks of these liners for deck games, and the swimming baths. In many ways it resembled a cruise though, of course, every available opportunity was taken to continue the military training and physical drill of all ranks. I am glad to report that as a result of the

healthy life led by the force, with the exception of a few minor accidents and one death, the men arrived looking bronzed and the picture of health.... ²

Shore leave was granted to the men at both ports of call and this privilege was enjoyed by all to the full. In the case of going on shore in the Australian port [Fremantle], the Australians proved most hospitable. I am to report that the behaviour of the men was good, and their popularity with the townspeople was exceptional and their welcome most whole-hearted. I am certain that if, on future occasions, men go ashore at this port, they will have a similar welcome. The visit on shore at the other port [Colombo] was looked forward to by all because it was their first introduction to the mysteries of the East. The visit was fully enjoyed. They bought many souvenirs which have been posted off to relatives and friends in New Zealand, who will no doubt later receive queer-looking parcels and surprises.

The men are now in the process of being disembarked at Suez by the Embarkation Staff and, as I write here in my office at Divisional Headquarters in our camp, I can hear the strains of the band of a famous British regiment and the pipes and drums of a famous Scottish regiment playing one of our units into camp, where an excellent meal has been provided for them, and where they will draw their bedding and equipment and make themselves comfortable for the night.

I am just off now to see the men marching in and when I return shall send a further telegram reporting what I have seen in the units' camps.

The disembarkation will take from three to four days to complete; so far only two units and some details have arrived. The situation in camp is one of orderly confusion, which will take some days to clear up. All hands are wiring in to do this.

¹ Not published.

² The text omitted referred to the death and burial at sea of a member of the force.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

71 – REPORT BY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, 2ND NZEF, TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE – [EXTRACT]

71

*REPORT BY THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, 2ND NZEF, TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE
[Extract]*

19 February 1940

.... ¹ The journey of the First Echelon ended at **Suez** on 12 February.... It was a most impressive moment for us all. Soon after daybreak on the 12th, the leading transports steamed into the harbour and were met by me and such members of our staff as had already arrived in Egypt. A little later a launch bearing the Ambassador's flag brought out Sir Miles Lampson, the British Ambassador to Egypt, Mr. Anthony Eden, and the immediate military chiefs. After introductions all round to the senior officers on the ship and the nurses, the distinguished visitors went to the after-deck. Speaking from the hatch cover, under the red ensign of the Mercantile Marine, with the men filling every vantage point, including the rigging, the Ambassador announced that he had a message to read from His Majesty the King, signed by the King's own hand. This was loudly cheered. The King's message was as follows:

I know well that the splendid tradition established by the armed forces of New Zealand will be worthily upheld by you, who have left your homes to fight for the cause that the whole Empire has made its own.

Now that you have entered the field of active service, I send you a very warm welcome, together with my best wishes for your welfare.

¹ This extract is from a long report by General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence. The report gave an account of the voyage from New Zealand to Egypt and reviewed the behaviour of the troops during leave at ports of call; the arrival and official welcome at Suez, accommodation and welfare facilities at Maadi, leave arrangements, health precautions, and training programme were other subjects covered.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

72 – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE RT. HON. P. FRASER ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ESCORT OF THE FIRST ECHELON

72

*SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE RT. HON. P. FRASER ON ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE ESCORT OF
THE FIRST ECHELON*

5 October 1948

During my visit to London in 1939 the question of the naval escort for the ships conveying our First Echelon to the Middle East was discussed with the Admiralty. The matter had also been the subject of cable discussion with the Naval Board in Australia.

A Captain came from the Lords of the Admiralty to see me at the Savoy Hotel, London. He expressed the Admiralty's regrets that a more senior officer was not available to convey the message. I replied that I did not attach any importance to the rank of the officer conveying the message but was very much concerned about the nature of the message itself. He stated that a cruiser could not be sent from Australia and that the *Leander* would be the only naval vessel to escort the First Echelon across the Tasman Sea to Australia, where they would join with the ships carrying the first Australian forces also bound for the Middle East. In Australia a stronger naval escort consisting of several cruisers would be waiting.

In reply I requested the officer to convey my compliments to the Admiralty and to inform the Sea Lords and all concerned that the ships conveying our First Echelon would not sail from New Zealand unless more adequate naval protection was provided.

Some days later, in acceptance of an invitation from Mr. Churchill, who was then First Lord, I waited on him at the Admiralty. I met Mr.

Churchill for the first time on this occasion having been unable for various reasons to accept previous invitations from him to dinner and luncheon. On my being shown into the room by Captain Tennant (later Admiral Tennant)¹ Mr Churchill, after shaking hands, immediately informed me that His Majesty's Ship *Canberra* would go to New Zealand to escort our First Echelon, as well as the *Leander*. I thanked him very cordially for this decision and then stated that I thought he and the Admiralty could do better still.

I explained that a battleship had never visited New Zealand and that it was a splendid and, indeed, a unique opportunity to strengthen New Zealand's war effort, intensifying the already high morale of the New Zealand people, by sending a battleship to accompany our troops. Mr. Churchill immediately agreed that it was a splendid suggestion and made a note upon an envelope which was lying conveniently near and said it would be done.

As a result, some weeks later the *Ramillies*, under the command of Captain Baillie-Grohman (now Admiral Baillie-Grohman)² entered Wellington Harbour with a banner flying on which were the words 'Well done *Achilles*' in honour of the part played by the *Achilles*, under the command of Captain Parry (now Admiral Parry),³ in the Battle of the River Plate.

¹ Admiral Sir William George Tennant, KCB, CBE, MVO. Senior Naval Officer, *Dunkirk*, during the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, May–Jun 1940; appointed Commanding Officer HMS *Repulse* 18 Jun 1940 and served on her till she was sunk in company with HMS *Prince of Wales* off Malay Peninsula, 10 Dec 1941; as Rear-Admiral, 4th Cruiser Squadron, was in charge of naval operations covering occupation of Madagascar, Sep 1942; appointed Flag Officer, Levant and Eastern Mediterranean, 5 Nov 1944; Commander-in-Chief America and West Indies Station, 1946-49.

² Vice-Admiral H. T. Baillie-Grohman, CB, DSO, OBE. Commanding Officer HMS *Ramillies* from 5 Jan 1939 to Jan

1941; during evacuation from **Greece**, Apr 1941, served as Flag Officer attached **Middle East** at Army Headquarters; appointed to HMS **Nile** (**Alexandria**) for special service on staff of Commander-in-Chief, **Mediterranean**; appointed to HMS **Badger** (parent ship, Harwich) in command of Base, 1 Mar 1944; Flag Officer in Command, **Kiel**, 8 May 1945.

³ Vice-Admiral W. E. Parry, CB. Commanding Officer HMS **Achilles** 27 Jan 1939 to 15 Oct 1940; Chief of the New Zealand Naval Staff, First Naval Member of the New Zealand Naval Board and Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron 1 May – 15 Oct 1940; relinquished command of the **Achilles** and post as Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron on 15 Oct 1940, but retained Commodore's rank as Chief of Naval Staff and First Naval Member till 30 Jun 1942, when he returned to England; appointed Commanding Officer HMS **Renown** 2 Jan 1943; commanded Naval Force 'L' (Follow-up) of Eastern Task Force covering British landing operations on **Normandy** beaches on 6 Jun 1944; Director of Naval Intelligence, Admiralty, Jul 1946 – May 1948; promoted Vice-Admiral, 4 Jan 1948; appointed Commander-in-Chief and Chief of Naval Staff, **Royal Indian Navy**, Jul 1948.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

FIRST ECHELON IN EGYPT: COMMAND AND EMPLOYMENT

First Echelon in Egypt: Command and Employment

73

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

28 February 1940

Advice has been received from the War Office that the Military Secretary of the British Expeditionary Force has raised the question whether, in the event of the Dominion forces joining the British Expeditionary Force, staff officers of such formations are to be regarded as other staff officers within the British Expeditionary Force and whether they can be made available for transfer, upgrading, &c., into British formations. Similarly, can British staff officers be appointed to Dominion formations? Secondly, in regard to brigade and unit commanders and seconds-in-command, is it intended to keep the Dominion forces intact or should the British Expeditionary Force draw on them, and *vice versa*, as the demands of efficiency suggest? Thirdly, he states that very many advantages would result in pooling our resources both in the case of staff and commanders, and also that the interchanges and infusion of new blood would mutually benefit both British and Dominion formations. The War Office would appreciate your views on the above proposals. I am advising Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, by air mail.

74

The Chief of the General Staff (Wellington) to General Freyberg (Cairo) [Extract]

2 March 1940

....¹ The High Commissioner for New Zealand in the United Kingdom has communicated with you by air mail regarding the interchange of staff officers of the British Expeditionary Force and those of the Dominion forces; similarly in regard to brigade and unit commanders. The Government do not like this idea. On receipt of Jordan's air mail

letter I would be glad to have your views by cable. The progress of the Second Echelon is very satisfactory.

¹ Text omitted concerned the appointment of commanding officers for 5th and 6th Field Regiments, New Zealand Artillery.

75

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 March 1940

The following telegram has been received from His Majesty's Ambassador at Cairo: ¹

On General Freyberg's invitation I attended a parade this morning of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and was privileged to take the salute. The men looked in fine fettle and are evidently settling down well in their new surroundings. As I told them, their general bearing and appearance was most impressive.

¹ Rt. Hon. Lord Killearn, PC, GCMG, CB, MVO; at time of reference, Sir Miles Wedderburn Lampson.

76

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

20 March 1940

Your telegram of 28 February (No. 73). It is the wish of the New Zealand Government that New Zealand staff officers should be retained for service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The same applies to brigade and unit commanders and seconds-in-command.

77

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

25 May 1940

In the terms of the emergency powers given me by the New Zealand Cabinet as General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Expeditionary Force,² I was empowered to commit the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to active operations in the event of an emergency. My move to the United Kingdom¹ and Italy's possible action in the near future may necessitate fresh powers being given to a competent military commander on the spot. For the information of Cabinet, the training of the troops has progressed well, but it has been greatly handicapped by lack of equipment and latterly by very hot weather. Collective training upon a full scale has been handicapped by the absence of necessary instruments and signal equipment and by the shortage of many classes of weapons, in most cases only 25 per cent being available. Even if complete equipment is made available from the Middle East war reserve a further period of training is necessary before the force could be used for active operations. At present the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are responsible for the security of Cairo, where more than 30,000 Italians live and where fifth column activities may be attempted. Later, when Cairo is pacified, units may be required to garrison defences or have some other role connected with the internal security of Egypt. Had I been here and time did not permit the whole question being referred to the New Zealand Cabinet, I should have agreed to commit the force to the defence of Egypt. As speed is the essence of combating fifth column activities I recommend that in my absence authority be given to General Wilson, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief [British Troops in] Egypt, to use the 2nd NZEF in defence of our vital interests here.

² See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 39).

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 152).

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

26 May 1940

In view of the way the situation appears to be developing and the threat of impending hostilities with Italy, the New Zealand Government are strongly of the opinion that you should remain in Egypt and that you should not proceed to the United Kingdom at this juncture. Please act accordingly unless you can show us strong reasons to the contrary, which will receive every consideration. We feel that Falla ² and Park, in co-operation with the High Commissioner, can adequately look after accommodation, &c., for the Second Echelon in the United Kingdom.

On the assumption that you remain in Egypt and retain immediate and personal command, we authorise you to use New Zealand troops as you suggest for operations against any possible fifth column, and subsequently on any necessary garrison or other duty in defence of Egypt for which your force is adequately trained, fitted, and equipped. This authority is subject to the express condition that you should not, except in an emergency of which you must be the judge, commit your troops to any operations for which, in your opinion, they are not yet adequately trained, fitted, and equipped.

Having regard to your telegram of 25 May (No. 77) and to previous reports on the subject, please telegraph at once a report as to: (a) the extent to which you are without necessary equipment or ammunition for the operations contemplated, and (b) the reserve supplies of ammunition and equipment in Egypt upon which you can draw if necessary. In particular we would like to know whether you have at your disposal, or can at once obtain, sufficient small-arms ammunition.

² Brigadier N. S. Falla, CMG, DSO, Commandant 2nd NZEF Base, Maadi Camp, Egypt, Nov 1940 - Jun 1941; released from 2nd NZEF and attached to British Ministry of Transport, London, as New Zealand representative; died at sea, 1945. In Feb 1940 Lieutenant-Colonel Falla was appointed Base Commandant, NZ Overseas Base, and at this time was in the United Kingdom.

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

26 May 1940

I am in general agreement with the contents of your most secret telegram of 26 May (No. 78) and will communicate them to the Commander-in-Chief, who is in accord with your views. For the information of Cabinet, there are ample war reserves of ammunition and equipment here and the men are well trained and fit for the limited operations contemplated by the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. In the event of war with Italy the situation in Egypt is giving no anxiety. The Italian forces are unlikely to take the offensive due to Libya's geographical position between Tunis and Egypt; they have no sea communications with Italy, and the lack of drinking water and roads across the desert between Libya and the Nile valley would prevent operations by an army of any size. Although mobilisation equipment for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has not yet arrived, the garrison of Egypt is adequately equipped and large reserves of troops are available for Palestine and Syria. I am not anxious about arrangements for the reception, accommodation, and comfort of the Second Echelon in the United Kingdom. MacCormick ¹ and Greville know every detail, and I am sending

¹ Brigadier K. MacCormick, CB, CBE, DSO, ED; at this time Assistant Director of Medical Services, New Zealand Division; on 1 Oct 1940 became Deputy Director of Medical Services, 2nd NZEF (later Director of Medical Services), with rank of Brigadier.

King ¹ and Crump for Ordnance and RASC problems, making a strong team under Falla. The troops are in great heart and are longing to get to the active work for which they are being trained. One month with full-scale equipment would fit these men for France. From all accounts the Second Echelon have benefited from the new training syllabus and I

feel that with two months' collective training they would be fit for war. What I wish my Minister to realise is that none of the senior officers of the Second Echelon are fit to start unit or collective training without first being trained themselves. Every day I am kept from taking their preparation in hand will delay the ultimate preparedness of the troops. While for the present I agree that I should stay here, the situation *vis-à-vis* the Allies and Italy may ease or be precipitated in the next few days, and the question whether my presence is most useful here or in the United Kingdom could then be reconsidered. As you will no doubt appreciate, splitting a force always raises problems of this kind.

¹ Brigadier T. J. King, CBE, New Zealand Ordnance Corps; at this time a Lieutenant-Colonel.

80

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

13 June 1940

Further to my telegram of 26 May (No. 79), the situation here is really unchanged by Italy's declaration of war. The round-up of Fascist leaders by the police went off smoothly and the danger of the fifth column is now greatly reduced. In the existing circumstances the garrison of Egypt appears to be more than adequate. The possibility of active operations for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is remote. Due to shortage of equipment no further headway with the training of the First Echelon can be made. I submit that I should now proceed to the United Kingdom with the training staff to train the Second Echelon. Will you cable if you approve my going? Air passages to the United Kingdom are now more difficult. It would help me administratively to have a forecast from Cabinet as to their ultimate plans.

81

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

14 June 1940

My message of 13 June (No. 80) crossed the Prime Minister's message of the same date [14 June].¹ An urgent reply to my question is required as planes to the United Kingdom are scarce and one leaves with a seat for self and Colonel Stewart on Sunday, via Sahara.

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 175). The difference in time between New Zealand and the Middle East is responsible for the above error in the date of the message being acknowledged.

82

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg
[Extract]

15 June 1940

Your telegrams of 13 and 14 June (Nos. 80 and 81). The Government approve of your proceeding to London at your discretion....
²

² For complete text see *Second Echelon* (No. 180).

83

General Freyberg to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

16 June 1940

The following is for the Minister of Defence and General Duigan: As arranged with the Minister, I leave here on the 17th arriving in England approximately on the 21st. After the 17th all personal or very secret telegrams for me should be addressed to the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London; all telegrams involving new matters should go to London with a copy to Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, Cairo; all other telegrams should go to Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, Cairo. Headquarters' office staff will still be in Cairo with Stevens and Gentry for (a) administration, and (b) training of Divisional units, for both of which

purposes they deal direct with me. Puttick is responsible for training the 4th Infantry Brigade and for local administration and discipline. In the event of active operations during my absence in the United Kingdom, the New Zealand troops in Egypt would come under his command. I recommend that during my absence you should grant Brigadier Puttick the same special power granted to Brigadier Miles.¹

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 177).

84

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

17 June 1940

The following message is for the personal information of General Freyberg:

Your telegram of 16 June (No. 83). The Government agree to all your proposals and are willing that the same powers as were granted to Brigadier Miles be granted to Brigadier Puttick.

85

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister

13 August 1940

This morning I took up the matter of equipment with the Secretary of State for War,² who admitted that the First Echelon requires certain additions to bring it up to war establishment and stated that these are being supplied as quickly as possible. The force from here³ will be fully equipped with modern arms. Equipment on a training scale will await the arrival of the **Third Echelon** and every effort has been promised for earliest completion to war establishment.

I expressed your concern at the slow progress in equipping our force and at the vagueness as to the date of delivery to the First and Third Echelons.⁴ The Secretary of State for War promised to give the matter his personal attention. He will give me full details on 16 August, after which I will cable you.

² Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden.

³ The Second Echelon.

⁴ See *Third Echelon* (No. 230).

86

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

16 August 1940

With reference to my telegram of 13 August (No. 85), I saw the Secretary of State for War, who explained the equipment situation as follows:

The First Echelon in Egypt is at present better equipped than similar formations there, and with additional equipment, including the latest 25-millimetre [-pounder?] guns now *en route*, will have full war equipment except tanks for the **Divisional Cavalry Regiment**. The Second Echelon in this country is now receiving full war equipment. This is to be completed by 30 September in readiness for possible movement. The Third Echelon will have a training scale of equipment on arrival at its destination. Its full war equipment is now being shipped. By October or November when this echelon will have completed its training, the 2nd New Zealand Division will be fully equipped, except possibly for tanks, the shortage of which is due to losses in France. However, every effort is being made to overcome this shortage.

87

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

22 August 1940

On the arrival of the Australian division ¹ at Helwan by the end of August our troops are to take over defence of Lines of Communication. The infantry relieve an Indian brigade. ² The 26th Battery, which is not yet equipped, is to take over in position one troop of 4.5-inch howitzers at Amiriya and one troop of six 18-pounders at Maaten Baggush. Two companies of the Machine Gun Battalion defend the Amiriya area against airborne attack. The Divisional Cavalry, 25th Battery, and the Machine Gun Battalion, less two companies, are in reserve and work on defences in the vicinity of Maaten Baggush. The 6th Field Company remain at Alexandria. The Anti-Tank Battery is training 180 Regular British and Indian and Australian infantry officers and other ranks on one month's course and will remain at Maadi till 15 September.

¹ 6th Australian Division.

² A brigade of 4th Indian Division.

88

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs ¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 September 1940

The despatch of reinforcements in personnel and equipment to the various theatres outside the United Kingdom has been given active consideration here. During the first eight months of the war, the greater part of the Army's effort was devoted to building up the British Expeditionary Force in France, and since the evacuation from Dunkirk it has been necessary to allot most of the current armaments production to home defence. In consequence, the forces overseas have received very

little reinforcing of men or of material since the outbreak of the war. The present position is that the French collapse has greatly increased the scale of the attack in the Middle East, and our interests in the Far East are also threatened by Japanese hostility. If the British Empire is to retain its position in these areas, substantial reinforcements of men and equipment must be despatched. The bulk of the equipment must be obtained from the United Kingdom.

We have still much to do before all requirements for the defence of the United Kingdom have been met, but the equipment of our forces here and the strength and organisation of our defences have already made considerable progress. Furthermore, as winter approaches, the practicability of an invasion will decrease because of weather conditions. It has therefore been decided to allocate from now onwards a considerably larger proportion of United Kingdom resources in men, and approximately 50 per cent of future production of equipment, to reinforcements for other theatres and to the provision of equipment for their garrisons and reserves. The corresponding slowing up in the completion of the defence arrangements of the United Kingdom will be accepted.

The Middle East is the theatre in which reinforcements are most urgently required, since there are indications that a large-scale offensive by the Italians will be launched when the weather is favourable for campaigning in this area (September to April). The urgent requirement is for additional armoured fighting vehicles and artillery (including anti-aircraft artillery). One army tank battalion, one cruiser tank regiment, and one light tank regiment have already been despatched by fast convoy, and a further convoy carrying artillery reinforcements will sail shortly. One division is being sent from India. The despatch of the balance of the 6th Australian

¹ Rt. Hon. Viscount Caldecote.

East will be arranged as soon as practicable.

Urgent steps are also being taken to provide the equipment required (including the equipment for the reinforcement of the Special Service units) in all items essential to enable them to fight, and to provide the necessary reserves of weapons and equipment. Although equipment will not be issued exclusively to each theatre in turn, military priority will be given to the Middle East. To meet the most urgent requirements in this theatre, 48 anti-tank guns, 20 Bofors anti-aircraft guns, 48 25-pounder guns, 500 Bren guns, 250 antitank rifles, with ammunition for all the above, 1,000,000 rounds of tracer small-arms ammunition, and 50,000 anti-tank mines have been recently despatched and a further large consignment will leave shortly. In addition, a separate allotment of weapons and equipment is being sent shortly to East Africa.

It has been proposed that the forces in Malaya should shortly be reinforced by one Australian division, and the defence of Fiji increased by a brigade group from New Zealand.¹ Consideration is also being given to the provision from other sources of anti-aircraft artillery reinforcements. It is intended that the forces in the Far East should be equipped in all items essential to enable them to fight and to provide 180 days' reserve of all essential weapons and equipment as soon as possible.

Additional African infantry brigade groups are being raised in East Africa and West Africa for employment in these theatres. The detailed composition of the garrisons which will eventually be required is under consideration. Certain additional anti-aircraft batteries are required to reinforce the (Aden?) land garrison, and will be provided, together with thirty days' reserves, as soon as possible. In India the British garrison has been depleted by eight battalions since the outbreak of war. Replacements for these battalions will have to be sent from the United Kingdom as soon as they can be spared.

As far as the Air Force is concerned, the immediate essential requirement is not to despatch squadrons from the United Kingdom but

to re-equip the existing squadrons overseas with first-class aircraft. This re-equipment will later be supplemented by the reinforcement of first-line strength squadrons. In the Middle East the first objective is to provide bomber aircraft capable of attacking Benghazi, the only effective base for operations against Egypt, and modern fighters to defend the Fleet base at Alexandria. Eighty-four Blenheim aircraft, which will re-equip five existing squadrons in the Middle East by the end of September, are being despatched.

¹ 8th New Zealand Brigade Group.

Wellington aircraft to equip one squadron and Hurricane aircraft to re-equip three squadrons will be sent out during the same period. In addition, commencing at the end of September, thirty-six long-range Blenheims and eighteen Hurricanes per month will be provided to replace wastage overseas generally. It is hoped also to provide two fighter squadrons and two general reconnaissance squadrons for Malaya by the end of 1940, but this must depend on the development of the situation in the United Kingdom and in the Middle East.

The above proposals also involve heavy shipping and naval escort problems, and these are receiving urgent consideration.

89

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington)

7 September 1940

With reference to the telegrams of 3 and 12 August from the Governor-General of New Zealand. ¹ His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will now have been informed of the general policy regarding reinforcements in personnel and equipment to the Middle East as indicated in my telegram (No. 88). The following are the comments of the United Kingdom authorities regarding the outstanding points raised

in the telegrams under reference, namely: (1) the prospects of a large-scale attack in the Middle East, possibly from more than one direction and possibly with German assistance; and (2) the position, in detail, of the scale of equipment for the New Zealand forces in the Middle East.

During the autumn, an Italian attack on Egypt from Libya is likely, and we are taking all possible steps to deal with such a contingency. Certain information as to these steps was contained in my telegram (No. 88), and further information will shortly be sent. Although there is a possibility that German forces might co-operate from Libya or initiate an attack from Syria, it is unlikely that either of these threats could materialise without considerable preparation by the Germans, and of this no definite indication has yet been received. In particular, an advance from Syria would take a considerable time to prepare and long warning of such preparation should be available.

¹ See *Third Echelon* (Nos. 224 and 230).

As the New Zealand Government have no doubt been informed by the Officer Commanding the New Zealand troops in the Middle East, arrangements have been made by the Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East for a brigade group to be moved from Cairo to an operational theatre in the Western Desert in the near future.¹ As for the equipment of this brigade group, it is not possible to say exactly what are the deficiencies, since it has been found necessary to pool all equipment and vehicles in the Middle East, but this brigade group and one of the Australian brigade groups, which is also moving into an operational theatre, are being equipped to the highest scale possible from existing sources in the Middle East. After this has been done the combined deficiencies of the two brigade groups in the principal items of equipment will, as far as can be ascertained at present, be as follows:

37 2-inch mortars

144 anti-tank rifles

65 light machine guns

32 machine guns

44 light tanks

18 Bren carriers

48 25-pounder guns

While, therefore, the equipment of this New Zealand brigade group is not complete, it is on as generous a scale as is possible at the moment, and it is thought that it should be adequate for the role which it is intended these troops should undertake.

As regards the remaining New Zealand forces now in the Middle East, the available training equipment will include the following among the principal items:

1730 rifles

9 2-pounder anti-tank guns

8 18-pounder guns

4 4.7-inch howitzers

As regards the third New Zealand echelon, which has sailed in US 4, the New Zealand Government were informed in my telegram to the Governor-General of 30 July,² of the major items of equipment which are being made available to this contingent. This equipment has already been shipped and should arrive in the Middle East about the middle of September. It is on an equivalent scale to that provided for many Regular units in the United Kingdom.

As indicated in my telegram to the Governor-General of 26 July,³ it is the intention in the autumn to move the second New

¹ No. 87.

² See *Third Echelon* (No. 223).

³ See *Third Echelon* (No. 220).

Zealand echelon, now in the United Kingdom, to the Middle East. The New Zealand Government will be fully informed as soon as definite proposals for the movement of this contingent can be communicated to them, but they may wish to know at once that it is hoped that this contingent will be fully equipped here before it sails.

Further, as indicated in the third paragraph of my telegram of 1 September (No. 88), the Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East will be allocated a very large proportion of the new equipment from the United Kingdom to make up the deficiencies among the forces under his command.

90

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg (London)

10 September 1940

The New Zealand Government is disturbed by information received as to the present deficiencies of the New Zealand brigade group now moving into an operational theatre in the Western Desert—see the telegram from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Wellington, dated 7 September (No. 89). It would appear that the brigade group probably has 18 2-inch mortars instead of 36, 23 anti-tank rifles instead of 95, 182 light machine guns instead of 215, 19 machine guns instead of 36, 6 light tanks instead of 28, 21 Bren carriers instead of 30, no 25-pounders instead of 24.

I should be glad, (1) if you could ascertain, or else instruct Puttick to

inform me, what actual supplies of equipment have been issued to the New Zealand brigade; (2) whether it is sufficient for the task allotted; and (3) if possible, how soon are the deficiencies likely to be made good. Your personal opinion on the equipment position would be appreciated.

91

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

12 September 1940

Your telegram of 10 September (No. 90). I can appreciate how anxious you must be about the lack of equipment in Egypt. The delay in answering your telegram is due to being near Dover in bivouac waiting hopefully for a German landing. I have not yet seen the Secretary of State's telegram of 7 September (No. 89); when I do I will communicate with Puttick and will then send you the answers to your three questions, but it will take some days. Meanwhile I am in constant touch with Cairo. For your information, I forward a cable received from Puttick, dated 31 August:

The move of the New Zealand forces to the Western Desert commenced on the 28th and will be completed by the 6th, less the Anti-Tank Battery and the signal class. ¹ Inglis ² with Headquarters 4th Brigade commands Lines of Communication, which include Cavalry, Artillery, and Machine Gun Battalion, which are employed on the defences. Divisional Headquarters, in reserve near Daba in readiness to assume command of groups concentrating for active operations, will carry out reconnaissance and TEWTs ³ and reinforce Lines of Communication headquarters or Maadi as necessary. Stevens with small staff and Base details remains at Maadi to prepare for the Third Contingent. Army Service Corps surplus to field force requirements remains at Maadi but is organised ready to reinforce on Lines of Communication if required. Reserve Mechanical Transport Company, ASC, and 6th Field Company remain detached as at present.

When I received the above cable, and knowing the position when I

left, I considered the equipment of the First Echelon sufficient for the role assigned to it. Your cabled figures do not appear correct but Puttick's reply will give me the correct figure. Even so, it should be remembered that normal brigade groups have no cavalry regiment and only a machine-gun company of twelve instead of nineteen Vickers guns. It is true that the force is weak in anti-tank rifles and lacks new 25-pounders, but it has 18-pounders—a good gun—and besides other arms has a large number of Brens. I consider that the First Echelon when kept together as a formation is a formidable fighting force quite adequate for the task allotted it.

As you know, the equipment situation for the past year has been very bad and has been accentuated by French losses. Production here is much improved, but the quantity required to make the defences of the United Kingdom secure has been enormous. Excellent progress has been made but at the expense of the Middle East. The danger of attempted invasion is nearly over. By the end of October, unless the German bombing of factories interferes seriously with production, we shall be past the danger point. After the end of September all interest will centre in the Middle East. The equipment [position] there is not good but, thanks to most firm representations to the highest authority here, a new policy has been agreed to and in the immediate future the Middle East is to get 50 per cent of the production of our factories. Enormous shipments were made last month; some have now arrived and will continue to arrive for some months. These include aeroplanes, tanks, guns, ammunition, &c. With regard to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force's equipment, the Second Echelon will be complete in every detail before embarkation except for twelve antitank 2-pounders and minor details of Royal Engineers field company equipment. The balance of the equipment for the First Echelon, including its full complement of 25-pounders and all vehicles, is now on the water. Training equipment for the Third Echelon upon a basis of 50 per cent issues has been shipped and should be available upon their arrival. I believe that from now on the Middle East equipment position will continue to improve, and by the end of November the New Zealand Expeditionary Force should be able to

take the field as a division.

Undoubtedly this autumn has been most difficult here. We should have been relieved of our operational role tomorrow and completed mobilisation pending embarkation. Three days ago these orders were cancelled and we are to stay out here covering Dover until the end of the month or when the present good weather breaks. Immediately War Office liberates me I fly to Egypt by the quickest route. Meanwhile the position in England is excellent, everybody, especially the women population of London, showing great spirit. I can assure His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that our men are well trained, fit, and in great heart, and that the equipment position is adequate. I am confident that our men will play their part if called upon to defend either Great Britain or Egypt.

¹ The Signal School, which had been left at Maadi, rejoined 2nd New Zealand Divisional Signals on 16 Sep.

² Major-General Lindsay Merritt Inglis, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, VD. At the time of this reference he was temporarily in command of 4th New Zealand Infantry Brigade with the rank of Colonel; commanded 4th Infantry Brigade 1941–42 and 4th Armoured Brigade 1942–44; temporarily in command of 2nd New Zealand Division, Jun–Aug 1942, after General Freyberg had been wounded, and in Jun–Jul 1943; Chief Judge of the Control Commission Supreme Court in the British Zone of Occupation, Germany.

³ Tactical Exercises Without Troops.

92

General Freyberg to Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo)

13 September 1940

The following is for Brigadier Puttick:

The New Zealand Government is disturbed by information received from the Dominions Office as to your present equipment deficiencies and operational role. The Minister of Defence reports that your brigade group probably has 18 2-inch mortars instead of 36, 23 anti-tank rifles instead of 95, 182 Brens instead of 215, 19 Vickers instead of 36, 6 light tanks instead of 28, 21 Bren carriers instead of 30, nil 25-pounders instead of 24. To enable me to assure the Government will you as soon as possible send me answers to the following questions: (1) Is the main New Zealand force together or is it split up into two groups, one under you and the other under [Inglis](#)? (2) Are our main forces cast in a role to defend Lines of Communication or are they with the Desert Army? (3) When are you likely to get the balance of your equipment?

93

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

19 September 1940

On 10 September Puttick reported as follows:

All well. I am perfectly satisfied with the conditions under which the force is employed. It has now been decided to form an extensive defensive position at Maaten Baggush.

In answer to my telegram (No. 92) sent after receiving your message of 10 September (No. 90), Puttick reported on 17 September:

I consider the equipment situation very satisfactory and better than that of many Regular units here. Vickers, Bren, and anti-tank rifles are complete for fighting units, and the remainder almost complete. Each battalion has seven carriers out of ten, balance in a week only; also 25 per cent 2-inch mortars. The Divisional Cavalry have nine light tanks and eight carriers, with eleven carriers shortly, but no .5-inch machine guns. The Artillery have eighteen 18-pounders, plus eight howitzers. Twenty-five-pounders are due shortly. Answering your three questions: (1) The New Zealand Expeditionary Force is concentrated and under my command. (2) It is holding a sector of the defence of the Maaten

Baggush area with, and under the command of, the 4th Indian Division. (3) The remainder of the equipment, except for 25-pounders and light tanks, will be available in ten days from the 17th.

For the information of the Minister, **Maaten Baggush** is 29 miles in the rear of **Mersa Matruh**, our foremost defences, and approximately 140 miles from **Sollum**.

Realising that the **Third Echelon** is arriving in Egypt in about two weeks untrained and only partially equipped, I send for your information the latest appreciation from General Wavell of the situation in Egypt, dated 12 September:

Evidence and indications of enemy intentions on the Libyan front are as yet inconclusive. Movements in the **Western Desert** on the 10th/11th still appear preparatory and indicate no immediate intention of a major advance. The recent move forward closely follows the plan adopted by the Italians during the last two months of gradual approach by stages to the frontier. As the enemy approach close to the frontier, protective troops covering the formation of defended localities noticeably increase. The immediate intention seems to be the strengthening of defences on a broad front up to the frontier line to prevent our continued penetration which has been a running sore and a consistent cause of casualties in men and material. The propaganda value to the Italians of re-occupying territory previously overrun by us must not be overlooked. Also, Italian occupation of **Sollum** is projected. Results of air reconnaissance and other rearward indications still provide no evidence that a major attack is impending.

As for the Home front, I still consider a German invasion not a possible operation of war. Movements of shipping off the French coast and the recent savage bombing attacks on **London** are so pronounced that every precaution must be taken. The weather here is bad and there are indications of equinoctial gales commencing. I understand now that our departure for Egypt is again retarded by the order of the Prime Minister who considers that in our role in the defence of the **United**

Kingdom we cannot be spared while the threat remains. The splitting of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has caused great difficulties. As Commander I feel torn between the military needs of both theatres, Egypt and here. I know you will be greatly relieved that both echelons are well equipped with modern arms and reserves of warlike stores adequate for all contingencies, also that their training has progressed very satisfactorily. The force in Egypt is, however, short of tanks, artillery, and air support. With the **Third Echelon arriving, I feel sure of your approval to my transferring to Egypt as soon as the **War Office** releases me**

POSTSCRIPT: News has arrived that the Italians have advanced in force to **Sidi Barrani** and it appears that a serious effort to invade Egypt has begun. I have arranged to fly out as soon as a plane can be produced. This depends on meteorological [word omitted] on account of ice forming on the wings. I shall take Stewart, and Miles will follow as soon as possible. Hargest, who has shaped very well in training, will be left in command of the Second Echelon.

¹

¹ The above text, taken from the GOC's files, differs in a number of respects from the telegram received in New Zealand in which there were many mutilations and omissions.

94

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

23 September 1940

On the grounds of the urgency of the situation here, I have experienced opposition to my leaving the United Kingdom. I feel certain, however, that the Egyptian situation is the more difficult and I am leaving by bomber on the 22nd, via **Malta, arriving in the early morning of the 24th. I feel that with the situation developing in Egypt, and with our small army in the **Middle East**, I should go there. Stewart accompanies me, and Falla and Miles will come as soon as passages can be arranged for them.**

95

General Freyberg (Cairo) to the Minister of Defence

24 September 1940

Stewart and I have arrived. I have taken over command.

96

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

27 September 1940

I have just returned after two days in the Western Desert with the 4th Brigade Group who occupy a defensive position in reserve. Everybody is fit and well and in excellent spirits. Their arms and equipment are now practically complete, except that they are still armed with 18-pounders. I would be unwilling to pass any opinion upon the likelihood of the Italians launching a serious attack here. My views two months ago were as expressed in my official appreciation to the British Prime Minister on 29 July ¹ which should have reached you by now. Owing to the arrival here of aeroplanes, tanks, and equipment upon a large scale the situation is easing. Nevertheless, if the Italians do attack in the next month we shall be fighting numerically superior forces and will be at a disadvantage as regards artillery, tanks, and aircraft. Tomorrow I go to Suez to meet the Third Echelon.

¹ For the text of this appreciation see Appendix 4.

97

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence [Extract]

28 October 1940

.... ¹ I have just returned from the desert after a four-day training scheme with the First Echelon. The Artillery have now calibrated and fired a training practice with 18-pounders; they should get 25-pounders

any day now. The 4th Infantry Brigade are fit and 95 per cent equipped. In my opinion the 4th Brigade Group are now trained and equipped on a sufficient scale to take any operational role. They will operate in the Western Desert until they are relieved by an Australian division.²

¹ See *Concentration of the 2nd New Zealand Division (No. 249)* for rest of text.

² 6th Australian Division.

98

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

13 December 1940

Our Divisional Signals, Petrol and Ammunition companies, Supply Column, and Reserve Mechanical Transport Company took part in the recent battle, the 4th Brigade Group being in reserve at Baggush. The 6th Brigade continue training at Maadi and are quite fit to fight the Italians when equipped.

There is no doubt that we have had very great success. Apart from prisoners, estimated at over 30,000, we have captured a large portion of the guns of Italy's Libyan army which will be hard to replace. The result of the battle is far-reaching—we now have the initiative, but I warn you against undue optimism as the enormous distances and the lack of roads, railways, and motor transport must limit success. Had we the necessary rails and rolling stock we could knock out the Italians in Libya before the hot weather. Meanwhile, our success will influence the situation in the Balkans and should stiffen resistance; in any case, little can happen there until the spring.

99

NOTE FOR THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION FROM GENERAL WAVELL¹

27 December 1940

I feel that I owe an explanation to the New Zealand Division, and especially to the 4th Infantry Brigade, regarding the recent operations in the Western Desert. I know that they are disappointed at not having taken part in the advance on Sidi Barrani or beyond, and perhaps feel hurt that they have been used for all the hard work of making defences and then have not been detailed to take part in the attack when attack became possible.

I therefore give you the reasons which influenced the decision not to use them in the advance. It was my original intention to do so. But the New Zealand Government, quite naturally and quite rightly, has always wished that the New Zealand Division should be employed in active operations only as a complete division under its own Commander. I am sure that if I had been able to explain the situation to the New Zealand Government, they would have granted permission for the 4th Infantry Brigade to be used, as they have granted permission for the special use of a part of the forces they have supplied. At the time when the decision had to be taken, however, it was still several weeks before the operations were to take place, the strictest possible secrecy was being maintained, and the number of those who knew that an operation was to take place at all was extremely limited. To consult the New Zealand Government would necessarily have involved the communication of some details of the plans to several people and possibly some discussion of them. It would have been necessary to place the Brigade under the command of the Commander of the 4th Indian Division. I felt that I could not do all this without some detailed explanation to the New Zealand Government which might have jeopardised secrecy. I therefore decided, somewhat reluctantly, not to use the New Zealand Brigade, and to use instead the 16th Infantry Brigade which I could do without reference to anyone.

As regards the use of the Australian Division for the second stage of the operations, I required a whole division, and if I had sent forward the New Zealand Brigade it would have been necessary to form a composite division of Australian and New Zealand troops, which I had been given to

understand was contrary to the wishes of the New Zealand Government. It would have either broken up the New Zealand Division or would have involved a further relief at a later stage with loss of time and waste of transport. It had always been my intention that the Australian Corps should eventually take over the Western Desert, and that the New Zealand Division when complete should become the General Headquarters Reserve. This explains why I was unable to send forward the New Zealand Brigade in the second stage of the operations.

As you know, however, the assistance that has been given by the New Zealand Division to the operations in the Western Desert has been invaluable, and the recent success could not have been gained without it. The New Zealand Division has supplied its Signals, its transport, its Engineers, Railway and other personnel who have made up our shortage in these very necessary services. I should like to refer also to the magnificent work done by the Long Range Patrols who relieved me of any anxiety about the Southern Libyan Desert, from which the Italians might have threatened Upper Egypt or the Sudan.

I take this opportunity of thanking the New Zealand Division for all the assistance they have so willingly provided during the very difficult period when the defence of Egypt was dangerously weak, and I very much regret that it was not possible for them to take an even greater share in the advance from Matruh. Their turn will come before long, and I have every confidence that their leadership, training, and spirit will win them great distinction in any operation in which they take part.

A. P. Wavell

¹ Field-Marshal Earl Wavell, PC, GCB, GCSI, GCIE, CMG, MC (then General Sir Archibald Wavell); GOC-in-C, Middle East, 1939–41; GOC-in-C, India, 1941–43; Supreme Commander, South-West Pacific, Jan–Mar 1942; Viceroy and Governor-General of India 1943–47.

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

29 December 1940

The following is for publication if you wish:

In the Western Desert New Zealand mechanical transport units have played an important part in the operations up to date. In the opening stages they carried infantry forward to the attack and displayed coolness and resolution under fire. Since the first attack they have worked continuously at the arduous task of bringing forward supplies under difficult conditions and over long distances by day and night. In addition, New Zealand signallers have provided essential links in the system of communications, working long hours under trying conditions; in this way they have contributed largely to the successes obtained.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

73 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

73

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

28 February 1940

Advice has been received from the War Office that the Military Secretary of the British Expeditionary Force has raised the question whether, in the event of the Dominion forces joining the British Expeditionary Force, staff officers of such formations are to be regarded as other staff officers within the British Expeditionary Force and whether they can be made available for transfer, upgrading, &c., into British formations. Similarly, can British staff officers be appointed to Dominion formations? Secondly, in regard to brigade and unit commanders and seconds-in-command, is it intended to keep the Dominion forces intact or should the British Expeditionary Force draw on them, and *vice versa*, as the demands of efficiency suggest? Thirdly, he states that very many advantages would result in pooling our resources both in the case of staff and commanders, and also that the interchanges and infusion of new blood would mutually benefit both British and Dominion formations. The War Office would appreciate your views on the above proposals. I am advising Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, by air mail.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

74 – THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON) TO GENERAL FREYBERG (CAIRO) [EXTRACT]

74

The Chief of the General Staff (Wellington) to General Freyberg (Cairo) [Extract]

2 March 1940

.... ¹ The High Commissioner for New Zealand in the United Kingdom has communicated with you by air mail regarding the interchange of staff officers of the British Expeditionary Force and those of the Dominion forces; similarly in regard to brigade and unit commanders. The Government do not like this idea. On receipt of Jordan's air mail letter I would be glad to have your views by cable. The progress of the Second Echelon is very satisfactory.

¹ Text omitted concerned the appointment of commanding officers for 5th and 6th Field Regiments, New Zealand Artillery.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

75 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

75

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 March 1940

The following telegram has been received from His Majesty's Ambassador at Cairo: ¹

On General Freyberg's invitation I attended a parade this morning of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and was privileged to take the salute. The men looked in fine fettle and are evidently settling down well in their new surroundings. As I told them, their general bearing and appearance was most impressive.

¹ Rt. Hon. Lord Killearn, PC, GCMG, CB, MVO; at time of reference, Sir Miles Wedderburn Lampson.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

76 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)

76

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

20 March 1940

Your telegram of 28 February (No. 73). It is the wish of the New Zealand Government that New Zealand staff officers should be retained for service with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The same applies to brigade and unit commanders and seconds-in-command.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

77 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

77

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

25 May 1940

In the terms of the emergency powers given me by the New Zealand Cabinet as General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Expeditionary Force,² I was empowered to commit the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to active operations in the event of an emergency. My move to the United Kingdom¹ and Italy's possible action in the near future may necessitate fresh powers being given to a competent military commander on the spot. For the information of Cabinet, the training of the troops has progressed well, but it has been greatly handicapped by lack of equipment and latterly by very hot weather. Collective training upon a full scale has been handicapped by the absence of necessary instruments and signal equipment and by the shortage of many classes of weapons, in most cases only 25 per cent being available. Even if complete equipment is made available from the Middle East war reserve a further period of training is necessary before the force could be used for active operations. At present the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are responsible for the security of Cairo, where more than 30,000 Italians live and where fifth column activities may be attempted. Later, when Cairo is pacified, units may be required to garrison defences or have some other role connected with the internal security of Egypt. Had I been here and time did not permit the whole question being referred to the New Zealand Cabinet, I should have agreed to commit the force to the defence of Egypt. As speed is the essence of combating fifth column activities I recommend that in my absence authority be given to General Wilson, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief [British Troops in] Egypt, to use the 2nd NZEF in defence of our vital interests here.

² See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF (No. 39)*.

¹ See *Second Echelon (No. 152)*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

78 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

78

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

26 May 1940

In view of the way the situation appears to be developing and the threat of impending hostilities with Italy, the New Zealand Government are strongly of the opinion that you should remain in Egypt and that you should not proceed to the United Kingdom at this juncture. Please act accordingly unless you can show us strong reasons to the contrary, which will receive every consideration. We feel that Falla² and Park, in co-operation with the High Commissioner, can adequately look after accommodation, &c., for the Second Echelon in the United Kingdom.

On the assumption that you remain in Egypt and retain immediate and personal command, we authorise you to use New Zealand troops as you suggest for operations against any possible fifth column, and subsequently on any necessary garrison or other duty in defence of Egypt for which your force is adequately trained, fitted, and equipped. This authority is subject to the express condition that you should not, except in an emergency of which you must be the judge, commit your troops to any operations for which, in your opinion, they are not yet adequately trained, fitted, and equipped.

Having regard to your telegram of 25 May (No. 77) and to previous reports on the subject, please telegraph at once a report as to: (a) the extent to which you are without necessary equipment or ammunition for the operations contemplated, and (b) the reserve supplies of ammunition and equipment in Egypt upon which you can draw if necessary. In particular we would like to know whether you have at your disposal, or can at once obtain, sufficient small-arms ammunition.

2 Brigadier N. S. Falla, CMG, DSO, Commandant 2nd NZEF Base, Maadi Camp, Egypt, Nov 1940 - Jun 1941; released from 2nd NZEF and attached to British Ministry of Transport, London, as New Zealand representative; died at sea, 1945. In Feb 1940 Lieutenant-Colonel Falla was appointed Base Commandant, NZ Overseas Base, and at this time was in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

79 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER

79

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

26 May 1940

I am in general agreement with the contents of your most secret telegram of 26 May (No. 78) and will communicate them to the Commander-in-Chief, who is in accord with your views. For the information of Cabinet, there are ample war reserves of ammunition and equipment here and the men are well trained and fit for the limited operations contemplated by the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. In the event of war with Italy the situation in Egypt is giving no anxiety. The Italian forces are unlikely to take the offensive due to Libya's geographical position between Tunis and Egypt; they have no sea communications with Italy, and the lack of drinking water and roads across the desert between Libya and the Nile valley would prevent operations by an army of any size. Although mobilisation equipment for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has not yet arrived, the garrison of Egypt is adequately equipped and large reserves of troops are available for Palestine and Syria. I am not anxious about arrangements for the reception, accommodation, and comfort of the Second Echelon in the United Kingdom. MacCormick ¹ and Greville know every detail, and I am sending

¹ Brigadier K. MacCormick, CB, CBE, DSO, ED; at this time Assistant Director of Medical Services, New Zealand Division; on 1 Oct 1940 became Deputy Director of Medical Services, 2nd NZEF (later Director of Medical Services), with rank of Brigadier.

King ¹ and Crump for Ordnance and RASC problems, making a strong team under Falla. The troops are in great heart and are longing to

get to the active work for which they are being trained. One month with full-scale equipment would fit these men for France. From all accounts the Second Echelon have benefited from the new training syllabus and I feel that with two months' collective training they would be fit for war. What I wish my Minister to realise is that none of the senior officers of the Second Echelon are fit to start unit or collective training without first being trained themselves. Every day I am kept from taking their preparation in hand will delay the ultimate preparedness of the troops. While for the present I agree that I should stay here, the situation *vis-à-vis* the Allies and Italy may ease or be precipitated in the next few days, and the question whether my presence is most useful here or in the United Kingdom could then be reconsidered. As you will no doubt appreciate, splitting a force always raises problems of this kind.

¹ Brigadier T. J. King, CBE, New Zealand Ordnance Corps; at this time a Lieutenant-Colonel.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

80 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

80

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

13 June 1940

Further to my telegram of 26 May (No. 79), the situation here is really unchanged by Italy's declaration of war. The round-up of Fascist leaders by the police went off smoothly and the danger of the fifth column is now greatly reduced. In the existing circumstances the garrison of Egypt appears to be more than adequate. The possibility of active operations for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is remote. Due to shortage of equipment no further headway with the training of the First Echelon can be made. I submit that I should now proceed to the United Kingdom with the training staff to train the Second Echelon. Will you cable if you approve my going? Air passages to the United Kingdom are now more difficult. It would help me administratively to have a forecast from Cabinet as to their ultimate plans.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

81 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

81

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

14 June 1940

My message of 13 June (No. 80) crossed the Prime Minister's message of the same date [14 June].¹ An urgent reply to my question is required as planes to the United Kingdom are scarce and one leaves with a seat for self and Colonel Stewart on Sunday, via Sahara.

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 175). The difference in time between New Zealand and the Middle East is responsible for the above error in the date of the message being acknowledged.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

82 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG – [EXTRACT]

82

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg
[Extract]

15 June 1940

Your telegrams of 13 and 14 June (Nos. 80 and 81). The Government approve of your proceeding to London at your discretion....
2

² For complete text see *Second Echelon* (No. 180).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

83 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

83

General Freyberg to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

16 June 1940

The following is for the Minister of Defence and General Duigan: As arranged with the Minister, I leave here on the 17th arriving in England approximately on the 21st. After the 17th all personal or very secret telegrams for me should be addressed to the High Commissioner for New Zealand in London; all telegrams involving new matters should go to London with a copy to Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, Cairo; all other telegrams should go to Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, Cairo. Headquarters' office staff will still be in Cairo with Stevens and Gentry for (a) administration, and (b) training of Divisional units, for both of which purposes they deal direct with me. Puttick is responsible for training the 4th Infantry Brigade and for local administration and discipline. In the event of active operations during my absence in the United Kingdom, the New Zealand troops in Egypt would come under his command. I recommend that during my absence you should grant Brigadier Puttick the same special power granted to Brigadier Miles.¹

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 177).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

84 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)

84

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

17 June 1940

The following message is for the personal information of General Freyberg:

Your telegram of 16 June (No. 83). The Government agree to all your proposals and are willing that the same powers as were granted to Brigadier Miles be granted to Brigadier Puttick.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

85 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER

85

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister

13 August 1940

This morning I took up the matter of equipment with the Secretary of State for War,² who admitted that the First Echelon requires certain additions to bring it up to war establishment and stated that these are being supplied as quickly as possible. The force from here³ will be fully equipped with modern arms. Equipment on a training scale will await the arrival of the **Third Echelon** and every effort has been promised for earliest completion to war establishment.

I expressed your concern at the slow progress in equipping our force and at the vagueness as to the date of delivery to the First and Third Echelons.⁴ The Secretary of State for War promised to give the matter his personal attention. He will give me full details on 16 August, after which I will cable you.

² Rt. Hon. R. A. Eden.

³ The Second Echelon.

⁴ See *Third Echelon* (No. 230).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

86 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER

86

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

16 August 1940

With reference to my telegram of 13 August (No. 85), I saw the Secretary of State for War, who explained the equipment situation as follows:

The First Echelon in Egypt is at present better equipped than similar formations there, and with additional equipment, including the latest 25-millimetre [-pounder?] guns now *en route*, will have full war equipment except tanks for the Divisional Cavalry Regiment. The Second Echelon in this country is now receiving full war equipment. This is to be completed by 30 September in readiness for possible movement. The Third Echelon will have a training scale of equipment on arrival at its destination. Its full war equipment is now being shipped. By October or November when this echelon will have completed its training, the 2nd New Zealand Division will be fully equipped, except possibly for tanks, the shortage of which is due to losses in France. However, every effort is being made to overcome this shortage.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

87 – HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO) TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

87

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

22 August 1940

On the arrival of the Australian division ¹ at Helwan by the end of August our troops are to take over defence of Lines of Communication. The infantry relieve an Indian brigade. ² The 26th Battery, which is not yet equipped, is to take over in position one troop of 4.5-inch howitzers at Amiriya and one troop of six 18-pounders at Maaten Baggush. Two companies of the Machine Gun Battalion defend the Amiriya area against airborne attack. The Divisional Cavalry, 25th Battery, and the Machine Gun Battalion, less two companies, are in reserve and work on defences in the vicinity of Maaten Baggush. The 6th Field Company remain at Alexandria. The Anti-Tank Battery is training 180 Regular British and Indian and Australian infantry officers and other ranks on one month's course and will remain at Maadi till 15 September.

¹ 6th Australian Division.

² A brigade of 4th Indian Division.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

88 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

88

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 September 1940

The despatch of reinforcements in personnel and equipment to the various theatres outside the United Kingdom has been given active consideration here. During the first eight months of the war, the greater part of the Army's effort was devoted to building up the British Expeditionary Force in France, and since the evacuation from Dunkirk it has been necessary to allot most of the current armaments production to home defence. In consequence, the forces overseas have received very little reinforcing of men or of material since the outbreak of the war. The present position is that the French collapse has greatly increased the scale of the attack in the Middle East, and our interests in the Far East are also threatened by Japanese hostility. If the British Empire is to retain its position in these areas, substantial reinforcements of men and equipment must be despatched. The bulk of the equipment must be obtained from the United Kingdom.

We have still much to do before all requirements for the defence of the United Kingdom have been met, but the equipment of our forces here and the strength and organisation of our defences have already made considerable progress. Furthermore, as winter approaches, the practicability of an invasion will decrease because of weather conditions. It has therefore been decided to allocate from now onwards a considerably larger proportion of United Kingdom resources in men, and approximately 50 per cent of future production of equipment, to reinforcements for other theatres and to the provision of equipment for

their garrisons and reserves. The corresponding slowing up in the completion of the defence arrangements of the United Kingdom will be accepted.

The Middle East is the theatre in which reinforcements are most urgently required, since there are indications that a large-scale offensive by the Italians will be launched when the weather is favourable for campaigning in this area (September to April). The urgent requirement is for additional armoured fighting vehicles and artillery (including anti-aircraft artillery). One army tank battalion, one cruiser tank regiment, and one light tank regiment have already been despatched by fast convoy, and a further convoy carrying artillery reinforcements will sail shortly. One division is being sent from India. The despatch of the balance of the 6th Australian

¹ Rt. Hon. Viscount Caldecote.

and New Zealand Divisions from the United Kingdom to the Middle East will be arranged as soon as practicable.

Urgent steps are also being taken to provide the equipment required (including the equipment for the reinforcement of the Special Service units) in all items essential to enable them to fight, and to provide the necessary reserves of weapons and equipment. Although equipment will not be issued exclusively to each theatre in turn, military priority will be given to the Middle East. To meet the most urgent requirements in this theatre, 48 anti-tank guns, 20 Bofors anti-aircraft guns, 48 25-pounder guns, 500 Bren guns, 250 antitank rifles, with ammunition for all the above, 1,000,000 rounds of tracer small-arms ammunition, and 50,000 anti-tank mines have been recently despatched and a further large consignment will leave shortly. In addition, a separate allotment of weapons and equipment is being sent shortly to East Africa.

It has been proposed that the forces in Malaya should shortly be reinforced by one Australian division, and the defence of Fiji increased

by a brigade group from New Zealand.¹ Consideration is also being given to the provision from other sources of anti-aircraft artillery reinforcements. It is intended that the forces in the Far East should be equipped in all items essential to enable them to fight and to provide 180 days' reserve of all essential weapons and equipment as soon as possible.

Additional African infantry brigade groups are being raised in East Africa and West Africa for employment in these theatres. The detailed composition of the garrisons which will eventually be required is under consideration. Certain additional anti-aircraft batteries are required to reinforce the (Aden?) land garrison, and will be provided, together with thirty days' reserves, as soon as possible. In India the British garrison has been depleted by eight battalions since the outbreak of war. Replacements for these battalions will have to be sent from the United Kingdom as soon as they can be spared.

As far as the Air Force is concerned, the immediate essential requirement is not to despatch squadrons from the United Kingdom but to re-equip the existing squadrons overseas with first-class aircraft. This re-equipment will later be supplemented by the reinforcement of first-line strength squadrons. In the Middle East the first objective is to provide bomber aircraft capable of attacking Benghazi, the only effective base for operations against Egypt, and modern fighters to defend the Fleet base at Alexandria. Eighty-four Blenheim aircraft, which will re-equip five existing squadrons in the Middle East by the end of September, are being despatched.

¹ 8th New Zealand Brigade Group.

Wellington aircraft to equip one squadron and Hurricane aircraft to re-equip three squadrons will be sent out during the same period. In addition, commencing at the end of September, thirty-six long-range Blenheims and eighteen Hurricanes per month will be provided to replace wastage overseas generally. It is hoped also to provide two

fighter squadrons and two general reconnaissance squadrons for Malaya by the end of 1940, but this must depend on the development of the situation in the United Kingdom and in the Middle East.

The above proposals also involve heavy shipping and naval escort problems, and these are receiving urgent consideration.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

89 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON)

89

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High
Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington)*

7 September 1940

With reference to the telegrams of 3 and 12 August from the Governor-General of New Zealand.¹ His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will now have been informed of the general policy regarding reinforcements in personnel and equipment to the Middle East as indicated in my telegram (No. 88). The following are the comments of the United Kingdom authorities regarding the outstanding points raised in the telegrams under reference, namely: (1) the prospects of a large-scale attack in the Middle East, possibly from more than one direction and possibly with German assistance; and (2) the position, in detail, of the scale of equipment for the New Zealand forces in the Middle East.

During the autumn, an Italian attack on Egypt from Libya is likely, and we are taking all possible steps to deal with such a contingency. Certain information as to these steps was contained in my telegram (No. 88), and further information will shortly be sent. Although there is a possibility that German forces might co-operate from Libya or initiate an attack from Syria, it is unlikely that either of these threats could materialise without considerable preparation by the Germans, and of this no definite indication has yet been received. In particular, an advance from Syria would take a considerable time to prepare and long warning of such preparation should be available.

¹ See *Third Echelon* (Nos. 224 and 230).

As the New Zealand Government have no doubt been informed by the Officer Commanding the New Zealand troops in the Middle East, arrangements have been made by the Commander-in-Chief in the Middle East for a brigade group to be moved from Cairo to an operational theatre in the Western Desert in the near future. ¹ As for the equipment of this brigade group, it is not possible to say exactly what are the deficiencies, since it has been found necessary to pool all equipment and vehicles in the Middle East, but this brigade group and one of the Australian brigade groups, which is also moving into an operational theatre, are being equipped to the highest scale possible from existing sources in the Middle East. After this has been done the combined deficiencies of the two brigade groups in the principal items of equipment will, as far as can be ascertained at present, be as follows:

37 2-inch mortars

144 anti-tank rifles

65 light machine guns

32 machine guns

44 light tanks

18 Bren carriers

48 25-pounder guns

While, therefore, the equipment of this New Zealand brigade group is not complete, it is on as generous a scale as is possible at the moment, and it is thought that it should be adequate for the role which it is intended these troops should undertake.

As regards the remaining New Zealand forces now in the Middle East, the available training equipment will include the following among the principal items:

1730 rifles

9 2-pounder anti-tank guns

8 18-pounder guns

4 4.7-inch howitzers

As regards the third New Zealand echelon, which has sailed in US 4, the **New Zealand Government** were informed in my telegram to the Governor-General of 30 July,² of the major items of equipment which are being made available to this contingent. This equipment has already been shipped and should arrive in the **Middle East** about the middle of September. It is on an equivalent scale to that provided for many Regular units in the **United Kingdom**.

As indicated in my telegram to the Governor-General of 26 July,³ it is the intention in the autumn to move the second New

¹ No. 87.

² See **Third Echelon** (No. 223).

³ See **Third Echelon** (No. 220).

New Zealand echelon, now in the United Kingdom, to the Middle East. The New Zealand Government will be fully informed as soon as definite proposals for the movement of this contingent can be communicated to them, but they may wish to know at once that it is hoped that this contingent will be fully equipped here before it sails.

Further, as indicated in the third paragraph of my telegram of 1 September (No. 88), the Commander-in-Chief in the **Middle East** will be allocated a very large proportion of the new equipment from the **United Kingdom** to make up the deficiencies among the forces under his command.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

90 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG (LONDON)

90

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg (London)

10 September 1940

The New Zealand Government is disturbed by information received as to the present deficiencies of the New Zealand brigade group now moving into an operational theatre in the Western Desert—see the telegram from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in Wellington, dated 7 September (No. 89). It would appear that the brigade group probably has 18 2-inch mortars instead of 36, 23 anti-tank rifles instead of 95, 182 light machine guns instead of 215, 19 machine guns instead of 36, 6 light tanks instead of 28, 21 Bren carriers instead of 30, no 25-pounders instead of 24.

I should be glad, (1) if you could ascertain, or else instruct Puttick to inform me, what actual supplies of equipment have been issued to the New Zealand brigade; (2) whether it is sufficient for the task allotted; and (3) if possible, how soon are the deficiencies likely to be made good. Your personal opinion on the equipment position would be appreciated.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

91 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

91

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

12 September 1940

Your telegram of 10 September (No. 90). I can appreciate how anxious you must be about the lack of equipment in Egypt. The delay in answering your telegram is due to being near Dover in bivouac waiting hopefully for a German landing. I have not yet seen the Secretary of State's telegram of 7 September (No. 89); when I do I will communicate with Puttick and will then send you the answers to your three questions, but it will take some days. Meanwhile I am in constant touch with Cairo. For your information, I forward a cable received from Puttick, dated 31 August:

The move of the New Zealand forces to the Western Desert commenced on the 28th and will be completed by the 6th, less the Anti-Tank Battery and the signal class. ¹ Inglis ² with Headquarters 4th Brigade commands Lines of Communication, which include Cavalry, Artillery, and Machine Gun Battalion, which are employed on the defences. Divisional Headquarters, in reserve near Daba in readiness to assume command of groups concentrating for active operations, will carry out reconnaissance and TEWTs ³ and reinforce Lines of Communication headquarters or Maadi as necessary. Stevens with small staff and Base details remains at Maadi to prepare for the Third Contingent. Army Service Corps surplus to field force requirements remains at Maadi but is organised ready to reinforce on Lines of Communication if required. Reserve Mechanical Transport Company, ASC, and 6th Field Company remain detached as at present.

When I received the above cable, and knowing the position when I

left, I considered the equipment of the First Echelon sufficient for the role assigned to it. Your cabled figures do not appear correct but Puttick's reply will give me the correct figure. Even so, it should be remembered that normal brigade groups have no cavalry regiment and only a machine-gun company of twelve instead of nineteen Vickers guns. It is true that the force is weak in anti-tank rifles and lacks new 25-pounders, but it has 18-pounders—a good gun—and besides other arms has a large number of Brens. I consider that the First Echelon when kept together as a formation is a formidable fighting force quite adequate for the task allotted it.

As you know, the equipment situation for the past year has been very bad and has been accentuated by French losses. Production here is much improved, but the quantity required to make the defences of the United Kingdom secure has been enormous. Excellent progress has been made but at the expense of the Middle East. The danger of attempted invasion is nearly over. By the end of October, unless the German bombing of factories interferes seriously with production, we shall be past the danger point. After the end of September all interest will centre in the Middle East. The equipment [position] there is not good but, thanks to most firm representations to the highest authority here, a new policy has been agreed to and in the immediate future the Middle East is to get 50 per cent of the production of our factories. Enormous shipments were made last month; some have now arrived and will continue to arrive for some months. These include aeroplanes, tanks, guns, ammunition, &c. With regard to the New Zealand Expeditionary Force's equipment, the Second Echelon will be complete in every detail before embarkation except for twelve antitank 2-pounders and minor details of Royal Engineers field company equipment. The balance of the equipment for the First Echelon, including its full complement of 25-pounders and all vehicles, is now on the water. Training equipment for the Third Echelon upon a basis of 50 per cent issues has been shipped and should be available upon their arrival. I believe that from now on the Middle East equipment position will continue to improve, and by the end of November the New Zealand Expeditionary Force should be able to

take the field as a division.

Undoubtedly this autumn has been most difficult here. We should have been relieved of our operational role tomorrow and completed mobilisation pending embarkation. Three days ago these orders were cancelled and we are to stay out here covering Dover until the end of the month or when the present good weather breaks. Immediately War Office liberates me I fly to Egypt by the quickest route. Meanwhile the position in England is excellent, everybody, especially the women population of London, showing great spirit. I can assure His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that our men are well trained, fit, and in great heart, and that the equipment position is adequate. I am confident that our men will play their part if called upon to defend either Great Britain or Egypt.

¹ The Signal School, which had been left at Maadi, rejoined 2nd New Zealand Divisional Signals on 16 Sep.

² Major-General Lindsay Merritt Inglis, CB, CBE, DSO, MC, VD. At the time of this reference he was temporarily in command of 4th New Zealand Infantry Brigade with the rank of Colonel; commanded 4th Infantry Brigade 1941–42 and 4th Armoured Brigade 1942–44; temporarily in command of 2nd New Zealand Division, Jun–Aug 1942, after General Freyberg had been wounded, and in Jun–Jul 1943; Chief Judge of the Control Commission Supreme Court in the British Zone of Occupation, Germany.

³ Tactical Exercises Without Troops.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

92 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO)

92

General Freyberg to Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo)

13 September 1940

The following is for Brigadier Puttick:

The New Zealand Government is disturbed by information received from the Dominions Office as to your present equipment deficiencies and operational role. The Minister of Defence reports that your brigade group probably has 18 2-inch mortars instead of 36, 23 anti-tank rifles instead of 95, 182 Brens instead of 215, 19 Vickers instead of 36, 6 light tanks instead of 28, 21 Bren carriers instead of 30, nil 25-pounders instead of 24. To enable me to assure the Government will you as soon as possible send me answers to the following questions: (1) Is the main New Zealand force together or is it split up into two groups, one under you and the other under Inglis? (2) Are our main forces cast in a role to defend Lines of Communication or are they with the Desert Army? (3) When are you likely to get the balance of your equipment?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

93 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

93

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

19 September 1940

On 10 September Puttick reported as follows:

All well. I am perfectly satisfied with the conditions under which the force is employed. It has now been decided to form an extensive defensive position at Maaten Baggush.

In answer to my telegram (No. 92) sent after receiving your message of 10 September (No. 90), Puttick reported on 17 September:

I consider the equipment situation very satisfactory and better than that of many Regular units here. Vickers, Bren, and anti-tank rifles are complete for fighting units, and the remainder almost complete. Each battalion has seven carriers out of ten, balance in a week only; also 25 per cent 2-inch mortars. The Divisional Cavalry have nine light tanks and eight carriers, with eleven carriers shortly, but no .5-inch machine guns. The Artillery have eighteen 18-pounders, plus eight howitzers. Twenty-five-pounders are due shortly. Answering your three questions:
(1) The New Zealand Expeditionary Force is concentrated and under my command. (2) It is holding a sector of the defence of the Maaten Baggush area with, and under the command of, the 4th Indian Division. (3) The remainder of the equipment, except for 25-pounders and light tanks, will be available in ten days from the 17th.

For the information of the Minister, Maaten Baggush is 29 miles in the rear of Mersa Matruh, our foremost defences, and approximately 140 miles from Sollum.

Realising that the **Third Echelon** is arriving in Egypt in about two weeks untrained and only partially equipped, I send for your information the latest appreciation from General Wavell of the situation in Egypt, dated 12 September:

Evidence and indications of enemy intentions on the Libyan front are as yet inconclusive. Movements in the **Western Desert** on the 10th/11th still appear preparatory and indicate no immediate intention of a major advance. The recent move forward closely follows the plan adopted by the Italians during the last two months of gradual approach by stages to the frontier. As the enemy approach close to the frontier, protective troops covering the formation of defended localities noticeably increase. The immediate intention seems to be the strengthening of defences on a broad front up to the frontier line to prevent our continued penetration which has been a running sore and a consistent cause of casualties in men and material. The propaganda value to the Italians of re-occupying territory previously overrun by us must not be overlooked. Also, Italian occupation of **Sollum** is projected. Results of air reconnaissance and other rearward indications still provide no evidence that a major attack is impending.

As for the Home front, I still consider a German invasion not a possible operation of war. Movements of shipping off the French coast and the recent savage bombing attacks on **London** are so pronounced that every precaution must be taken. The weather here is bad and there are indications of equinoctial gales commencing. I understand now that our departure for Egypt is again retarded by the order of the Prime Minister who considers that in our role in the defence of the **United Kingdom** we cannot be spared while the threat remains. The splitting of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has caused great difficulties. As Commander I feel torn between the military needs of both theatres, Egypt and here. I know you will be greatly relieved that both echelons are well equipped with modern arms and reserves of warlike stores adequate for all contingencies, also that their training has progressed very satisfactorily. The force in Egypt is, however, short of tanks,

artillery, and air support. With the **Third Echelon** arriving, I feel sure of your approval to my transferring to Egypt as soon as the **War Office** releases me

POSTSCRIPT: News has arrived that the Italians have advanced in force to **Sidi Barrani** and it appears that a serious effort to invade Egypt has begun. I have arranged to fly out as soon as a plane can be produced. This depends on meteorological [word omitted] on account of ice forming on the wings. I shall take Stewart, and Miles will follow as soon as possible. Hargest, who has shaped very well in training, will be left in command of the Second Echelon. ¹

¹ The above text, taken from the GOC's files, differs in a number of respects from the telegram received in New Zealand in which there were many mutilations and omissions.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

94 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

94

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

23 September 1940

On the grounds of the urgency of the situation here, I have experienced opposition to my leaving the United Kingdom. I feel certain, however, that the Egyptian situation is the more difficult and I am leaving by bomber on the 22nd, via Malta, arriving in the early morning of the 24th. I feel that with the situation developing in Egypt, and with our small army in the Middle East, I should go there. Stewart accompanies me, and Falla and Miles will come as soon as passages can be arranged for them.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

95 – GENERAL FREYBERG (CAIRO) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

95

General Freyberg (Cairo) to the Minister of Defence

24 September 1940

Stewart and I have arrived. I have taken over command.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

96 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

96

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

27 September 1940

I have just returned after two days in the Western Desert with the 4th Brigade Group who occupy a defensive position in reserve. Everybody is fit and well and in excellent spirits. Their arms and equipment are now practically complete, except that they are still armed with 18-pounders. I would be unwilling to pass any opinion upon the likelihood of the Italians launching a serious attack here. My views two months ago were as expressed in my official appreciation to the British Prime Minister on 29 July ¹ which should have reached you by now. Owing to the arrival here of aeroplanes, tanks, and equipment upon a large scale the situation is easing. Nevertheless, if the Italians do attack in the next month we shall be fighting numerically superior forces and will be at a disadvantage as regards artillery, tanks, and aircraft. Tomorrow I go to Suez to meet the Third Echelon.

¹ For the text of this appreciation see Appendix 4.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

97 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE [EXTRACT]

97

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence [Extract]

28 October 1940

.... ¹ I have just returned from the desert after a four-day training scheme with the First Echelon. The Artillery have now calibrated and fired a training practice with 18-pounders; they should get 25-pounders any day now. The 4th Infantry Brigade are fit and 95 per cent equipped. In my opinion the **4th Brigade Group** are now trained and equipped on a sufficient scale to take any operational role. They will operate in the Western Desert until they are relieved by an Australian division. ²

¹ See *Concentration of the 2nd New Zealand Division* (No. 249) for rest of text.

² 6th Australian Division.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

98 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

98

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

13 December 1940

Our Divisional Signals, Petrol and Ammunition companies, Supply Column, and Reserve Mechanical Transport Company took part in the recent battle, the 4th Brigade Group being in reserve at Baggush. The 6th Brigade continue training at Maadi and are quite fit to fight the Italians when equipped.

There is no doubt that we have had very great success. Apart from prisoners, estimated at over 30,000, we have captured a large portion of the guns of Italy's Libyan army which will be hard to replace. The result of the battle is far-reaching—we now have the initiative, but I warn you against undue optimism as the enormous distances and the lack of roads, railways, and motor transport must limit success. Had we the necessary rails and rolling stock we could knock out the Italians in Libya before the hot weather. Meanwhile, our success will influence the situation in the Balkans and should stiffen resistance; in any case, little can happen there until the spring.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

99 – NOTE FOR THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION FROM GENERAL WAVELL 1

99

NOTE FOR THE NEW ZEALAND DIVISION FROM GENERAL WAVELL 1

27 December 1940

I feel that I owe an explanation to the New Zealand Division, and especially to the 4th Infantry Brigade, regarding the recent operations in the Western Desert. I know that they are disappointed at not having taken part in the advance on Sidi Barrani or beyond, and perhaps feel hurt that they have been used for all the hard work of making defences and then have not been detailed to take part in the attack when attack became possible.

I therefore give you the reasons which influenced the decision not to use them in the advance. It was my original intention to do so. But the New Zealand Government, quite naturally and quite rightly, has always wished that the New Zealand Division should be employed in active operations only as a complete division under its own Commander. I am sure that if I had been able to explain the situation to the New Zealand Government, they would have granted permission for the 4th Infantry Brigade to be used, as they have granted permission for the special use of a part of the forces they have supplied. At the time when the decision had to be taken, however, it was still several weeks before the operations were to take place, the strictest possible secrecy was being maintained, and the number of those who knew that an operation was to take place at all was extremely limited. To consult the New Zealand Government would necessarily have involved the communication of some details of the plans to several people and possibly some discussion of them. It would have been necessary to place the Brigade under the command of the Commander of the 4th Indian Division. I felt that I could not do all this without some detailed explanation to the New Zealand Government

which might have jeopardised secrecy. I therefore decided, somewhat reluctantly, not to use the New Zealand Brigade, and to use instead the 16th Infantry Brigade which I could do without reference to anyone.

As regards the use of the Australian Division for the second stage of the operations, I required a whole division, and if I had sent forward the New Zealand Brigade it would have been necessary to form a composite division of Australian and New Zealand troops, which I had been given to understand was contrary to the wishes of the [New Zealand Government](#). It would have either broken up the New Zealand Division or would have involved a further relief at a later stage with loss of time and waste of transport. It had always been my intention that the Australian Corps should eventually take over the [Western Desert](#), and that the New Zealand Division when complete should become the General Headquarters Reserve. This explains why I was unable to send forward the New Zealand Brigade in the second stage of the operations.

As you know, however, the assistance that has been given by the New Zealand Division to the operations in the [Western Desert](#) has been invaluable, and the recent success could not have been gained without it. The New Zealand Division has supplied its Signals, its transport, its Engineers, Railway and other personnel who have made up our shortage in these very necessary services. I should like to refer also to the magnificent work done by the Long Range Patrols who relieved me of any anxiety about the Southern Libyan Desert, from which the Italians might have threatened Upper Egypt or the Sudan.

I take this opportunity of thanking the New Zealand Division for all the assistance they have so willingly provided during the very difficult period when the defence of Egypt was dangerously weak, and I very much regret that it was not possible for them to take an even greater share in the advance from [Matruh](#). Their turn will come before long, and I have every confidence that their leadership, training, and spirit will win them great distinction in any operation in which they take part.

¹ Field-Marshal Earl Wavell, PC, GCB, GCSI, GCIE, CMG, MC (then General Sir Archibald Wavell); GOC-in-C, Middle East, 1939–41; GOC-in-C, India, 1941–43; Supreme Commander, South-West Pacific, Jan–Mar 1942; Viceroy and Governor-General of India 1943–47.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

100 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

100

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

29 December 1940

The following is for publication if you wish:

In the Western Desert New Zealand mechanical transport units have played an important part in the operations up to date. In the opening stages they carried infantry forward to the attack and displayed coolness and resolution under fire. Since the first attack they have worked continuously at the arduous task of bringing forward supplies under difficult conditions and over long distances by day and night. In addition, New Zealand signallers have provided essential links in the system of communications, working long hours under trying conditions; in this way they have contributed largely to the successes obtained.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

SECOND ECHELON: DIVERSION TO UNITED KINGDOM, COMMAND AND EMPLOYMENT

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101 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

101

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

3 February 1940

With regard to the escort proposed for the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have had the opportunity of perusing the correspondence which has passed by telegraph between the Admiralty and the New Zealand Naval Board.¹

They fully appreciate the difficulties in the way of again despatching HMS *Ramillies* to New Zealand, but they cannot bring themselves willingly to accept as adequate on this occasion an escort of strength less than that considered necessary in January. However remote the danger may be and however strong the proposed escort in comparison with any attack that can reasonably be contemplated, they feel that they, and indeed the Admiralty, would be in an indefensible position if any untoward development was to take place with a weaker escort than in January when the circumstances were certainly not more threatening.

Therefore, quite apart from the desirability of showing a battleship in these waters as frequently as possible, they feel that they cannot consent to the arrangements proposed and must ask for HMS *Ramillies* to be sent to New Zealand as previously, even if this means a delay of a few days in the convoy's departure.

¹ During the voyage of the First Echelon to Egypt reports were

received from HMS *Ramillies* that the very large distances being steamed, sometimes at high speed, were bringing strain on her boilers and machinery and engine-room personnel. Unless the Australian and New Zealand Naval Boards considered battleship escort for the Second Echelon convoy across the Tasman Sea necessary, the Admiralty proposed that the *Ramillies* should rest and refit at Sydney. In a message to the Admiralty dated 25 Jan 1940 the New Zealand Government expressed the hope that the *Ramillies*, for reasons of morale, would come to New Zealand. The Admiralty replied that in view of the very large amount of steaming done by the *Ramillies* in recent months it was essential that she should have a short refit, which could best be arranged at Sydney, but should a change in the naval situation in New Zealand waters make it essential for a battleship escort to be provided, the sailing date of the convoy would be adjusted accordingly.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

102 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

102

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

15 February 1940

In reply to your telegram of 3 February (No. 101). The Admiralty, on whom rests the responsibility for providing adequate escort, regard the position as being better than in January, and they see no military necessity to provide a battleship escort between New Zealand and Australia in the present situation. However, in deference to the representations of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, the Admiralty agree that HMS *Ramillies* should proceed to New Zealand on this occasion. It will be appreciated that this will mean a delay of nine days in the sailing of the convoy.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

103 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

103

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

16 February 1940

**My Prime Minister is indeed grateful for your telegram of 15
February (No. 102). His Majesty's Government in New Zealand warmly
appreciate the Admiralty's decision.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

104 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD

104

*The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to the New Zealand
Naval Board*

18 March 1940

Director of Sea Transport's telegrams 1701 and 1702 of 15 March.¹

It is proposed that HMAS *Canberra*² and HMS *Leander* should form the ocean escort for US 3 (fast convoy)³ on the New Zealand

¹ Not published. A telegram dated 6 Mar from the Admiralty to the Australian and New Zealand Naval Boards notified the division of the convoy into a fast and a slow group. HMS *Ramillies* was to form part of the escort for the slow group. Telegrams 1701 and 1702 gave details of the movements of the ships in each group and the probable itinerary of each convoy. One Australian brigade was to travel in the slow convoy and the rest of the Australian contingent and the Second Echelon from New Zealand in the fast group.

² HMAS *Canberra*, 8-inch cruiser, 9850 tons; lost in the battle of Savo Island (Solomons), 9 Aug 1942.

³ The letters US as used by the Admiralty denoted an inward bound convoy; WS signified outward bound. Convoy US 2 was the slow group, carrying Australian troops only, and US 3 the fast group.

station and that HMAS *Australia*¹ should relieve HMS *Leander* in 160 degrees east, approximately.²

¹ HMAS *Australia*, 8-inch cruiser, 9870 tons.

² i.e., in mid-Tasman. The New Zealand Naval Board concurred in the use of the *Leander*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

105 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH AND NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARDS

105

The Admiralty to the Australian Commonwealth and New Zealand Naval Boards

18 March 1940

The Admiralty concur with the proposal outlined in your 1116 of 17 March.³ They regret that the moral effect of the intended visit by HMS *Ramillies* to New Zealand will now be lost, but it will be realised that the change in plan is inevitable as the *Ramillies* has neither the speed nor the endurance to accompany the fast group.

It is presumed that the Australian and New Zealand Naval Boards will now arrange mutually for the escort of the New Zealand contingent across the Tasman.

³ Not published. In this telegram to the Admiralty the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board proposed that the *Ramillies* should remain at Sydney for an extra period to assist her refit before going to Melbourne to escort the slow convoy.

The number quoted in each of these naval telegrams is the time of despatch.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

106 – THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

106

The New Zealand Naval Board to the Admiralty

20 March 1940

Your telegram of 18 March (No. 105). His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are very uneasy whether the escort proposed from New Zealand to Australia (*Canberra* and *Leander* to 160 degrees east, thence *Canberra* and *Australia*) and onwards is sufficiently strong, and they would be glad to have information of the Admiralty's intentions regarding the escorting forces proposed for the whole voyage.

For the information of the Prime Minister, the Naval Board suggest that your reply to the foregoing should include an appreciation of the liability of attack by surface forces and the relative advantages of (a) a fast convoy with weak escort, and (b) a large, slow convoy with a stronger escort.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

107 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

107

The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to the Admiralty

21 March 1940

With reference to the New Zealand Naval Board's telegram of 20 March (No. 106). Although the escort are considered adequate, if desired HMAS *Australia* could join the trans-Tasman escort in New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

108 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD

108

The Admiralty to the New Zealand Naval Board

28 March 1940

Your telegram of 20 March (No. 106).

As was pointed out in the Dominions Secretary's telegram of 15 February (No. 102), the responsibility for providing adequate escorts rests on the Admiralty. Under existing conditions it is the Admiralty's considered opinion that the only type of raider which might be encountered in the Tasman Sea is one of the merchant ship type, and consequently the present escort arrangements in the Tasman Sea are considered adequate.

The question of the relative advantages of (a) fast convoys with weak escort, and (b) larger slow convoys with stronger escort, does not arise on the present occasion because for the reasons given in the Admiralty's telegram 1231 of 6 March, paragraph 1,¹ it is not possible to concentrate all transports in one convoy.

The proposals for the escort for the New Zealand contingent west of Fremantle are contained in the telegram of 6 March and have been concurred in by the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board.

The question of the adequacy of the escorts for all troop convoys is continually under consideration, and should there be any reason for doing so these arrangements would be modified.

¹ Not published. Paragraph 1 of this telegram was as follows:

To effect urgent economy in shipping it is under

consideration to include *Queen Mary*, *Aquitania*, *Mauretania*, and *Empress of Britain* in US 2. The speed of some of the other transports will be below that at which these fast liners can be handled and it is therefore necessary to divide the convoy into a fast group and a slow group whose sea-going speed will be 20 and 13 knots respectively. Two escorting forces will therefore be required.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

109 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

109

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

1 April 1940

For the consideration of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, my Ministers desire me to represent their views on the question of the ocean escort which the Admiralty propose for the convoy conveying the Second Echelon of New Zealand troops.

They have read the message of 28 March (No. 108) from the Admiralty to the New Zealand Naval Board in reply to the latter's message of 20 March (No. 106), the first paragraph of which was sent by their direction. They learn from this that the Admiralty consider an escort of two 8-inch cruisers is sufficient in the existing circumstances, and that the escort arrangements would be modified if there should be any reason for doing so.

The Admiralty refer to your telegram of 15 February (No. 102) which mentioned that Their Lordships are responsible for the adequacy of ocean escorts. My Ministers appreciate this fact and they do not, of course, dispute Their Lordships' judgment in such matters, but they feel bound to point out that it is also their own responsibility to ensure that over 7000 New Zealand troops do not depart from this country unless and until they are fully satisfied that the voyage will be made in conditions providing a reasonable maximum of safety.

Having regard to the information conveyed to the Naval Board by the Admiralty in messages 1550 of 22 March, 1333 of 24 March, and 1131 of

28 March, ¹ which indicates at least a strong suspicion that a pocket battleship is at large, they cannot disguise their uneasiness at the prospect of the convoy being protected by only two warships, both of which are practically unarmoured. The Chief of the Naval Staff has explained to the Government the technical and strategical factors involved, including the safety which the speed of the convoy affords.

Nevertheless, the Government feel that there is an element of risk because an attack might well be made in circumstances highly unfavourable to the defence of the convoy, and they cannot dismiss from their minds the attraction which they imagine this particular convoy, so valuable in both men and ships, would have for the enemy. It may well be, they argue, that a pocket battleship has been sent out for this very purpose.

¹ These naval telegrams are not published. They were to the effect that reports had been received that a pocket battleship accompanied by a tanker had left Germany in the first week of March for commercial raiding.

Having regard to these considerations, to which my Ministers attach much weight, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand propose that HMS *Leander* shall proceed the whole way with the convoy, thereafter being at the Admiralty's disposition as already arranged. (The Chief of the Naval Staff concurs. ¹) Their Lordships are aware that it was not considered desirable here for HMS *Leander* to leave the vicinity of New Zealand until HMS *Achilles* completes her refit, but the Naval Board report that the latter vessel can be at forty-eight hours' notice for sea by the middle of May, and HMS *Hector* ² will be available. They are of the opinion that a successful attack on the convoy would be more damaging to Imperial and New Zealand interests than one on New Zealand ports or shipping in New Zealand waters at that time, and they will feel more reassured if the convoy is escorted by two 8-inch cruisers and one 6-inch cruiser.

¹ Commodore H. E. Horan, DSC, RN, First Naval Member of the New Zealand Naval Board and Chief of the Naval Staff. On 1 Jan 1940 Commodore Horan had relieved Captain J. W. Rivett-Carnac, DSC, RN, as Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron and Commanding Officer of HMS *Leander*. As from 1 May 1940 Captain Horan relinquished the rank of Commodore, Second Class, but remained in command of the *Leander*, and Captain W. E. Parry, CB, RN, assumed the rank of Commodore, Second Class, and took over from Captain Horan the duties of First Naval Member of the New Zealand Naval Board, Chief of the Naval Staff, and Commodore Commanding New Zealand Squadron, continuing in command of HMS *Achilles*.

² HMS *Hector*, armed merchant cruiser, 11,198 tons, Ocean Steam Ship Company (A. Holt and Company); badly damaged by Japanese aircraft, Colombo, Mar 1942.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

110 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

110

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 April 1940

The point of view of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, contained in your telegram of 1 April (No. 109), in desiring to ensure that the voyage in question will be made under conditions of maximum safety is appreciated by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty. They agree that His Majesty's ship *Leander* will be employed more usefully on escort duty than in defence of New Zealand interests against the forms of attack visualised in their message to the New Zealand Naval Board of 28 March (No. 108), against which it is considered the presence of the *Hector* and *Achilles*, the latter at forty-eight hours' notice from the middle of May, will afford adequate security. In the circumstances, they welcome the additional security to the convoy which the presence of the *Leander* will afford. It is the intention that, on conclusion of the escort duty, the *Leander* should join the East Indies Station.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

111 – THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD – [EXTRACT]

111

*The New Zealand Naval Board to the Australian Commonwealth
Naval Board
[Extract]*

12 April 1940

.... ¹ As offered in your telegram of 21 March (No. 107), the New Zealand Government would appreciate arrangements being made for HMAS *Australia* to rendezvous with the convoy in the vicinity of Cook Strait.

¹ Acknowledgment of an earlier telegram (not published) has been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

112 – MEMORANDUM FROM THE NAVAL SECRETARY TO THE PERMANENT HEAD, PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT (WELLINGTON) – OCEAN ESCORT FOR TROOP CONVOY

112

*Memorandum from the Naval Secretary to the Permanent Head,
Prime Minister's Department (Wellington)*

19 April 1940

OCEAN ESCORT FOR TROOP CONVOY

Perhaps you will be good enough to inform the Honourable Prime Minister that a telegram has been received from the Admiralty, addressed to the Australian and New Zealand Naval Boards, stating that in consequence of the present uncertainty as to the attitude of Italy, the French Admiralty are effecting a strong concentration of their naval forces in the Mediterranean and urgently desire the very early return of the French 8-inch cruiser *Suffren*.

The Admiralty state that the best arrangement which can now be made for the ocean escort, to enable the wishes of the French Government to be met, is to provide HMAS *Sydney*² in place of the *Suffren* from Cocos Islands³ ot the destination.

The effect of this will be that from Cocos Islands the escort will consist of one 8-inch cruiser and two 6-inch cruisers.

In making this proposal the Admiralty state:

As German naval forces are fully occupied in North Sea operations⁴ and as both pocket battleships were located in German waters on 6 April, Admiralty considers escort force composed of *Kent*, *Sydney*, and

Leander from Cocos Islands to Aden for US 3 is adequate and therefore propose complying with the French suggestion. The convoy situation with reference to the attitude of Italy will be kept under constant review.

The Australian Naval Board have communicated their concurrence in these proposals to the Admiralty and to the New Zealand Naval Board.

If the Prime Minister approves, it is proposed to signify the concurrence of the New Zealand Naval Board.

N. T. P. COOPER,

Naval Secretary

² HMAS *Sydney*, 6-inch cruiser, 6830 tons; lost with all hands after destroying the German raider *Kormoran* in Indian Ocean, 19 Nov 1941.

³ Approximately midway between Fremantle and Colombo, and the site of a strategically important cable station.

⁴ Germany had invaded Norway on 9 Apr. The two battles of Narvik had taken place on 10 and 13 Apr, and the British Expeditionary Force had been landed at Namsos and Narvik between 15 and 18 Apr 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

113 – THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

113

The New Zealand Naval Board to the Admiralty

19 April 1940

Your 1250 of 17 April.¹ Although most reluctant still further to reduce the strength of the proposed escort and much concerned as to the situation that may result, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are nevertheless prepared to accept the point of view expressed by the Admiralty. At the same time they must stress the fact that they would feel much happier were it possible to substitute an 8-inch cruiser for a 6-inch cruiser. They ask that such further consideration as is practicable be given to this possibility.

¹ Not published. The text of this telegram is given in the Naval Secretary's memorandum of 19 Apr to the Permanent Head of the Prime Minister's Department.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

114 – THE CHIEF OF THE NAVAL STAFF IN HMS LEANDER TO NAVY OFFICE (WELLINGTON)

114

The Chief of the Naval Staff in HMS Leander to Navy Office (Wellington)

20 April 1940

Your telegram of 19 April (No. 113). Please inform Ministers that I consider the Admiralty's disposition for the ocean escort quite adequate in the present strategic situation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

115 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD

115

The Admiralty to the New Zealand Naval Board

21 April 1940

Your telegram of 19 April (No. 113). The acceptance by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand of the Admiralty's views is much appreciated. The decisions were reached after the fullest consideration of the situation by the Admiralty, who regret that under the present circumstances no further strengthening of the escort is practicable.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

116 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

116

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

29 April 1940

The presence in the Eastern Mediterranean of HMS *Ramillies*, which is now engaged in escorting a convoy from New Zealand and Australia, is essential at the earliest possible moment.

Resulting from operations on the Norwegian coast and the consequent location of units of the German Fleet, the Admiralty are satisfied that there is no danger to the convoy from German warships and that the only possible danger would be from a merchant ship raider, for which the cruiser escort is adequate. The Admiralty are therefore issuing instructions to HMS *Ramillies* to cease acting as escort for the convoy and proceed ahead.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

117 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

117

The Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

30 April 1940

I suggest that, having regard to the Italian situation and the possibility of the passage through the Red Sea becoming impracticable, consideration be given to the postponement of the embarkation of the New Zealand Forces until the situation is clarified. Accommodation would not be available here for the New Zealand troops if the convoy were held up in Australia. In this connection, my immediately following telegram contains the text of a telegram sent today to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

118 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

118

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

30 April 1940

The following is the text of the telegram sent to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

The Commonwealth Government, having regard to the deterioration of the Italian situation and the possibility of the [passage of] Australian and New Zealand convoys through the Red Sea becoming impracticable, propose that the embarkation of Australian troops for the third convoy, due to sail from Sydney on 5 May, should be postponed until the situation is clarified. Because of the difficulty of accommodating the New Zealand troops in Australia in the event of their being delayed here, the Commonwealth Government have suggested similar action to the New Zealand Government. It is considered preferable to postpone the embarkation instead of delaying the convoy with troops on board at an intermediate port. The present arrangements for the embarkation of the Australian troops will be temporarily postponed pending your advice.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

119 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

119

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

30 April 1940

Having regard to the imminent departure of the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, for the safety of which until its arrival at its destination His Majesty's Government in New Zealand can by no means divest themselves of responsibility, and in view of your telegram of 29 April (No. 116) and of previous communications with reference to the possibility of Italian hostility, my Prime Minister would be glad to have at the very earliest possible moment any further information that may be available as to the possibility of hostile action by Italy during the succeeding month. He also requests from you an appreciation of the Italian forces that are now or might at the appropriate moment be available to attack the convoy *en route* to Egypt, and an intimation, in as detailed a form as possible, as to what steps His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would propose to take, in the event of Italian hostility, to protect the convoy from attack by air or sea while *en route*. The Prime Minister would be grateful also for an indication of the probable steps that would be taken if the possibility of diversion is contemplated in these circumstances.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

120 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

120

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

30 April 1940

In regard to the question of the departure of New Zealand and Australian troops, my Prime Minister has had the opportunity of perusing the telegram dated 30 April from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia to you.¹ My immediately following telegram (No. 124) contains the text of my Prime Minister's reply. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be grateful if a reply to my telegram of 30 April (No. 119) could be despatched so as to reach here by 8 a.m., New Zealand time, on 1 May, as the New Zealand troops embark on that date. At the same time please repeat your reply to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

¹ See No. 118.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

121 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

121

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

30 April 1940

I regret that it is not possible to reply by the time requested, but hope to reply within the next few hours.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

122 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

122

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

30 April 1940

My telegram of 29 April (No. 116). It has now been decided that for the time being HMS *Ramillies* need not be detached.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

123 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

123

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

30 April 1940

Before the receipt of the telegrams dated 30 April from the Australian and New Zealand Governments (Nos. 118 and 119) the question of the safety of your convoys was already under consideration. Unless the situation improves, the Admiralty consider that it would be undesirable to pass convoys US 2 and US 3 through the Red Sea.

The alternative of the troops proceeding by the overland route to Egypt, via Basra, is considered impracticable by the War Office for climatic and administrative reasons. Moreover, if war with Italy were to break out subsequent to the arrival of the contingents in Egypt, there might be considerable difficulties in equipping them, as the necessary material has to come from United Kingdom resources. In the circumstances it has been necessary to consider the advisability of the diversion of both convoys.

Since better training facilities exist in the United Kingdom than in other possible destinations and since the equipment must be supplied from this country, it is suggested that the best course would be to divert these contingents to the United Kingdom. It would, of course, give us great pleasure to welcome Australian and New Zealand troops here, and the Admiralty are confident that adequate security can be afforded for convoys moving by the Cape of Good Hope route to the United Kingdom.

We should be grateful if we could be informed as soon as possible

whether this would be agreeable to the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments.

In that event, unless the situation shows marked improvement, we shall order convoy US 2 to be diverted before it enters the Gulf of Aden.

With reference to convoy US 3, we hope that the arrangements for embarkation as previously contemplated will be completed. Convoy US 3 would be diverted on the same date as US 2 if diversion proves to be necessary. The War Office are explaining to Freyberg the position as set out above.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

124 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

124

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

1 May 1940

Further to my immediately preceding telegram (No. 120). The following is the text of my reply to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia:

I am very grateful for your telegram of 30 April (No. 117). We had ourselves been considering today the question of the pending convoy. We had not considered that the situation at present warranted postponement of departure, but before the receipt of your communication we had today sent a telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, the text of which is contained in my immediately following telegram.¹ We propose to reconsider the matter on receipt of the Secretary of State's reply, but we are continuing in the meantime with the arrangements for embarkation, which takes place on 1 May. We have now asked the Secretary of State, to whom the text of this telegram is being repeated, to reply to our telegram tonight and repeat his reply to you.

¹ The telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs referred to is No. 119 of 30 Apr 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

125 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

125

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia

1 May 1940

The situation as set out in the Secretary of State's telegram of 30 April (No. 123), which has been repeated to you, has now been considered by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. They are in general agreement with the measures suggested in that telegram, and they propose to act accordingly. Before however advising His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to that effect they would be grateful to know the views of His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia. A very early reply would be appreciated in view of the fact that the convoy is due to sail on 2 May.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

126 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

126

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 May 1940

Thanks for your telegram. The following reply has been sent to the telegram of 30 April (No. 123) from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

Immediate consideration has been given your telegram of 30 April, but the Government feel some difficulty in arriving at a decision as to the ultimate destination of the convoy without additional information regarding the strategic considerations involved in Italy's possible entry into the war and the repercussions that this step may have in the Balkans, the Near East, the North-West frontier of India, and in the Far East.

Prior to answering your suggestion that the second and third convoys be diverted to the United Kingdom, the Commonwealth Government would like an appreciation by your Chiefs of Staff on the likely possibilities of the prospective situation, the measures required to counter probable enemy plans and to provide for security of our interests, and the zone in which an Imperial Force could co-operate most effectively. We can then see more clearly our part in the scheme of things. No doubt this information is readily available as the possibility of being confronted with an alliance of this nature has long been referred to in Committee of Imperial Defence documents.¹

The Commonwealth Government is gravely concerned at the

prospect of the 6th Division being split into parts located in Palestine and in the United Kingdom. Though this entails administrative handicaps there is also the possibility of difficulties in re-concentration from the operational point of view, and in our minds the latter is imperative. Furthermore, such a wide dispersion might contravene the fulfilment of the decision as to the theatre in which an Imperial Force should serve.

Pending the receipt of the appreciation and a decision, our view is that the second convoy should be held at Colombo for a few days, and in view of the urgency of the matter the Chief of the Naval Staff was asked to forward a signal to that effect to the Commander of the escort and the Admiralty.

In the appreciation of the Chiefs of Staff it is desired that they should traverse the considerations involved in equipping the division. As there are important local considerations which must be brought into the picture, the Australian Chiefs of Staff have also been asked to submit a similar review.

This telegram has been repeated to the New Zealand Government.

¹ The Committee of Imperial Defence, in the United Kingdom, is in effect a committee of representatives of all those State Departments which may be concerned in any way with preparations for national defence. The committee has no executive function in itself. Its conclusions take the form of recommendations to Cabinet. The closest liaison is maintained with the other Governments of the British Commonwealth. Activities are directed by a central committee, of which the Prime Minister is the only permanent member, aided by such other Ministers or officials as he cares to summon.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

127 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

127

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

1 May 1940

The Chiefs of Staff are preparing an appreciation, but it is not expected that it can be telegraphed before Friday. In the meantime, it is hoped that New Zealand arrangements for the departure of the Second Echelon will proceed.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

128 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

128

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

2 May 1940

The suggestion contained in your telegram of 30 April (No. 123), that the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force should, if circumstances require it, be diverted to the United Kingdom, has been agreed to by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. However, they have seen the telegram addressed to you by the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia,¹ and having regard to the point of view taken by His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia and the embarrassment which would result were Australia to take one course and New Zealand another, they would appreciate at the earliest possible moment tomorrow morning, New Zealand time, an expression of the opinion and the advice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. In the meantime, pending the receipt of a reply to this telegram, when they will decide the course they intend to adopt, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have determined not to alter the arrangements for the embarkation of the Second Echelon (which is now taking place) or its departure tomorrow. In making their decision they would also be greatly assisted if they could be informed of the details of the escort proposed in the case of diversion and furnished with the most explicit assurances that the safety of the convoy is fully assured.

A repetition of this telegram is being sent to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

¹ See No. 126.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

129 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

129

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

2 May 1940

Your telegram No. 127. The Second Echelon is leaving today accordingly.¹

¹ A total of 428 officers and 6410 other ranks (total 6838) sailed in the Second Echelon. The ships in which they sailed were *Aquitania*, 44,786 tons, Cunard White Star; *Empress of Britain*, 42,348 tons, Canadian- Pacific; *Empress of Japan* (now *Empress of Scotland*), 26,032 tons, Canadian- Pacific; and *Andes*, 25,676 tons, Royal Mail Line. The *Empress of Britain* was sunk on 28 Oct 1940 off the west coast of Ireland.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

130 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

130

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

2 May 1940

Further to my telegram of 1 May (No. 126). The Commonwealth Government has decided that the embarkation of the third convoy should proceed as arranged. By the time it reaches Fremantle, at the latest, the appreciation asked for from the United Kingdom Government should have been received and a decision reached by the Commonwealth Government as to the destination of the AIF. From your telegram of 1 May,² it has been noted that you did not consider the situation at present warranted postponement of the convoy's departure.

² See No. 124.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

131 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

131

The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to the Admiralty

2 May 1940

If the New Zealand Government can make the *Leander* available, the Commonwealth Government are agreeable for the escort for US 3 to consist of the *Australia* and the *Leander* between Fremantle and Capetown, if this route is used.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

132 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

132

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 May 1940

The following telegram has been received from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs in reply to my telegram of 1 May: ³

The matter was considered in Cabinet this morning. If the US 2 convoy were allowed to proceed normally beyond Colombo, it still would be possible to divert it before entering the Red Sea should the situation require it. In the circumstances we [suggest ?] that this course be followed and if, as we hope, the Commonwealth Government agree, we should be glad if they would arrange accordingly for a further signal to be sent to the Commander of the escort. As indicated in my telegram (No. 127), we hope to telegraph tomorrow the general appreciation for which you have asked.

My telegram immediately following contains the text of our reply.

³ See No. 126.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

133 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

133

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 May 1940

The following telegram has been transmitted to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

It has been noted from your telegram (No. 123) that unless the situation shows marked improvement you proposed to order convoy US 2 to be diverted before entering the Gulf of Aden. Our proposal for detention at Colombo was to safeguard ourselves against a situation in which, under certain possible circumstances, our troops might be held up indefinitely in some port with less favourable climatic and other conditions than Colombo.

Should it arise, we assume that our concurrence in the convoy proceeding as originally arranged will cover this eventuality, and the Chief of the Naval Staff has been requested, therefore, to advise the Commander of the escort as desired.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

134 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH AND NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARDS

134

The Admiralty to the Australian Commonwealth and New Zealand Naval Boards

3 May 1940

If it is found necessary to divert US 2 and US 3 to the United Kingdom via the Cape of Good Hope, the Admiralty's intentions for escort are as follows:

US 2. From the Arabian Sea to Freetown, via the Cape— *Ramillies* and *Kent*.

US 3. From Fremantle to Capetown: to rendezvous 'A' in midway position, *Canberra* and *Australia*; from rendezvous 'A' to the Cape, *Shropshire*¹ and *Australia*. From the Cape to Freetown: two 8-inch cruisers of the South Atlantic Command.

It appears from Admiralty data that the endurance of HMS *Leander* will not allow her to make the passage from Fremantle to the Cape in company of US 3 at 20 knots.² It is proposed, therefore, that in the circumstances under consideration, her future employment with the Imperial Forces should be reviewed.

The escort onward from Freetown for both convoys will not be less powerful than two 8-inch cruisers, and it will be strengthened as necessary in the light of prevailing circumstances. Anti-submarine escorts will be provided for the passage through the submarine danger area.

Their Lordships are satisfied that the convoys will be given full

security by the above measures.

¹ HMS *Shropshire*, 8-inch cruiser, 9830 tons.

² Note on telegram by Staff Officer, Operations, reads:

Fremantle to Capetown, 4700 miles approximately.

Fremantle to Durban, 4200 miles approximately.

***Leander's* endurance at 20 knots—4520 miles. (CB 1815)**

***Leander's* endurance at 18 knots—5350 miles. (CB 1815)**

[CB—Confidential Book listing warships of the British Commonwealth with details of speed, endurance, &c.]

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

135 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

135

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

4 May 1940

With reference to my telegram of 1 May (No. 127). The following is the appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff asked for:

Intervention of Italy—Should Italy decide to intervene she will probably time her entry to coincide with a new development in the West, which might be a German attack on the United Kingdom or the Western Front, or an invasion of another neutral state. Neither the Italian Army nor the Air Force is in good condition for war, and it is probable, therefore, that the Italian plan will be to use her Navy to dispute Allied control of sea communications while using the other arms for raids and diversions. The probable Italian action would be either an invasion of the Dalmatian coast or Corfu,³ which would no doubt result eventually in war with the Allies, or direct attack on Allied interests in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea.

There is also the possibility, which is regarded as being remote, that Spain might enter the war with or soon after Italy, in which case Gibraltar could not be used as a naval base and an increased naval effort would be required in the Western Mediterranean, particularly if Italy should occupy the Balearic Islands.¹

The defeat of Germany will remain our primary object, and it will be appreciated that, with our existing commitments in Norway, on the Western Front, and at Home, our first aim in the Mediterranean and in

the Middle East must be to ensure the security of Allied interests. Measures to achieve this aim will automatically cut Italy's communications with the outer seas and immediately impose economic pressure, and will also isolate her possessions in East Africa.

Measures to re-concentrate Allied naval forces in sufficient strength in the Mediterranean are now being taken—the British being generally responsible for the Eastern Basin and the French for the Western. As regards the Red Sea, we do not anticipate serious difficulty in meeting surface or submarine attack, but we consider it inadvisable in the early stages of the war to expose troop convoys to the risk of air attack from East Africa.

In addition, Allied plans provide for local offensives as soon as they can be organised; in particular, the French from Tunisia against Libya, and Allied forces from Djibouti into Abyssinia. These attacks would take time to stage. Plans are also under discussion with the French for air action against war industries in north-west Italy, which we consider would be the quickest and most effective way of bringing possibly decisive pressure to bear.

Balkans and Turkey—The situation with regard to the Balkans and the Near East will depend upon whether Italy attacks Yugoslavia or Greece, and whether Germany invades the Balkans. We shall not be able to give direct support to Yugoslavia or Greece until the threat to Allied communications through the Aegean has been countered. We hope that Turkey will join us against Italy, in which case Allied support will be provided initially through the Anatolian railway ² until communications through the Aegean can be restored. With Turkey on our side the Bosphorus will be closed to Italy and open to the Allies.

North-West Frontier of India—Russia is the only power which could seriously affect our interests here. By itself, Italian intervention would have little if any effect. The present situation in this part of the world is satisfactory and the attitude of the Afghanistan Government *vis-à-vis* Russia is reassuring. The possibility of a flare up of tribal trouble always

exists, but the army in India is fully adequate to deal with any situation in the tribal territory and Russia cannot develop a land attack on India for a long period. Air attack on a limited scale on centres in Northern India is possible and may lead to local internal security problems. We have recently equipped two Blenheim squadrons in India with fighter conversion sets, which would act as some deterrent. Russian invasion of Northern Afghanistan would be a more formidable danger. The Government of India is investigating the possibility of helping the Kabul Government to maintain authority in an emergency. The whole tendency of Russian policy, however, is to avoid being drawn into a major war after their experiences in Finland, and we regard Russian intervention against us as unlikely.

Far East—The view of the Foreign Office is that Japan's ultimate policy will be decided by the outcome of the war in the West. In the meantime Japan remains very heavily committed in China and is fearful of American policy. Her early intervention is, therefore, most unlikely. General indications are that American reactions to any Japanese aggression in the Pacific would be very strong. The Chiefs of Staff consider as very remote the possibility of direct attack on Australia or New Zealand.

Australian and New Zealand Forces—It has always been the intention that the Australian and New Zealand contingents when fully equipped should be employed according to the demands of the strategic situation, and the most likely theatres are the Near East and France. If war breaks out with Italy it is hoped that it will be possible to reconstitute the Red Sea route within the first three months. Full war scales of equipment for the Australian and New Zealand contingents will probably be ready by the middle of September. Therefore, there should be no difficulty in re-constituting a complete and fully equipped division either in Egypt or the United Kingdom by that date at the latest.

The anxiety of the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments in the event of diversion to the United Kingdom at the present time and the inherent disadvantages in the splitting of formations are realised.

However, all possible steps would be taken to reconstitute the whole expeditionary force at the earliest possible date. Meanwhile, if it is found necessary to divert US 2 and US 3 to the United Kingdom, it is suggested that liaison officers from the Australian and New Zealand forces now in Egypt be attached to these contingents. This arrangement could be made from here if the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments agree.

The possibilities of diversion to India and Kenya have been examined. With regard to India, the difficulties are the complete lack of modern training equipment and suitable accommodation for hot weather, while in Kenya there is no suitable accommodation at all. If US 2 and US 3 were diverted to either of these countries, the ultimate reconstitution and equipment of the whole of the expeditionary force would, it is thought, almost certainly be delayed.

Taking into account the above considerations it is recommended that, in the present circumstances, diversion is unnecessary and that the convoys should adhere to their programme. The situation is being watched from day to day and the Admiralty would issue orders for diversion if the situation should demand it at any time. In that event diversion to the United Kingdom is recommended.

In the event of diversion the Admiralty is telegraphing separate arrangements for escort and security.

³ A Greek island in the Adriatic, off the western coast of Greece and about seventy miles from the heel of Italy.

¹ The Balearic Islands of Minorca and Majorca are Spanish territory.

² The principal and central Turkish railway, which would provide a rail link to the east and with Syria and Palestine to the south. Smyrna is the principal terminal on the Mediterranean coast.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

136 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

136

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia

5 May 1940

Preliminary consideration has now been given to the Secretary of State's telegram of 4 May (No. 135). Some difficulty has been found in reconciling the statement contained in the Secretary of State's telegram of 30 April (No. 123) that 'unless the situation shows marked improvement' convoys US 2 and US 3 should be diverted, with the recommendation contained in the telegram now under consideration that 'in the present circumstances diversion is unnecessary and that the convoys should adhere to their programme.' However, we are content for our part to allow convoy US 3 to proceed as originally arranged, subject, firstly, to our being kept most closely informed as to developments as they occur; secondly, to the decision as to the ultimate destination being made by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand after considering the views of the Admiralty and of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and to our being given an opportunity at the appropriate time of making that decision with the full facts then available; and, thirdly, to our being satisfied as to the adequacy of the escort proposed, in case of diversion, from Capetown onwards, as to which we are at present not without doubt.

We should be glad to have the views of His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia before advising His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to the above effect.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

137 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

137

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

9 May 1940

With reference to your telegram of 5 May (No. 136), it is suggested that most close contact be maintained on this matter. The following telegram has been sent to the United Kingdom Government:

The appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff contained in your telegram (No. 135) has been fully considered by the War Cabinet, and, in so far as matters calling for immediate decision are concerned, the following are our conclusions and observations:

Route and Destination of Convoy and Escorts

In the present circumstances it is noted that the diversion of convoys US 2 and US 3 is not considered necessary and, subject to later observations, we agree to the convoys adhering to their programmes. In reaching this decision the Commonwealth Government assume that, should war with Italy eventuate after either convoy has entered the Red Sea, the protection provided or readily available will be such as to reasonably ensure the security of the convoys against sea and air attacks whilst *en route* to their destination. It has been noted that the Chiefs of Staff do not anticipate any serious difficulty in meeting surface or submarine attacks, but consider it inadvisable to expose troop convoys to the risk of air attack from East Africa in the early stages of the war.

In regard to diversion, it is noted that the situation is being watched from day to day, that the Admiralty would issue orders for diversion if the situation should demand it at any time, and that diversion to the United Kingdom is recommended. As immediate action may be a vital factor in the safety of a convoy, we concur in action along these lines, but we desire that any such decision should be communicated forthwith for our information and concurrence and that we should be kept fully informed on the trend of the situation. In agreeing to diversion via the Cape, the Commonwealth Government again assume that the escort arrangements both to Capetown and thence onward will ensure the security of both [convoys?] in respect of surface craft and submarines.

Equipping and Re-concentration of Australian Imperial Force

With some concern the Commonwealth Government note the statement in your telegram of 30 April (No. 123) that if war with Italy were to break out subsequent to the arrival of the contingents in Egypt there might be considerable difficulty in equipping our troops as the necessary material has to come from United Kingdom sources.

It will be recalled that the High Commissioner, in accordance with cabled directions on 26 January, ¹ made representations on the situation in the Near East and the Middle East, the possibility of employment of Australian [troops?] on active operations, and the anticipated rate of provision of modern weapons and equipment. In view of the statement quoted we would urge that the utmost expediency be used in fully equipping our troops, the present forecast of which is given as the middle of September.

Should diversion of the convoys to the United Kingdom become necessary the Commonwealth Government stress the importance of re-constituting the whole expeditionary force at the earliest possible moment and note your assurance that this will be done.

Ultimate Theatre of Employment

It is indicated by the Chiefs of Staff that the most likely theatres for the employment of the Australian Imperial Force are the Near East and France. When the training and equipping of the force has reached a stage to enable it to take the field you will no doubt raise this aspect again.

¹ Not available.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

9 MAY 1940

9 May 1940

With reference to your telegram of 5 May (No. 136), it is suggested that most close contact be maintained on this matter. The following telegram has been sent to the United Kingdom Government:

The appreciation by the Chiefs of Staff contained in your telegram (No. 135) has been fully considered by the War Cabinet, and, in so far as matters calling for immediate decision are concerned, the following are our conclusions and observations:

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

ROUTE AND DESTINATION OF CONVOY AND ESCORTS

Route and Destination of Convoy and Escorts

In the present circumstances it is noted that the diversion of convoys US 2 and US 3 is not considered necessary and, subject to later observations, we agree to the convoys adhering to their programmes. In reaching this decision the Commonwealth Government assume that, should war with Italy eventuate after either convoy has entered the Red Sea, the protection provided or readily available will be such as to reasonably ensure the security of the convoys against sea and air attacks whilst *en route* to their destination. It has been noted that the Chiefs of Staff do not anticipate any serious difficulty in meeting surface or submarine attacks, but consider it inadvisable to expose troop convoys to the risk of air attack from East Africa in the early stages of the war.

In regard to diversion, it is noted that the situation is being watched from day to day, that the Admiralty would issue orders for diversion if the situation should demand it at any time, and that diversion to the United Kingdom is recommended. As immediate action may be a vital factor in the safety of a convoy, we concur in action along these lines, but we desire that any such decision should be communicated forthwith for our information and concurrence and that we should be kept fully informed on the trend of the situation. In agreeing to diversion via the Cape, the Commonwealth Government again assume that the escort arrangements both to Capetown and thence onward will ensure the security of both [convoys?] in respect of surface craft and submarines.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

EQUIPPING AND RE-CONCENTRATION OF AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

Equipping and Re-concentration of Australian Imperial Force

With some concern the Commonwealth Government note the statement in your telegram of 30 April (No. 123) that if war with Italy were to break out subsequent to the arrival of the contingents in Egypt there might be considerable difficulty in equipping our troops as the necessary material has to come from United Kingdom sources.

It will be recalled that the High Commissioner, in accordance with cabled directions on 26 January,¹ made representations on the situation in the Near East and the Middle East, the possibility of employment of Australian [troops?] on active operations, and the anticipated rate of provision of modern weapons and equipment. In view of the statement quoted we would urge that the utmost expediency be used in fully equipping our troops, the present forecast of which is given as the middle of September.

Should diversion of the convoys to the United Kingdom become necessary the Commonwealth Government stress the importance of re-constituting the whole expeditionary force at the earliest possible moment and note your assurance that this will be done.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

ULTIMATE THEATRE OF EMPLOYMENT

Ultimate Theatre of Employment

It is indicated by the Chiefs of Staff that the most likely theatres for the employment of the Australian Imperial Force are the Near East and France. When the training and equipping of the force has reached a stage to enable it to take the field you will no doubt raise this aspect again.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

138 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

138

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

9 May 1940

The opportunity of perusing the views of the Chiefs of Staff, as set out in your telegram of 4 May (No. 135) is warmly appreciated by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. They are content to allow convoy US 3 to proceed as originally arranged subject, firstly, to their being kept most closely informed as to developments as they occur; secondly, to the decision as to the ultimate destination being made by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand after considering the views of the Admiralty and of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and to their being given an opportunity, at the appropriate time, of making that decision with the full facts then available (this condition, of course, applies only to the ultimate destination and would in no way preclude the Admiralty from ordering any alteration in course, if and when this appeared necessary for the safety of the convoy); and, thirdly, to their being satisfied as to the adequacy of the escort proposed, in the case of diversion, from Capetown onwards, as to which they are at present not without anxiety. If diversion is decided upon they would appreciate a review of the position as regards escort in the light of potential enemy dispositions at that time. In the absence of intimation to the contrary, they assume that if US 3 is not diverted no diminution will be made in the escort proposed from Australia to Aden—namely, two 8-inch cruisers and one 6-inch cruiser to the Cocos Islands, and one 8-inch cruiser and two 6-inch cruisers from the Cocos Islands to Aden.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

139 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

139

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 May 1940

We are grateful for your telegram of 9 May (No. 138). Should the situation require diversion the New Zealand Government will be communicated with as desired. Your assumption in the last sentence is confirmed.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

140 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

140

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

15 May 1940

With reference to my telegram of 11 May (No. 139).

Today the War Cabinet have considered the position in regard to US 3 and they have concluded that in view of the present situation in relation to Italy it would be inadvisable for the convoy to proceed towards the Middle East. Accordingly, arrangements are being made for diversion towards Capetown.

As regards the ultimate destination, it is felt that for the reasons described in my telegram of 30 April (No. 123) it would be desirable for the contingents to proceed to the United Kingdom, and it is hoped this will be agreeable to the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments. It is the intention that the escort will be maintained at its present strength as far as Capetown, except that the 6-inch cruiser will have to be withdrawn on account of fuel endurance. The arrangements for onward escort are at present under consideration, and full particulars of proposals will be communicated as soon as possible together with a short appreciation of the factors on which they are based.

It is understood that two vessels ¹ have Chinese crews who decline to proceed into the Atlantic, but this difficulty can be met by the transfer at Capetown of the troops at present on these ships to other ships of the convoy in which accommodation can be provided without undue overcrowding. This would ensure the minimum delay at Capetown and

that the troops would be able to reach the United Kingdom in one body.

¹ Transport X 5, *Empress of Canada*, and transport X 6,
Empress of Japan.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

141 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO)

141

*The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to Headquarters
2nd NZEF (Cairo)*

15 May 1940

Diversion of the convoy to **Capetown** has been decided on. The War Office suggest that you may desire key personnel now in Egypt to join the convoy *en route* or be available on arrival at the new destination. The War Office will endeavour to arrange accordingly. Immediate information as to details of personnel to be moved is requested.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

142 – HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND

142

Headquarters 2nd NZEF to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

15 May 1940

The following is for Brigadier Park, Military Liaison Officer:

Does your telegram mean that the destination is Capetown or Great Britain? If the latter, please advise if all future New Zealand troops are to concentrate and train there?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

143 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF

143

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEF

16 May 1940

My telegram (No. 141) meant diversion to Capetown, the eventual destination being the United Kingdom. If the Red Sea route is considered safe at the time of departure of the Third Echelon the present intention is ultimately to concentrate the whole Division in the Middle East.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

144 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

144

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

16 May 1940

The proposal contained in your telegram of 15 May (No. 140) to divert convoy US 3 to the United Kingdom is agreed to by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. On the information available to them, however, they cannot feel that it would be possible to transfer the troops from the ships not proceeding beyond Capetown to the remaining vessels of the New Zealand portion of the convoy, and His Majesty's Government in New Zealand presume that all proper steps will be taken to provide suitable and healthy accommodation, and that suitable additional shipping will be supplied if this accommodation cannot be found from the remaining ships of the convoy.

This telegram has been repeated to Australia.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

145 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

145

The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to the Admiralty

16 May 1940

With reference to ACNB 0207Z, 3 May, to Director of Sea Transport ¹ regarding the probable hold-up of X 5 and X 6 at Capetown owing to trouble with the Asiatic crew.

Following receipt of the message (No. 140) from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs proposing the transfer of troops at Capetown from X 5 and X 6 to the other five ships of US 3 for

¹ Not published. In this telegram the opinion was expressed that the Chinese crew of these transports would refuse to go beyond Capetown if the convoy were diverted to the United Kingdom.

onward passage to the United Kingdom, we understand that the Commonwealth Government is averse to the consequent overcrowding and other problems such as life-saving equipment, messing, and fresh water. In order to avoid these difficulties we propose that the *Orcades*, ¹ due at Colombo homeward bound on 17 May, fitted for 1600, and the *Strathnaver*, ² due at Aden homeward bound on 17 May, fitted for 1500, be diverted and ordered to proceed at best speed to Capetown, where they could arrive about 27 May and 26 May respectively. Both ships have a small number of passengers and full cargo for the Mediterranean and the United Kingdom.

The convoy is due at Capetown on 26 May. If you concur with this

proposal, we request that immediate steps be taken to arrange diversion.

This telegram is repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.

¹ Orient Line, 23,456 tons; sunk by enemy U-boat off the Cape of Good Hope, 10 Oct 1942.

² Peninsular and Oriental Line, 22,283 tons.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

146 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

146

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 May 1940

Your telegram of 16 May (No. 144). The following telegram has been despatched to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

The wisdom of diverting US 3 to the United Kingdom is still causing His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia some doubts, and before agreeing to this course, which would mean the splitting of our forces, they would appreciate early advice of the possibility of completing the training of the troops in North-West India.

If the estimate given in your cable of 4 May (No. 135), that the Red Sea route can be re-constituted within the first three months of the war with Italy is borne out, training could be carried out during this time and there would appear to be no difficulty in re-establishing the division when the Red Sea is clear.

Would you therefore please advise us of the capacity of India to accommodate, train, and equip these troops, and whether such a course holds any advantages in the release of British troops in India for service in other theatres. In addition, we would like to receive your views on the alternative of training in South Africa should the Government of that Dominion be willing for the troops to embark [disembark?] there.

This telegram has been repeated to South Africa and to New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

147 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

147

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

17 May 1940

Your telegram of 15 May (No. 140). His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have now received advice of the Australian suggestion that the *Orcades* and *Strathnaver* be used to obviate difficulties of overcrowding, &c., from Capetown onwards, and they give warm support to this suggestion.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

148 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

148

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

17 May 1940

The suggestion that it might be possible to complete the training of the troops in North-West India or the Union of South Africa has been considered and the following is the position as seen here:

INDIA— Accommodation: There are not enough barracks suitable for white troops in any one neighbourhood to allow the concentration of the Australian and New Zealand troops. It is improbable that sufficient suitable barracks could be found even if the desirability of concentration was ignored. There are serious medical objections to white troops remaining under canvas during the hot weather or the rainy season, and this is the only alternative.

Training: It would be impracticable to carry out training, other than individual training, during the hot weather. The Australian and New Zealand troops have been under training for some three months at least and would require now to be carrying out more advanced training.

Equipment: Both full scale and training scale of equipment would have to be provided from the United Kingdom as neither could be supplied from India. This would entail a delay of some two months even in the most favourable shipping situation. At present, with some few exceptions, Australian and New Zealand troops are without any other equipment than rifles.

Role in India: The acceptance of Australian and New Zealand troops

in order to reduce the British garrisons in India is not considered practicable because, firstly, these troops would have to be equipped before they could be employed in an active role, and, secondly, any removal of British troops would involve their eventual replacement later on the departure of the Australian and New Zealand troops, since no permanent reduction in the numbers of British troops in India could be accepted.

In addition to the points enumerated above, a diversion to India would delay in any case the date of readiness of the Australian and New Zealand troops for operations in European theatres of war.

SOUTH AFRICA—It would be for His Majesty's Government in South Africa to say whether suitable accommodation exists and could be made available, but the equipment situation would be the same as for India except that it could be provided with a little less delay. We greatly hope in these circumstances, as well as on general grounds, that His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia ¹ will be willing that the troops should proceed to this country.

¹ This telegram was addressed to the Governments of Australia and South Africa as well as to New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

149 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

149

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

17 May 1940

With reference to your telegrams of 16 May (No. 144) and 17 May (No. 147). Consideration has been given to the possibility of utilising the *Orcades* and *Strathnaver*, but it is regretted that they cannot be made available as they are required for other urgent war purposes. No other suitable vessels are available at present, or could be made available within a reasonable period, without serious interference with war requirements. It is not felt that the arrangement described in my telegram (No. 140) would involve appreciable discomfort, and it is also considered that the conditions on board will be entirely suitable and healthy. Adequate water will be available for the increased numbers, and additional life-saving appliances will be put on board at *Capetown*. In the past some of the vessels have carried considerably larger numbers of troops than those now proposed. Having regard to the present most difficult shipping situation, we very much hope that, in the circumstances, the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments will agree to the course proposed.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

150 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND – [EXTRACT]

150

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General
of New Zealand*

[Extract]

19 May 1940

Circular daily war telegram.¹

An enemy raider may be at sea in the South Atlantic. The indications are mines off Cape Agulhas, the sighting of a suspicious ship on 2 May, and the fact that the British SS *Scientist* (6199 tons),² which left Durban on 27 April, is overdue. Two German merchant ships, which may be acting as supply ships, have escaped, one from Azores and the other from the Canaries.

¹ Daily war telegrams on the progress of the war were sent by the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to each of the Dominion Governments.

² Sunk by the German merchant raider *Atlantis* in the South Atlantic on 3 May 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

151 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

151

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

20 May 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, in the light of the considerations set out in your telegrams of 17 May (Nos. 148 and 149), are prepared to agree to the proposals for the diversion of convoy US 3 to the United Kingdom and for the necessary adjustments in accommodation contemplated. They trust, however, that every possibility of providing suitable accommodation will be explored and that the best arrangements possible will be made, having regard both to the comfort and the health of the troops. In view of the reference in your daily war telegram of 19 May (No. 150) to the possibility of a German raider being abroad in the vicinity of South Africa, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand continue to hold some anxiety as to the safety of the convoy and presume that, with a view to strengthening the escort if necessary, this aspect of the matter is being most carefully watched.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

152 – GENERAL FREYBERG (CAIRO) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

152

General Freyberg (Cairo) to the Minister of Defence

22 May 1940

As complete arrangements have been made here for its reception and training, I regret the decision to send the Second Echelon to England. Now that the decision has been made and the Division is to be split, the whole policy of ultimate concentration can be reconsidered in the light of active operations upon the Western Front. There is no hurry for a decision on this matter as Falla and MacCormick will make a complete plan, but no financial commitments, for the Division based upon England. Then we need only implement sufficient for the Second Echelon.

I have done all I can to reduce commitments here consequent upon smaller numbers through the hot months. The hospital at **Helwan** will now be taken over by British Troops in Egypt and not by us.

MacCormick's move necessitates, and I have arranged, Kenrick ¹ being diverted from **Capetown** as the medical situation in **Cairo** needs first-class administration. Arrangements for a convalescent home have been discontinued as it is cheaper to handle individual cases than to launch out upon hiring and equipping a new convalescent home. The bath at **Helwan** [costing?] £1200 has been finished but I have cancelled the filtration plant. I will endeavour to get the bath taken over by War Department funds.

The changed plans will necessitate sending at once by air a small administration staff to the **United Kingdom** to make arrangements for the reception, accommodation, and comfort of the Second Echelon, followed by myself and a small training staff. I do not intend to leave

here until the last minute and will return as soon as the training of the Second Echelon has progressed sufficiently. There seems to be no alternative to these plans. Cable if you approve.

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel (later Brigadier) H. S. Kenrick, CB, CBE, ED, succeeded Brigadier MacCormick first as Assistant Director of Medical Services, 2nd NZEF, and later as Director.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

153 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

153

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

25 May 1940

Your telegram of 22 May (No. 152).

The decision to divert the convoy was made by the authorities in the United Kingdom because of the danger of the transports being subjected to attack should Italy enter the war.

I concur with your arrangements regarding MacCormick and Kenrick and the proposals relating to the Helwan bath. I also agree with the suggested plans for the reception, accommodation, and training of the Second Echelon.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

154 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

154

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

27 May 1940

My telegram of 15 May (No. 140).

While in the South Atlantic the Admiralty intend escorting US 3 by HMS *Cumberland*¹ and HMS *Shropshire*.

Reliable evidence indicates that no German surface warships were outside Home waters on 18 May, and in particular that both pocket battleships were then undergoing repairs. Therefore, it is highly probable that the raider now believed to be at large is of a disguised merchant ship type against which one 8-inch cruiser would be more than a match.

It is the intention that the next port of call should be Freetown, where adequate surface and air anti-submarine patrols are in force, although there is no evidence that German submarines have as yet attempted to proceed so far afield.

With regard to possible Italian intervention, it is known that all Italian surface warships are in the Mediterranean or the Red Sea area. The Straits of Gibraltar are closely patrolled against the possible passage of submarines, and even should hostilities commence against Italy in the immediate future, it is not considered that there would be any necessity to divert the convoy to Trinidad.

The arrangements for escort from Freetown onward will be considered later.

¹ HMS *Cumberland*, 8-inch cruiser, 10,000 tons.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

155 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

155

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

29 May 1940

With reference to your telegram of 20 May (No. 151), it has now been found possible to arrange for one of the two convoy vessels which were to be withdrawn to proceed with US 3. ¹

¹ An undated naval message on a Prime Minister's Department file reads: '*Empress of Canada* gone on. Chinese replaced by New Zealand naval draft and others.' In a message to the Chief of the General Staff on 31 May Brigadier Hargest reported: 'Accommodation on the trans-shipment satisfactory under emergency conditions. Health good.'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

156 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)

156

General Freyberg to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

29 May 1940

The following message is for Brigadier Falla:

Please keep me posted regarding any developments. Where do the Second Echelon concentrate? Please ensure that all arrangements are reported where necessary to this headquarters for approval and are not discussed or entered into with New Zealand direct. Will you pass this on to Hargest² and Barrowclough³ in due course?

² Brigadier James Hargest, CBE, DSO, MC, VD; commanded 5th New Zealand Infantry Brigade until taken prisoner of war at Sidi Azeiz in Nov 1941; escaped Mar 1943, with Brigadier Miles, from prison camp near Florence and reached Switzerland; later reached United Kingdom via France and Spain; killed in action in Normandy in Aug 1944 while acting as an observer with the 50th (Northumbrian) Division.

³ Major-General H. E. Barrowclough, CB, DSO, MC, ED; commanded a composite force of New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom in 1940; commanded 6th New Zealand Infantry Brigade in Greece and Libya in 1941; returned to New Zealand in 1942 and was GOC 2nd NZEF in the Pacific and GOC 3rd New Zealand Division, 8 Aug 1942–20 Oct 1944.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

157 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

157

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

31 May 1940

Owing to the proximity of Colchester to the present theatre of war, the Eastern Command in England is now organised as a war area, necessitating the dispersion of units. Falla cables:

Owing to the situation I have arranged provisional accommodation for one battalion at Harwich, one battalion at Frinton, the Artillery and Engineers at Reedhall, Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Army Medical Corps at Romanway, and the remainder under canvas, the Maori Battalion at Berechurch and one battalion at Wivenhoe.

Both from a training and disciplinary point of view this arrangement is a thoroughly bad one for us; further, Essex is now in a bad area for air attacks. Therefore, I have wired Falla as follows:

Cannot agree to the arrangements suggested for the Second Echelon. Tell the War Office that although I am sure that the New Zealand Government wish to help in the way most acceptable to the British war effort, especially at the present moment, I would point out that the collective training of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is already grievously interfered with by lack of equipment and the separation of the Second Echelon from the First. The arrangement suggested in the Eastern Command is bad for discipline and will further hamper training for war. I would therefore press to concentrate the Second Echelon in the Southern Command, with preference at Hungerford. I am communicating with the New Zealand Government.

I hope this action has your approval.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

158 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

158

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

1 June 1940

The New Zealand Government are greatly disturbed to learn from General Freyberg that it is now proposed that the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force on arrival in the United Kingdom is to be widely dispersed and not concentrated as previously arranged. The exigencies of the situation are fully realised, but they feel that they must ask His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to do what is possible to make more suitable arrangements than those that are apparently proposed, and especially to make every effort to accommodate the echelon as far as possible in one body and in a suitable locality.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

159 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

159

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

1 June 1940

The Government is in full agreement with the views contained in your telegram of 31 May (No. 157) as to the accommodation of the Second Echelon in England, and they have sent the following telegram to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom:

[Text of telegram No. 158]

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

160 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

160

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

4 June 1940

The serious shortage of all training equipment in England for some time, due to the re-equipment of the **British Expeditionary Force**, and the inadvisability of Colchester for concentration are disclosed in the attached exchange of cables with Brigadier Falla:

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEF

1 June. Following from Falla: ¹ Your telegram of 31 May. ² Your wishes have been communicated to the **War Office** who have advised that training equipment is limited to an approximate scale as below, and this will be provided only after the re-equipment requirements of the **British Expeditionary Force** have been met; unless the contingent is in a battle area there is no prospect of increasing these scales: motor transport—minimum amount for administration only; Bren guns—lower training scale; antitank rifles—ten per battalion; mortars, 2-inch—three per battalion, 3-inch—one per battalion; 2-pounder anti-tank gun—two per regiment; field artillery—six drill-purpose guns and carriages per regiment; pistols—84 for the contingent; Engineers—lower training scale; Signals—interim training scale; Medical—hospital and field ambulance equipped to war establishment if in a troop area, otherwise field ambulance only equipped on lower training scale. The prospect of the New Zealand contingent going to Colchester is welcomed by Eastern Command as the present stage of training of the contingent will be much in advance of other units available there.

¹ Brigadier Falla's normal channel of communication with

General Freyberg, while the latter was still in the Middle East, was through the office of the New Zealand High Commissioner in the United Kingdom.

² See No. 157.

Headquarters 2nd NZEF to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

2 June. Following for Brigadier Falla: The issues raised in your telegram must be considered carefully. Will you telegraph at once if going to Colchester will enable the contingent to be concentrated in the town, using existing barracks. The suggestion put forward in your telegram of the 30th ¹ is quite unworkable. An answer to this is urgently wanted before a decision can be made. Referring to the scale of equipment, will you let us know when the approximate scale mentioned will be available and when the equipment for collective training will be issued; also, when are the Second Echelon expected in the United Kingdom?

¹ See No. 157 of 31 May.

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEF

3 June. Your telegram of 2 June. Following from Falla: Tactical considerations rule out the Colchester area. Concentration in town and barracks is considered unsound because of the risk of bombing. Harwich and Frinton were indicated for urgent garrison requirements. The War Office appreciation follows. The only definite information available is that the contingent is due at Freetown on 7 June. I will reply later regarding equipment.

Headquarters 2nd NZEF to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

3 June. Following for Brigadier Falla: As a permanent base the

Colchester area is definitely out of the question. My Government now want to concentrate the Second Echelon in Southern Command. Will you therefore discuss the question with Colonel Allen, who knows all areas, and make the best arrangement possible with the War Office? Any arrangements made must visualise a complete base for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in barracks or huttet camp, together with a concentration area capable of taking the Second Echelon and with possible expansion for further troops. The area should be adjacent to good training areas and musketry facilities; tents are preferred to billets.

The situation disclosed seems thoroughly unsatisfactory. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force is split up with no policy to reunite, particularly the First Echelon, which apparently has been relegated to garrison duties in Cairo owing to the absence of mobilisation equipment, while the Second Echelon appears worse off than the First, with no likelihood of taking its rightful place in the field. Further, as no decision as to the final destination has yet been made, no plans can be made for the base organisation. In spite of the equipment situation disclosed in Falla's cable, I have replied asking that the Second Echelon should concentrate if possible in Southern Command.

Until the Italian situation is clarified, the separation of the First and Second Echelons must now be accepted, and it is for your consideration whether the present policy of keeping the New Zealand troops out of action until the Division is concentrated should be temporarily abandoned. That both echelons will be kept low on the priority list for equipment and employed in garrison duties seems to be the alternative. This would have an adverse effect on the men now that active operations have commenced. If Italy does not enter into the war, or the situation in the Mediterranean or the Red Sea is cleared up, I advise that the First and Second Echelons be concentrated in England at the first opportunity with early despatch to France if another brigade can be made available by the War Office or the Australians in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

4 JUNE 1940

4 June 1940

The serious shortage of all training equipment in England for some time, due to the re-equipment of the British Expeditionary Force, and the inadvisability of Colchester for concentration are disclosed in the attached exchange of cables with Brigadier Falla:

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEFT

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEFT

1 June. Following from Falla: ¹ Your telegram of 31 May. ² Your wishes have been communicated to the War Office who have advised that training equipment is limited to an approximate scale as below, and this will be provided only after the re-equipment requirements of the British Expeditionary Force have been met; unless the contingent is in a battle area there is no prospect of increasing these scales: motor transport—minimum amount for administration only; Bren guns—lower training scale; antitank rifles—ten per battalion; mortars, 2-inch—three per battalion, 3-inch—one per battalion; 2-pounder anti-tank gun—two per regiment; field artillery—six drill-purpose guns and carriages per regiment; pistols—84 for the contingent; Engineers—lower training scale; Signals—interim training scale; Medical—hospital and field ambulance equipped to war establishment if in a troop area, otherwise field ambulance only equipped on lower training scale. The prospect of the New Zealand contingent going to Colchester is welcomed by Eastern Command as the present stage of training of the contingent will be much in advance of other units available there.

¹ Brigadier Falla's normal channel of communication with General Freyberg, while the latter was still in the Middle East, was through the office of the New Zealand High Commissioner in the United Kingdom.

² See No. 157.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND

Headquarters 2nd NZEF to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

2 June. Following for Brigadier Falla: The issues raised in your telegram must be considered carefully. Will you telegraph at once if going to Colchester will enable the contingent to be concentrated in the town, using existing barracks. The suggestion put forward in your telegram of the 30th ¹ is quite unworkable. An answer to this is urgently wanted before a decision can be made. Referring to the scale of equipment, will you let us know when the approximate scale mentioned will be available and when the equipment for collective training will be issued; also, when are the Second Echelon expected in the United Kingdom?

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEFT

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEFT

3 June. Your telegram of 2 June. Following from Falla: Tactical considerations rule out the Colchester area. Concentration in town and barracks is considered unsound because of the risk of bombing. Harwich and Frinton were indicated for urgent garrison requirements. The War Office appreciation follows. The only definite information available is that the contingent is due at Freetown on 7 June. I will reply later regarding equipment.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND

Headquarters 2nd NZEF to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

3 June. Following for Brigadier Falla: As a permanent base the Colchester area is definitely out of the question. My Government now want to concentrate the Second Echelon in Southern Command. Will you therefore discuss the question with Colonel Allen, who knows all areas, and make the best arrangement possible with the War Office? Any arrangements made must visualise a complete base for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in barracks or huttet camp, together with a concentration area capable of taking the Second Echelon and with possible expansion for further troops. The area should be adjacent to good training areas and musketry facilities; tents are preferred to billets.

The situation disclosed seems thoroughly unsatisfactory. The New Zealand Expeditionary Force is split up with no policy to reunite, particularly the First Echelon, which apparently has been relegated to garrison duties in Cairo owing to the absence of mobilisation equipment, while the Second Echelon appears worse off than the First, with no likelihood of taking its rightful place in the field. Further, as no decision as to the final destination has yet been made, no plans can be made for the base organisation. In spite of the equipment situation disclosed in Falla's cable, I have replied asking that the Second Echelon should concentrate if possible in Southern Command.

Until the Italian situation is clarified, the separation of the First and Second Echelons must now be accepted, and it is for your consideration whether the present policy of keeping the New Zealand troops out of action until the Division is concentrated should be temporarily abandoned. That both echelons will be kept low on the priority list for

equipment and employed in garrison duties seems to be the alternative. This would have an adverse effect on the men now that active operations have commenced. If Italy does not enter into the war, or the situation in the Mediterranean or the Red Sea is cleared up, I advise that the First and Second Echelons be concentrated in England at the first opportunity with early despatch to France if another brigade can be made available by the War Office or the Australians in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

161 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

161

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

6 June 1940

As a result of recent developments, the appreciation as to the intervention of Italy contained in my telegram of 4 May (No. 135), has now been reviewed and it is thought that the first two paragraphs might now be revised to read as follows:

As Italy's Navy is in better condition for war than Italy's Army or Air Force, the probable Italian plan would be to use the Navy to dispute Allied control of sea communications, while using other arms for raids and diversions which may be on a major scale. The probable Italian action would be either a direct attack on Allied interests and possessions in the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, or invasion of the Dalmatian coast or Corfu.

The appreciation still holds good in other respects.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

162 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO BRIGADIER R. MILES – [EXTRACT]

162

*Letter from General Freyberg to Brigadier R. Miles
[Extract]*

6 June 1940

MY DEAR MILES,

Many thanks for your personal and secret letter of 30 May.... ¹ You will, of course, have been in touch with Falla and will know what we feel here and what the Government in New Zealand feel about dispersal and going to the training area in the Eastern Command. First and foremost we are, in my opinion, a division training for war. We should not let anything interfere with that, and we should resist to the utmost any effort that may be made to turn us into garrison troops for England. Secondly, I may be quite wrong, but I cannot believe that Hitler or the Germans intend to attempt an invasion of England. If they do it would be an excellent thing for the Allies. In any case we have rightly decided to concentrate in the Southern Command. It is an ideal area from our point of view. We shall have a show of our own in most delightful surroundings, and the troops, I am sure, will love the country and the town.

With regard to the points you raise about operational command, I am in entire agreement with you. Had I realised the situation I should have sent you fully prepared. You will take command of the troops, and I think you should establish Headquarters which can function in the event of their using the Second Echelon as a striking force, but I strongly urge you to resist any attempt at dispersion. The force should be used as a force. I am sending to you orders in writing, and I am

sending to Hargest and you notes on training. Both Stewart and I hope to be Home before very long, but in common with others we want to see this Italian situation cleared up one way or the other. There are one or two interesting developments which I cannot put on paper. However, all appears to be going well.

Yours sincerely,

¹ Brigadier Miles's letter is not published. In it the dispersal of the force in the United Kingdom and the question of command were discussed. A personal message from General Freyberg has been omitted from this letter.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

163 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

163

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

6 June 1940

Advice has been received from Falla that two areas have been offered to accommodate the Second Echelon—Winchester, in billets, or Aldershot, in tents. The War Office advise leaving the question of a base for decision later. I am against Aldershot because it would mix us up with the Canadians; further, Aldershot is theoretically (?) dangerous point [because of] enemy bombing. On the other hand, Winchester has a very good training area, a good train service, and excellent conditions for the men. Have cabled Falla to make arrangements for Winchester as the Second Echelon arrives on the 16th. Will you cable if you approve?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

164 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

164

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

7 June 1940

Your arrangements for Winchester are approved.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

165 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

165

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

7 June 1940

The following has been received from Falla:

After further reconnaissance the War Office have advised that it is now found impracticable to accommodate the New Zealand contingent in the Winchester area and that arrangements are being made, therefore, to receive it at Aldershot; no alternative but to agree.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

166 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

166

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

7 June 1940

The Admiralty have had the position in relation to the onward passage of US 3 from Freetown under consideration. The general situation remains as indicated in my telegram of 27 May (No. 154).

HMS *Resolution*¹ and HMS *Arethusa*² will be stationed at Gibraltar before the convoy leaves Freetown, and for the last part of the passage units of the Home Fleet will provide cover. In the present circumstances, and with these additional measures of security, it is considered that ocean escort by HMS *Shropshire* and HMS *Cumberland* will afford adequate protection, but a destroyer screen and air reconnaissance will be provided during the passage through the submarine zone. If a change in the situation should so require, means are available to reinforce the ocean escort.

The convoy will pass to the west of Ireland and is destined for the Clyde.

¹ HMS *Resolution*, battleship, 29,150 tons, eight 15-inch guns.

² HMS *Arethusa*, 6-inch cruiser, 5220 tons.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

167 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

167

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

8 June 1940

The arrangements proposed for the escort of US 3 during its onward passage from Freetown, as set out in your telegram of 7 June (No. 166), have been noted with interest and appreciation by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. They note the assurance that the escort proposed is adequate and assume that, in the light of the potentialities of the immediate future, His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom will keep the situation constantly under review, so that should a change in the situation so require the escort can be reinforced immediately.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

168 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

168

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

8 June 1940

We regret to learn from your telegram of 1 June (No. 158) of the concern felt by the New Zealand Government. We feel that there must have been some misunderstanding as to what has been contemplated. The position is that arrangements had been made for the troops to be stationed in the Colchester area as it was understood from the New Zealand authorities in London that this area was preferred. However, in the existing conditions, operational reasons would have prevented the full concentration of the Second Echelon if stationed in that area, and the War Office accordingly consulted the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, who agreed that in the circumstances an alternative area to Colchester should be found. The War Office are now in further communication with General Freyberg with a view to deciding upon an alternative area affording suitable training facilities without dispersion, and they expect to reach a decision at an early date.

We are certain that the above will prove satisfactory to the New Zealand Government.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

169 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

169

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

8 June 1940

Your telegram of 7 June (No. 165). It is regretted that Winchester cannot now be made available, and if in your opinion no better arrangements can be made in the meantime we feel with you that we must reluctantly agree to the proposal to accommodate the contingent at Aldershot in the hope that an improvement can be made as the opportunity offers.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

170 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

170

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

8 June 1940

The following message has been received from Falla:

Aldershot reconnoitred today; with a view to facilitating training a generally satisfactory camp has been selected. The Artillery are at Bourley, the infantry, Royal Corps of Signals, and administrative headquarters at Mytchett, Maoris and Medical at Ewshot, Army Service Corps and Engineers at Eelmoor.

I have looked up the areas and they seem quite suitable. Anyway, as no other arrangements are possible it would appear that we must agree.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

171 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER

171

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister

12 June 1940

As Britain is a war zone the War Office intimates that the troops here will be under local command and not under the commander in Egypt. You will be advised officially.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

172 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

172

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

12 June 1940

The Dominion Governments will have appreciated that the success of the German attack in northern France has produced a situation in which, possibly in the near future, an attempted invasion of this country has to be taken very seriously into account with practical effects on the disposition of all military forces available in the United Kingdom.

Hitherto, the policy which it had been hoped to follow in respect of Dominion troops while training in this country was to allocate them to areas selected primarily on the grounds of suitability for training purposes, and entirely without reference to the possibility of the troops in question having to be used as part of the country's available defence.

Because of the altered situation with which we are now faced it has been necessary to reconsider the disposition of the Australian and New Zealand contingents which will very shortly be arriving in this country. It had been hoped, of course, to locate these contingents, and to make all other arrangements connected with their arrival here, with the continuation of their training solely in view, and the eventual completion of self-contained and fully trained Australian and New Zealand higher formations. As the situation now is, it is necessary to make such arrangements for the location of the contingents as will best suit the needs of the time. All efforts will of course be made to arrange for the continuation of their training on the most effective lines, including, so far as possible, avoidance of dispersal, but there is no alternative to locating contingents in any district in the United

Kingdom where, having regard to the stage of training already reached and the high [quality of the?] troops, they will be best placed to carry out whatever defensive role it might be necessary to allot to them on the occurrence of an emergency. We are confident that in the circumstances no objection will be raised by His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia and His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

Information to the fullest possible extent will of course be given Dominion Governments as arrangements are decided on and the closest touch will be maintained. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand already will have seen my telegram of 8 June (No. 168) and will no doubt have heard from General Freyberg in more detail.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

173 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

173

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

13 June 1940

With reference to my immediately preceding telegram (No. 172). Regarding the questions of command and administration of that part of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force shortly to serve in this country, we assume that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will wish the principles set out in the memorandum enclosed in your despatch No. 6 of 5 June ¹ to apply, subject to such modifications as may be necessitated by the fact that this contingent will be detached from the main body of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force for the time being.

The geographical considerations and the increased difficulty of communication between this country and the Middle East since the outbreak of war with Italy suggest that the New Zealand Government will wish the powers, duties, &c., which are defined for and vested in the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force as regards the New Zealand Forces in the Middle East, to be delegated to and exercised by the Officer Commanding the New Zealand formation in this country. On this point a very early expression of the views of the New Zealand Government would be appreciated.

¹ This despatch cannot be traced. The memorandum referred to was the GOC's charter, for which see *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 39).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

174 – MEMORANDUM FROM THE NAVAL SECRETARY TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE – CONVOY US 3: ESCORT ARRANGEMENTS

174

Memorandum from the Naval Secretary to the Minister of Defence

13 June 1940

CONVOY US 3: ESCORT ARRANGEMENTS

With reference to my memorandum NA 030/50/2 of 7 June 1940,² I have the honour to report that the following escort arrangements have been communicated by the Admiralty:

- (The convoy left **Freetown** on 8 June escorted by HMS *Shropshire* (8-a) inch cruiser), HMS *Cumberland* (8-inch cruiser), and HMS *Hermes*³ (aircraft carrier).
- (The ocean escort was reinforced on 12 June by HMS *Dorsetshire*¹ (8-b) inch cruiser).
- (On 14 June HMS *Dorsetshire* will be relieved by HMS *Hood*² (battle-c) cruiser, 15-inch guns).

The ocean escort as from 14 June will therefore consist of the battle-cruiser HMS *Hood*, two 8-inch cruisers, and an aircraft carrier, and, as previously reported, HMS *Resolution* (battleship) and HMS *Arethusa* (6-inch cruiser) will be stationed at Gibraltar, and a destroyer screen and air reconnaissance will be provided during passage through the submarine zone.

N. T. P. COOPER,

Naval Secretary

² Not published. This memorandum forwarded a copy of an

appreciation by the Admiralty giving the arrangements for the escort of convoy US 3 from Freetown to its destination. The text is included in the telegram of 7 Jun 1940 (No. 166) from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General.

³ HMS *Hermes* small aircraft carrier, sunk by the Japanese in the Indian Ocean, 1942.

¹ HMS *Dorsetshire*, 8-inch cruiser, 9975 tons; administered the coup de grâce to the disabled *Bismarck*, 27 May 1941; sunk by Japanese aircraft in the Indian Ocean, 1942.

² HMS *Hood*, battle-cruiser, eight 15-inch guns, 41,000 tons; sunk on 24 May 1941, with three survivors, in the action which led ultimately to the destruction of the *Bismarck*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

175 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

175

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

14 June 1940

Please telegraph urgently your comments in full on the following two telegrams received by us today from the British Government:

[Text of telegrams Nos. 172 and 173]

Telegram No. 168 referred to in No. 172 is in general terms and has no particular bearing. The memorandum referred to in No. 173 is that addressed to you on 5 January vesting powers.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

176 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)

176

General Freyberg to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

14 June 1940

The following is for Brigadier Falla:

Since time is getting short I send you this warning. Because of pressure from the British Government, the New Zealand Government may have to accept to send troops to a war area. Your orders will come from the War Office.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

177 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

177

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

14 June 1940

Your telegram of 14 June (No. 175).

My personal opinion remains unchanged regarding the location of the Second Echelon in the United Kingdom. The concentration of the echelon and training for war should be aimed at. The British Government's strongly worded telegrams, however, must be given consideration, especially as our employment in the war area at this juncture may liberate other troops for service in France. My advice to the Government therefore is as follows:

If it is necessary in the British Government's opinion to use the New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom for home defence, they should be adequately equipped with fighting equipment even should a less modern type of equipment only be available. They could then be used as the tactical situation demands—the equipment of the force to be a *sine qua non* of their being so employed.

The New Zealand troops should not be placed under a British Divisional Commander but should work as a separate formation direct under the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the war area where they are stationed.

Replying to the questions raised in telegram No. 173, I have to advise the New Zealand Government that I have arranged that Brigadier Miles should command all New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom. As he is competent to carry out these duties I recommend that the decision should stand.

I am satisfied with the proposed administration in the United Kingdom. As we have an efficient administrative staff and as all arrangements have been made, I see no reason to delegate any special administrative powers given to me as General Officer Commanding New Zealand Expeditionary Force. This decision could be altered if the situation proves otherwise.

Referring to the special powers in the memorandum of 5 January signed by the Prime Minister, I feel that in my absence from the United Kingdom only the powers under paragraph (a) ¹ need be delegated. I suggest that these be delegated by the New Zealand Government to Brigadier Miles. As time is short I have warned Falla that a change may be possible. Air mail has been re-established now on a fresh route.

¹ Paragraph (a) of the memorandum read: 'In the case of sufficiently grave emergency or in special circumstances, of which he [GOC, 2nd NZEF] must be the sole judge, to make decisions as to the employment of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and to communicate such decisions directly to the New Zealand Government, notwithstanding that in the absence of that extraordinary cause such communication would not be in accordance with the normal channels of communication indicated in the following paragraphs...'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

178 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

178

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

15 June 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand agree in general with the viewpoint expressed in your telegram of 12 June (No. 172) and approve the use of New Zealand troops, if necessary, for home defence in the United Kingdom, subject, however, to the prior condition that they have been equipped previously with fighting equipment suitable for the purpose, even should a less modern type of equipment only be available. They feel also that the New Zealand troops should work as a separate formation directly under the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the war area where they are stationed and that they should not be placed under a British Divisional Commander.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

179 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

179

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

15 June 1940

Your telegram of 13 June (No. 173). It has been arranged by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that Brigadier Miles should command all New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom. They are arranging for delegation to him of such of the powers referred to in the memorandum enclosed in my despatch No. 6 of 5 June as may be necessary. General Freyberg will be available for discussion of any necessary details as it is expected he will be proceeding to the United Kingdom very shortly.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

180 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

180

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

15 June 1940

Your telegrams of 13 and 14 June. ¹ The Government approve of your proceeding to London at your discretion.

Your telegram of 14 June (No. 177). The following messages have been sent to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

[Text of telegrams Nos. 178 and 179 of 15 June]

The delegation of powers to Brigadier Miles under paragraph (a) of the memorandum of 5 January is approved by the Government. Please arrange accordingly if and as required.

¹ See *First Echelon in Egypt: Command and Employment* (Nos. 80 and 81).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

181 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER

181

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister

15 June 1940

With the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom this office is receiving many offers of service from New Zealanders already in this country. Is it your wish that we proceed with enlistment? Also please advise the age limit for acceptance.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

182 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND

182

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

16 June 1940

Your telegram of 15 June (No. 181). Your reference to the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has occasioned surprise. If we are to understand that the impending arrival has become known then grave anxiety must be felt here, and we would be glad of immediate reassurances on this point.

On the question of enlistments, consult Freyberg on his arrival. If he considers it practicable and if training facilities permit acceptance, the Government would have no objection to the enlistment of men within the present age group 21-40 years. Please send an estimate of the numbers of such enlistments.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

183 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

183

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

16 June 1940

Convoy US 3 has arrived safely in the United Kingdom. It will be appreciated that this information is not for publication. On the other points mentioned in your telegram of 14 June ¹ a further communication will be sent shortly.

¹ Not published. This telegram contained details of arrangements for the release of news of the arrival of the Australian and New Zealand contingents in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

184 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER

184

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

17 June 1940

Further to my telegram (No. 181) and your reply (No. 182), it is general talk here that troops of all the Dominions, including those troops now training in other lands, will arrive eventually in Britain. There need be no fear of any definite knowledge being disclosed as times and places, routes and numbers, or any particulars, even approximate, are not made known. The arrival of our officers from Egypt has aroused curiosity, and the impression is that our troops are coming from there at some time in the future.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

185 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

185

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

18 June 1940

With reference to your telegram of 16 June (No. 183) concerning the announcement of the arrival of US 3. As public anxiety about the safety of the convoy is becoming marked, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be grateful if, at the earliest possible moment, they could be informed whether release can be expedited and when it can be effected.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

186 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

186

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

20 June 1940

Anzac three.¹

¹ Extract from a telegram of 12 Jun (not published) from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand: ‘Owing to the need for security of vessels of the convoy, it will probably not be possible to release news of arrival for a short time after disembarkation is completed. The exact time cannot yet be given, but as soon as the Admiralty are satisfied on security grounds, a telegram consisting of the code words “Anzac three” will be despatched to the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments who will on receipt of the telegram be able to release the official communique announcing the arrival of the US 3 in this country....’

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

187 – GENERAL FREYBERG (LONDON) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

187

General Freyberg (London) to the Minister of Defence

27 June 1940

I have been in England for twenty-four hours and it is impossible in such a short time to give an appreciation of all the difficulties that exist. Nevertheless, I feel that it would assist you in New Zealand if I give my views and I can add to them when I have had more time. I arrived here after a difficult journey and am at my headquarters in Aldershot where the troops are under canvas. Everybody is well and settling down. In spite of the War Office's decision to disperse, the New Zealand troops in England are now concentrated in the Aldershot area and are about to commence training.

In the event of an attack being made on the United Kingdom the Second Echelon are in General Headquarters Reserve and will be moved to support any threatened area. At present nothing definite has been planned, but details are being worked out. We shall probably form two groups, one a mobile striking force consisting of the 5th Infantry Brigade with attached troops under the command of Hargest, and the Maori Battalion and other small units as a defensive group for defence of the reserve line under Barrowclough. If the two groups work together they will either be under me, if I am in the United Kingdom, or under Miles.

I have visited the War Office and have had conversations with the Director of Military Operations ¹ and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. ² Tomorrow evening I shall be seeing General Ironside. ³

The situation in Europe has undoubtedly deteriorated, and the military advisers here appear sure that the German Higher Command

will attempt an attack on the United Kingdom, but I find it difficult to believe that they will risk such a hazardous operation which, in my opinion, would be doomed to failure.

I want you to inform Cabinet that the situation here is grave but is improving week by week. For some time to come we shall be short of many of our weapons as there is a desperate shortage of equipment. This is the common lot of most troops here. Nevertheless, I feel that in spite of this, and I am sure that Cabinet will agree with me, New Zealand troops must be prepared to accept battle upon uneven terms in defence of Great Britain.

I have emphasised continually the advisability of concentrating the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and I came here with this object so as to put before Cabinet the War Office point of view and such advice as I thought would enable them to form their opinion. I am still in favour of concentrating as soon as expedient, but since talking to the heads here, and in view of the gravity of the situation both at Home and in the Middle East, I have come to the conclusion that we should accept the position of being separated for the present, subject to such minor adjustments between England and Egypt which will in no way cause embarrassment here while, at the same time, they will improve the fighting powers of the force while separated.

A fuller appreciation will be sent to you when I have had time to study the situation in detail. I will do nothing to commit the New Zealand troops in England until I have Cabinet authority. If you are in general agreement with the opinion I have expressed, will you cable me here?

¹ Major-General Richard Henry Dewing, CB, DSO, MC.

² General (later Field-Marshal) Sir John Dill.

³ At this time Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces.



DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

188 – LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PLANS, WAR OFFICE, TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, HOME FORCES

188

Letter from the Director of Military Operations and Plans, War Office, to the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces

29 June 1940

SIR

In connection with the contingent of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force now in the United Kingdom, I am directed to forward you the following information:

At Appendix 'A' is a copy of a memorandum of 5 January 1940 from the Prime Minister of New Zealand defining the powers of the General Officer Commanding, 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force overseas.¹ The New Zealand Government is arranging to confer on the Officer Commanding the New Zealand contingent in the United Kingdom such of the powers referred to in this memorandum as may be necessary in the existing circumstances.

His Majesty's Government has informed the New Zealand Government that, so far as possible, the New Zealand contingent in the United Kingdom will be given facilities for continuing its training with a view to its ultimate junction with the Middle East and third contingent to form the New Zealand Division.

The New Zealand Government has expressed its wish that the contingent should be employed as a separate formation and not as individual units or embodied in a British division. The New Zealand Government has also asked that the contingent should not be used unless it has been previously equipped with fighting equipment suitable

for the employment in view, though the New Zealand Government recognises that less modern equipment only may be available.

In view of the above undertaking and the wishes of the New Zealand Government, the New Zealand contingent has been placed in War Office reserve.

In an emergency it would be released by the War Office and would come under the operational control of Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces.

I am ...

[R. H. DEWING,

Major-General], Director of Military Operations and Plans

¹ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF (No. 39)*. Appendix 'A' is not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

189 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

189

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

29 June 1940

I am glad to hear of your safe arrival and am most grateful for the expression of views and the information contained in your telegram of 27 June (No. 187) with which we are in general agreement. We are content to leave all questions concerning the utilisation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom to your discretion, on the understanding that, where possible, before action is taken you will give us the opportunity of forming and expressing an opinion.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

190 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

190

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

4 July 1940

Further to my cable of 27 June (No. 187). I have now had time to get in touch with the situation here. Government opinion, shared by all the Services, is that immunity from invasion cannot be guaranteed with the present naval and air forces at our disposal. Once the enemy has committed himself, naval and air forces will seriously interrupt all lines of communication.

It is felt that a seaborne expedition could be transported in motor boats, submarines, warships, transports, and flat-bottomed motor barges, the latter facilitating rapid unloading of armoured fighting vehicles. At or near each point of attack the enemy is likely to make use of parachute troops both to capture landing grounds for troop-carriers and to disorganise communications. The possible scale of airborne invasion is estimated at ten to fifteen thousand men in one day. The enemy is likely to use the shortest sea and air route for his main effort against this country, but is sure to attempt diversionary operations in the Shetlands, Ireland, or in North Scotland.

Undoubtedly, the enemy's object is to defeat the United Kingdom, thereby destroying the British Empire. His military objectives will be the centre of Government in London and the centres of production and supply, together with under-water and air attacks on our overseas supply system.

The fact that the enemy has the initiative imposes upon us the strategic defensive, the first object of which is to protect [our shores?] and limit any enemy landing by sea or air and prevent the capture of

any port or area which will facilitate the development of the invasion. The second object is to deal swiftly and adequately with the enemy's widely scattered forces by means of mobile columns before these enemy elements have established themselves, and also to prevent the arrival of reinforcements. The third object is to prevent the enemy destroying this country's vital resources.

The Second Echelon have now settled down. Although in common with other troops here they are short of equipment—they have been given a much better allotment than was at first visualised—they are working night and day, Sundays included, to fit themselves for an active role. They are in excellent heart, and the chance of meeting the enemy at a near date has enormously raised their morale. I have reorganised the force into three groups: a mobile force, consisting of a cavalry squadron, an improvised machine gun company, and an improvised infantry battalion from Royal Artillery personnel, under Brigadier Miles; the 5th Infantry Brigade under Brigadier Hargest; and an improvised brigade, consisting of the Maori Battalion and an improvised infantry battalion from reinforcements, under Brigadier Barrowclough.

The New Zealand force in buses will be completely mobile. Operationally we are to work in the closest touch with the 1st Canadian Division, who are fully equipped, and their GOC¹ has agreed to support us with artillery.

My opinion that any attempt at landing in England is doomed to failure is unaltered. The military powers, however, are insistent

¹ General Andrew George Latta McNaughton, PC, CH, CB, CMG, DSO; till 18 Jul 1940 commanding 1st Canadian Division as Major-General; from that date until 25 Dec 1940 commanded 7th Corps, which included the New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom; later commanded Canadian Corps until 1942; commanded First Canadian Army 1942–43; Minister of National Defence, Canada, 1944–45.

that the Germans will make the attempt and the date indicated is early in July. We must hope that they do and that they do not make any move against Egypt, which would be more difficult to counter now that France has made a separate peace.

Since the receipt of your message of 29 June (No. 189) expressing general agreement with my opinions, I have gone on with all preparations, and with the emergency powers which the New Zealand Government saw fit to give me I shall be able to use our men in an emergency in any active role that may be assigned to us. However, as time may still allow, I feel that the Government may wish through normal channels to offer the New Zealand force in the United Kingdom to His Majesty's Government for active operations in the event of invasion. ¹

¹ The above text, taken from the GOC's files, differs in a number of respects from the telegram on file in the Prime Minister's Department.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

191 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

191

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

4 July 1940

Many thanks for the information contained in your telegram of 4 July (No. 190), which is greatly appreciated. However, we are in some doubt concerning the last sentence, in view of the fact that we advised His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom through official channels on 15 June (No. 178) that we were in general agreement with the point of view expressed in the Secretary of State's telegram of 12 June (No. 172)—a copy of which was telegraphed to you on 14 June—and that we approved of New Zealand troops being used if necessary for home defence in the United Kingdom, subject, however, to the prior condition that they were previously equipped with fighting equipment suitable for the purpose, even should a less modern type of equipment only be available, and to certain conditions as to command. These were both your own suggestions and a copy of our communication to the British Government was telegraphed on 15 June to you at Cairo (No. 180). It occurs to us that probably this telegram failed to reach you (in which case you should see the Governor-General's telegrams to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs Nos. 178 and 179 of 15 June) and that my telegram of 29 June, which was intended merely to give you all necessary authority for that purpose, has accordingly been misunderstood. Please telegraph, however, if there is anything more you think we could or should do.²

² General Freyberg replied on 10 Jul that 'the situation as regards the command of the New Zealand Forces in England and their employment is quite satisfactory'.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

192 – LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PLANS, WAR OFFICE, TO THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

192

Letter from the Director of Military Operations and Plans, War Office, to the General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom

9 July 1940

SIR,

With reference to War Office letter dated 29 June, I am directed to say that it was understood in conversation with you that in exercise of the powers vested in you under section (a) of the memorandum, of which a copy was reproduced at Appendix 'A' to the above letter, it is your wish that the contingent of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom should be released by the War Office and placed forthwith under the operational control of the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces. This has been done.

I am to ask for confirmation in writing.

I am ...

[R. H. DEWING,

Director of Military Operations and Plans

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

193 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE DIRECTOR OF MILITARY OPERATIONS AND PLANS, WAR OFFICE

193

Letter from General Freyberg to the Director of Military Operations and Plans, War Office

10 July 1940

SIR,

I have to acknowledge your [letter] dated 9 July. In confirmation of conversation I now confirm in writing that under my special powers I wish the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom to be released by the War Office and to be placed under control of the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces.

I am ...

[],

GOC NZEF

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

194 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE [EXTRACT]

194

Letter from General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence [Extract]

Mytchett Place
Mytchett,

15 August 1940

SIR,

I have the honour to report that I have just received your welcome letter of 27 May,¹ which followed me by a belated route to England. I am happy that the actions and advice I have tendered have met with your approval. I hope that the relationship existing between us will continue because, even with complete understanding between two departments such as ours, the distance and the time lag in correspondence make co-operation difficult.

Since my last report to you the situation has changed completely. The French are now out of the war and for the moment almost hostile, and the Spanish from all accounts are only waiting their moment to remove General Franco and come in with the Axis powers. Japan also has given evidence of hostile intentions.

I know from the copies of cipher messages I have read that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have experienced most anxious times during the last weeks. I wish, therefore, to give all the help I can in the difficult decisions you are forced to make.

¹ This letter is not published. An extract dealing with the proposed formation of the Anzac Corps is included in Volume II.

Problems Caused by Splitting the New Zealand Expeditionary Force

As you know, I was very much against sending the Second Echelon to England, as I believe also were the Government in New Zealand. The diversion of the Second Echelon to Great Britain not only increased the difficulties of training and organisation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, but also made it necessary to split the Divisional staff and send part of it here so that the troops could be trained upon modern lines.

When the split was decided upon I sent off part of my staff by air to make plans for the reception of the Second Echelon in England. I intended to follow in time to commence the training. As you will remember, a series of disasters followed. France was overrun and this was the moment when Italy chose to declare war upon the Allies. It was thought at the time that these changes in alignment constituted a threat to Egypt, and it was decided that I should remain there so long as the threat to the Middle East continued.

After the Italian inhabitants in Cairo and Alexandria had been interned, and this was carried out without any trouble, it was agreed that as I was of more use in England than in Egypt I should start for Home by an air route. As the Mediterranean route was closed we were sent across the Sahara. This journey, to say the least of it, was a most dangerous one. The route was unsurveyed and little preparation had been carried out; consequently there was no ground organisation, and the landing grounds were rough and too small. To add to our difficulties we were overladen. The news of the capitulation of France reached us at Khartoum. The journey across the intervening French territory was followed by great complications and, to add to these, the plane crashed in the desert, but notwithstanding this we eventually reached England after an eight-day journey.

The Situation in Great Britain after Dunkirk

The situation after our arrival in the United Kingdom was most interesting. There was considerable military activity, accompanied by a certain amount of apprehension, but there was no panic and no despondency, and public opinion upon the whole was very sound. It was felt, however, both in military and civil quarters, that an attack against Great Britain was imminent.

As far as I can gather the reason for this belief came from the fact that on the one hand the Germans said they were determined to attack and occupy Great Britain, while upon the other hand the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force said they could not guarantee our shore against seaborne or airborne attack. Furthermore, at Dunkirk the Army had lost all the modern equipment that existed, with the exception of some rifles. Since then, however, great strides have been made and all the divisions have now been issued with a scale quite sufficient to be effective, although on a reduced basis.

Arrangements made for Accommodation in the United Kingdom

On the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in England the question of the area of concentration and of our employment was uncertain, because all our arrangements to go to Colchester had to be abandoned owing to the German advance along the Belgian coast, and the vulnerability of the barracks to an air attack.

As you will remember, the War Department had allotted to us a provisional area which split up the whole force and gave them a garrison role on the East Coast, which would have made our training very difficult. I had reported this to the New Zealand Government and, with your approval, had insisted upon concentrating the force to enable us to be able to carry out collective training. After certain negotiations we were allotted a series of tented camps in the Aldershot area, and these, I am glad to report, have turned out as well as possible. We have been bombed only twice, and the administrative arrangements have been quite good. Being close to Aldershot we have had access to the School of

Cookery and I am glad to say that the standard of housekeeping within the units has been brought up to a good level.

I have been to the Forestry Company at Crowborough and have looked into their difficulties and, with a certain amount of assistance, they will now be in a much better position to ensure that their men are properly fed.

So far we have not had any chance to organise games for the men. We have been training night and day to fit them for their part in the battle should the Germans decide to attack Great Britain.

Factors taken into Consideration in Deciding the Role I should Recommend to the New Zealand Government for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom

When I arrived in the United Kingdom on 25 June I found it hard to take the threat of an invasion of Great Britain by the Germans as a serious project. I still believe that any such action is an act of desperation and one which we should welcome. There was, however, the fact that we had lost the whole of the equipment of the British Expeditionary Force (ten divisions) plus all the five months' war reserves which were in the base depots in France.

I saw our troops and their Commanders on arrival and then went to the War Office and interviewed General Dill and General Ironside. As a result of all my contacts at Home I came to the conclusions:

That Great Britain was in a tight corner and that the people were facing up to their difficulties most gallantly;

That the arrival of the New Zealanders and the Australians in the circumstances had been most opportune and had steadied the nation considerably;

That in the event of an invasion under present conditions any New Zealand troops in England, even though untrained and under-equipped,

must be prepared to take their stand in the forefront and defend the Old Country. I felt this partly because I knew if we were to risk our lives we could not do so in a better cause than in fighting to safeguard the people in Great Britain, and also because I knew that should there be an attack, the first question that all our people in New Zealand would ask would be, 'What part did our men take?' I felt that you would all expect us to accept battle even on uneven terms in the defence of the heart of the Empire.

Knowing what was expected of us, and after consulting the **New Zealand Government**, I went to the **War Office** and told the authorities that 'my Government want you to give us as much equipment as you can spare, and would wish you to cast the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the role in which you may consider us to be of greatest assistance at the present moment.'

Role of New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Event of German Invasion

They accepted our offer with alacrity and were most appreciative and most helpful about equipment. They assigned to us a position of great importance, as we were made part of General Headquarters Reserve and formed a striking force composed of:

1st Canadian Division

1st Armoured Division

New Zealand Expeditionary Force (United Kingdom)

I decided that the quickest method of training was to take out the force and make it work together as such over the actual country we were to guard. I wish the people of New Zealand could know the wonderful effect the presence of our men had upon the people at Home here. I also wish they could have seen the fine sight of 6000 bronzed New Zealanders marching across the Sussex Weald.

We paid weekly visits back to our camp at Aldershot to pick up the transport and the additional arms and equipment as they arrived, leaving again for Sussex as soon as possible. For these operations I organised the Second Echelon into three mobile columns:

The Covering Force, commanded by Brigadier Miles, comprised of—

1 Cavalry Squadron

1 improvised Infantry Battalion of Royal Artillery personnel

1 Machine Gun Company

The 5th Infantry Brigade Group, commanded by Brigadier Hargest, comprised of—

21st Infantry Battalion

22nd Infantry Battalion

23rd Infantry Battalion

The 7th Infantry Brigade Group, commanded by Brigadier Barrowclough, comprised of—

28th Maori Battalion

29th improvised Infantry Battalion (reinforcements)

State of Equipment Issued

We had no field or anti-tank artillery, but for a matter of fact neither had any other British formation. We had, however, an adequate amount of arms and equipment:

Per Battalion—

18 Bren guns

10 Boys [anti-tank] rifles

3 Bren carriers

25 per cent of unit transport

We had, however, two complete Bus Companies which could move our whole force at one lift.

The Three Full-scale Exercises

The Second Echelon moved out of camp as soon as possible and took with it all available arms and equipment, together with its ammunition, engineers' stores, picks and shovels, explosives, and five complete days' rations and water.

The object of these exercises was:

- (i) To practise Divisional staff in carrying out a bus move of the Division;**
- (ii) To give Brigadiers and Battalion Commanders experience in handling their commands in the field;**
- (iii) To try out our administrative services in the field.**

1. The first operation was the hasty occupation of a defensive position at Crowborough, Sussex. Each of the groups then moved separately in their bus columns down to the sea coast to rehearse repelling possible enemy landings.

2. The next manoeuvre was arranged for Brigadier Hargest's force to fight Brigadier Barrowclough's force.

3. The final scheme was to carry out an endurance march of 100 miles in six days.

During these exercises the Commanders learned how to handle their fast-moving bus columns and their transport, and the junior officers and men found their feet and got the idea of working together as a force. We came back at the conclusion of our last exercise on 8 August, bronzed and fit, and I feel confident that if we are asked to take part in the

defence of Great Britain the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is a force to be reckoned with, and will give an excellent account of itself wherever it may be used.

Since then, more equipment has arrived and we have now got 50 per cent of our unit transport, together with 100 per cent of our field guns—eight 25-pounder guns and sixteen 75-millimetre (French) guns, 50 per cent or ten 2-pounder anti-tank guns, 100 per cent of our Bren carriers, 100 per cent of our Bren guns, 100 per cent of our Boys rifles. From today we are to all intents and purposes almost 100 per cent equipped.

The Problem of What the Future Holds for the British Empire

I know that it has been a most difficult time for you in New Zealand, and it has also been a difficult period here both for the staff and for the men. All ranks have responded excellently, and they have worked Saturdays and Sundays and all hours when necessary. I am, however, now quite happy over the results achieved. This crisis and the threat of invasion have given a great stimulus to training. I feel that everybody has come through the training with the greatest credit. I am more than satisfied with the progress made, and feel confident that when we concentrate in Egypt in the near future we shall be able to take the field as a first-class division. Now that it is decided that the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are to concentrate in Egypt, I am going ahead with all preparations. I have sent the ADMS ¹ back by sea, in the same convoy as the Railway Construction Group.

I feel that with nearly 20,000 troops in Egypt we must now make all arrangements for our Base. I am at the moment going into all the details with Brigadier Falla, who will be leaving for Egypt in the course of two or three weeks. I have also arranged to send off early in September Brigadier Miles, Brigadier Barrowclough, Colonel Crump, and the staff of the 6th Infantry Brigade.

As you will realise, the additional numbers to be accommodated in Egypt will necessitate an increase in our medical institutions. We shall

now require Convalescent Homes and a **Convalescent Depot**. You will be glad to hear that the New Zealand General Hospital has opened at Helwan.

¹ Assistant Director of Medical Services (Colonel K. MacCormick).

The Possible Action of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Event of Invasion

Although the situation here looks fairly settled for the moment, nobody can be certain what the Germans mean to do. There is only one certainty I feel, and it is that should the Germans attempt to attack Great Britain, using their land forces, they are bound to suffer a serious reverse.

By the time this report reaches you we shall know a lot more than we do now. I feel, however, very much happier about the state of our equipment and the state of our training.

So much for the equipment, training, and operational side of our work here in England.

Position in Egypt

Since leaving Egypt the situation there seems to have deteriorated and as soon as we have disposed of the possibility of an attack upon this country I shall make my way back to the First Echelon. It is of interest to note that when I arrived here I found that people outside the **War Office** did not realise how meagre was the margin of safety in Egypt. I was glad, therefore, to be asked by Mr. Churchill to come and dine with him at Downing Street. As a result of my attitude on defence he asked me to write for the use of Cabinet an appreciation of the situation in the **Middle East**. It was not easy for me to do this as I was busy training the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and I had to complete my appreciation while I was on our full-scale exercises at Coleman's Hatch. When it was

finished I sent it to the Prime Minister who, in spite of the fact that I attacked the Government policy of concentrating upon the defence of England at the expense of the Middle East, had it published and circulated to the members of the War Cabinet and the Committee he had appointed to look into the position in the Middle East.

I asked Mr. Churchill if he would mind my sending a copy of my appreciation, which is most secret, for your information and he readily agreed, so please find a copy attached.¹

The Prime Minister then asked me to dine and stay the night at Chequers with him, and we stayed up very late talking about the problems that beset us in Egypt. I feel, therefore, that some good may come of this because I spoke very freely of our difficulties.

Mr. Churchill was fully informed about our Division and asked me to send messages of thanks to New Zealand for all that has been done in these very difficult times.

I have now been given another paper by the Prime Minister to prepare for the War Cabinet. It is upon an operational role, and this I have almost finished.

I was much impressed and comforted by Mr. Churchill's grasp of the situation and I believe that my frank exchange of views with him may have beneficial interest in the Middle East.

Finally, my views on the Middle East can be taken as those expressed in my appreciation to Mr. Churchill. I am apprehensive that we may not get our reinforcements there in time. If we can hold Egypt and then later on reinforce it with a large, fast-moving, armoured force, together with an Air Force capable of protecting our columns, we can capture Libya from the Italians without having to do very much fighting.

¹ See Appendix 4.

GENERAL QUESTIONS OF INTEREST

(a) The Visit of His Majesty the King

On Saturday, 6 July, His Majesty paid us a visit at Mytchett Place and spent the whole day going round our units. He was much impressed by all he saw and was especially impressed with the smartness and drill of the Maori Battalion.

During his visit His Majesty honoured us by staying to luncheon when he met about 140 officers and nurses picked from all the units of the Second Echelon. Needless to say, his visit, which was attended by the High Commissioner, Mr. Jordan, and the Commander of the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force, General Sir Alexander Godley, GCB, was greatly appreciated by us all....²

(i) Organisation at Home after Departure of Second Echelon

When the New Zealand Expeditionary Force leaves England to concentrate in the Middle East we shall be forced to leave about one hundred men in hospital who will come to us in Egypt as and when they are fit enough to travel. I intend, therefore, to leave behind a doctor and possibly two nurses, together with a small organisation, to look after them. These will follow us to Egypt as and when they can.

Finally, may I say that as far as I can estimate everything is going well both here and in Egypt. I am anxious that we should concentrate as a division and get our complete equipment as soon as possible. It really looks now as if that goal were in sight. In the work I am carrying out here I am supported by a most excellent body of officers and men who will, when the time comes, give a good account of themselves.

I am most indebted also to the band of officers and NCOs in New Zealand for the excellent work they are doing in training the men for overseas, and am most appreciative of the help given me by Army

Headquarters.

It is difficult to say what the future has in store for us all but I am sure that if we can get through the next four months without any major setback, North Africa will be an active and profitable theatre of war for the Allies.

I have ...

, Major-General,

Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force

PS.—I have sent by separate post a copy of this report to the GOC New Zealand Forces, Wellington.

² In the portion of the text not published General Freyberg reviewed the medical and welfare arrangements for the force in the United Kingdom and made acknowledgment of Patriotic Fund parcels and consignments of apples received.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

MYTCHETT PLACE – MYTCHETT, ALDERSHOT 15 AUGUST 1940

Mytchett Place
Mytchett,

15 August 1940

SIR,

I have the honour to report that I have just received your welcome letter of 27 May,¹ which followed me by a belated route to England. I am happy that the actions and advice I have tendered have met with your approval. I hope that the relationship existing between us will continue because, even with complete understanding between two departments such as ours, the distance and the time lag in correspondence make co-operation difficult.

Since my last report to you the situation has changed completely. The French are now out of the war and for the moment almost hostile, and the Spanish from all accounts are only waiting their moment to remove General Franco and come in with the Axis powers. Japan also has given evidence of hostile intentions.

I know from the copies of cipher messages I have read that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have experienced most anxious times during the last weeks. I wish, therefore, to give all the help I can in the difficult decisions you are forced to make.

¹ This letter is not published. An extract dealing with the proposed formation of the Anzac Corps is included in Volume II.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

PROBLEMS CAUSED BY SPLITTING THE NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Problems Caused by Splitting the New Zealand Expeditionary Force

As you know, I was very much against sending the Second Echelon to England, as I believe also were the Government in New Zealand. The diversion of the Second Echelon to Great Britain not only increased the difficulties of training and organisation of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, but also made it necessary to split the Divisional staff and send part of it here so that the troops could be trained upon modern lines.

When the split was decided upon I sent off part of my staff by air to make plans for the reception of the Second Echelon in England. I intended to follow in time to commence the training. As you will remember, a series of disasters followed. France was overrun and this was the moment when Italy chose to declare war upon the Allies. It was thought at the time that these changes in alignment constituted a threat to Egypt, and it was decided that I should remain there so long as the threat to the Middle East continued.

After the Italian inhabitants in Cairo and Alexandria had been interned, and this was carried out without any trouble, it was agreed that as I was of more use in England than in Egypt I should start for Home by an air route. As the Mediterranean route was closed we were sent across the Sahara. This journey, to say the least of it, was a most dangerous one. The route was unsurveyed and little preparation had been carried out; consequently there was no ground organisation, and the landing grounds were rough and too small. To add to our difficulties we were overladen. The news of the capitulation of France reached us at Khartoum. The journey across the intervening French territory was

followed by great complications and, to add to these, the plane crashed in the desert, but notwithstanding this we eventually reached England after an eight-day journey.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE SITUATION IN GREAT BRITAIN AFTER DUNKIRK

The Situation in Great Britain after Dunkirk

The situation after our arrival in the United Kingdom was most interesting. There was considerable military activity, accompanied by a certain amount of apprehension, but there was no panic and no despondency, and public opinion upon the whole was very sound. It was felt, however, both in military and civil quarters, that an attack against Great Britain was imminent.

As far as I can gather the reason for this belief came from the fact that on the one hand the Germans said they were determined to attack and occupy Great Britain, while upon the other hand the Royal Navy and the Royal Air Force said they could not guarantee our shore against seaborne or airborne attack. Furthermore, at Dunkirk the Army had lost all the modern equipment that existed, with the exception of some rifles. Since then, however, great strides have been made and all the divisions have now been issued with a scale quite sufficient to be effective, although on a reduced basis.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

ARRANGEMENTS MADE FOR ACCOMMODATION IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Arrangements made for Accommodation in the United Kingdom

On the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in England the question of the area of concentration and of our employment was uncertain, because all our arrangements to go to Colchester had to be abandoned owing to the German advance along the Belgian coast, and the vulnerability of the barracks to an air attack.

As you will remember, the War Department had allotted to us a provisional area which split up the whole force and gave them a garrison role on the East Coast, which would have made our training very difficult. I had reported this to the New Zealand Government and, with your approval, had insisted upon concentrating the force to enable us to be able to carry out collective training. After certain negotiations we were allotted a series of tented camps in the Aldershot area, and these, I am glad to report, have turned out as well as possible. We have been bombed only twice, and the administrative arrangements have been quite good. Being close to Aldershot we have had access to the School of Cookery and I am glad to say that the standard of housekeeping within the units has been brought up to a good level.

I have been to the Forestry Company at Crowborough and have looked into their difficulties and, with a certain amount of assistance, they will now be in a much better position to ensure that their men are properly fed.

So far we have not had any chance to organise games for the men. We have been training night and day to fit them for their part in the battle should the Germans decide to attack Great Britain.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

FACTORS TAKEN INTO CONSIDERATION IN DECIDING THE ROLE I SHOULD RECOMMEND TO THE NEW ZEALAND GOVERNMENT FOR THE NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

Factors taken into Consideration in Deciding the Role I should Recommend to the New Zealand Government for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom

When I arrived in the **United Kingdom** on 25 June I found it hard to take the threat of an invasion of Great Britain by the Germans as a serious project. I still believe that any such action is an act of desperation and one which we should welcome. There was, however, the fact that we had lost the whole of the equipment of the **British Expeditionary Force** (ten divisions) plus all the five months' war reserves which were in the base depots in **France**.

I saw our troops and their Commanders on arrival and then went to the **War Office** and interviewed General Dill and General Ironside. As a result of all my contacts at Home I came to the conclusions:

That Great Britain was in a tight corner and that the people were facing up to their difficulties most gallantly;

That the arrival of the New Zealanders and the Australians in the circumstances had been most opportune and had steadied the nation considerably;

That in the event of an invasion under present conditions any New Zealand troops in England, even though untrained and under-equipped, must be prepared to take their stand in the forefront and defend the Old Country. I felt this partly because I knew if we were to risk our lives we could not do so in a better cause than in fighting to safeguard the people in Great Britain, and also because I knew that should there be an attack,

the first question that all our people in New Zealand would ask would be, ‘What part did our men take?’ I felt that you would all expect us to accept battle even on uneven terms in the defence of the heart of the Empire.

Knowing what was expected of us, and after consulting the New Zealand Government, I went to the War Office and told the authorities that ‘my Government want you to give us as much equipment as you can spare, and would wish you to cast the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the role in which you may consider us to be of greatest assistance at the present moment.’

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

ROLE OF NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN EVENT OF GERMAN INVASION

Role of New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Event of German Invasion

They accepted our offer with alacrity and were most appreciative and most helpful about equipment. They assigned to us a position of great importance, as we were made part of General Headquarters Reserve and formed a striking force composed of:

1st Canadian Division

1st Armoured Division

New Zealand Expeditionary Force (United Kingdom)

I decided that the quickest method of training was to take out the force and make it work together as such over the actual country we were to guard. I wish the people of New Zealand could know the wonderful effect the presence of our men had upon the people at Home here. I also wish they could have seen the fine sight of 6000 bronzed New Zealanders marching across the Sussex Weald.

We paid weekly visits back to our camp at Aldershot to pick up the transport and the additional arms and equipment as they arrived, leaving again for Sussex as soon as possible. For these operations I organised the Second Echelon into three mobile columns:

The Covering Force, commanded by Brigadier Miles, comprised of—

1 Cavalry Squadron

1 improvised Infantry Battalion of Royal Artillery personnel

1 Machine Gun Company

**The 5th Infantry Brigade Group, commanded by Brigadier Hargest,
comprised of—**

21st Infantry Battalion

22nd Infantry Battalion

23rd Infantry Battalion

**The 7th Infantry Brigade Group, commanded by Brigadier
Barrowclough, comprised of—**

28th Maori Battalion

29th improvised Infantry Battalion (reinforcements)

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

STATE OF EQUIPMENT ISSUED

State of Equipment Issued

We had no field or anti-tank artillery, but for a matter of fact neither had any other British formation. We had, however, an adequate amount of arms and equipment:

Per Battalion—

18 Bren guns

10 Boys [anti-tank] rifles

3 Bren carriers

25 per cent of unit transport

We had, however, two complete Bus Companies which could move our whole force at one lift.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE THREE FULL-SCALE EXERCISES

The Three Full-scale Exercises

The Second Echelon moved out of camp as soon as possible and took with it all available arms and equipment, together with its ammunition, engineers' stores, picks and shovels, explosives, and five complete days' rations and water.

The object of these exercises was:

- (i) **To practise Divisional staff in carrying out a bus move of the Division;**
- (ii) **To give Brigadiers and Battalion Commanders experience in handling their commands in the field;**
- (iii) **To try out our administrative services in the field.**

1. The first operation was the hasty occupation of a defensive position at Crowborough, Sussex. Each of the groups then moved separately in their bus columns down to the sea coast to rehearse repelling possible enemy landings.

2. The next manoeuvre was arranged for Brigadier Hargest's force to fight Brigadier Barrowclough's force.

3. The final scheme was to carry out an endurance march of 100 miles in six days.

During these exercises the Commanders learned how to handle their fast-moving bus columns and their transport, and the junior officers and men found their feet and got the idea of working together as a force. We came back at the conclusion of our last exercise on 8 August, bronzed and fit, and I feel confident that if we are asked to take part in the defence of Great Britain the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is a force to be reckoned with, and will give an

excellent account of itself wherever it may be used.

Since then, more equipment has arrived and we have now got 50 per cent of our unit transport, together with 100 per cent of our field guns—eight 25-pounder guns and sixteen 75-millimetre (French) guns, 50 per cent or ten 2-pounder anti-tank guns, 100 per cent of our Bren carriers, 100 per cent of our Bren guns, 100 per cent of our Boys rifles. From today we are to all intents and purposes almost 100 per cent equipped.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE PROBLEM OF WHAT THE FUTURE HOLDS FOR THE BRITISH EMPIRE

The Problem of What the Future Holds for the British Empire

I know that it has been a most difficult time for you in New Zealand, and it has also been a difficult period here both for the staff and for the men. All ranks have responded excellently, and they have worked Saturdays and Sundays and all hours when necessary. I am, however, now quite happy over the results achieved. This crisis and the threat of invasion have given a great stimulus to training. I feel that everybody has come through the training with the greatest credit. I am more than satisfied with the progress made, and feel confident that when we concentrate in Egypt in the near future we shall be able to take the field as a first-class division. Now that it is decided that the New Zealand Expeditionary Force are to concentrate in Egypt, I am going ahead with all preparations. I have sent the ADMS ¹ back by sea, in the same convoy as the Railway Construction Group.

I feel that with nearly 20,000 troops in Egypt we must now make all arrangements for our Base. I am at the moment going into all the details with Brigadier Falla, who will be leaving for Egypt in the course of two or three weeks. I have also arranged to send off early in September Brigadier Miles, Brigadier Barrowclough, Colonel Crump, and the staff of the 6th Infantry Brigade.

As you will realise, the additional numbers to be accommodated in Egypt will necessitate an increase in our medical institutions. We shall now require Convalescent Homes and a Convalescent Depot. You will be glad to hear that the New Zealand General Hospital has opened at Helwan.

¹ Assistant Director of Medical Services (Colonel K. MacCormick).



DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE POSSIBLE ACTION OF THE NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE IN EVENT OF INVASION

The Possible Action of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Event of Invasion

Although the situation here looks fairly settled for the moment, nobody can be certain what the Germans mean to do. There is only one certainty I feel, and it is that should the Germans attempt to attack Great Britain, using their land forces, they are bound to suffer a serious reverse.

By the time this report reaches you we shall know a lot more than we do now. I feel, however, very much happier about the state of our equipment and the state of our training.

So much for the equipment, training, and operational side of our work here in England.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

POSITION IN EGYPT

Position in Egypt

Since leaving Egypt the situation there seems to have deteriorated and as soon as we have disposed of the possibility of an attack upon this country I shall make my way back to the First Echelon. It is of interest to note that when I arrived here I found that people outside the War Office did not realise how meagre was the margin of safety in Egypt. I was glad, therefore, to be asked by Mr. Churchill to come and dine with him at Downing Street. As a result of my attitude on defence he asked me to write for the use of Cabinet an appreciation of the situation in the Middle East. It was not easy for me to do this as I was busy training the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and I had to complete my appreciation while I was on our full-scale exercises at Coleman's Hatch. When it was finished I sent it to the Prime Minister who, in spite of the fact that I attacked the Government policy of concentrating upon the defence of England at the expense of the Middle East, had it published and circulated to the members of the War Cabinet and the Committee he had appointed to look into the position in the Middle East.

I asked Mr. Churchill if he would mind my sending a copy of my appreciation, which is most secret, for your information and he readily agreed, so please find a copy attached. ¹

The Prime Minister then asked me to dine and stay the night at Chequers with him, and we stayed up very late talking about the problems that beset us in Egypt. I feel, therefore, that some good may come of this because I spoke very freely of our difficulties.

Mr. Churchill was fully informed about our Division and asked me to send messages of thanks to New Zealand for all that has been done in these very difficult times.

I have now been given another paper by the Prime Minister to prepare for the War Cabinet. It is upon an operational role, and this I have almost finished.

I was much impressed and comforted by Mr. Churchill's grasp of the situation and I believe that my frank exchange of views with him may have beneficial interest in the Middle East.

Finally, my views on the Middle East can be taken as those expressed in my appreciation to Mr. Churchill. I am apprehensive that we may not get our reinforcements there in time. If we can hold Egypt and then later on reinforce it with a large, fast-moving, armoured force, together with an Air Force capable of protecting our columns, we can capture Libya from the Italians without having to do very much fighting.

¹ See Appendix 4.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

GENERAL QUESTIONS OF INTEREST

GENERAL QUESTIONS OF INTEREST

(a) *The Visit of His Majesty the King*

On Saturday, 6 July, His Majesty paid us a visit at Mytchett Place and spent the whole day going round our units. He was much impressed by all he saw and was especially impressed with the smartness and drill of the Maori Battalion.

During his visit His Majesty honoured us by staying to luncheon when he met about 140 officers and nurses picked from all the units of the Second Echelon. Needless to say, his visit, which was attended by the High Commissioner, Mr. Jordan, and the Commander of the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force, General Sir Alexander Godley, GCB, was greatly appreciated by us all.... ²

(i) *Organisation at Home after Departure of Second Echelon*

When the New Zealand Expeditionary Force leaves England to concentrate in the Middle East we shall be forced to leave about one hundred men in hospital who will come to us in Egypt as and when they are fit enough to travel. I intend, therefore, to leave behind a doctor and possibly two nurses, together with a small organisation, to look after them. These will follow us to Egypt as and when they can.

Finally, may I say that as far as I can estimate everything is going well both here and in Egypt. I am anxious that we should concentrate as a division and get our complete equipment as soon as possible. It really looks now as if that goal were in sight. In the work I am carrying out here I am supported by a most excellent body of officers and men who will, when the time comes, give a good account of themselves.

I am most indebted also to the band of officers and NCOs in New Zealand for the excellent work they are doing in training the men for overseas, and am most appreciative of the help given me by Army Headquarters.

It is difficult to say what the future has in store for us all but I am sure that if we can get through the next four months without any major setback, North Africa will be an active and profitable theatre of war for the Allies.

I have ...

, Major-General,

Commanding the New Zealand Expeditionary Force

PS.—I have sent by separate post a copy of this report to the GOC New Zealand Forces, Wellington.

² In the portion of the text not published General Freyberg reviewed the medical and welfare arrangements for the force in the United Kingdom and made acknowledgment of Patriotic Fund parcels and consignments of apples received.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

195 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

195

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

21 August 1940

The improvement of the military situation at Home continues as re-armament progresses. However, the situation in the Middle East cannot be considered satisfactory until fresh equipment and troops arrive.

No doubt the Axis powers have the initiative for the moment both at Home and in the East, but they also have limitations of action. Their invasion of Great Britain must be attempted before bad weather in September or wait until the spring. Bearing in mind the rate of re-armament, by next spring we should have four armoured divisions and over thirty infantry divisions equipped. If the German General Staff wish to invade the United Kingdom they must do so in the next three weeks or give up the project for good.

As for the invasion of Egypt, the hot weather would appear to preclude until October any large-scale offensive across the Libyan Desert. The invasion of Egypt, therefore, would not appear likely until after the threat to the United Kingdom has been disposed of. In either case, the Axis powers would need to re-deploy their air force formations, together with a large number of load- and troop-carrying aircraft. Wastage to these load-carriers in the event of attack on the United Kingdom would be very great, perhaps 50 per cent. It is estimated that at least 500 load-carriers would be required, and this is possible as Germany alone has approximately this number. In view of wastage, however, there would appear to be only sufficient load-carriers for one offensive, not both.

Germany is ready to attack. She is known to have re-deployed her Air

Force against the United Kingdom and, as rash as it may appear, Germany will consider very carefully before giving up the invasion plan. I still think that it is not a possible operation of war.

There are two schools of thought upon defence in Government circles here, those who argue that all equipment should be concentrated upon the defence of the United Kingdom until the threat of invasion is disposed of, and those who believe that there can be no policy of defence except from the point of view of the Empire as a whole, which brings with it automatically the problems of the defence of the Suez Canal and Singapore. I am of the latter school.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, asked me to place my views in writing, and I have done so. These have been printed and circulated to the War Cabinet. There is no doubt that more attention will be taken of the Middle East. Large quantities of arms and equipment are now being shipped to Egypt. A certain quantity is already upon the water, despatched by fast convoy, but until equipment arrives there in large quantities the situation in Egypt is insecure and will remain so until the end of the current year.

It is my opinion that, of the two threats, the attempt to invade the United Kingdom would be the least dangerous, where, thanks to the progress of re-armament and the efficiency of our Navy and Air Force, we are now reasonably secure. More serious would be an attack by combined German and Italian forces upon Egypt.

Meanwhile, I am glad to say that the Second Echelon have their complete equipment of Brens, Boys rifles, carriers, light tanks, guns, and warlike stores. Training has proceeded well. We have already completed three full-scale Divisional exercises and you can feel confident that the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom is now equipped, organised, and reasonably well trained. The officers, both senior and regimental, are good and the morale of the whole force is excellent. Further, I anticipate that the remainder of the Division will be completely equipped shortly. There is no doubt, however, that

pending the arrival of equipment in Egypt, the position is decidedly weak.

Orders have been received to complete mobilisation by the end of September before leaving for the Middle East. In view of the decision to concentrate in Egypt, I am making arrangements now to get my staff back to prepare for the arrival of the Third Echelon. Brigadiers Falla, Miles, Barrowclough and staff, and Crump, leave the United Kingdom on 5 September by packet boat for the Cape, thence by air to Cairo. With your concurrence, I propose to wait until the invasion is disposed of or the threat is over, then fly to Cairo either via Gibraltar or direct over France. Will you cable me if you agree? ¹ A copy of my appreciation for Mr. Churchill on the defence of Egypt together with a full written report of my actions here in the United Kingdom is in the post. ²

¹ On 27 Aug the Minister of Defence cabled his approval of General Freyberg's plans.

² No. 194.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

196 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

196

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

20 September 1940

My telegram of 26 July.³ It had been hoped as stated that the situation in the United Kingdom would permit the despatch of the second New Zealand brigade, now in this country, to the Middle East before or during the present month.

The New Zealand troops are occupying an important place in the defence of Great Britain which could not at present be filled by other troops without serious dislocation. Therefore, it has been thought very desirable that the proposed move should be postponed for a few weeks. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom hope that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand appreciate the position, though they are aware that the New Zealand Government attach importance to the concentration in the Middle East at an early date of the New Zealand forces overseas. However, the postponement is intended to be not longer than would permit of the second New Zealand brigade leaving this country towards the end of October.

Expectations are that the Australian troops in the United Kingdom will leave early next month for the Middle East.

³ See *Third Echelon* (No. 220).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

197 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

197

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

21 September 1940

Your telegram of 20 September (No. 196). The United Kingdom's needs during the present critical weeks are fully appreciated by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, and they acquiesce in the desire of the United Kingdom Government to retain the troops of the New Zealand brigade. They are satisfied to leave to the United Kingdom authorities the date of the departure of those troops to the Middle East.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

198 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

198

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

10 October 1940

The War Office now report considerable delay in the transfer of the Second Echelon to the Middle East. This is greatly to be regretted as the troops are now fully trained and completely equipped. War Office have just replied to a telegram from me as follows:

The composition of convoy WS 4 sailing in November, which has now been decided, does not include the New Zealand contingent in the United Kingdom, though it includes part of the Australian contingent. There were about 100,000 competitors for a shipment capacity of 30,000. The policy remains to concentrate the New Zealand contingent in the Middle East as soon as practicable. Although I hope that this will be the case, it would be misleading for me to give you an assurance that the New Zealand contingent will be included in WS 5 sailing in December. I do not think that His Majesty's Government could possibly give such a guarantee to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

Full efficiency and smooth administration require the earliest possible concentration of the entire Division in Egypt, and I feel that any representation the New Zealand Government can make to speed up the despatch of the Second Echelon should be made.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

199 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

199

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

11 October 1940

Advice has been received by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand from General Freyberg that no steps have yet been taken for the despatch to Egypt of the Second Echelon of the 2nd NZEF. In this connection they had understood from your telegram of 20. September (No. 196) that the intention was that the Second Echelon should leave the United Kingdom for Egypt towards the end of October, and they gather now that it is unlikely that this move will take place even in December.

While His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are satisfied to leave the date of the departure of these troops to the Middle East to the United Kingdom authorities (as set out in my telegram No. 197 of 21 September), nevertheless they wish it to be understood that the utmost importance is attached by them to the early concentration of the New Zealand Division, and they sincerely trust that at a very early date it will be possible to make arrangements to that effect.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

200 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

200

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

11 October 1940

Your telegram of 10 October (No. 198). The continued delay in the concentration of the New Zealand Division has greatly disturbed us and we have today sent the following telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

[Text of telegram No. 199]

The War Cabinet have considered your letters of 15 and 16 August,¹ and your appreciation of the position in Egypt prepared for Mr. Churchill, which have now arrived, and wish me to tell you how greatly they have appreciated your careful analysis of the position. They would be grateful if you would, from time to time, communicate to us your appreciation of the situation as it develops, particularly such information as you can supply regarding the equipment of the New Zealand forces in Egypt, the role they are

¹ There is no trace of any letter from General Freyberg dated 16 Aug 1940. A possible explanation is that the appreciation on the position in Egypt (see Appendix 4) was despatched on that date with a covering letter.

expected to adopt, and their fitness and equipment for such purposes. Your messages of appreciation with reference to gift parcels, apples, &c.,¹ are being conveyed to the appropriate authorities.

¹ These messages were included in General Freyberg's letter of 15

Aug 1940 to the Minister of Defence (No. 194), but have been omitted from the extract published in this volume.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

201 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

201

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

21 October 1940

Your telegram of 11 October (No. 199). The willingness of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to leave to the United Kingdom authorities the date of departure of the New Zealand Second Echelon from the United Kingdom to the Middle East is greatly appreciated by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and they wish to assure the New Zealand Government again that it has always been, and is still, their policy to concentrate the New Zealand Division in the Middle East at the earliest possible date.

However, it has now become clear that the situation in the Middle East demands urgent reinforcements of armoured troops, artillery, and anti-aircraft units, and it is essential that priority should be given to the despatch of such troops. The next convoy for the Middle East from this country cannot contain more than 30,000 troops, and we greatly regret that, in these circumstances, it has been found impossible to arrange for the New Zealand troops in question to leave in that convoy.

Although, unfortunately, it is thus impossible for the New Zealand troops to be sent to the Middle East as soon as we had hoped, we feel sure that the New Zealand Government will appreciate the necessity for giving priority to the troops most urgently required in that theatre of war. All efforts will be made to include New Zealand troops in the following convoy which is due to leave in December, but we should find it very difficult at the present stage to give any undertaking that they

will be included in that convoy, in view of the undesirability of deciding upon the units to be included until nearer the time of sailing, when the precise requirements of the Middle East in the light of the local situation then obtaining can be assessed in detail. However, as soon as the military situation permits, we can assure you that it is our intention that the New Zealand troops should leave for Egypt.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

202 – THE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON) TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO)

202

*The New Zealand Military Liaison Officer (London) to Headquarters
2nd NZEF (Cairo)*

2 November 1940

The sailing date to the Middle East has now been settled. All units of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the United Kingdom are now to complete mobilisation by 29 November. The present intention is that all units will be sent probably in the last week of December if shipping space is available.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

203 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

203

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

14 January 1941

I should like, on the departure of the New Zealand troops who are now leaving this country for service elsewhere, to convey to you and your colleagues on behalf of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom our thanks for the help which they have rendered in the common cause during their service here. Their fine bearing and keenness have won the admiration of all. We have the happiest recollections of them and hope that they are taking with them equally happy memories of the Home-country in whose defence they have played their part so well.

We send them every good wish. We know that they will ably carry on the splendid traditions of the New Zealand Forces and that they will win fresh laurels for their arms.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

204 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

204

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

16 January 1941

I am asked by my Prime Minister to convey the following reply to your telegram of 14 January (No. 203):

Your remarks on the conduct and bearing of the New Zealand troops who have recently left the United Kingdom are very warmly appreciated by my colleagues and myself. The troops were made to feel at all times that they were among their own people and that their welcome was genuine and warm, and we here for our part are proud to know that they worthily represented us, and that they have played some part in defending the centre of the Commonwealth. We share with you the conviction that they will worthily uphold their traditions in their new sphere of activity.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand wish to publish both your message and their reply, but suggest that publication should be withheld until the troops have actually arrived at their destination. They have no knowledge as to whether or not this will coincide with the date referred to in your telegram to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand.¹ If His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom agree to this course, it is suggested that after definite advice has been received of the safe arrival of the troops, the time of publication should be synchronised.

¹ Not published. In this telegram the Secretary of State for

Dominion Affairs requested that the message contained in his telegram of 14 Jan (No. 203) should not be published before 25 January.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

205 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

205

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia

20 January 1941

I received on 14 January a message of appreciation from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs of the services of the New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom, together with a suggestion that this and any reply made should not be published before 25 January. In making a suitable reply we suggested that we would wish to publish both messages, but that this action should be withheld until the troops had actually arrived at their destination, adding that we had no knowledge as to whether or not this would coincide with the date referred to above. The High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand has now received a message suggesting that if we have not already done so we should inform the Commonwealth Government of our views regarding the date of publication so that your Government may have an opportunity to furnish their observations. We had, of course, no idea that Australian troops were included in the convoy, but, in accordance with the suggestion of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, the matter is referred to you.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

206 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

206

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

22 January 1941

With regard to your telegram of 20 January (No. 205) concerning publicity in connection with the movement of troops in the United Kingdom to the Middle East, the Commonwealth Government agree with your view that the announcement should be withheld until the troops have actually arrived at their destination. The text of a telegram sent by us today to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs is contained in my immediately following telegram.

The Commonwealth Government would be pleased to know whether the New Zealand Government concur in these proposals. On account of the position outlined therein, we would be grateful if for the present a public announcement could be withheld.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

207 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

207

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

22 January 1941

My immediately preceding telegram (No. 206). The following is the text of the telegram sent to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

The message of the United Kingdom Government contained in your telegram of 14 January ¹ is much appreciated by the Commonwealth Government, and they would wish to publish it at the appropriate time. It is noted from your telegram of 14 January to the High Commissioner ² that for security reasons the message should not be published before 25 January. The Commonwealth Government consider it inadvisable that any public announcement should be made until the arrival in the Middle East of the second convoy, which completes the movement of troops from the United Kingdom. It is understood that the second convoy left the United Kingdom early this month, and on the basis of the time taken for the movement of the first convoy it would not arrive at the destination until late in February. The Commonwealth Government suggest an arrangement for the release of the news similar to that which operated in connection with the announcement of the arrival of the first contingents of Australian and New Zealand troops in the Middle East, statements being made in Canberra and Wellington simultaneously upon receipt of a code word from the Middle East. We would appreciate the immediate observations of the United Kingdom Government on the proposal, also information as to the anticipated date of the second convoy's arrival in the Middle East.

The Commonwealth Government has been informed by the New Zealand Government of their view that the announcement should be withheld until the troops have actually arrived at their destination. This telegram has been repeated to the New Zealand Government and we have asked them to withhold for the present any announcement.

¹ Not published.

² Not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

208 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

208

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of Australia

23 January 1941

Your telegram of 22 January (No. 206). The New Zealand Government agree with the proposals contained in your telegram of 22 January to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs. They agree also that the public announcement should be withheld until the troops have actually arrived at their destination, and accordingly will defer it as proposed.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

209 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS [EXTRACT]

209

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs [Extract]*

19 February 1941

Your telegram of 15 February.¹ Further consideration has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to the question of publicity concerning the arrival of their troops in the Middle East from the United Kingdom, and they regret that any ambiguity should have arisen as to their desires in this respect. In their

¹ Not published. This telegram from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand dealt with the question whether the inter-governmental messages only should be published (see Nos. 203 and 204) or whether the public announcement should include reference to the arrival of the Australian and New Zealand troops at their destination. The telegram added that it was proposed to consult the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, on the question whether there would be any objection to such an announcement.

opinion, it is most essential that the public of New Zealand should be informed that the troops which had left the United Kingdom have arrived safely at their destination and that the New Zealand Division is now complete.

Naturally there is considerable discussion and a certain amount of disappointment amongst the New Zealand public that our troops have not shared to any major degree in the recent successful actions in the Middle East, more particularly since some detachments have been under

training there for over twelve months. The Government have endeavoured to make it clear that one of the principal reasons why the troops were not used was the fact that the Division was incomplete and was therefore not likely to be engaged in the theatre of war until after the arrival from the United Kingdom of the Second Echelon. It has been known always that the journey via the Cape would have to be undertaken, and considerable anxiety on the part of relatives and others will be allayed by the announcement of the safe arrival of the troops. Moreover, it is felt that the fact that the Division is now complete will be a source of great stimulation to the morale of the people of the Dominion.

If the press announcement were to be confined merely to the publication of the inter-governmental messages which refer only to the departure from the United Kingdom, as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom propose, such an incomplete announcement must inevitably give rise to rumours of a most unsettling character. It was partly to avoid giving cause for anxiety in the minds of relatives and others, as well as the desire to run no risk of giving information to the enemy, that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand were unwilling to publish these messages on the date suggested by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. If that same announcement were made at this juncture and not followed shortly by the further statement that the troops had arrived, it would result in the state of public opinion which His Majesty's Government in New Zealand were most anxious to avoid.... ¹

Although ready to defer to the considered wishes and opinions of the responsible military authorities His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are deeply conscious of the necessity of maintaining the morale of their people and feel most strongly that the course they propose should be adopted. They would be grateful if His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom would consult the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, on the lines set out in your telegram.

¹ Text omitted repeated the views of the Australian Government contained in that Government's telegram to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs on 22 Jan 1941, repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand in No. 207.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

210 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

210

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

26 February 1941

With reference to your telegram of 19 February (No. 209), the Government of the United Kingdom, in deference to the views expressed by the New Zealand Government, agree that an announcement should be made in Australia and New Zealand that the Australian and New Zealand troops have arrived in the Middle East and that the New Zealand formation is now complete. The word 'formation' is used deliberately, as the reference 'division' might convey useful information to the enemy. It is also desirable that the announcement should not imply that all Australian and New Zealand troops have left the United Kingdom, and the actual date of arrival and the names of the ships should not be mentioned.

As soon as the telegram notifying arrival is received from the Dominions Office, the inter-governmental messages and the announcement of arrival may be published. Expectations are that it will not be possible to release the news of arrival before the beginning of next month.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

211 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

211

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

4 March 1941

I am sure you will be glad to hear that the 5th Brigade and attached troops arrived at **Suez** on 3 March. The Division is therefore concentrated and all are in excellent health.

You will appreciate that from now on I must leave more in the hands of Rear Headquarters of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. All matters of policy and matters you wish referred to me personally will continue to reach me direct, but you will understand, of course, that there will be a time lag.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THIRD ECHELON

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

212 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

212

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

8 June 1940

With reference to the second paragraph of my telegram of 2 June.¹

The matter subsequently received further consideration here and as a result the Prime Minister of France² was informed to the following effect:

It was emphasised by us that that portion of the British Expeditionary Force evacuated from Northern France must be completely re-equipped before being employed again and that considerable replacements in personnel and equipment would also be necessary in our air fighter force, the whole of which has been most intensively engaged.

The British Expeditionary Force Headquarters would be reestablished in France and as soon as possible a new British Expeditionary Force built up. Within a period of days two divisions and proportionate Corps troops would be sent over, and a third division would be despatched as soon as possible, but this would depend largely on when its artillery could be provided. The French asked if they could help in this respect. Accompanying the above formations would be an appropriate proportion of army co-operation aircraft.

The fighter squadrons now in France are being immediately brought up to strength and every effort would be made to send further help as soon as recent losses have been replaced.

As soon as possible the bomber squadrons now in France would be brought up to full strength, and the remainder of the bomber force in the United Kingdom would continue support as in the past, actions against objectives selected by the French High Command being given priority.

¹ This telegram, which is not published, contained a summary of the main conclusions reached at a meeting of the Supreme War Council in Paris on 31 May 1940. Paragraph 2 reads: 'A discussion took place as to further British assistance to France, and the United Kingdom Government, without making any definite promise, undertook to consider immediately: (a) what reinforcements could be sent to France, with particular reference to the impending battle on the Somme and the Aisne, and how soon they could be made available, (b) what air support could be given to this battle; and to communicate at the earliest possible moment, the results of this consideration to the French Government.'

² M. Paul Reynaud, GCVO; Minister of Finance, Nov 1938–Mar 1940; Prime Minister, Mar–Jun 1940; interned Sep 1940; detained in fortress after trial by Council for Political Justice, Oct 1941; released from imprisonment by United States Seventh Army, 1945.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

213 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

213

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

27 June 1940

The serious difficulties already experienced in equipping the New Zealand Expeditionary Force must obviously be added to materially by the necessity of re-equipping that portion of the British Expeditionary Force evacuated from France, to which attention is called in your telegram (No. 212), and in the light of this fact His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have been tentatively considering their future programme for the despatch of troops overseas. On the one hand, there would appear to be little to be gained by sending the Third Echelon to the United Kingdom if it cannot at once be fully trained and, within a reasonable period, fully equipped, and if consequently, as would apparently be the case, it would merely add to the mouths to be fed and to the large number of troops already awaiting equipment in the United Kingdom, where indeed it might be obliged to wait for a very considerable period before, by the transfer of the First Echelon, the concentration of the New Zealand Division would be possible. On the other hand, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand do not exclude the possibility (though they would regret it) of brigading the Second and Third Echelons of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force with Australian or British troops and thus forming a composite division, though they feel that unless the necessary equipment were available this again would be of little advantage. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have also recently been directing some attention to the proposal that they should despatch a brigade group to Fiji in the event of a threat of hostilities in

the Pacific,¹ and if it should be considered undesirable to despatch the Third Echelon to the United Kingdom on the completion of its preliminary training here they are inclined to believe that at that point it might be prudent to transfer a portion of it to Fiji, thus ensuring its being in position if required, and, after recruiting to full strength, to hold the remainder here until the situation in the United Kingdom with respect to equipment is easier. All these matters have been giving

¹ See Volume III, *Defence of the South Pacific*.

some concern to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand and they would be glad to have the comments and advice of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom at an early date.

This telegram has been repeated to Canberra.¹

¹ It was also sent through the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to General Freyberg, who was asked for his comments. See No. 217.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

214 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND²

214

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand²

28 June 1940

In spite of the possible hostility of the United States of America and Russia, the deterrent of the Japanese commitments in China, and our military and economic strength, there are indications that Japan may be contemplating moves to improve her strategic and economic position. While it is not thought that war with Japan is necessarily imminent, the Chiefs of Staff are reviewing Far Eastern strategy.³ Briefly, their views are as follows:

The security of our Imperial interests in the Far East lies ultimately in our ability to control sea communications in the South-Western Pacific, for which purpose an adequate fleet must be based at Singapore. We appreciate your anxiety with regard to the despatch of a fleet to Singapore. However, since our previous assurances in this respect, the whole strategic situation has been radically altered by the defeat of the French. The result of this has been to alter the whole of the balance of naval strength in home waters. Formerly we were prepared to abandon the Eastern Mediterranean, relying on the French fleet in the Western Mediterranean to contain the Italian fleet, and despatch a fleet to the Far East. Now if we move the Mediterranean fleet to the Far East there is nothing to contain the Italian fleet, which will be free to operate in the Atlantic or to reinforce the German fleet in home waters, using bases in North-West France. Therefore, we must retain in European waters sufficient naval forces to match both the German and Italian fleets, and we cannot do this and send a fleet to the Far East. In the

meantime, the strategic importance to us of the Far East has increased, both from the point of view of Empire security and to enable us to defeat the enemy by the control of essential commodities at the source.

The Japanese advance in China and Hainan has increased the threat to Malaya, and any further advance into French Indo- China, Dutch possessions, or Thailand would endanger still more our position at Singapore, the key point in the Far East. We can no longer concentrate on the defence of Singapore Island entirely, because of the increased range of aircraft and the development of aerodromes, particularly in Thailand, but must consider the defence of Malaya as a whole, particularly the security of up-country landing grounds. For this reason, and because we cannot spare a fleet for the Far East at present, it is all the more important that we should do what we can in Malaya to improve our land and air defences.

In its telegram of 13 June ¹ the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia mentioned the possibility of supplying further land forces. It is considered by the Chiefs of Staff that the urgent movement of one division and two squadrons of aircraft to Malaya is desirable as an added immediate deterrent. They ask particularly whether roughly the equivalent of a division, equipped as fully as possible, could be made available, if necessary drawing on Australia's militia pool of equipment. They realise that these troops could not be equipped up to full Western standards, nor would this be necessary in view of the unlikelihood of the Japanese being able to bring mechanised troops with the latest forms of equipment to attack them. For the time being, at any rate, they consider that employment in Malaya would be in the best interests of the Empire.

If the Commonwealth Government cannot make a whole division available immediately owing to equipment or other difficulties, the Chiefs of Staff recommend movement by brigade groups as they become necessary.

² Addressed also to the Australian Government.

³ See also Volume III.

**¹ This telegram from the Prime Minister of Australia to the
Dominions Secretary is not published.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

215 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

215

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

2 July 1940

Your telegram of 27 June (No. 213). The suggestion that a brigade group should be sent from New Zealand to Fiji is greatly appreciated, and our provisional view is that this would be a very valuable role for New Zealand forces. The position is that at the moment we are giving active consideration to the situation in the Far East generally, and in the near future we hope to be able to communicate a full appreciation of the position in the Pacific as we see it. Resulting from this examination of the position, it was as a preliminary measure that we thought it desirable to approach the Commonwealth Government in my telegram of 28 June (No. 214) about the possibility of sending military and air reinforcements to Singapore.

The considerations advanced in your telegram of 27 June regarding the use of New Zealand forces generally, will of course, be taken into account in our examination of the situation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

216 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

216

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 July 1940

The Chiefs of Staff have prepared the following appreciation of the military position in the Middle East. It is being communicated also to His Majesty's Ambassador at Cairo,¹ the Commander-in-Chief, India,² and the Commanders-in-Chief in the Middle East³ and Mediterranean.⁴

The retention of our position in the Middle East remains of the utmost importance to the successful prosecution of the war, particularly in view of our policy of an economic blockade of Europe. The security of the Anglo-Iranian oil fields is also important.

The security of the Middle East hinges on the defence of Egypt and the Sudan, where our main forces are based, our Middle Eastern communications are centred, and the Suez Canal is controlled; on the defence of Iraq, from which we must control the oil of Iraq and Iran and safeguard the route from Baghdad to Haifa; on Palestine, which is now our most northerly defensive position and contains the western terminus of the Baghdad route; on Aden, which is essential to our Red Sea lines of communication; and on the defence of Kenya, which is our second line of defence in Africa, a valuable base of operations against Italian East Africa, and which contains a second alternative line of communication via Mombasa to Egypt.

Very considerable success has already been achieved in reducing the Italian air and submarine threat to the Red Sea, and it is of first

importance that this route should be rendered secure as soon as

¹ Sir Miles Lampson.

² General Sir Robert Archibald Cassels, GCB, GCSI, DSO; GOC-in-C of Army in India, 1935–41.

³ General Wavell.

⁴ Admiral of the Fleet, Viscount Cunningham, KT, GCB, OM, DSO; in 1940, Vice-Admiral Sir Andrew Browne Cunningham; Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, 1939–42; C-in-C Allied Naval Forces, Mediterranean, 1943; Admiral of the Fleet, 1943; First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, 1943–46.

possible. The development of the air route to Nigeria-Geneina (Duala), as reinforcement for the route for aircraft and light stores to Egypt, is being pressed on, as is the work on the Baghdad and Mombasa alternative routes.

Our Middle East policy must at present be generally defensive, although every chance of taking local offensive action will be continued. The possibility of attack on Egypt by German forces from this area, undoubtedly a serious threat, calls for an increased scale of defence, although the difficulties of terrain, climate, and communications in Libya are limiting factors. Our present forces are sufficient to deal with any purely Italian attack as long as we retain the Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean. In Libya, Italy could now muster between 300 and 400 bombers, but their morale is indifferent and their maintenance poor. The participation of the German Air Force in air attacks on Egypt is not impossible and Alexandria might be rendered untenable as a Fleet base, although in the near future their air force is likely to be fully occupied in attacks on the United Kingdom.

It is hoped that Turkey would oppose a German or Italian attack on

the Middle East through the Balkans. Although we cannot rely on her to offer prolonged resistance, the threat to the Middle East from this direction is comparatively a long-term one. It is important that Syria should not fall into enemy occupation.¹ If the *status quo* is to be disturbed by our enemies, it is clearly desirable that Turkey should resist.

Iraq's defence is compromised by the situation in Syria, by the possibility of a disturbed internal situation, and by the growing hostility of Iran. Subject to the agreement of the Iraq Government it is intended to reinforce Iraq with one division from India.

Although the continuance of French resistance at Djibouti cannot be counted on, the success of our action against the Italian air and submarine threat promises well for the future security of the Red Sea route.

The intention is to retain the Fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean as long as possible.

The above reasons make it clearly necessary to strengthen our defence forces in the Middle East at the earliest possible moment. The situation is, however, governed by probable large-scale air offensive, and even invasion of this country, in the near future, and shortages of equipment to meet these threats. Therefore, our policy must be to concentrate our immediate efforts on the defence of the United Kingdom and to start releasing equipment for the Middle East when we can more clearly judge the situation following the

¹ See Volume II, Syria.

impending trial of strength here. This may not be for two months; in the meantime we shall endeavour to send everything we can spare, including, if possible, modern fighters for the re-equipment of squadrons in Egypt and bombers to replace wastage.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

217 – GENERAL FREYBERG (LONDON) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

217

General Freyberg (London) to the Minister of Defence

12 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 29 June ¹ and the Governor-General's telegram of 27 June (No. 213) to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs.

I agree completely with the opinion that it would be of no service to send the **Third Echelon** unless they are to be immediately provided with arms and equipment up to a scale that will allow them to train and take the field. If the despatch to the **United Kingdom** of the **Third Echelon** should be delayed because of equipment difficulties their temporary despatch to **Fiji** would no doubt have a salutary effect in the **Pacific**. Since reading your above-quoted telegram, the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs' telegram of 3 July (No. 216) has been despatched and a copy read by the New Zealand Cabinet. It would appear now that British military policy is in favour of constituting the New Zealand Division in the **Middle East** as soon as possible. I suggest that, subject always to the condition being made by the **New Zealand Government** that mobilisation equipment is available upon their arrival, you agree to concentration. Although it would be bad enough in England to add to the number of mouths without adding to military strength, in Egypt it would be much worse. It is certain that the situation in the **Middle East** is not as stated in my message of 26 May. ² With **France** out of the war and disarmed, hostile **Italy** has adequate numbers of troops and aircraft in **Libya** to threaten Egypt. If Germany attempts an invasion of England she would urge **Italy** to make a move against Egypt. It would be difficult to synchronise the two efforts as a seaborne attack on the **United Kingdom** could not be attempted after the windy season has begun in

September and no serious offensive is likely in North Africa before October because of the heat. It would appear, therefore, that Germany must move first, and if she has a bad failure Italy's main offensive

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 189).

² See *First Echelon in Egypt* (No. 79).

upon Egypt will be greatly influenced and probably given up. Taking the longer view, I feel that nobody can foresee how events will shape. With the failure of harvests in Europe and the complete nature of the blockade, Germany, and certainly Italy, very soon will be hard pressed for food. Germany is aware that we are re-equipping five divisions every two months and will improve upon that rate. When invasion would again be possible, that is, by May of next year, we shall have over forty divisions fully equipped and superiority in the air. Germany must attack England or give up the project,¹ and I still feel that any such attack is an act of desperation doomed to failure.

It is my opinion that when the threat to the United Kingdom has been disposed of the Government would be wise to urge upon the British Government the advisability of reviewing the whole position of the employment of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Any decision to move either the Second or Third Echelons should be dependent upon a clear undertaking being given by the British Government that full mobilisation equipment will be made available upon their arrival overseas. Unless such a decision can be given I entirely agree with your decision to hold up temporarily the sailing of the Third Echelon from the area of the Pacific. I am to add that the equipment of the Second Echelon is being carried out very quickly.

¹ Another version of this telegram reads: 'Germany must attack England now. ...'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

218 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON)

218

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the High
Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington)*

13 July 1940

The following is supplementary to the appreciation contained in my telegram of 3 July (No. 216). A full-scale appreciation of the situation in the Far East and a paper on the major strategy of the war as a whole are now being prepared and will be telegraphed on completion. ²

The immediate threat is to the United Kingdom, the security of which is vital. At present our policy must be a short-term one with the primary object of avoiding defeat at Home, and all resources must be devoted initially to this purpose. It is hoped that by September this phase will be over and that any attempt at invasion will have been defeated. The attention of the enemy is then likely to turn to the Middle East: this may happen simultaneously with the attack on this country, but owing to climatic conditions it is doubtful if the enemy will embark on large-scale operations from Libya or North Africa [*two words mutilated*] until the end of September. Therefore, as soon as the situation at Home permits, it will be necessary to reinforce the Middle East, and it is hoped that it will be possible to reconstitute the 6th Australian Division and the 2nd New Zealand Division in the Middle East by the autumn or early winter of this year. These divisions will be completed with equipment at the same time as they are concentrated.

Both the Australian forces in Palestine and the New Zealand forces in Egypt are now held in reserve there. Their presence should help to avoid internal disturbances, but they are available to act in that event.

The intention is that, in the event of an emergency, they would be employed by General Wavell, subject to their own Commanders' approval. When fully equipped they would be available for employment in active operations in accordance with the situation at the time.

Indications from the above are that we are anticipating operations on a large scale in the Middle East throughout the autumn and winter of 1940. It is desirable, therefore, that preparations for the despatch of reinforcements to the Middle East should be carried out as far as possible in accordance with the timetable already given by the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments.¹ It is realised that the circumstances at the time may not permit of their despatch to the Middle East: for example, the Red Sea route may not be open. Satisfactory progress is, however, being made in dealing with the air and submarine threat to our communications through the Red Sea. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, has been asked if he can accept these reinforcements on the dates given, but there is little doubt that he will wish to have them.

Although the possibility of Alexandria being rendered untenable as a Fleet base was referred to in my previous message, it will be realised that our policy is to defend and hold Egypt. The possibility in this connection of a heavy scale attack by German land forces against Egypt and Palestine, either from the west or from the northeast, is not considered to be an immediate contingency.

² See Volume III.

¹ See Volume II, *Reinforcements, 1940–42.*

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

219 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS [EXTRACT]

219

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs [Extract]*

24 July 1940

Close attention has again been directed by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to the future programme for the despatch abroad of New Zealand troops on which their tentative and preliminary views were expressed in my telegram of 27 June (No. 213). They have noted the intention of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, as expressed in your telegram of 2 July (No. 215), to consider the questions raised in my telegram and as soon as possible to supply a full appreciation of the position with the comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the points raised by the New Zealand Government. It is now clear from your telegram of 13 July (No. 218) to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, that it is contemplated that reinforcements for despatch to the Middle East should be prepared as far as possible in accordance with the timetable already given by the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments, and that it is hoped to concentrate in the Middle East by the autumn or early winter of this year the New Zealand Expeditionary Force and the Australian Expeditionary [Imperial] Force.

Messages which have been repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board from the Admiralty and the Director of Sea Transport ¹ now indicate the allocation of certain vessels for the transport of New Zealand troops and the intention to despatch convoy US 4 on or about 23 August from Sydney, involving, of course, the departure of troops from New Zealand at an earlier date. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are still

very much in doubt as to the position, and they find themselves forced to make a very early decision on the matter in order that all necessary and timely preparations can be made if this date is adhered to. They would therefore be grateful to receive an immediate indication of the views of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the following aspects of the matter:

If it is proposed that the Third Echelon should proceed to the Middle East, as is apparently the case, they would be glad of an indication of the route to be followed and the escort proposed. In this connection they feel bound to point out that at the moment they see no material difference between the risk involved in respect of the Second Echelon, which led to its diversion to the United Kingdom, and the risk likely to be involved next month. If the situation has altered, or if it is likely to alter, they would be glad to learn in what respect.

The possibility of providing the necessary equipment has also in their opinion a direct bearing on the question. They gather that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom hope to provide equipment at the same time as the divisions are concentrated. They would be grateful if an intimation could be given as to whether it

¹ Not published.

is the intention to despatch the Second Echelon from the United Kingdom to the Middle East to arrive on or about the same time as the Third Echelon, and of an assurance that the necessary equipment will be provided for all New Zealand troops in the Middle East, including all requisite mobilisation equipment, on arrival, and all further equipment within a reasonable time thereafter to enable them to fight effectively if necessary.

A factor which they feel must not be ignored is the possibility of the despatch of a brigade group to Fiji. Should it be decided with the concurrence of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to

despatch such a force it will be realised that it may be necessary to reduce proportionately the reinforcements to be forwarded with the Third Echelon.... ¹

Having regard to the urgency of this matter His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be most grateful if a reply could be despatched to reach here by the morning of 26 July.

¹ For text omitted see *Special Units—Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies* (No. 303).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

220 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

220

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

26 July 1940

So far as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are able to give them at the present time, the following are the answers to the questions contained in your telegram of 24 July (No. 219):

It is hoped, in accordance with the original programme, to sail convoy US 4 for the Middle East from Sydney on 23 August, and that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to utilise the full capacity available in this convoy. It is suggested that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand should despatch by this convoy reinforcements for the First Echelon now in Egypt, as well as the following ancillary units which it is understood are now ready to leave: 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th and 19th New Zealand Army Troops Companies.² We suggest that any remaining capacity in US 4 should be filled by such units of the Third Echelon as may be selected by the New Zealand Government. It is suggested also that the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company should remain for the present in New Zealand, but we should be very grateful if a Headquarters Railway

² See

*Special Units—Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops
Companies.*

Operating Group (total all ranks, 26—see WE 4/1931/17/2)¹ could be raised and despatched with the other transportation units in US 4.

With regard to the route for the convoy, it is proposed that the ships should proceed to India in the first place and that transshipment should take place into smaller vessels for the passage through the Red Sea to Suez. As regards the escort, it is proposed that HMAS *Canberra* should be used for the ocean passage, and adequate anti-submarine and anti-aircraft escort would be provided for the passage through the Red Sea. The Naval Commander-in-Chief, East Indies,² will arrange details in the light of the situation at the time. The destruction of 60 per cent of the Italian submarines in that area and, to a lesser extent, the reduced fuel stocks caused by our continual bombing of Italian air bases has reduced materially the risk of passage through the Red Sea. Two convoys have already passed through the Red Sea without loss, and before the passage of US 4 His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom themselves intend to pass about 27,000 further troops through the Red Sea in addition to regular supply convoys. Therefore, before the passage of US 4 the security of the route will have been fully tested.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom cannot yet state a firm date by which full equipment for the Third Echelon can be provided. At the best, however, it cannot reach the Middle East until some time after the arrival of the echelon sailing on 23 August. Personal anti-gas equipment should be available on the arrival of the echelon as it has already been despatched. In addition a modified scale of Bren guns, anti-tank rifles, mortars, &c., will be despatched by the fastest means possible. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom foresee the possibility of a situation developing in the Middle East in which white troops would play a valuable part in the security of the area, even with this modified scale of equipment. They therefore hope that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to send the forces as above

proposed, notwithstanding the inevitable delay in the provision of full equipment.

As the New Zealand Government will be aware, we hope that it may be possible in due course to concentrate the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Middle East, but it is unlikely that the situation in the United Kingdom would permit the second New Zealand brigade to sail for the Middle East from this country before September. Therefore, it could not reach the Middle East with its

¹ War establishment as laid down by the War Office.

² Admiral Sir Ralph Leatham, KCB, Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, Apr 1939–Apr 1941; at time of reference, Vice-Admiral.

equipment until the end of the year at the earliest unless the Mediterranean route can be opened before then. ¹

The possibility of the despatch of a brigade group to Fiji is now being considered by the Chiefs of Staff. The position in the Far East is at present considered to be less tense, but the Chiefs of Staff may recommend that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand should be asked to be prepared to undertake this measure. If such a recommendation were adopted, it is appreciated that it would be necessary to reduce proportionately the reinforcements to be forwarded with the Third Echelon. Within the next few days it is hoped to communicate further on this point.... ²

¹ See

Second Echelon.

² For text omitted see *Special Units—Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies* (No. 305).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

221 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

221

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

28 July 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are grateful for your telegram of 26 July (No. 220). In this connection they would, however, much appreciate at the earliest possible moment a definite indication of the number of officers and men from New Zealand for whom accommodation ³ will be available and the transport that it is proposed to use for this purpose. It will be understood that immediate arrangements will need to be made by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand for departure on the date mentioned in your telegram, and it is essential that the exact numbers for which these preparations must be made should be made known to them immediately.

³ A further cable from the Governor-General on 30 Jul 1940 read as follows:

Ministers urge a most immediate reply to my most secret and most immediate telegram of 28 July (No. 221). Should there be any misunderstanding of the information that they require, they ask that this message be interpreted by inserting the words 'in convoy US 4' after the word 'accommodation'.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

222 – GENERAL FREYBERG (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER

222

General Freyberg (London) to the Prime Minister

30 July 1940

With reference to the telegram of 26 July (No. 220) from the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs and the Governor-General's telegram of 28 July (No. 221).

I understand that all questions of the route and risk of passage are answered by the Admiralty.

The highest authority here desires that the railway units be sent to the Middle East, an opinion with which I entirely agree.¹ As more transport accommodation is now available, I understand that this will not prevent the Third Echelon from embarking.

In view of the last sentence of the fourth paragraph of the Secretary of State's No. 220 of 26 July, I suggest that the Third Echelon should be sent even if its equipment is on a reduced scale.

Regarding the question of accommodation raised in your reply, Maadi and Helwan camps will be adequate accommodation for all our three echelons. The railway troops will not be accommodated by us but by Army. If later reinforcements raise problems of accommodation we can move one or two brigades to the Western Desert for a tour of duty. Forgive the delay as we are out in bivouac in Sussex² upon a full-scale exercise. The men are in great heart and all is well.

¹ See

Special Units—Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies.

2 See

Second Echelon.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

223 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

223

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

30 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 28 July (No. 221). New Zealand's response has greatly encouraged His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. Since four British ships with a total capacity for 9500 men are available for US 4, plus Dutch ships to number six if required, with a total capacity for 9000, accommodation will not now represent a limiting factor. Of the above potential accommodation for over 18,000 troops, the Australian requirements for this convoy will not absorb more than about 6000 places. If, therefore, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are prepared to send by this convoy the whole of the Third Echelon, in addition to the transportation and Army Troops units mentioned in my telegram of 26 July (No. 220), there is ample accommodation for these numbers and also for such reinforcements as the New Zealand Government may be able to spare, having regard to the above-quoted communication.

In view of the New Zealand Government's reply we are making every effort to provide at once the highest scale of equipment at present possible, and arrangements are being made for definite quantities to be allocated for the New Zealand forces to be sent in US 4, calculated on the basis of a contingent with fighting troops comprising one infantry brigade of three battalions, one field regiment of artillery, one anti-tank battery, and one field company; included in the equipment which will be made available for the New Zealand troops sailing by US 4 are the following among the major items: 80 Bren guns, 40 anti-tank rifles, nine

2-inch mortars, three 3-inch mortars, eight field guns, two anti-tank guns, six wireless sets, number of ... wireless sets, and a number of ... Bren carriers.¹ This equipment should reach Egypt by the middle of September, with the exception of the Bren carriers which would follow very shortly afterwards.

The New Zealand Government's anxiety to be in a position to make the necessary detailed arrangements is appreciated, and it is hoped that the foregoing will enable them to do so. In order that shipping accommodation can be adjusted accordingly and the necessary detailed supply arrangements made, we should be grateful for early information of the New Zealand Government's decision.

¹ The text here is uncertain.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

224 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

224

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

3 August 1940

In connection with your telegram of 30 July (No. 223), for which they are grateful, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have the following observations to make:

The view, which they have held for some considerable time, that relations between the British Commonwealth and Japan are most unstable, has been reinforced by the rapid deterioration in the past few weeks in the Far Eastern situation. They look on the position as it is now developing as one of great gravity and they cannot disguise from themselves the fact that the contingency of hostilities with Japan in the near future is one that must be taken seriously into consideration if it is not to be accepted as a probability.²

They have felt it to be their duty in these circumstances to consider with much care the course that should be taken with the New Zealand troops now in training in the Dominion, including those for the Third Echelon, and particularly the question of the departure and the destination of the Third Echelon with its accompanying reinforcements and ancillary troops. In considering this matter they have tried to weigh carefully every pertinent consideration, and they think it might be of advantage were they to inform His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of the lines upon which their discussion of the matter has developed.

On the one hand, they have had to recognise and attach due weight to the fact that the situation in the Far East is very serious, and that it appears to be getting worse; that if the Third Echelon leaves this Dominion there is at the present moment no force available in this country whose training is in any way comparable with that of the Third Echelon, which is in itself only partially trained; that some time must elapse before, with the existing resources in this Dominion, any other force will be trained even to that standard; that the absence of trained troops in adequate numbers would be a particular disadvantage here in case of attack because of the length of New Zealand's coastline and the numerous harbours and open beaches offering ready facilities for a landing; and that the Third Echelon on departure would naturally take with it a proportion of the available supplies of arms and equipment, already far from adequate. In view of the effect on the British Commonwealth's position of a possible successful attack on New Zealand, it might well be, in the existing circumstances, that the best contribution this Dominion could make to the common effort would be in fully ensuring its own defence.

They have also had to consider the fact that the surrender of the French, as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have informed them, has doubled the contemplated scale of attack in the Middle East, and the prospect that, whatever the fate of the pending German attack on Great Britain, a large-scale attack may well be launched in the Middle East, possibly from more than one direction, and possibly too, as a combined German and Italian operation. They are also anxious to ensure that it will be possible to continue to reinforce with men and supplies the troops in the Middle East.

The fact has had to be acknowledged that the equipment to be provided for the troops of the Third Echelon on arrival in the Middle East is much less than half the recognised fighting scale and that there is, and it is realised that there can be, no definite indication as to when they will be fully equipped; and they have been forced to realise that while the scale of equipment contemplated might well be, as His

Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom assure them, adequate for one possible scale of action, it would nevertheless be a fact that if fighting on the Continental scale were to take place the New Zealand troops in that area may have to fight on very unequal terms.

Also, the risk of the passage has not been absent from their minds, and in this respect they have felt it necessary to consider that the proposed escort on this occasion is materially smaller than on either of the previous occasions (though they readily appreciate why this should be so) while the risk is certainly no less and, indeed, if Japan were to enter the war, the risk would be appreciably greater than before. However, they assume that all necessary protection and escort will be provided. All these circumstances have been looked at with the greatest of care and in the light of the fullest possible information that they have been able to gather here.

On the other hand, there are very weighty considerations against deferring the despatch of the troops. They fully accept the fact that a large view must be taken, that in the last resort this Dominion must stand or fall according to the decision in the main theatres of war, and that as a corollary it would be wise to have all possible forces at decisive points rather than to disperse them in reserves all over the world. Again, they see that if the despatch of the Third Echelon to the Middle East is deferred, the First Echelon would be left unsupported and the concentration of the New Zealand Division retarded.

The fullest weight has been given to the recent appreciations of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff on the vital necessity of maintaining the British positions in the Middle East, having regard to the lines of communication which would otherwise be open to the enemy eastward and southward, and to the necessity of safeguarding vital oil supplies; and, finally, they have attached the utmost importance to the fact that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, after full consideration on the widest strategical scale, have concluded that in the present circumstances the best contribution this Dominion could make to the common cause would be by the despatch of the Third Echelon to

the Middle East, and have asked them to take this course.

The New Zealand Government, having very carefully weighed all the above considerations and every other known factor that might conceivably have a bearing upon the matters in question, have come to the conclusion that the troops should depart as proposed, and all necessary preparations have accordingly been made. Having regard to the threatening situation *vis-à-vis* Japan, they feel, however, that they should retain from the reinforcements that would otherwise be despatched with the Third Echelon the necessary force (3050 all told) for despatch to Fiji as soon after the concurrence of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom is received as this can be arranged.

The comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the points raised above would be appreciated, but in the meantime the troops that will be ready on 19 August for despatch in convoy US 4 will total accordingly 287 officers, 53 nurses, and 5791 other ranks.¹ His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be grateful to receive at the earliest possible moment an intimation of the transports allotted for that purpose, with their respective accommodation, and the date on which departure from New Zealand is contemplated, and any further information that may now be available as to escort, including the passage across the Tasman Sea for which HMS *Achilles*² could be made available.

² See Volume III.

¹ A total of 356 officers and 6078 other ranks (total 6434) embarked with the Third Echelon.

² HMS *Achilles* had returned to New Zealand from the South Atlantic Station on 23 Feb 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

225 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO DIRECTOR OF SEA TRANSPORT

225

The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to Director of Sea Transport

5 August 1940

Repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.

Your 1845, 3 August, and your 0405, 4 August.³ Accommodation is required by New Zealand for maximum 6131 *vide* their telegram of 5 August⁴ to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board only.

It is therefore proposed that shipping be utilised as follows:

Mauretania, Empress of Japan, and Orcades to take the New Zealand contingent.⁵

Aquitania,⁶ the Dutch ships ***Christiaan Huygens, Indrapoera, Slamat, and Nieuw Holland***, to take the Australian contingent.

Assuming that the four Dutch ships could be fitted for a minimum of 1000 each, the ***Nieuw Zeeland*** and ***Johan de Witt*** would not be required but could be fitted and sailed independently for **Bombay**.

The inclusion of four fast ships in the same convoy as the Dutch ships appears uneconomical because of, firstly, the slow speed combined with the convoy, viz., about 14–15 knots; secondly, the four fast ships are already fitted; thirdly, it is anticipated that the ***Mauretania, Empress of Japan, and Orcades*** could leave **Wellington** about 23 August, being joined in **Bass Strait** by the ***Aquitania***.

Subject to ocean escort being available (see my telegram No. 226 of

5 August), it is proposed that the *Mauretania*, *Empress of Japan*, *Orcades*, and *Aquitania* should proceed as fast convoy US 4, 19–20 knots, to **Bombay** via **Fremantle**, and the four Dutch ships from **Sydney** as slow convoy US 5, 14–15 knots, as soon as ready, at the earliest about 6 September.

The dates of leaving **Fremantle** will be approximately as follows, but will be confirmed:

US 4, Sunday, 1 September

US 5, Saturday, 14 September

³ These two telegrams from the Director of Sea Transport are not published. They gave details of his proposals for the assembly of the convoy.

⁴ Not published. The numbers given in this telegram were 287 officers, 53 nurses, and 5791 other ranks.

⁵ These were the transports in which the **Third Echelon** sailed: *Mauretania*, Cunard-White Star, 35,739 tons; *Empress of Japan* and *Orcades* (see

Second Echelon).

⁶ *Aquitania*, Cunard-White Star, 44,786 tons.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

226 – THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD TO THE ADMIRALTY

226

The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board to the Admiralty

5 August 1940

Repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.

My earlier telegram of 5 August, paragraph 4. The proposed ocean escorts are as follows:

Fast convoy US 4: Tasman Sea— *Achilles* and/or *Perth*¹ as arranged between the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board and the New Zealand Naval Board. From Bass Strait onward to Colombo— *Canberra* only.

Slow convoy US 5: *Sydney* to the vicinity of Cocos Islands— *Perth*. From the vicinity of Cocos Islands onward— *Canberra*.

The need for increased protection in the Indian Ocean may be indicated by later intelligence.

¹ HMAS *Perth*, late *Amphion*, 6-inch cruiser, 7100 tons; sunk in night action near entrance to Sunda Strait, 28 Feb 1942.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

227 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

227

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

9 August 1940

Your telegrams of 3 August (No. 224) and 5 August. ²

The willingness of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to despatch the **Third Echelon** to the **Middle East** in a situation in the **Far East** and the **Pacific** which cannot fail to give rise to some anxiety is greatly appreciated by His Majesty's Government in the **United Kingdom**. We fully realise that New Zealand's wish is to retain sufficient trained forces in the **Pacific** area to make it possible for a brigade group to be despatched to **Fiji** and, as has already been indicated, it is considered that the very substantial increase in **Fiji**'s security, which this decision represents, is a most valuable form of assistance to the common cause.

With regard to the contingent for the **Middle East**, we have noted the numbers of the New Zealand troops which will be ready to sail with US 4. A short postponement in the sailing of this convoy has become necessary, and it is now not expected to leave **Fremantle** before 1 September. The transport to be provided for the New Zealand troops will comprise the **Mauretania**, **Empress of Japan**, and **Orcades**, with respective capacities for 2500, 2500, and 1500 persons. Full details of movement will be notified as soon as possible, but it is hoped to arrange for the above ships to sail from New Zealand on or about 23 August. ¹ The escort proposed for the Tasman crossing is HMS **Achilles** and/or **HMAS Perth**, as may be arranged between the Australian and New Zealand Naval Boards, and for the onward passage to Colombo, HMAS

Canberra.

As soon as a decision is reached the New Zealand Government will be informed of the detailed arrangements for the onward passage from Colombo, which are under discussion with the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies.

² See Volume III, *Defence of the South Pacific*. In this telegram the New Zealand Government asked the United Kingdom Government to concur with its proposal to send a brigade group to Fiji.

¹ A postponement of this date was later notified, and the convoy left New Zealand on 28 August.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

228 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

228

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

9 August 1940

I read the Governor-General's telegram of 3 August to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs (No. 224) with the greatest interest and sympathy. I appreciate fully the great responsibility which you and your colleagues cannot but feel in taking the decisions which you have reached as to the disposition of the available New Zealand forces. For our part we are greatly heartened as ever by New Zealand's readiness to meet the needs of the situation both in the Middle East and the Pacific. I feel sure of the absolute soundness of your decision.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

229 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD

229

The Admiralty to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board

10 August 1940

Repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.

The proposals in your telegrams of 5 August (Nos. 225 and 226) are concurred in by the Admiralty in so far as the organisation of the escorts is concerned. It is hoped that they are also acceptable to the New Zealand Naval Board.

The precise date of sailing may, however, require adjustment with regard to the availability of shipping and escorts for the onward passage to Egypt, in relation to other large troop movements which have already commenced from the United Kingdom to the same destination. This aspect of the question is under urgent examination and a further signal will be sent you.¹

¹ This telegram read: ‘Concur with proposal in your telegram (No. 225) of 5 August.’

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

230 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

230

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

12 August 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have now had an opportunity of perusing the information contained in your telegram of 11 August ² to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, and they are bound to say it increases their apprehension as to the scale of equipment to be provided for the New Zealand troops in the Middle East. As they have indicated in my telegram of 3 August (No. 224), they are far from satisfied that the equipment that will be available for the Third Echelon, or indeed for the First, is adequate to enable the New Zealand troops to play a proper part in fighting if it develops on a scale that might be expected from the concentrations of enemy troops referred to in the above-mentioned telegram. They feel that they must ask His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom at once whether it is not possible not only to provide a more adequate scale of equipment but also to advise them in detail of the equipment to be provided and its expected time of arrival in the Middle East.

² Not published. A statement of the Allied and enemy forces then in the Middle East was given in this telegram. Under the heading North Africa the following forces were listed:

British in Egypt: One armoured division (less one brigade); one infantry division; one infantry brigade; one New Zealand infantry brigade; one Indian infantry division (less one brigade).

Egyptian: The equivalent of two divisions.

Italian: In Libya—16 divisions (8½ facing Egypt and 7½ facing Tunis).

French: Six divisions and internal security troops.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

231 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

231

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

12 August 1940

The information contained in your telegram of 9 August (No. 227) is greatly appreciated by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. On receipt of this information they have been considering the arrangements proposed for the escort of convoy US 4, and in this connection they have the following comments to make:

They are of the opinion that between New Zealand and Bass Strait it would be desirable, for the purposes of security, that the escort should consist of HMS *Achilles* and HMAS *Perth*, and they would be grateful if arrangements could be made to that effect.

They are still not without apprehension that for the voyage between Australia and Colombo the escort proposed—HMAS *Canberra*—may be inadequate. It is understood that a raider is believed to be operating in the Indian Ocean and if, as they understand might be the case, this raider should prove to be a submarine, they would not regard a cruiser as adequate protection. In this connection they would be most grateful for the comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, and for an intimation whether it is proposed to provide any anti-submarine protection, if necessary, and if so for what portion of the voyage and in what strength.

For the onward voyage from Colombo they would be grateful for detailed information as to the proposals for escort at the earliest possible

**date. As they have repeatedly pointed out, they feel that they cannot
divest themselves of their share of the responsibility for the safe passage
of their troops, and before these troops sail they would like to feel
satisfied with the arrangements contemplated throughout the whole
voyage.**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

232 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

232

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

13 August 1940

Further to my telegram of 12 August (No. 231).

**Having regard to the difficulties in making *HMAS Perth* available,
His Majesty's Government in New Zealand now agree to accept HMS
Achilles as the sole escort for the trans-Tasman passage to Bass Strait,
provided that, if necessary, *HMAS Perth* is held immediately available.** ¹

¹ The Australian Commonwealth Naval Board confirmed that the *Perth* would be available.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

233 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

233

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

14 August 1940

Your telegram of 26 July (No. 220). In accordance with your suggestion, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand is despatching the following in convoy US 4:

Reinforcements totalling 600 for artillery, signals, and infantry of the First Echelon.

The 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company, Headquarters Railway Operating Group.²

All units of the Third Echelon with its first reinforcements for same, excepting the 8th New Zealand Field Company, Engineers, and its first reinforcements.

It is requested that if possible the 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company should be attached to and at the disposal of the GOC, 2nd New Zealand Division, until the arrival of the 8th New Zealand Field Company, Engineers, which will be despatched with the next, that is, the fourth draft of reinforcements. In the meantime the 19th New Zealand Army Troops Company is required for essential preparatory work in Fiji, but it will be replaced or relieved later for despatch to the Middle East.³

2 See

Special Units—Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies.

3 The 18th Army Troops Company went to Fiji; the 19th Company sailed with the **Third Echelon**.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

234 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

234

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

14 August 1940

Your telegram of 12 August (No. 231).

The observations of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand with regard to the escort arrangements for US 4 have been considered by the United Kingdom Government.

As regards the passage between New Zealand and Bass Strait, it is observed from your telegram of 13 August (No. 232) that the New Zealand Government are now agreeable to accepting HMS *Achilles* as the sole escort provided that HMAS *Perth* is held immediately available if necessary. The New Zealand Government will, it is assumed, make any necessary arrangements regarding HMAS *Perth* with the Commonwealth Government. However, the Admiralty have no reason to suppose that any enemy surface warship is at large, and they therefore consider that HMS *Achilles* will afford fully adequate protection for the passage across the Tasman Sea against any disguised merchant ship raider which, in their opinion, is the only type of enemy vessel which might be operating in these waters.

With regard to the passage from Fremantle to Colombo, the Admiralty have no reason to suspect the presence of an enemy submarine in the Indian Ocean and believe that the only three Italian submarines now outside the Mediterranean are in the vicinity of their base at Massawa, where they were successfully attacked on 4 August by

British aircraft. The New Zealand Government may wish to know that even in the **North Atlantic**, where occasionally submarines are known to be operating, the Admiralty do not consider provision for anti-submarine escorts necessary for troop or other convoys when outside what are regarded as the normal zones in which concentrated submarine activity is to be expected, viz., an area extending about 500 miles from the **British Isles** and in the close approaches to the Straits of Gibraltar. Therefore, it is not visualised that in these circumstances anti-submarine measures will become necessary in the broad expanse of the **Indian Ocean**, and the Admiralty regard HMAS ***Canberra*** as affording fully adequate protection for US 4.

As regards the onus of passage from Colombo,¹ it is now proposed that four ships of US 4 should proceed to **Bombay**, the troops being there trans-shipped into smaller vessels for the **Red Sea** passage. From **Colombo to Bombay** an escort by 'C' class cruisers may be

¹ 'onward passage from Colombo' is probably intended.

arranged by the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, who will also make escort arrangements for the onward passage from **Bombay** to **Suez**. It is regretted that it is not possible for him to settle details of this latter escort until nearer the date of sailing. However, the New Zealand troops will be included in convoys containing British troops *en route* to the **Middle East**, and the Admiralty are satisfied that the Commander-in-Chief, East Indies, will afford adequate protection. During the passage of the **Red Sea**, and, as necessary, in the Gulf of **Aden**, special escorts, including anti-submarine vessels, will be provided.¹

It is hoped that the **New Zealand Government** will feel satisfied with these arrangements and will be prepared, as arranged, to despatch New Zealand troops in US 4.

¹ The New Zealand troops in the ***Mauretania*** and ***Orcades*** were

trans-shipped at **Bombay** as these two ships were proceeding to the **United Kingdom**. The New Zealand Forestry Companies bound for the **United Kingdom** were trans-shipped at **Bombay** from the *Empress of Japan* to the **Orcades**. The Third Echelon continued the voyage to the **Middle East** in the *Empress of Japan*, **Ormonde** (Orient Line, 14,982 tons), and **Orion** (Orient Line, 23,371 tons).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

235 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

235

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

15 August 1940

My Ministers are most grateful for your telegram of 14 August (No. 234) and in the present circumstances they are prepared to accept the arrangements proposed. However, before the voyage from **Bombay** onwards is commenced they hope that it will be possible to advise them of the escort proposed. ²

² On receipt of advice that the escort from **Bombay** to the Gulf of **Aden** would be one 'C' class cruiser and one armed merchant cruiser the **New Zealand Government** stated that it was not satisfied that the strength of the escort was sufficient and asked for an assurance that it would be increased, particularly for its passage from the Gulf of **Aden** through the **Red Sea**. This request was granted, and the escort through the **Red Sea** to **Egypt** consisted of the **Ajax** (6-inch cruiser, 6985 tons), two destroyers, and an anti-aircraft cruiser.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

236 – GENERAL FREYBERG (CAIRO) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

236

General Freyberg (Cairo) to the Minister of Defence

29 September 1940

I am pleased to report that I have met the **Third Echelon** who arrived safely at **Suez** this morning. The troops are well and appear fit, and their journey was without incident. The 6th Field Ambulance and the reinforcements are still at **Bombay** but join us in the course of a fortnight.¹ Disembarkation of the **Third Echelon** will proceed on Monday and Tuesday, then they will commence training at **Maadi**. Equipment on a training scale is coming to hand and I hope in the course of a few days to have 50 per cent Brens, 100 per cent anti-tank rifles, two 2-pounder anti-tank guns, and 50 per cent of our 18-pounders. Other equipment is on an adequate training scale. I am glad to report that the First Echelon are now in process of being issued with sixteen 25-pounders.

¹ The 6th Field Ambulance and the remainder (550) of the **Third Echelon** arrived at **Maadi** from **Bombay** on 27 Oct 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

237 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

237

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

1 October 1940

I thank you for your personal message ² which is deeply appreciated. Will you convey to the Prime Minister and the people of New Zealand our thanks for the message on the arrival of the **Third Echelon**, which has been conveyed to them. The standard set by the First and Second Echelons is high, and I have never seen a fitter or better body of men than those I inspected this week in the **Western Desert**, where they have been carrying out very important work. The achievements of the Second Echelon in England also deserve mention. Mr. Churchill and the Commander-in-Chief, Home Forces, were genuinely impressed when they saw them at the end of August. When the threat of invasion appeared imminent early in September, the Commander-in-Chief specially selected the Second Echelon for the vital task of counter-attack troops in the **Dover** area, from where the Prime Minister refuses to move them until the invasion threat is past. In order to carry out the task they have given us tanks, anti-aircraft guns, and everything we asked for. The confidence displayed in your force must be gratifying to you and is, in my opinion, fully justified.

² Not published. In this telegram, dated 30 Sep 1940, the Minister of Defence expressed his thanks for recent telegrams notifying the safe arrival in Egypt of the **Third Echelon** and of General Freyberg himself, and for the General's 'encouraging reports' on the equipment position. A message from the Prime Minister to the officers and men of the **Third Echelon** conveying congratulations on their safe arrival and the good wishes of the Government and people of New Zealand was included in this telegram.



DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

CONCENTRATION OF THE 2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION: POLICY CONCERNING DETACHMENTS

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

238 – MEMORANDUM FROM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO HEADQUARTERS, 2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION – ATTACHMENT– DOMINION AND BRITISH FORCES

238

*Memorandum from General Headquarters, Middle East, to
Headquarters, 2nd New Zealand Division*

8 June 1940

ATTACHMENT—DOMINION AND BRITISH FORCES

It is possible that circumstances might arise in which British troops would take control of all means of transportation in a hostile country and of the systems of communication. If such an event occurred it would be necessary to find troops not only for the purpose of guarding the essential methods of transport and communication, but also actually to operate such services. The British troops at present in the Middle East are already short of their wartime requirements for railway and signal personnel, both in officers and other ranks. This possible added commitment would still further reduce the fighting efficiency of the British Troops in Egypt. In the case of railway personnel, of which there is at present only a negligible supply (the nucleus of one railway operating and construction company), it would be impossible to find personnel to operate railways.

The Commander-in-Chief fully appreciates the desire of the Australian and New Zealand Forces to operate as formations. Nevertheless, the situation envisaged in this letter is one in which the necessity for providing communications is paramount.

You are requested, therefore, to say whether in such circumstances

you would be prepared to lend the British units skilled railway and signals personnel, both officers and other ranks, required for the emergency operation of railways and communications. Such personnel would be attached only until the period of emergency was ended.

Details are now being worked out of the minimum number of such personnel required for this emergency command. Notification will be sent to you of the numbers which we would ask you to find, if you agree to the principle of this attachment.

¹Lieutenant-General Sir Ronald MacKenzie Scobie, KBE, CB, MC; Deputy Adjutant-General, General Headquarters, Middle East, May–Aug 1940; GOC, Tobruk Fortress, 1941; GOC, Malta, 1942; Chief of the General Staff, Middle East, 1943; GOC, Greece, 1944–46.

Brigadier,

Deputy Adjutant-General ¹

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

239 – MEMORANDUM FROM HEADQUARTERS, 2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION, TO GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST

239

*Memorandum from Headquarters, 2nd New Zealand Division, to
General Headquarters, Middle East*

11 June 1940

Would you please tell the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, that in the event of an emergency the New Zealand Government are willing that the New Zealand Expeditionary Force should take part in any active operations for which they are trained and equipped, and they are prepared also to lend the British units such skilled railway personnel as they can to operate the railways and communications during the anticipated period of emergency.

Although it is the policy of my Government to help in the manner most in keeping with the British war effort, owing to the shortage and indeed the absence of some of the mobilisation equipment, I must reserve the right vested in me by my Government to decide the scope of active operations in which my force should engage.

,

Major-General

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

240 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

240

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

14 June 1940

With reference to the powers vested in me by Cabinet,¹ I have authorised the following temporary detachments: Firstly, four officers, 100 other ranks from Divisional Signals to form Egypt Force signal headquarters in the Western Desert. Secondly, I have agreed, in conjunction with the Australian Imperial Force, in the event of a crisis [affecting?] the Egyptian railways to lend temporarily two officers and 100 other ranks to take over and help run the State railways. Thirdly, I have agreed to help Lines of Communication, Western Desert, by the temporary loan of motor transport and drivers. As these detachments are for a short duration and the troops concerned sufficiently trained and equipped, I have agreed subject to Cabinet's approval. Shall I notify each small detachment or use my discretion upon minor and unimportant detachments?

¹ See *Appointment of Commander, 2nd NZEF* (No. 39).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

241 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

241

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

18 June 1940

Reference your telegram of 14 June (No. 240). Your three proposals are agreed to. Use your own discretion regarding minor and unimportant detachments as you are more conversant with the conditions in Egypt.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

242 – MEMORANDUM FROM HEADQUARTERS, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION, TO HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT – DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

242

*Memorandum from Headquarters, New Zealand Division, to
Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt*

29 September 1940

DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

As you will have seen, the second contingent ¹ of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has now arrived in Egypt, and this will be followed by the brigade group that has completed its training in Great Britain. We are therefore within measurable distance of having a complete Division concentrated and ready for Divisional training.

In the past, with the object of helping, we have met practically every request for the loan of New Zealand units and detachments. The time has come when we can no longer comply with requests for detachments, and in fact, since reinforcements have been left behind in New Zealand to make room for Army Troops companies, it is now necessary for us to recall those already made. I do not wish to cause you undue inconvenience, and I am prepared to postpone the recall of some detachments in order to give you time to arrange for their relief.

The detached units I most require are:

One troop, 4th Field Regiment, now under command Alexandria Sub-area, to rejoin its regiment at Maaten Burbeita;

6th Field Company, also under command Alexandria Sub-area, to

move to Maaten Baggush and come under command 4th Infantry Brigade;

No. 1 Company, Divisional Signals, now forming Western Desert Corps Signals, to return to Maadi and revert to New Zealand Division when possible.

¹ This was the Third Echelon, the second contingent of the force to arrive in Egypt.

As you are short of transport it is proposed that the 4th Reserve Mechanical Transport Company should remain under command Western Desert Force.

In addition to the units mentioned above, the following individuals or parties should return to their units as early as possible:

Ten artificers with MAC ¹; twenty-five other ranks employed on filling anti-tank mines at Abbassia; three Engineer clerks at Moascar and elsewhere; three other ranks on railway duties in the Western Desert; one signalman at Khartoum; one Engineer officer (Lieutenant Pemberton) ² on special duties in the Delta; one Engineer officer (Lieutenant Pollock) ³ on special work either in the Western Desert or Alexandria Sub-area.

The seventy other ranks in the Long Range Patrol should return to regimental duty in due course, and I would appreciate information regarding when they are likely to be released from their present duties. ⁴

I know you will realise that these proposals are necessary to enable Divisional training to be carried out.

B. C. FREYBERG,

Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Division

¹ Motor Ambulance Convoy.

² Major R. C. Pemberton, MC, New Zealand Engineers.

³ On the HQ 2nd NZ Division (General Staff Branch) file copy of this memorandum the name has been amended to Peacock. At that time Lt. J. F. Peacocke, HQ, NZE, was attached to HQ, BTE. Lt. G. D. Pollock, 10th LAD, was then attached to 5th Field Park Company, New Zealand Engineers.

⁴ See

Special Units— Long Range Desert Group.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

243 – MEMORANDUM FROM HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT, TO HEADQUARTERS, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION – DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

243

*Memorandum from Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt, to
Headquarters, New Zealand Division*

4 October 1940

DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

Reference your letter under the above heading, dated 29 September 1940.

Troop 4th Field Regiment has been ordered to rejoin at Maaten Baggush.

Sixth Field Company has been ordered to go to Western Desert.

It is not possible at present to relieve No. 1 Company, New Zealand Divisional Signals, as it is doing the work of Corps Signals. A Corps Signals has been promised from the United Kingdom.

Artificers with MAC are being relieved as artificers are available to replace them. General Headquarters are being asked to speed this up.

General Headquarters have been asked when the anti-tank mine-filling party will finish its work.

Three Engineer clerks will be returned.

General Headquarters have been asked to relieve three other ranks employed in transportation duties in the Western Desert.

It is understood that you now agree to the signalman remaining at Khartoum.

The Engineer officers employed on special duties have been returned.

The help that all these detachments have given has been greatly appreciated. Every effort is being made to return them to the New Zealand Division as quickly as is possible.

¹Signed by a Major for Brigadier, General Staff. The signature is indecipherable.

Brigadier, ¹

General Staff

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

244 – MEMORANDUM FROM HEADQUARTERS, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION, TO HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT – DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

244

*Memorandum from Headquarters, New Zealand Division, to
Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt*

10 October 1940

DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

Further to my letter of 29 September and to your memorandum of 4 October, I am anxious to concentrate all troops of my Division as early as possible so that the much-needed collective training can be recommenced.

In addition to the units and individuals mentioned in my letter referred to above, I would very much like to have returned to my command—

4th Field Regiment	Western Desert
34th Anti-Tank Battery	Western Desert
5th Field Park Company	Western Desert
6th Field Company	Western Desert
27th Machine Gun Battalion (1 Company)	Western Desert
4th Field Ambulance	Western Desert
Divisional Cavalry Regiment	Western Desert
Ammunition Company, NZASC	Abbassia

Without 4th Reserve Mechanical Transport Company, NZASC, and No. 1 Company, Divisional Signals, the training of the Division will be very much hampered, as I am sure you will agree, and I request that you will endeavour to return those two units, together with those mentioned

in the above paragraph, at an early date.

I fully appreciate your difficulties and realise that all these detachments cannot be recalled at once, but I would be grateful if you could give me some indication of the date of their return, to enable me to make a training plan.

B. C. FREYBERG,

Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Division

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

245 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

245

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

13 October 1940

I am most reluctant to trouble the Government with difficulties, but I have no alternative since the present situation deals with the policy of the employment of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

The dispersion of the First Echelon by a process of detachments has been one unfortunate result of splitting the First and Second Echelons. To explain the trend of events, I quote an instance during my absence in the United Kingdom when Generals Wavell, Wilson, and Blamey¹ considered how the forces in the Middle East should meet the situation caused by the collapse of the French. Regrouping was necessary, and it was proposed that the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Egypt should be split into six detachments. Quite apart from the loss of our identity, it would have caused problems of administration, discipline, and records. By the proposed rearrangement the First Echelon were dispersed between Corps Troops, the Western Desert Force, Corps Signals, Corps Reserve, the 6th Australian Division, and the 4th Indian Division. On receiving these proposals in the United Kingdom I cabled General Wavell as follows:

Have just received your proposals for reorganisation with its repercussions upon the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in Egypt. As no such change can be made without the approval of the New Zealand Government, I hope these proposals will not be proceeded with. I do not wish to disclose to the New Zealand Government the proposals as outlined by you to break up the New Zealand Force, as they would make a most unfavourable impression in New Zealand official circles with

repercussions you probably have not foreseen. The answer to any such proposals would, I am sure, be an uncompromising refusal.

Resulting from this telegram the proposed splitting was dropped. Notwithstanding, however, when I arrived back in Egypt I found that by peaceful methods units had been dispersed over a wide area as follows, many detachments having existed for months:

Divisional Signals and 4th Reserve Mechanical Transport Company under the command of the Western Desert Force;

Long Range Patrol of two officers and eighty men on the Libyan frontier under British officers;

Ammunition Company under the command of the Cairo Area;

2nd Cavalry Regiment at Daba under Lines of Communication;

4th Infantry Brigade Group, 27th Machine Gun Battalion, 5th Field Park Company, and 6th Field Company near Mersa Matruh under the command of the Western Desert Force;

About fifty artificers spread out from Khartoum to Alexandria.

Most of these commitments are more than 200 miles away from Divisional Headquarters and the Third Echelon at Maadi.

When I told General Wilson that I now wanted to concentrate the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to train as a Division he temporised but, under pressure, said he saw no chance until after December. During a crisis I quite realise that temporary detachments may be necessary, and under the existing powers given me by the New Zealand Government I will do everything to help, but in the interests of the Division I consider that the present unsatisfactory position should be terminated. Before doing so, will my Government say if they concur? As it would be better if I can settle the matter personally with the Commanders here, I would suggest that the New Zealand Government do not make representations to the British Government at this stage.

¹ General Sir Thomas Albert Blamey, GBE, KCB, CMG, DSO; GOC, 6th Division, AIF, 1939–40; GOC, 1st Australian Corps, 1940–41; title altered in 1941 to GOC, AIF in Middle East; commanded Anzac Corps in Greece, Apr 1941; Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, 1941; Commander-in-Chief, Allied Land Forces, South-West Pacific Area, 1942–45.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

246 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

246

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

15 October 1940

Your telegram of 13 October (No. 245). War Cabinet are most dissatisfied with the present dispersal of the New Zealand Forces and agree entirely with your views. We will support you fully in any steps you consider it necessary to take to facilitate the concentration of the New Zealand Division. Please keep us advised of the position and inform us whenever you consider it desirable that we should communicate with the British Government on this matter.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

247 – MEMORANDUM FROM HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT, TO HEADQUARTERS, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION – NEW ZEALAND DIVISION–TRAINING

247

*Memorandum from Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt, to
Headquarters, New Zealand Division*

19 October 1940

NEW ZEALAND DIVISION–TRAINING

Reference your memorandum dated 10 October 1940 (No. 244), and confirming conversation on 12 October between GOC-in-C and Major-General B. C. Freyberg, VC, CB, CMG, DSO. Your desire to concentrate all the Division as early as possible for training is fully appreciated.

You will, however, understand that at the present time there is a large part of your Division filling an important role in the Western Desert, and it is highly likely to be involved in any battle which may take place in that area, and has, in fact, carried out reconnaissance and planning to that end.

It is therefore out of the question for the time being, until the situation clears up considerably, that the 4th New Zealand Brigade, or the units you mention, should be withdrawn to Maadi.

With regard to other units or detachments which are at the present time away from the Division, everything possible is being done to have them relieved and returned to you at an early date. My letter dated 4 October 1940 (No. 243), explains the position. The two most difficult cases, as you are probably aware, are the Ammunition Company and the Divisional Signals. As regards the former, the position in transport will

improve in this country within six weeks, permitting units to fulfil their proper function; and as regards the latter, relief of some of the sections now operating in the Western Desert is beginning at once.

It is not easy to fix a date when either your Division or the bulk of it can be concentrated at Maadi for training. This depends to a large extent on enemy action, but it is the GOC-in-C's intention, provided nothing happens to stop it, that your Division and the 6th Australian Division should relieve each other in the Western Desert. Meanwhile you may be satisfied that every New Zealander in the Western Desert Force is getting very good training whatever he is doing, in addition to which arrangements will be made as soon as work on the Baggush Box has sufficiently progressed, for the 4th New Zealand Brigade Group to carry out training in the neighbourhood under your direction, provided of course that the tactical situation permits it; GOC, Western Desert [Force],¹ would be glad to be informed of what your plans are in this respect. The group will, of course, as long as it is in the Desert, remain under GOC, Western Desert Force, for operations and administration.

²Lieutenant-General Alexander Galloway, CB, CBE, DSO, MC; Brigadier, General Staff, British Troops in Egypt, 1940; BGS, Greece and Crete, 1941.

A. GALLOWAY,² Brigadier,

General Staff

¹ General Sir Richard Nugent O'Connor, GCB, DSO, MC; commanded Western Desert Force, Libyan Campaign, 1940–41; taken prisoner Apr 1941; escaped late in 1943; Corps Commander in France, 1944; GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, India, 1945; GOC-in-C, North-Western Army, India, Nov 1945–46; Adjutant-General to the Forces 1946–47.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

248 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO BRIGADIER GALLOWAY, HEADQUARTERS, BRITISH TROOPS IN EGYPT

248

Letter from General Freyberg to Brigadier Galloway, Headquarters, British Troops in Egypt

19 October 1940

DEAR GALLOWAY,

The New Zealand Forces are not an integral part of the British Army —they are a distinct New Zealand force, proud of their own identity. They cannot be split up and used piecemeal, except with the consent of the New Zealand Government. The past I know has been unfortunate, and for that I must take my share of the blame. We came over here in February, keen and willing to help everybody, and have never refused a request of any sort. It has been a mistake, and the efficiency of the Division has suffered grievously. Now, because we are insisting on concentrating as a force, we are most unpopular. I feel I let our force in for this by not saying 'No' right at the beginning, as I believe did the AIF.

For your information I send you a copy of the special powers vested in me by the New Zealand Government. They will put you in the picture. They were granted to me when I accepted command of the NZEF.

The NZEF will, I hope, be assembling fast in the next few months, and when equipment is available here I am empowered by my Government to raise an armoured brigade.³

The position is quite clear; in an emergency we will all work under anybody's command, and do any job for which we are trained and equipped. The Division meanwhile cannot be used piecemeal. When the

equipment has been completed up to an operational scale and has been in its possession for at least a month, the NZEF will be handed over by the **New Zealand Government** and placed under the operational command of the AIF or BTE, or it may even take part in some theatre of war not yet decided upon.

That is the situation as I see it.

B. C. FREYBERG,

**Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Expeditionary Force**

³ See Volume II, *Formation of New Zealand Armoured Brigade.*

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

249 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE [EXTRACT]

249

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence [Extract]

28 October 1940

I am glad to be able to report that the question of detachments from and the subsequent concentration of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force has been settled with General Wavell. It cannot be carried out at once but arrangements will be made to do so as soon as the operational position here and the reinforcement of the Middle East allow.... ¹

¹ See *First Echelon in Egypt (No. 97)* for rest of text.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

250 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

250

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

7 November 1940

It is most difficult at the moment to make any appreciation, but it is necessary to do so for administrative purposes.

After extensive preparations for the invasion of the United Kingdom Germany has suffered her first big reverse with loss of prestige and considerable material damage. She has also wasted vital campaigning months; the Axis made a great mistake in missing the opportunity of capturing Egypt in July when it was practically unprotected. The position in the Middle East is now much better; all classes of Army and Air Force equipment arrived in October and the volume of supply is increasing.

As for the present German position, their Army is reported to be restless and dissatisfied. Crop failure in 1940 and the prospect of a bad crop in 1941 may cause serious disturbances and internal security problems throughout Europe. It is reported that Germany's present oil supplies will become inadequate by June next. Germany realises that success in any particular theatre will not conquer the British Empire and now sees no quick way of winning. In order to achieve the aim of smashing the British Empire Germany must therefore in the immediate future obtain wheat and oil supplies for a long war.

There appear to be two courses open to Germany: either to break through Turkey and secure Basra and Mosul oil or turn on the Russians and get Ukraine wheat and Baku oil. Opinions favour the former course but at present a forecast is difficult.

As far as developments in the Balkans situation are concerned, Roumania is now suppressed, Yugoslavia is not able to resist German pressure, and Bulgaria, pro-Axis, has just moved an army to the Turkish frontier. Her gallant resistance, although encouraging, may not prove sufficient to save Greece and we cannot at this stage send troops. If air bases on the eastern coast of Greece are obtained by the Axis it will hinder British ships using the Aegean Sea and the Dardanelles. Russia holds the key to the Balkan situation. An authoritative report asserts a Russo-German agreement to cut up Turkey, Russia to be given control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and a free hand in Iran, Germany to take Mosul. Turkey is a loyal ally and will undoubtedly resist if Russia is neutral, but should Russia join Germany, Turkey will capitulate and allow the passage of the German Army. If Turkey resists she will hold Thrace, with the help of bad weather, until the spring. If Turkey gives in and lets the Germans through they can be in Anatolia before the winter. Should Germany attack Russia, and many consider it likely, she may endeavour to isolate Russia by closing the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles before the winter.

It is my firm opinion that 1941 is the critical year. A maximum effort will be made by the Axis. Fighting in the Middle East may be fierce and prolonged with the British going to the aid of Turkey in the spring. The Middle East Forces will probably have to face operations either in Thrace or Anatolia in March next. I am doing all I can to hasten equipment for the fighting units, organisation of base training depots, and completion of medical arrangements. It would be prudent to get the 4th and 5th Reinforcements here as soon as possible.

As you know, with the situation changing hourly, an appreciation at a time like this must be continually reviewed. Whatever Russia does, however, the extension of hostilities in the Middle East involving the New Zealand Expeditionary Force must be anticipated by the spring of 1941.

A comprehensive statement regarding the training and equipment of

the Division will be sent in a few days.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

251 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS¹ TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON)

251

*The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs¹ to the High
Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington)*

8 November 1940

Information has been received that the Greeks intend removing six of their nine battalions now on Crete for employment elsewhere. We cannot ask them to reconsider this move in the circumstances, though we have asked them to leave their existing twelve guns on Crete until these are replaced by us. We think it very unlikely that the Italians will, in all the circumstances, attack Crete, but for future operations, this island is of the highest importance to us, and failure to hold it would be a military and political disaster of the first order. Therefore we have informed the Greek authorities that we are ready to assume responsibility for its security.

Two British infantry battalions (*vide* paragraph 1 (b) of my circular telegram of 6 November)² are an insufficient garrison, and the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, has therefore been instructed to despatch additional battalions.

It is likely that the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, in view of the present situation in the Western Desert, will consider it to be in our common interest to select for Crete from those Australian and New Zealand troops now retained in Egypt for internal security duties. Should the Commander-in-Chief so desire, we hope that the Commonwealth and New Zealand Governments will be able to give their concurrence.

In view of the necessity for rapid action, it is requested that a very

early reply may be sent to this message, which is being sent also to His Majesty's Government in the Commonwealth of Australia, and that you will repeat your reply to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.

¹ Viscount Cranborne had succeeded Viscount Caldecote at the Dominions Office on 5 Oct 1940.

² Not published. Notification of the British Cabinet's decision to give Greece 'the greatest possible material and moral support at the earliest possible moment' was contained in this telegram. Resources in Egypt were to be drawn on for this support. The telegram gave details of air, naval, and military assistance to be provided.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

252 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

252

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

8 November 1940

Your comments are desired on the proposal under consideration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that troops for Crete should be selected 'from those Australian and New Zealand troops now retained in Egypt for internal security duties.' Please telegraph immediately.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

253 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER

253

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

8 November 1940

In reply to your telegram dated 8 November (No. 252), I have seen Generals Wavell and Blamey. The proposal under consideration by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom appears to be to relieve Greek troops in Crete by sending troops that are on a low scale of equipment and partially trained. I gather that the Australians have been asked, and understand from Blamey that they are willing to carry out the duty. I understand that the units for Crete would not be found from their fighting formations but from reinforcements already in Palestine.

The situation in the Middle East is that General Wavell is having to fight with inadequate resources, and any additional restriction placed upon his troops makes the situation for him more difficult. While I still consider that our basic aim should be to concentrate the Division and train it, and resist all efforts made to split it or use it piecemeal, I feel that in a period such as this we should be willing to compromise and meet the British Government. Therefore, I would advise that, if you see fit, a reply should be sent on the following lines:

Understand that the proposal to send troops to Crete envisages using troops on a low scale of training equipment and partially trained to avoid breaking into the divisions being concentrated and trained in Egypt. The role envisaged in Crete is more or less that of garrison troops and this could be carried out by reinforcements undergoing training. The New Zealand Government agree in principle and are prepared to allow units to be formed with their reinforcements, as and when they become available, to take over garrison duties in Crete while they complete their

training. However, the New Zealand Government are most anxious that the New Zealand Division, which is at present split into three parts, should be concentrated as soon as possible so that it can be trained ready to operate as a complete division early in 1941.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

254 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

254

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

9 November 1940

With reference to your telegram dated 8 November (No. 251) addressed to the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand, concerning the despatch to Crete of New Zealand and Australian troops.

It is understood by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that the proposal to send these troops envisages using troops on a low scale of training equipment and partially trained to avoid breaking into the divisions being concentrated and trained in Egypt, and that the role envisaged in Crete is more or less that of garrison troops, and this could be carried out by reinforcements undergoing training. This is agreed to in principle by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand and they are prepared to allow units to be formed with their reinforcements, as and when they become available, to take over garrison duties in Crete while completing their training. This concurrence is subject always to the provision firstly, that the New Zealand troops selected should, in the opinion of the Officer Commanding the New Zealand force overseas, be sufficiently trained for the duties involved, and secondly, that their equipment would be fully adequate.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are still most anxious that the New Zealand Division, which is at present split into three parts, should be concentrated as soon as possible so that it is trained ready to operate early in 1941 as a complete division. ¹

¹ A reply, in similar terms, from the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia was repeated to the Prime Minister of New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

255 – LETTER FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

255

Letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

10 November 1940

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

With reference to the message in the Governor-General's telegram to the Secretary of State of 11 October ² about the concentration of the New Zealand Division, I have been asked by the Secretary of State to convey to you the great appreciation of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom of the co-operation of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand in this question.

Full weight will of course be given by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to the considerations referred to in the above telegram, ¹ viz., that the degree of training and the scale of equipment of any troops selected for the duty in question will be adequate to enable them to discharge their tasks.

The importance which His Majesty's Government in New Zealand attach to the reconstitution of the New Zealand Division is fully appreciated and it is still the intention that this should be accomplished at the earliest possible moment. For this purpose any New Zealand contingents which may be sent to Crete will be replaced there by other troops as soon as this is practicable in the light of the general situation.

² It will, however, be realised that in existing circumstances it is not possible to give a definite assurance that this can be done.

A similar message is being sent to the Prime Minister of Australia

and the substance is being repeated by the War Office to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.

Yours, &c.,

H. F. BATTER BEE

² See *Second Echelon* (No. 199).

¹ This reference is obviously to telegram No. 254 and not to the telegram mentioned in the first paragraph, No. 199.

² Events in NOrth Africa and later the demands of the campaign in Greece prevented this plan from being put into operation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

256 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

256

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

22 November 1940

There is every likelihood of the New Zealand Division concentrating at **Helwan** and **Maadi** in January and moving out as a Division in February and March to complete Divisional training. The dates are dependent on the arrival of the Second Echelon.

The present state of equipment and training is as follows:

<i>Unit</i>	<i>State of training</i>	<i>State of equipment, excluding transport</i>
4th Infantry Brigade	Fit for war	90 per cent
5th Infantry Brigade, Maori Battalion, and reinforcement battalion.	Fit for war	100 per cent
6th Infantry Brigade	Under training, fit in one month	60 per cent
4th Field Regiment	Fit for war	65 per cent 25– pounders.
5th Field Regiment	Fit for war	100 per cent 25– pounders
6th Field Regiment	Under training, fit for war in two months	Training scale 18– pounders
7th Anti-Tank Regiment, less 33rd Battery	Fit for war	100 per cent
33rd Battery, Anti-Tank Regiment	Under training, fit for war in two months	Low training scale
Divisional Signals, less Third Echelon	Fit for war	70 per cent

Divisional Signals, Third Echelon	Fit in two months	1 per cent
Divisional Royal Army Service Corps	Fit for war	100 per cent
Divisional Royal Engineers	Fit for war	60 per cent
Divisional Cavalry	Fit for war	Short of tanks, signal equipment, and spares.
Divisional Reconnaissance Unit	Under training, not fit for war for four months	Short of all equipment.
4th Field Ambulance	Fit for war	100 per cent
5th Field Ambulance	Fit for war	100 per cent
6th Field Ambulance	Fit in one month	70 per cent
Other units	Fit for war	80 per cent

Medium regiment, Royal Artillery, light anti-aircraft regiment, Royal Artillery, and medium tank battalion, recommended by the Bartholomew report and sanctioned by the New Zealand Government, have still to be formed but no equipment is yet available.¹

The question of 25-pounders and transport vehicles is on a sound footing and these will be available for Divisional training next February.

I am greatly concerned about the early provision of equipment for two Divisional reconnaissance and protection units, namely the Divisional Cavalry Regiment and the new Divisional Reconnaissance Unit, which are vital either in the exploitation of success or in defence. With the support of General Wavell, I have urged the War Office to provide twenty-eight light tanks with anti-tank guns for the Divisional Cavalry, if possible light tanks, wheeled, with 2-pounder, or light tanks, tracked, with 15-millimetre gun; failing either, cruiser tanks; also signal equipment and spares for armoured fighting vehicles.

I have asked the War Office in respect of the Divisional Reconnaissance Unit, for which no establishment has been agreed upon, to work out a provisional establishment and scale of equipment on a four-company basis, each company composed of one platoon of scout

cars, one platoon of carriers, and two platoons of infantry in trucks; also one year's spares for armoured fighting vehicles and essential signal equipment. I have asked for this equipment to be issued in time to accompany the Second Echelon from the United Kingdom. Would much appreciate, in view of the urgency, if you could bring pressure to bear on London through Government channels.

¹ A committee under General Sir William Bartholomew, GCB, CMG, DSO, was set up to consider the reorganisation of the British Army in the light of the campaigns in Poland and France in 1939–40. Its recommendations on the organisation of a division are published in Volume II, *Formation of New Zealand Armoured Brigade*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

257 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

257

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

23 November 1940

The presence of New Zealand troops in **Athens** is indicated in press messages received today from **London**. Please advise at once if this is so, and if it is so, whether it is proper to publish the fact. The messages are not being released in the meantime.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

258 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

258

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

23 November 1940

With reference to your telegram of 23 November (No. 257). We have no confirmation here of the presence or otherwise in Athens of New Zealand troops and there is no question of the presence there of any, with the possible exception of details.

The report from Greece to which you refer reached London via Zurich yesterday; we understand that it has also been published in the United States. In the circumstances it was felt impracticable to stop publication of the report here but the press were informed that we could not confirm it.

The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, is being asked to inform you direct of the facts and whether there is any objection to the issue of official confirmation of the report.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

259 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

259

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

23 November 1940

There is no truth whatever in the report published by American newspapers that Dominion troops have been sent to Greece.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

260 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

260

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

27 November 1940

General Freyberg has advised His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that there is every likelihood of the New Zealand Division concentrating in Egypt early next year. The Government are greatly concerned regarding the lack of equipment for certain units, namely, the **Divisional Cavalry Regiment and the newly-formed **Divisional Reconnaissance Unit**.**

Representations have been made by General Freyberg to the War Office, supported by General Wavell, for the provision of twenty-eight light tanks for the Divisional Cavalry; if possible, tanks equipped with 2-pounders, or light tanks, tracked, with 15-millimetre guns¹; failing either, cruiser tanks; also signal equipment and spares for armoured fighting vehicles. Equipment is also required for the Reconnaissance Unit, the establishment of which is at present under consideration by the War Office.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand consider it important that this equipment should be made available as early as possible, and they would greatly appreciate it being issued in time to accompany the Second Echelon to the Middle East.

¹ Because of mutilation in transmission this text differs slightly from that of the copy of General Freyberg's telegram of 22 Nov 1940 (No. 256) on the GOC's files.



DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

261 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

261

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

30 November 1940

The following press message has been received in Wellington from London: ‘Confirmed that some ancillary New Zealand troops in Greece.’ If you could please confirm this and supply particulars His Majesty’s Government in New Zealand would be grateful.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

262 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

262

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

2 December 1940

Your telegram of 30 November (No. 261). The War Office have no information of any change in the situation since the denial issued by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, on 23 November, and as far as can be ascertained the press message referred to in your telegram has no new authority beyond that of the story then contradicted. Further investigation into the course of events giving rise to the publication of this story is being carried out.

In the meantime, unless confirmed by the military authorities in Cairo, it is suggested that any report to the effect that organised units of New Zealand troops have landed in Greece should be regarded as untrue.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

263 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

263

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

2 December 1940

You asked in your telegram of 11 October ¹ for an appreciation of the situation, the state of our equipment, and our likely role and fitness for it. For the appreciation and state of equipment see my telegrams Nos. 250 and 256. I am now able to report on our likely role.

German plans for next spring must be affected by the favourable Greek situation and we must add **Greece to Thrace** as a possible

¹ See **Second Echelon** (No. 200).

theatre of war in the **Middle East**. It is too much to hope that Germany will attempt the invasion of the **United Kingdom**.

Role of New Zealand Forces: For the personal information of the Prime Minister, we are to concentrate at **Cairo** and be in General Headquarters Reserve ready to move at short notice to any theatre of war in the spring. After one month with our complete Divisional equipment we shall be as fit as any troops for the role for which we are cast.

With reference to your telegram of 2 December, ¹ I feel that I must most strongly represent that should we be cast for an operational role we must have at least three months' reinforcements, amounting to 4200, fully trained, in our base depots. Owing to the need for sending troops to **Fiji** I would point out that we were 2300 reinforcements short with the **Third Echelon**, and with expansion and new units to be formed

immediately we shall require an additional 2600 not originally budgeted for. Even if the 4th Reinforcements arrive to time and complete, we should only just be able to have reserves ready by the end of March. I have gone into the whole reinforcement position with General Duigan² who will arrive in New Zealand about the New Year. I strongly urge, and he agrees, sending the 4th Reinforcements complete and trying to expedite part of the 5th Reinforcements to arrive by March. By drawing some men from Fiji this could be done.³

¹ Not published. This telegram from the Chief of the General Staff to HQ 2nd NZEF advised that the shipping position prevented the despatch of the remainder of the 4th Reinforcements until late January and notified a reduction in the size of the draft (2nd section, 4th Reinforcements) then being prepared for embarkation.

² Major-General Sir John Duigan, Chief of the New Zealand General Staff, arrived in Egypt on 28 Nov 1940 after having attended the Singapore Conference and the Far Eastern Conference at **New Delhi**. He had discussions with the Commander-in-Chief, **Middle East**, and with **General Freyberg**, and visited New Zealand units (First and Third Echelons) in the **Western Desert** and at **Maadi**. He also visited **Greece** early in December before returning to New Zealand.

³ See Volume II, *Reinforcements, 1940–42*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

264 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

264

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

3 December 1940

The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, officially denied press reports of some days ago that New Zealand troops were in Athens. Detailed reports continue to arrive to the same effect, and in order that we may be aware of the facts before secret session next Thursday night, New Zealand time, I shall be grateful if you will advise me of the position.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

265 – WAR OFFICE (LONDON) TO GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST

265

War Office (London) to General Headquarters, Middle East

3 December 1940

Will you please inform Army Headquarters, **Melbourne**, and the Chief of the General Staff, **Wellington**, and repeat to **War Office**, whether or not any individuals of the Australian or New Zealand forces are in **Greece** or **Crete** and of any other fact, no matter how insignificant, which may have given rise to persistent press reports to this effect.

The Chief of the General Staff, Wellington: Will you please pass on to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand any information received.

Repeated to Wellington and Melbourne.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

266 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER

266

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

3 December 1940

Your telegram of 3 December (No. 264). There is one section of the 9th Survey Company, strength eighteen all ranks, at Piraeus. I would point out that Railway troops are out of my control and are moved at the discretion of General Headquarters. This is not very satisfactory. Through General Duigan I am accordingly submitting recommendations to you.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

267 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

267

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

6 December 1940

My telegram of 23 November (No. 259). Regret was misinformed. The information is not entirely correct since two officers and fifty-four men of the 9th New Zealand Railway Survey Company are in Greece.¹ None in Crete. No Australians.

¹ The detachment returned to Egypt without loss in April 1941.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

268 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

268

Letter from General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

7 December 1940

SIR,

With reference to my memorandum 14/12/1305 dated 16 November 1940, ¹ telegram of 3 December 1940 (No. 264) from the Prime Minister inquiring about New Zealand troops in Greece, and my telegram of 3 December 1940 (No. 266) in answer thereto, I have to confirm the fact that the conditions under which the Railway and other Line of Communication units are serving entitles General Headquarters, Middle East, to move them in whole or in part at their discretion.

Members of my staff have held many discussions with the Director of Transportation, ² who is the Staff Officer at General Headquarters most concerned, and have obtained his assurance that in the future he will inform us of any moves of units or sub-units from their original locations.

I have indicated to him that I think it most undesirable that sections of New Zealand units should be permanently separated from their parent units, and he has now assured me that he will reduce such actions to the minimum possible. He maintains, however, that he has the right to move them about according to the exigencies of the service.

In these circumstances you will appreciate that it is going to be difficult for me to keep contact with the Line of Communication units in the degree desirable, and that their association with 2nd NZEF cannot be a very close one. Such things as distribution of mail and gift parcels,

and making contact in such cases as the recent by-election, will be very slow.

Up to the present, the only units in the field have been the various Railway Groups, but shortly the Army Troops Companies and Mechanical Equipment Company will be added to the number.

In order to minimise difficulties, it would be most desirable that all these units should be kept concentrated and that detachments should not be made except as a very temporary measure, and that they should not be allowed to detach individual officers or men to bolster up weak British units.

I would suggest therefore that you communicate with the War Office and ask that they agree to issue instructions accordingly.

I have, &c.,

B. C. FREYBERG,

Major-General,
Commanding 2nd NZEF

¹ Not traced.

² Brigadier C. A. Langley, CBE, MC, Royal Engineers.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

269 – THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON) TO THE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON)

269

*The Chief of the General Staff (Wellington) to the New Zealand
Military Liaison Officer (London)*

c. 7 December 1940

As a result of the recent inquiries regarding New Zealand troops in Greece, the Government wishes you to arrange with War Office that early notification be telegraphed in future of the employment in operations in which the 2nd NZEF is not engaged of any similar detachment of New Zealand troops.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

270 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

270

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

11 December 1940

Very careful consideration has been given to your telegram of 27 November (No. 260) about equipment for the New Zealand Divisional Cavalry Regiment and the New Zealand Divisional Reconnaissance Unit. The desire of the New Zealand Government that these units should be fully equipped at the earliest possible date is fully appreciated, and we are anxious that everything possible should be done to provide the necessary equipment.

As regards the Divisional Reconnaissance Unit, however, the position is that equipment is not yet available, and up to the present it has not been possible to issue equipment to the Divisional Reconnaissance Unit of any division, whether from the United Kingdom or from the Dominions.

As the New Zealand Government are aware, supplies of all types of equipment are allocated periodically to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, who allots them among the units under his command in accordance with their operational requirements. At present the shortage of tanks of all types is acute, and it is very much regretted that it will not be possible to equip the New Zealand Divisional Cavalry before its departure from the United Kingdom for the Middle East.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

271 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

271

General Freyberg to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

13 January 1941

Will you inform the Minister [of Defence] and Cabinet from your first-hand knowledge of the position that opinion here regarding possible action by Germany in the spring remains unaltered except that help for Greece may materialise if Germany intervenes.

The New Zealand Expeditionary Force are now General Headquarters Reserve and are concentrating at last for Divisional training. The 4th Brigade Group arrive at Helwan today and tomorrow.

When our full equipment is available and our combined training with our artillery and infantry, shooting live ammunition, has been carried out, I shall consider the Division fit to take the field as a two-brigade division pending the arrival from the United Kingdom of the 5th Brigade Group.

Impress upon the Minister of Defence and Cabinet how important it is from a Divisional point of view not to have our fighting troops committed piecemeal before we are properly equipped and trained as a division.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

272 – LETTER FROM MAJOR-GENERAL ARTHUR SMITH, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST,¹ TO GENERAL FREYBERG

272

Letter from Major-General Arthur Smith, General Headquarters, Middle East,¹ to General Freyberg

14 January 1941

We are very much alive to the desirability of returning your signals, sappers, and transport to you as soon as possible.

We are still terribly short of signal personnel and equipment; in fact the elastic is already fully stretched, and if stretched much more it will break. We hope, however, to be able to return a proportion of your signallers early next month, and the remainder directly we get sufficient trained personnel from England, but this may not be until March. However, the situation may be eased by further help from Australian signallers and, although I do not want to make any rash promises, it is possible that we may be able to get all your fellows back to you next month.

Your Field Companies are at the moment urgently required in the forward area, but, when we get Australian Field Companies up, your sappers will be returned to you. The situation is complicated by an additional call for sappers in Greece.

With regard to your transport; as you know, we are very short of MT and the urgent necessity of sending lorries to Greece has made the problem acute.

I know you want to get your Division together to train, and we are doing our best to help you. In this connection we realise you need more equipment and this will be supplied as soon as we can possibly do so.

Yours, &c.

ARTHUR SMITH

¹ Lieutenant-General Sir Arthur Francis Smith, KCB, KBE, DSO, MC; Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Middle East, 1939–40; Chief of the General Staff, Middle East, 1941–42; GOC, London District, 1942–44; GOC-in-C, Persia and Iraq Command, 1944–45; GOC-in-C, Eastern Command, India, 1945–46; Chief of the General Staff, India, 1946; GOC, British Forces in India and Pakistan, 1947–48.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

273 – THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE TO GENERAL FREYBERG

273

The Minister of Defence to General Freyberg

5 February 1941

Your letter of 7 December (No. 268). It is agreed by the Government that it is most desirable that the units of the Division should be kept concentrated as far as possible, and they are sure that General Headquarters, Middle East, will not order detachments therefrom unless such action is made imperative by the exigencies of the service. As regards non-divisional troops, the Government consider it unwise to attempt to restrict the action of General Headquarters, Middle East, in using its Army, Corps, or Line of Communication units to the very best advantage of the force as a whole. The Government feel that the assurance given you by the Director of Transportation, *vide* the third paragraph of your letter, should obviate further detachments other than those absolutely necessary, and that at this stage it would not be desirable to take the matter up further with the War Office. It is suggested that you point out the domestic administrative difficulties consequent upon detachments to the appropriate authorities at General Headquarters, Middle East. If at a later date you consider detachments to an unreasonable degree are being made, please advise me, and I will ask the Government to consider taking up the matter with the War Office.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

274 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

274

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

23 February 1941

In your telegram of 11 October ¹ you asked for an appreciation of the situation and our likely role and fitness for it. I see no reason to alter the appreciation in my telegram of 7 November (No. 250), as varied by my telegram to General Duigan dated 13 January (No. 271).

With regard to our fitness and state of equipment, the complete Division is now concentrated at Helwan with the exception of the 21st, 22nd, 23rd, and 28th Infantry Battalions, the 5th Field Ambulance, the 7th Field Company, and one squadron of the Divisional Cavalry, all of whom are due at Suez on 3 March. The Division is now receiving its full equipment and transport up to complete war scale and in the course of the next few days all of this will be in our hands. As regards training, I am confident that individual and collective training have been carried out thoroughly and that the Division is now fit for war as a two-brigade division, and as soon as the 5th Brigade have been refitted and hardened up after the voyage, the Division could take the field complete.

Therefore, I feel that should the British Government request the release of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force for a full operational role the New Zealand Government can now do so with confidence.

¹ See *Second Echelon* (No. 200).

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

**SPECIAL UNITS – 34TH ANTI-TANK BATTERY, NEW ZEALAND
ARTILLERY**

Special Units

34th Anti-Tank Battery, New Zealand Artillery

275

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

4 September 1939

The formation of a unit comprising citizens of overseas Dominions living in or visiting this country is being considered by the War Office. New Zealanders, of whom there are a great number offering their services, are being referred to the War Office on the understanding that facilities for transfer will be considered if later a New Zealand Expeditionary Force should be formed for service in Europe... ¹

¹ The text omitted concerned the departure of the Defence Department liaison officer for New Zealand.

276

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand [Extract]

8 September 1939

The Government are considering a proposal to form an Anti-Tank Battery from New Zealanders in the United Kingdom offering their services, in which case Major Duff ² is to raise the unit and command it temporarily... ³

² Major C. S. J. Duff. See page 46 for biographical details.

³ The text omitted concerned the disposal of New Zealand officers in the United Kingdom.

277

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

20 September 1939

Further to your telegram of 8 September (No. 276). As it is wished to avoid volunteers drifting away meanwhile to other units I am anxious for your reply concerning the formation of a unit here. A decision is also required regarding the liabilities of officers on the New Zealand reserve and the retired list who are in the United Kingdom.

278

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand

21 September 1939

Government approval has been given to the formation of the nucleus of an anti-tank regiment as part of the organisation of the infantry division which New Zealand is now raising. Major Duff, Royal New Zealand Artillery, is to command the unit temporarily. *Bona fide* New Zealanders only are to be enlisted. The rates of pay will be cabled to you separately. The Liaison Officer ¹ is to confer with the War Office regarding accommodation, training facilities, material, &c.

Those officers on the retired list have no liability, but officers on the New Zealand Reserve of Officers may be required. Before employment is found for them by the War Office, could the names of these officers be cabled to New Zealand.

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Park. See page 47, note 2.

279

*The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

26 September 1939

With reference to your telegram of 21 September (No. 278), it is assumed that the unit to be raised in the United Kingdom is to be regarded as a complete anti-tank battery. The Military Liaison Officer has been in touch with the War Office regarding facilities and it is proposed to attach the unit to a training regiment at Aldershot or Catterick. Please confirm that the enlistment age is twenty-one to thirty-five years and cable rates of pay and details regarding allotments, &c., at the earliest date as it is necessary to call up the men for interview and medical examination immediately.... ²

² The names of New Zealand Territorial and Reserve personnel in the United Kingdom have been omitted.

280

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand [Extract]

5 October 1939

Your telegram of 26 September (No. 279). The Anti-Tank Battery being raised in London should be completed as far as possible from New Zealanders in the United Kingdom. If the unit is required eventually for service in a European theatre of war, it will be brought up to its full establishment, but it is impossible at the present time to give a definite answer to this.... ¹

¹ The text omitted gave details of rates of pay and allowances by ranks and of the age limits for enlistment.

281

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

6 October 1939

It is reported by Colonel Park that satisfactory accommodation at

Aldershot has been secured for the battery and the first reinforcement, comprising four officers and 140 other ranks, who will probably enter training on 24 October, attached to an anti-tank training regiment. It might be possible to obtain a larger number of active service personnel from applicants presenting themselves for medical examination on 9–11 October. The unit will use battle dress supplied by the Imperial authorities who will carry out the whole administration. The War Office will make *per capita* charge, for which please authorise payment. It is anticipated that the training period will be about four months. I shall visit the men shortly after mobilisation. With reference to your telegram of 5 October (No. 280), is the possible production of a full regiment implied in the reference to the European theatre of war? Are the Home Defence rates of pay mentioned applicable to the United Kingdom unit and are they payable in sterling or in New Zealand currency? Please telegraph your reply by tomorrow.

282

The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand [Extract]

9 October 1939

You are authorised to pay War Office *per capita* charge. The possible production of a regiment to full establishment is contemplated....¹

¹ Details of rates of pay and allowances and allotments to dependants have been omitted.

283

The Military Liaison Officer (London) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

20 October 1939

The War Office can equip the Anti-Tank Battery earlier if it is placed at their disposal until the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary

Force. Its training programme depends on the date when its equipment comes to hand. Please advise urgently regarding the question of disposal and which contingent brings personnel for the expansion of the battery to a regiment.

284

The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser (London)

6 November 1939

Please see the Military Liaison Officer's telegram of 20 October to the Chief of the General Staff and inform the British Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are pleased to place the Anti-Tank Battery now being formed in the United Kingdom at the disposal of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, provided it is released when required for service with the New Zealand Division. The remaining batteries of the regiment will be formed in New Zealand, and should the Division go overseas will proceed with the second and third contingents.

285

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

16 January 1940

The following is for the Minister of Defence from Colonel Park

With reference to the Prime Minister's telegram of 6 November, the Army Council propose that the Anti-Tank Battery raised in the United Kingdom should mobilise on or about 1 April and proceed overseas as soon as possible after that date.¹ If an emergency arises and it is temporarily placed in the British Expeditionary Force in France, it will be allotted as an Army anti-tank battery. In any case, it will join the New Zealand Division later in the year. General Freyberg is being informed.

¹ The battery embarked at Southampton on 17 Apr 1940 and, after travelling by train from Cherbourg to Marseilles, arrived at

Alexandria on the 25th.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

275 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

275

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

4 September 1939

The formation of a unit comprising citizens of overseas Dominions living in or visiting this country is being considered by the War Office. New Zealanders, of whom there are a great number offering their services, are being referred to the War Office on the understanding that facilities for transfer will be considered if later a New Zealand Expeditionary Force should be formed for service in Europe... ¹

¹ The text omitted concerned the departure of the Defence Department liaison officer for New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

276 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

276

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[Extract]*

8 September 1939

The Government are considering a proposal to form an Anti-Tank Battery from New Zealanders in the United Kingdom offering their services, in which case Major Duff² is to raise the unit and command it temporarily...³

² Major C. S. J. Duff. See page 46 for biographical details.

³ The text omitted concerned the disposal of New Zealand officers in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

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Those officers on the retired list have no liability, but officers on the New Zealand Reserve of Officers may be required. Before employment is found for them by the War Office, could the names of these officers be cabled to New Zealand.

¹ Lieutenant-Colonel R. S. Park. See page 47, note 2.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

279 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER [EXTRACT]

279

*The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister
[Extract]*

26 September 1939

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² The names of New Zealand Territorial and Reserve personnel in the United Kingdom have been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

280 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

280

*The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand
[Extract]*

5 October 1939

Your telegram of 26 September (No. 279). The Anti-Tank Battery being raised in London should be completed as far as possible from New Zealanders in the United Kingdom. If the unit is required eventually for service in a European theatre of war, it will be brought up to its full establishment, but it is impossible at the present time to give a definite answer to this.... ¹

¹ The text omitted gave details of rates of pay and allowances by ranks and of the age limits for enlistment.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

281 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER

281

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

6 October 1939

It is reported by Colonel Park that satisfactory accommodation at Aldershot has been secured for the battery and the first reinforcement, comprising four officers and 140 other ranks, who will probably enter training on 24 October, attached to an anti-tank training regiment. It might be possible to obtain a larger number of active service personnel from applicants presenting themselves for medical examination on 9–11 October. The unit will use battle dress supplied by the Imperial authorities who will carry out the whole administration. The War Office will make *per capita* charge, for which please authorise payment. It is anticipated that the training period will be about four months. I shall visit the men shortly after mobilisation. With reference to your telegram of 5 October (No. 280), is the possible production of a full regiment implied in the reference to the European theatre of war? Are the Home Defence rates of pay mentioned applicable to the United Kingdom unit and are they payable in sterling or in New Zealand currency? Please telegraph your reply by tomorrow.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

282 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

282

*The Prime Minister to the High Commissioner for New Zealand
[Extract]*

9 October 1939

You are authorised to pay War Office *per capita* charge. The possible production of a regiment to full establishment is contemplated.... ¹

¹ Details of rates of pay and allowances and allotments to dependants have been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

283 – THE MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON) TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

283

The Military Liaison Officer (London) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

20 October 1939

The War Office can equip the Anti-Tank Battery earlier if it is placed at their disposal until the arrival of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force. Its training programme depends on the date when its equipment comes to hand. Please advise urgently regarding the question of disposal and which contingent brings personnel for the expansion of the battery to a regiment.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

284 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO THE HON. P. FRASER (LONDON)

284

The Prime Minister to the Hon. P. Fraser (London)

6 November 1939

Please see the Military Liaison Officer's telegram of 20 October to the Chief of the General Staff and inform the British Government that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are pleased to place the Anti-Tank Battery now being formed in the United Kingdom at the disposal of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, provided it is released when required for service with the New Zealand Division. The remaining batteries of the regiment will be formed in New Zealand, and should the Division go overseas will proceed with the second and third contingents.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

285 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER

285

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to the Prime Minister

16 January 1940

The following is for the Minister of Defence from Colonel Park

With reference to the Prime Minister's telegram of 6 November, the Army Council propose that the Anti-Tank Battery raised in the United Kingdom should mobilise on or about 1 April and proceed overseas as soon as possible after that date.¹ If an emergency arises and it is temporarily placed in the British Expeditionary Force in France, it will be allotted as an Army anti-tank battery. In any case, it will join the New Zealand Division later in the year. General Freyberg is being informed.

¹ The battery embarked at Southampton on 17 Apr 1940 and, after travelling by train from Cherbourg to Marseilles, arrived at Alexandria on the 25th.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

**RAILWAY, FORESTRY, AND ARMY TROOPS COMPANIES, NEW ZEALAND
ENGINEERS**

Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies, New Zealand Engineers

286

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 November 1939

A very pressing need has arisen for the immediate provision of the following Transportation and Forestry companies:

One Headquarters Maintenance and Construction Group, Royal Engineers ²

One Railway Survey company, Royal Engineers

Four Railway Construction companies, Royal Engineers

Two Forestry companies

Four Forestry companies will be required in addition early in 1940 and a further twelve Forestry companies at intervals at a later date.

There is no fixed war establishment for a Forestry company, but the 1918 war establishment of the Canadian company consisted of six officers and 173 other ranks (including 20 log-makers, 30 rollers and chain men, 10 road-cutters, and other specialists such as sawfilers, millwrights, log-setters, &c., and 40 general hands) and 69 draught horses. No doubt in the light of modern mechanical conditions this establishment will require modification.

Units of this nature can only be raised in the United Kingdom with great difficulty and in small numbers, and the suggestion has been made that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand might be prepared to assist in the provision of these units. The New Zealand Government's early observations on this suggestion would be received gratefully by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

² The War Establishment reference has been omitted in each case.

287

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

12 December 1939

Your telegram of 19 November (No. 286). Approval has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to the provision of the following units:

One Headquarters Maintenance and Construction Group, Royal Engineers

One Railway Survey company, Royal Engineers

One Railway Construction company, Royal Engineers

One Forestry company

The proposal is to take the personnel for these units into training about the middle of January and it is expected that they will be ready to leave about the middle of February. On the arrival of these units overseas it will be necessary for His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to arrange the provision of the necessary equipment for them.

288

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 December 1939

Your telegram of 12 December (No. 287). The New Zealand Government's offer to provide the units mentioned is accepted with gratitude by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. The

question of their transport to this country is now being considered.

289

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

9 January 1940

Further to my telegram of 19 December (No. 288), the Army Council consider that for reasons of safety it would be most advisable for the units in question to accompany the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Special Force as far as Egypt. As arrangements for the necessary extra shipping would have to be made at once, I should be glad to learn as soon as possible whether this proposal is acceptable.

290

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

14 January 1940

As suggested in your telegram of 9 January (No. 289), His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are making the necessary arrangements for the units in question to be despatched with the Second Echelon of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The units will receive the necessary training before embarkation as recommended by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.¹

¹ The CIGS's recommendation is not published.

291

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 February 1940

Your telegram of 14 January (No. 290). The financial arrangements

applicable in the case of the units in question have received consideration. As the units are being provided at the specific request of the United Kingdom Government it is suggested that the arrangements should be as follows:

- (That the New Zealand Government bear the cost of pay, pensions,
 - a) dependants' and field allowances, officers' mess allowances, the cost of transport to this country or France and back to New Zealand at the end of the war, and of the initial personal equipment.
- (That the United Kingdom Government bear all other expenses
 - b) connected with the equipment, work, or maintenance of the units.

Transportation and Forestry units were provided by the Canadian Government on these terms during the last war.

292

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

11 March 1940

Your telegram of 19 February (No. 291). His Majesty's Government in New Zealand assume that the apportionment suggested is that all costs of the units payable outside New Zealand, other than pay and allowances to the officers and men and transportation from and back to New Zealand, will be borne by the United Kingdom Government, and that such part of the pay and allowances as are payable overseas, together with transportation costs, will come within the general financial arrangements made with the United Kingdom Government for finance on loan basis for the maintenance of New Zealand forces overseas. If these assumptions are correct the suggested arrangements are agreed to.

293

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

13 June 1940

The offer of further assistance in the present grave situation is greatly appreciated.¹ All aspects of the question are under close examination, but meanwhile the Army Council would be very grateful if the New Zealand Government could consider providing, in addition to the Forestry and Transportation units already being despatched, one Railway Survey company, one Railway Construction company, two Railway Operating companies, and two Forestry companies. The special financial conditions already arranged in respect of the Forestry and Transportation units being provided

¹ See *Outbreak of War and Declarations—Italy* (No. 16) and *Munition Workers* (No 330).

(see my telegram to the New Zealand Government (No. 291) of 19 February) would be applicable in the case of future units suggested above if the New Zealand Government can make these available.

The Army Council would also be glad if the New Zealand Government would consider the provision of two Army Troops companies of Engineers, but it is hoped that if these are provided by New Zealand they would come under the ordinary financial arrangement by which, except where otherwise arranged, the Dominion is responsible for the cost of its own troops....¹

¹ For rest of text see *Special Units—Munition Workers* (No. 331).

294

The High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

14 June 1940

I have been asked by the Prime Minister to inform you that immediately on receipt of your telegram of 13 June (No. 293) Cabinet

was summoned and at once agreed to provide the additional units asked for: already steps have been taken with a view to recruiting the men and transporting them as soon as possible. The Prime Minister asks me to say that if there is any other form of help which the **United Kingdom** wants, and which New Zealand is able to give, you have only to ask for it.

295

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

18 June 1940

With reference to your telegram of 13 June (No. 293), my Ministers advise that the special troops asked for, totalling 2008 all ranks, can be ready for embarkation early in July. They would be grateful for information as to what shipping facilities are proposed. If it is desired to make shipping resources available from New Zealand it appears quite practicable to employ the *Awatea* ² and the *Aorangi* ³. The earliest date on which these ships can be ready to sail in convoy is now being investigated.

It is suggested for your consideration that the convoy should proceed to Vancouver for onward passage overland to the **Atlantic** coast, whence it is assumed that for the voyage to the **United Kingdom** convoyed shipping can be provided.

Should these proposals be agreed to, the Ministry of Shipping and the Director of Sea Transport will no doubt take the necessary action to make the *Aorangi* available. As the *Awatea* is on the New Zealand register she will be dealt with by my Government.

My Ministers also ask what escort would be provided and whether it would be proposed in this connection to employ HMS *Achilles*.

² RMS *Awatea*, Union Steam Ship Company; converted to armed merchant cruiser and subsequently sunk in the **Mediterranean** in

³ RMS *Aorangi*, Canadian-Australasian Line, 17,491 tons; converted to troopship and was used as a tug depot-ship at Southampton during the invasion of Normandy; later became a recreation centre and floating hostel for submarine crews in the Pacific.

296

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

28 June 1940

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom suggest that the arrangement for the immediate despatch of the New Zealand Railway units be cancelled as it is not now considered that any further Railway units will be required, so far as it is possible to foresee at present, in the United Kingdom or Western theatre. As, however, they may later be required elsewhere, it is hoped that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to keep them in being for the present until the situation becomes clearer.

On the other hand, we should be very grateful if two Forestry companies and two Army Troops companies of Engineers could be sent to the United Kingdom at once, and we understand that there would be sufficient accommodation in the *Awatea* for this purpose.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are most appreciative of New Zealand's assistance and much regret having to alter the plans in respect of the further Railway units for which we had asked.

297

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

29 June 1940

My Ministers are most grateful for your telegram of 28 June (No. 296) and are making arrangements accordingly. The despatch of the two Forestry companies and two Army Troops companies of Engineers in the *Awatea* will be possible on or about 11 July. However, my Ministers will be glad if they can be informed whether it is now desired that the *Awatea* should proceed to the United Kingdom, or whether the proposal made in my telegram of 18 June (No. 295), that the convoy should proceed via Vancouver, which they prefer, can be adopted.

With regard to escort, they would be glad if they could be informed, in reply to the last paragraph of my telegram No. 295, of the proposals of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

298

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

6 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 29 June (No. 297). The Admiralty regret that it is impracticable to provide a special escort for the *Awatea*, either on the Cape route or to the Pacific coast of Canada, and no firm arrangements could at present be made if the Pacific route were used for the onward passage of the troops in question in a convoy across the Atlantic.

The alternatives are therefore: first, that the troops should be sent by civil packet without escort but with the normal precautions for the safety of such vessels; second, that the *Awatea* should sail by the Cape route now without special escort, but subject to arrangements for escort in the danger areas as outlined in paragraph 1 of the Admiralty's telegram of 24 May to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board;¹ and third, that the *Awatea* should await the US 4 convoy of Australian reinforcements for the 6th Australian Division. However, as regards this convoy, no final

arrangements have been made at present

We shall be grateful if the New Zealand Government would consider the matter on the above lines. The supply position makes it very desirable that as soon as possible the Forestry companies should reach this country.

¹ This naval telegram is not published. The paragraph referred to read as follows:

Cover for these sailings is regarded as of little value in wide oceans, and it is considered, if close escort is not available for the entire passage, that adequate security will, in the present circumstances, be provided if liners are escorted for a period of two or three days from the ports of departure and arrival, and if they are given a wide evasive route.

299

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

9 July 1940

Immediate consideration has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to your telegram of 6 July (No. 298). They fully realise the extreme desirability of the troops concerned reaching the United Kingdom at the earliest possible moment, and indeed it is for this reason that they have proceeded with the utmost rapidity in raising the force and in carrying almost to completion the arrangements for the *Awatea* to be made ready to accommodate them. However, as has been explained to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in the past, they feel that they cannot divest themselves of their share of responsibility for the safe transport of these troops, and with the utmost regret they feel themselves unable to accept the proposal that the troops should proceed unescorted to the United Kingdom. However small the risk, they feel that they cannot take it, and indeed that if an attack were made on the ship in such circumstances the effect might well be to

nullify to a very important extent the war effort of this Dominion. Holding these views they feel that there are only two possible alternatives, either: (a) that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on further reflection find it possible to provide an adequate escort, and in this connection His Majesty's Government in New Zealand feel bound to say that in the present circumstances they would be most reluctant to agree to the removal of HMS *Achilles* from New Zealand waters for any appreciable period, or (b) that the departure of the troops be deferred until it is possible for them to join convoy US 4. In the latter event, if Forestry units are urgently required, they would point out that in the ranks of the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at present in the United Kingdom, and no doubt also amongst Australian troops in the United Kingdom, there must be large numbers of competent forestry men who, if required, could rapidly be made available.¹

As the *Awatea* is available for despatch on 12 July and the troops are in camp and ready to depart, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be grateful for the immediate comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in order that should it still be found impossible to provide an escort appropriate arrangements may be made for the disposal of the ship.

¹ The attention of General Freyberg, then in the United Kingdom, was drawn to this telegram, and he was asked to confer with United Kingdom authorities about the release of these men.

300

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 July 1940

Your telegram of 9 July (No. 299).

The views of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand with regard to the possibility of the troops concerned sailing without a special escort have been noted by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. They much regret that they do not find it possible to provide a special escort for the *Awatea*, and in these circumstances it seems to be unavoidable that the departure of the troops must be deferred for the time being.

The experience gained in recent months by the British Expeditionary Force in France, and the military situation now existing in this country, make it most important to ensure that the Forestry companies should receive military training, and therefore it would be appreciated if the New Zealand Government would arrange for the two Forestry companies to receive military training during the intervening period before their departure from New Zealand. According to the United Kingdom practice, the appropriate scale of training would last approximately two months, five weeks being devoted to ordinary military training, including drill, musketry, anti-gas training, and the use of weapons, and about three weeks to training in the construction of ordinary field works and in elementary demolitions.

The possibility that competent forestry men might be obtainable from the Australian and New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom is being examined. The United Kingdom authorities are grateful for this suggestion.

301

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

22 July 1940

My telegram of 28 June (No. 296). The War Office has now been notified by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, of the requirements of railway transportation units in that theatre and it appears likely that all the New Zealand Transportation units which have been raised will be

needed there. The Middle East requirements are now being examined in detail and as soon as this examination is completed a further telegram will be sent. We assume that the New Zealand Government would see no objection in principle to the employment in the Middle East of the New Zealand Transportation units whose departure from New Zealand was deferred as a result of my telegram.

302

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

23 July 1940

Your telegram of 22 July (No. 301). The employment in the Middle East of the New Zealand Transportation units is agreed to in principle by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. It is assumed that this proposal will apply to those units now in the United Kingdom as well as to those still in this Dominion.

In this connection they note that a further telegram is contemplated and they hope that in that communication they will be informed in all necessary detail of the proposals regarding the transport and escort to be provided, the route to be followed (both from the United Kingdom and New Zealand), the date of movement, and the formation to which the units will be attached on their arrival in the Middle East.

303

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs [Extract]

24 July 1940

.... ¹ His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be glad also of an indication of the wishes of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as to the Forestry units, the departure of which has been deferred as a result of your telegram of 10 July (No. 300). This postponement, it was understood, was intended to enable them to join

convoy US 4, but if, as is apparently now the case, this convoy is to proceed to the Middle East, some other arrangements must necessarily be made for the Forestry units.

It will be appreciated also if an indication could be given of the wishes of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom with reference to the two Army Troops companies of New Zealand Engineers which are at present being held in camp here, and particularly whether it is intended to despatch these to the Middle East or to the United Kingdom. The Transportation units have already been referred to in my telegram of 23 July (No. 302).

¹ For text omitted from this telegram see *Third Echelon* (No. 219).

304

General Freyberg (London) to the Minister of Defence

26 July 1940

Reference the Secretary of State's telegram of 22 July (No. 301) and the Governor-General's telegram of 23 July (No. 302) which has just arrived.

I have cabled regarding escort—see my message of 25 July. ¹

The Admiralty will cable regarding the route to be taken, which they will not disclose to me.

Transportation units in the Middle East will be Army troops and will work under the direct supervision of the Chief Engineer, Army Headquarters. I feel that that arrangement will be to the satisfaction of all concerned. As I shall be in the Middle East by then and can keep my eye upon them, I suggest the New Zealand Government should agree.

¹ This telegram was not received. See No. 306 for repetition of

305

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand [Extract]

26 July 1940

Your telegram of 24 July (No. 303). The following are the answers to your questions so far as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are able to give them at the present time:

It is hoped, in accordance with the original programme, to sail convoy US 4 for the Middle East from Sydney on 23 August and that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to utilise the full capacity available in this convoy. It is suggested that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand should despatch by this convoy reinforcements for the First Echelon now in Egypt, as well as the following ancillary units which it is understood are now ready to leave: 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th and 19th New Zealand Army Troops Companies... It is suggested also that the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company should remain for the present in New Zealand, but we should be very grateful if a Headquarters Railway Operating Group (total all ranks, 26—see WE 4/1931/17/2) could be raised and despatched with the other Transportation units in US 4.... ¹

With reference to the question regarding the Forestry units: as they are required for this country separate arrangements for their transportation will be needed, and a further communication will be sent as soon as it has been possible to formulate definite suggestions on this point.

¹ For text omitted see *Third Echelon* (No. 220).

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

29 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 28 July.² The following is a repetition of General Freyberg's telegram of 25 July regarding the Transportation units:

Following for Minister of Defence from Freyberg: The Transportation units are prepared to leave the United Kingdom for the Middle East by the end of the month.

I have been asked by the War Office to convey to your Government the following message: 'Please assure your Government that the units will be sailing in a convoy with a large number of British units and that the Admiralty has accepted the responsibility of providing a proper escort for this large convoy.'

I want to add that they will travel with their equipment, their mechanical transport, and full engineer stores.

² Not published. This telegram requested General Freyberg's comments on telegrams Nos. 220 and 221 (see

Third Echelon) and asked that his telegram of 25 Jul 1940, which had not been received, be repeated.

307

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 August 1940

Your telegram of 23 July (No. 302) and my telegram of 30 July.³ According to arrangements which have been made with General Freyberg, the New Zealand Transportation units in the United Kingdom will sail to the Middle East about 4 August in convoy W to Z. At his request the No. 1 New Zealand Convalescent Depot, New Zealand Medical Corps, will also sail in this convoy. The [two words mutilated] New Zealand Transportation units, both from New Zealand and from the United Kingdom, should operate as General Headquarters troops in the Middle East Command under the Director of Transport, Middle East.

We should be glad to learn as soon as possible what technical and personal equipment will be brought by the Transportation units and Army Troops companies of Engineers from New Zealand. If full-scale equipment cannot be provided we will try to make the balance available in the Middle East.

³ See *Third Echelon* (No. 223).

308

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 August 1940

My telegram of 10 July (No. 300).

Escort for the Forestry companies can now be arranged by the

Admiralty if the troops can be accommodated in the *Awatea*, or other suitable vessel, and sailed in convoy US 4 or US 5 (depending on the speed of the vessel) as far as **Fremantle**. The probable date of sailing and approved escort for US 5 are as stated in the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board's signals of 5 August, repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.¹

An armed merchant cruiser which is being transferred from the **China** to the South Atlantic Station will provide the onward escort from **Fremantle**; from Sierra Leone onward the vessel would be included in one of the regular escorted convoy sailings to the **United Kingdom**. In order that the diversion of the armed merchant cruiser may be arranged the Admiralty would be glad to learn at the earliest possible date whether these suggestions are acceptable to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

Arrangements will be made for the military training of these troops to be completed in the **United Kingdom** if it has not been fully carried out in New Zealand.

¹ See *Third Echelon* (Nos. 225 and 226).

309

The New Zealand Naval Board to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board

11 August 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have been asked by His Majesty's Government in the **United Kingdom** to send Forestry troops, twelve officers and 294 men, total 306, to the **United Kingdom**. The United Kingdom Government have proposed that the troops proceed in the *Awatea* or other suitable ship with US 4 as far as **Fremantle**, thence to Sierra Leone under escort of an armed merchant cruiser which is being transferred from **China** to the South Atlantic Station.

The New Zealand Government do not wish to employ the *Awatea* for this purpose as she is required to take the place of the *Niagara*, and because she has three times the amount of accommodation needed and would thus be wasteful.

It is possible to accommodate these troops in the existing ships of US 4.

The New Zealand Naval Board would be glad if you could say whether the troops could be trans-shipped at Fremantle to any vessel which may be proceeding under the escort of the armed merchant cruiser or whether a suitable vessel could be provided.

310

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs [Extract]

14 August 1940

Your telegram of 26 July (No. 305). In accordance with your suggestion, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand is despatching per convoy US 4 ... the 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company, Headquarters Railway Operating Group.... ¹

It is requested that if possible the 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company should be attached to and at the disposal of the GOC, 2nd New Zealand Division, until the arrival of the 8th New Zealand Field Company, Engineers, which will be despatched with the next

¹ For text omitted see *Third Echelon* (No. 233).

that is, the fourth draft of reinforcements. In the meantime the 19th New Zealand Army Troops Company is required for essential preparatory work in Fiji, but it will be replaced or relieved later for

despatch to the Middle East.¹

¹ The 18th Army Troops Company (not the 19th) went to Fiji; the 19th Company left with the Third Echelon for Egypt.

311

*The Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief, China [Station]*²

18 August 1940

Repeated to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board and the New Zealand Naval Board.

The *Arawa*³ is to provide the ocean escort as far as Freetown for a liner carrying the New Zealand Forestry Unit and a detachment of Australian troops to the United Kingdom. The liner first selected was the *Orcades*, due to sail in convoy US 4 from Fremantle on 1 September, it being the intention that the *Arawa* should escort her from Bombay. The position is no longer clear because of the present uncertainty as to the final date of sailing of US 4, and it is possible that the *Arawa* may be required to commence escort duty at Fremantle. She should therefore await further instructions at Singapore.

² Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, GBE, KCB, KCMG, DSO (then Vice-Admiral); C-in-C, China, 1940–42, Ceylon, 1942–45, Portsmouth, 1945–47.

³ RMS *Arawa*, Shaw Savill and Albion Company Ltd., 14,462 tons; converted to armed merchant cruiser.

312

The New Zealand Military Liaison Officer (London) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

9 November 1940

The 14th and 15th Forestry Companies arrived safely at Glasgow on 6 November.⁴ All well.

⁴ The 14th and 15th Forestry Companies left New Zealand with the **Third Echelon** in the *Empress of Japan* on 28 Aug 1940. At Bombay they left the contingent and re-embarked in the *Orcades* to continue the voyage to the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

286 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

286

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 November 1939

A very pressing need has arisen for the immediate provision of the following Transportation and Forestry companies:

One Headquarters Maintenance and Construction Group, Royal Engineers²

One Railway Survey company, Royal Engineers

Four Railway Construction companies, Royal Engineers

Two Forestry companies

Four Forestry companies will be required in addition early in 1940 and a further twelve Forestry companies at intervals at a later date.

There is no fixed war establishment for a Forestry company, but the 1918 war establishment of the Canadian company consisted of six officers and 173 other ranks (including 20 log-makers, 30 rollers and chain men, 10 road-cutters, and other specialists such as sawfilers, millwrights, log-setters, &c., and 40 general hands) and 69 draught horses. No doubt in the light of modern mechanical conditions this establishment will require modification.

Units of this nature can only be raised in the United Kingdom with great difficulty and in small numbers, and the suggestion has been made that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand might be prepared to

assist in the provision of these units. The New Zealand Government's early observations on this suggestion would be received gratefully by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

² The War Establishment reference has been omitted in each case.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

287 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

287

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

12 December 1939

Your telegram of 19 November (No. 286). Approval has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to the provision of the following units:

One Headquarters Maintenance and Construction Group, Royal Engineers

One Railway Survey company, Royal Engineers

One Railway Construction company, Royal Engineers

One Forestry company

The proposal is to take the personnel for these units into training about the middle of January and it is expected that they will be ready to leave about the middle of February. On the arrival of these units overseas it will be necessary for His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to arrange the provision of the necessary equipment for them.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

288 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

288

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 December 1939

Your telegram of 12 December (No. 287). The New Zealand Government's offer to provide the units mentioned is accepted with gratitude by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. The question of their transport to this country is now being considered.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

289 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

289

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

9 January 1940

Further to my telegram of 19 December (No. 288), the Army Council consider that for reasons of safety it would be most advisable for the units in question to accompany the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Special Force as far as Egypt. As arrangements for the necessary extra shipping would have to be made at once, I should be glad to learn as soon as possible whether this proposal is acceptable.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

290 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

290

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

14 January 1940

As suggested in your telegram of 9 January (No. 289), His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are making the necessary arrangements for the units in question to be despatched with the Second Echelon of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force. The units will receive the necessary training before embarkation as recommended by the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.¹

¹ The CIGS's recommendation is not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

291 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

291

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

19 February 1940

Your telegram of 14 January (No. 290). The financial arrangements applicable in the case of the units in question have received consideration. As the units are being provided at the specific request of the United Kingdom Government it is suggested that the arrangements should be as follows:

- (That the New Zealand Government bear the cost of pay, pensions, *a*) dependants' and field allowances, officers' mess allowances, the cost of transport to this country or France and back to New Zealand at the end of the war, and of the initial personal equipment.
- (That the United Kingdom Government bear all other expenses *b*) connected with the equipment, work, or maintenance of the units.

Transportation and Forestry units were provided by the Canadian Government on these terms during the last war.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

292 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

292

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

11 March 1940

Your telegram of 19 February (No. 291). His Majesty's Government in New Zealand assume that the apportionment suggested is that all costs of the units payable outside New Zealand, other than pay and allowances to the officers and men and transportation from and back to New Zealand, will be borne by the United Kingdom Government, and that such part of the pay and allowances as are payable overseas, together with transportation costs, will come within the general financial arrangements made with the United Kingdom Government for finance on loan basis for the maintenance of New Zealand forces overseas. If these assumptions are correct the suggested arrangements are agreed to.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

293 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

293

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

13 June 1940

The offer of further assistance in the present grave situation is greatly appreciated.¹ All aspects of the question are under close examination, but meanwhile the Army Council would be very grateful if the New Zealand Government could consider providing, in addition to the Forestry and Transportation units already being despatched, one Railway Survey company, one Railway Construction company, two Railway Operating companies, and two Forestry companies. The special financial conditions already arranged in respect of the Forestry and Transportation units being provided

¹ See *Outbreak of War and Declarations—Italy* (No. 16) and *Munition Workers* (No 330).

(see my telegram to the New Zealand Government (No. 291) of 19 February) would be applicable in the case of future units suggested above if the New Zealand Government can make these available.

The Army Council would also be glad if the New Zealand Government would consider the provision of two Army Troops companies of Engineers, but it is hoped that if these are provided by New Zealand they would come under the ordinary financial arrangement by which, except where otherwise arranged, the Dominion is responsible for the cost of its own troops....¹

¹ For rest of text see *Special Units—Munition Workers (No. 331)*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

294 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON) TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

294

The High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

14 June 1940

I have been asked by the Prime Minister to inform you that immediately on receipt of your telegram of 13 June (No. 293) Cabinet was summoned and at once agreed to provide the additional units asked for: already steps have been taken with a view to recruiting the men and transporting them as soon as possible. The Prime Minister asks me to say that if there is any other form of help which the United Kingdom wants, and which New Zealand is able to give, you have only to ask for it.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

295 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

295

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

18 June 1940

With reference to your telegram of 13 June (No. 293), my Ministers advise that the special troops asked for, totalling 2008 all ranks, can be ready for embarkation early in July. They would be grateful for information as to what shipping facilities are proposed. If it is desired to make shipping resources available from New Zealand it appears quite practicable to employ the *Awatea* ² and the *Aorangi* ³. The earliest date on which these ships can be ready to sail in convoy is now being investigated.

It is suggested for your consideration that the convoy should proceed to Vancouver for onward passage overland to the Atlantic coast, whence it is assumed that for the voyage to the United Kingdom convoyed shipping can be provided.

Should these proposals be agreed to, the Ministry of Shipping and the Director of Sea Transport will no doubt take the necessary action to make the *Aorangi* available. As the *Awatea* is on the New Zealand register she will be dealt with by my Government.

My Ministers also ask what escort would be provided and whether it would be proposed in this connection to employ HMS *Achilles*.

² RMS *Awatea*, Union Steam Ship Company; converted to armed merchant cruiser and subsequently sunk in the Mediterranean in

the course of the Allied landings in North Africa, 11 Nov 1942.

³ RMS *Aorangi*, Canadian-Australasian Line, 17,491 tons; converted to troopship and was used as a tug depot-ship at Southampton during the invasion of Normandy; later became a recreation centre and floating hostel for submarine crews in the Pacific.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

296 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

296

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

28 June 1940

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom suggest that the arrangement for the immediate despatch of the New Zealand Railway units be cancelled as it is not now considered that any further Railway units will be required, so far as it is possible to foresee at present, in the United Kingdom or Western theatre. As, however, they may later be required elsewhere, it is hoped that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to keep them in being for the present until the situation becomes clearer.

On the other hand, we should be very grateful if two Forestry companies and two Army Troops companies of Engineers could be sent to the United Kingdom at once, and we understand that there would be sufficient accommodation in the *Awatea* for this purpose.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are most appreciative of New Zealand's assistance and much regret having to alter the plans in respect of the further Railway units for which we had asked.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

297 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

297

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

29 June 1940

My Ministers are most grateful for your telegram of 28 June (No. 296) and are making arrangements accordingly. The despatch of the two Forestry companies and two Army Troops companies of Engineers in the *Awatea* will be possible on or about 11 July. However, my Ministers will be glad if they can be informed whether it is now desired that the *Awatea* should proceed to the United Kingdom, or whether the proposal made in my telegram of 18 June (No. 295), that the convoy should proceed via Vancouver, which they prefer, can be adopted.

With regard to escort, they would be glad if they could be informed, in reply to the last paragraph of my telegram No. 295, of the proposals of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

298 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

298

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

6 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 29 June (No. 297). The Admiralty regret that it is impracticable to provide a special escort for the *Awatea*, either on the Cape route or to the Pacific coast of Canada, and no firm arrangements could at present be made if the Pacific route were used for the onward passage of the troops in question in a convoy across the Atlantic.

The alternatives are therefore: first, that the troops should be sent by civil packet without escort but with the normal precautions for the safety of such vessels; second, that the *Awatea* should sail by the Cape route now without special escort, but subject to arrangements for escort in the danger areas as outlined in paragraph 1 of the Admiralty's telegram of 24 May to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board, repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board;¹ and third, that the *Awatea* should await the US 4 convoy of Australian reinforcements for the 6th Australian Division. However, as regards this convoy, no final arrangements have been made at present

We shall be grateful if the New Zealand Government would consider the matter on the above lines. The supply position makes it very desirable that as soon as possible the Forestry companies should reach this country.

¹ This naval telegram is not published. The paragraph referred to

read as follows:

Cover for these sailings is regarded as of little value in wide oceans, and it is considered, if close escort is not available for the entire passage, that adequate security will, in the present circumstances, be provided if liners are escorted for a period of two or three days from the ports of departure and arrival, and if they are given a wide evasive route.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

299 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

299

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

9 July 1940

Immediate consideration has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to your telegram of 6 July (No. 298). They fully realise the extreme desirability of the troops concerned reaching the United Kingdom at the earliest possible moment, and indeed it is for this reason that they have proceeded with the utmost rapidity in raising the force and in carrying almost to completion the arrangements for the *Awatea* to be made ready to accommodate them. However, as has been explained to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in the past, they feel that they cannot divest themselves of their share of responsibility for the safe transport of these troops, and with the utmost regret they feel themselves unable to accept the proposal that the troops should proceed unescorted to the United Kingdom. However small the risk, they feel that they cannot take it, and indeed that if an attack were made on the ship in such circumstances the effect might well be to nullify to a very important extent the war effort of this Dominion.

Holding these views they feel that there are only two possible alternatives, either: (a) that His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on further reflection find it possible to provide an adequate escort, and in this connection His Majesty's Government in New Zealand feel bound to say that in the present circumstances they would be most reluctant to agree to the removal of HMS *Achilles* from New Zealand waters for any appreciable period, or (b) that the departure of the troops be deferred until it is possible for them to join convoy US 4. In the latter

event, if Forestry units are urgently required, they would point out that in the ranks of the Second Echelon of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force at present in the United Kingdom, and no doubt also amongst Australian troops in the United Kingdom, there must be large numbers of competent forestry men who, if required, could rapidly be made available.¹

As the *Awatea* is available for despatch on 12 July and the troops are in camp and ready to depart, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be grateful for the immediate comments of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom in order that should it still be found impossible to provide an escort appropriate arrangements may be made for the disposal of the ship.

¹ The attention of General Freyberg, then in the United Kingdom, was drawn to this telegram, and he was asked to confer with United Kingdom authorities about the release of these men.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

300 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

300

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 July 1940

Your telegram of 9 July (No. 299).

The views of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand with regard to the possibility of the troops concerned sailing without a special escort have been noted by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. They much regret that they do not find it possible to provide a special escort for the *Awatea*, and in these circumstances it seems to be unavoidable that the departure of the troops must be deferred for the time being.

The experience gained in recent months by the British Expeditionary Force in France, and the military situation now existing in this country, make it most important to ensure that the Forestry companies should receive military training, and therefore it would be appreciated if the New Zealand Government would arrange for the two Forestry companies to receive military training during the intervening period before their departure from New Zealand. According to the United Kingdom practice, the appropriate scale of training would last approximately two months, five weeks being devoted to ordinary military training, including drill, musketry, anti-gas training, and the use of weapons, and about three weeks to training in the construction of ordinary field works and in elementary demolitions.

The possibility that competent forestry men might be obtainable

from the Australian and New Zealand troops in the United Kingdom is being examined. The United Kingdom authorities are grateful for this suggestion.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

301 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

301

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

22 July 1940

My telegram of 28 June (No. 296). The War Office has now been notified by the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, of the requirements of railway transportation units in that theatre and it appears likely that all the New Zealand Transportation units which have been raised will be needed there. The Middle East requirements are now being examined in detail and as soon as this examination is completed a further telegram will be sent. We assume that the New Zealand Government would see no objection in principle to the employment in the Middle East of the New Zealand Transportation units whose departure from New Zealand was deferred as a result of my telegram.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

302 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

302

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

23 July 1940

Your telegram of 22 July (No. 301). The employment in the Middle East of the New Zealand Transportation units is agreed to in principle by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand. It is assumed that this proposal will apply to those units now in the United Kingdom as well as to those still in this Dominion.

In this connection they note that a further telegram is contemplated and they hope that in that communication they will be informed in all necessary detail of the proposals regarding the transport and escort to be provided, the route to be followed (both from the United Kingdom and New Zealand), the date of movement, and the formation to which the units will be attached on their arrival in the Middle East.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

303 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS [EXTRACT]

303

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs [Extract]*

24 July 1940

.... ¹ His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would be glad also of an indication of the wishes of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom as to the Forestry units, the departure of which has been deferred as a result of your telegram of 10 July (No. 300). This postponement, it was understood, was intended to enable them to join convoy US 4, but if, as is apparently now the case, this convoy is to proceed to the Middle East, some other arrangements must necessarily be made for the Forestry units.

It will be appreciated also if an indication could be given of the wishes of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom with reference to the two Army Troops companies of New Zealand Engineers which are at present being held in camp here, and particularly whether it is intended to despatch these to the Middle East or to the United Kingdom. The Transportation units have already been referred to in my telegram of 23 July (No. 302).

¹ For text omitted from this telegram see *Third Echelon* (No. 219).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

304 – GENERAL FREYBERG (LONDON) TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

304

General Freyberg (London) to the Minister of Defence

26 July 1940

Reference the Secretary of State's telegram of 22 July (No. 301) and the Governor-General's telegram of 23 July (No. 302) which has just arrived.

I have cabled regarding escort—see my message of 25 July.¹

The Admiralty will cable regarding the route to be taken, which they will not disclose to me.

Transportation units in the Middle East will be Army troops and will work under the direct supervision of the Chief Engineer, Army Headquarters. I feel that that arrangement will be to the satisfaction of all concerned. As I shall be in the Middle East by then and can keep my eye upon them, I suggest the New Zealand Government should agree.

¹ This telegram was not received. See No. 306 for repetition of message.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

305 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

305

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand [Extract]

26 July 1940

Your telegram of 24 July (No. 303). The following are the answers to your questions so far as His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom are able to give them at the present time:

It is hoped, in accordance with the original programme, to sail convoy US 4 for the Middle East from Sydney on 23 August and that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be prepared to utilise the full capacity available in this convoy. It is suggested that His Majesty's Government in New Zealand should despatch by this convoy reinforcements for the First Echelon now in Egypt, as well as the following ancillary units which it is understood are now ready to leave: 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th and 19th New Zealand Army Troops Companies... It is suggested also that the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company should remain for the present in New Zealand, but we should be very grateful if a Headquarters Railway Operating Group (total all ranks, 26—see WE 4/1931/17/2) could be raised and despatched with the other Transportation units in US 4.... ¹

With reference to the question regarding the Forestry units: as they are required for this country separate arrangements for their transportation will be needed, and a further communication will be sent as soon as it has been possible to formulate definite suggestions on this point.

¹ For text omitted see *Third Echelon* (No. 220).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

306 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

306

The High Commissioner for New Zealand (London) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

29 July 1940

Reference your telegram of 28 July.² The following is a repetition of General Freyberg's telegram of 25 July regarding the Transportation units:

Following for Minister of Defence from Freyberg: The Transportation units are prepared to leave the United Kingdom for the Middle East by the end of the month.

I have been asked by the War Office to convey to your Government the following message: 'Please assure your Government that the units will be sailing in a convoy with a large number of British units and that the Admiralty has accepted the responsibility of providing a proper escort for this large convoy.'

I want to add that they will travel with their equipment, their mechanical transport, and full engineer stores.

² Not published. This telegram requested General Freyberg's comments on telegrams Nos. 220 and 221 (see

Third Echelon) and asked that his telegram of 25 Jul 1940, which had not been received, be repeated.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

307 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

307

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

3 August 1940

Your telegram of 23 July (No. 302) and my telegram of 30 July.³ According to arrangements which have been made with General Freyberg,^{PAGE 224} the New Zealand Transportation units in the United Kingdom will sail to the Middle East about 4 August in convoy W to Z. At his request the No. 1 New Zealand Convalescent Depot, New Zealand Medical Corps, will also sail in this convoy. The [*two words mutilated*] New Zealand Transportation units, both from New Zealand and from the United Kingdom, should operate as General Headquarters troops in the Middle East Command under the Director of Transport, Middle East.

We should be glad to learn as soon as possible what technical and personal equipment will be brought by the Transportation units and Army Troops companies of Engineers from New Zealand. If full-scale equipment cannot be provided we will try to make the balance available in the Middle East.

³ See *Third Echelon* (No. 223).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

308 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

308

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 August 1940

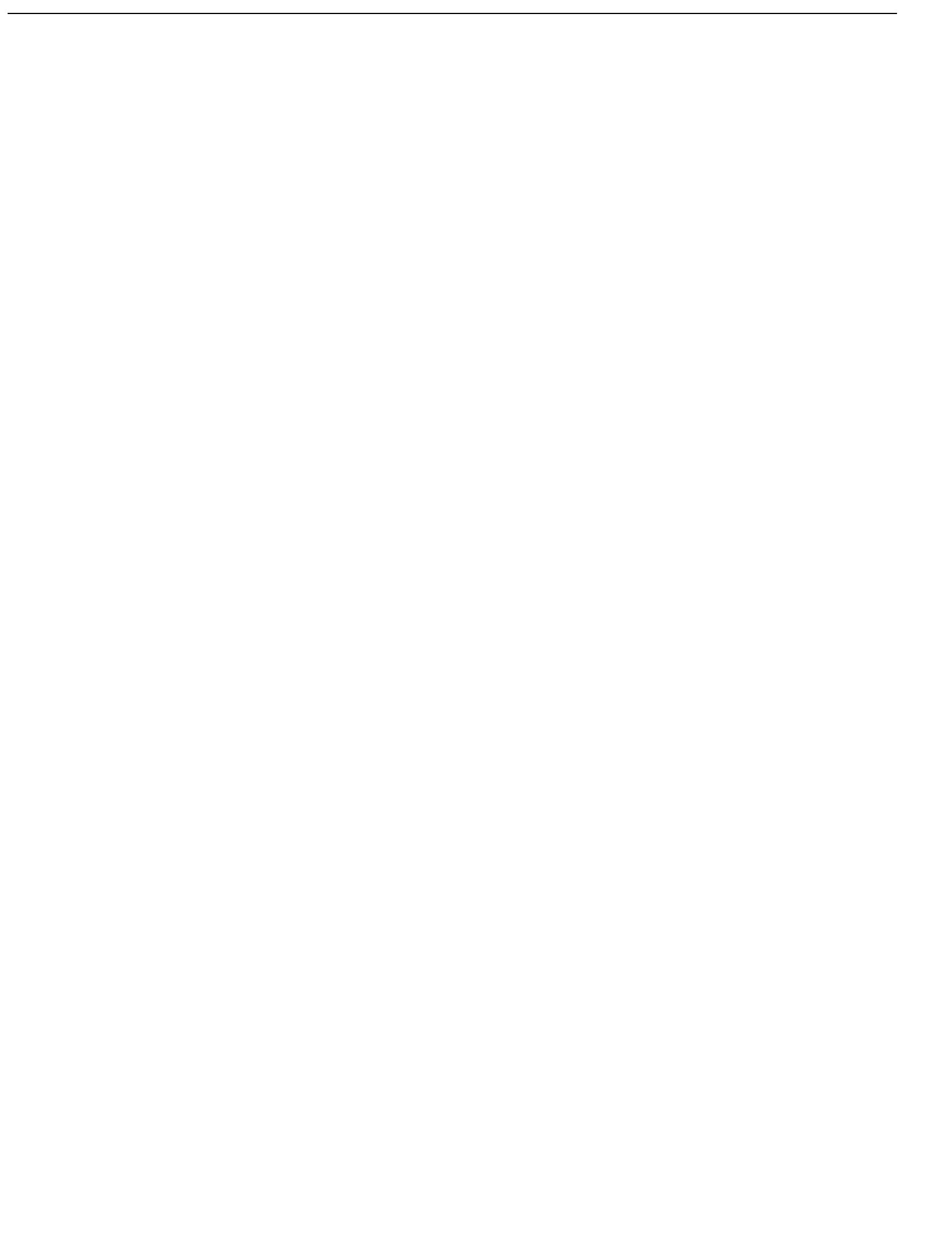
My telegram of 10 July (No. 300).

Escort for the Forestry companies can now be arranged by the Admiralty if the troops can be accommodated in the *Awatea*, or other suitable vessel, and sailed in convoy US 4 or US 5 (depending on the speed of the vessel) as far as **Fremantle**. The probable date of sailing and approved escort for US 5 are as stated in the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board's signals of 5 August, repeated to the New Zealand Naval Board.¹

An armed merchant cruiser which is being transferred from the **China** to the South Atlantic Station will provide the onward escort from **Fremantle**; from Sierra Leone onward the vessel would be included in one of the regular escorted convoy sailings to the **United Kingdom**. In order that the diversion of the armed merchant cruiser may be arranged the Admiralty would be glad to learn at the earliest possible date whether these suggestions are acceptable to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand.

Arrangements will be made for the military training of these troops to be completed in the **United Kingdom** if it has not been fully carried out in New Zealand.

¹ See *Third Echelon* (Nos. 225 and 226).



DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

309 – THE NEW ZEALAND NAVAL BOARD TO THE AUSTRALIAN COMMONWEALTH NAVAL BOARD

309

*The New Zealand Naval Board to the Australian Commonwealth
Naval Board*

11 August 1940

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have been asked by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom to send Forestry troops, twelve officers and 294 men, total 306, to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom Government have proposed that the troops proceed in the *Awatea* or other suitable ship with US 4 as far as Fremantle, thence to Sierra Leone under escort of an armed merchant cruiser which is being transferred from China to the South Atlantic Station.

The New Zealand Government do not wish to employ the *Awatea* for this purpose as she is required to take the place of the *Niagara*, and because she has three times the amount of accommodation needed and would thus be wasteful.

It is possible to accommodate these troops in the existing ships of US 4.

The New Zealand Naval Board would be glad if you could say whether the troops could be trans-shipped at Fremantle to any vessel which may be proceeding under the escort of the armed merchant cruiser or whether a suitable vessel could be provided.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

310 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS [EXTRACT]

310

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs [Extract]*

14 August 1940

Your telegram of 26 July (No. 305). In accordance with your suggestion, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand is despatching per convoy US 4 ... the 16th and 17th New Zealand Railway Operating Companies, 13th New Zealand Railway Construction Company, 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company, Headquarters Railway Operating Group.... ¹

It is requested that if possible the 18th New Zealand Army Troops Company should be attached to and at the disposal of the GOC, 2nd New Zealand Division, until the arrival of the 8th New Zealand Field Company, Engineers, which will be despatched with the next

¹ For text omitted see *Third Echelon* (No. 233).

that is, the fourth draft of reinforcements. In the meantime the 19th New Zealand Army Troops Company is required for essential preparatory work in Fiji, but it will be replaced or relieved later for despatch to the Middle East. ¹

¹ The 18th Army Troops Company (not the 19th) went to Fiji; the 19th Company left with the Third Echelon for Egypt.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

311 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, CHINA [STATION]2

311

*The Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief, China [Station]*²

18 August 1940

Repeated to the Australian Commonwealth Naval Board and the New Zealand Naval Board.

The *Arawa*³ is to provide the ocean escort as far as Freetown for a liner carrying the New Zealand Forestry Unit and a detachment of Australian troops to the United Kingdom. The liner first selected was the *Orcades*, due to sail in convoy US 4 from Fremantle on 1 September, it being the intention that the *Arawa* should escort her from Bombay. The position is no longer clear because of the present uncertainty as to the final date of sailing of US 4, and it is possible that the *Arawa* may be required to commence escort duty at Fremantle. She should therefore await further instructions at Singapore.

² Admiral Sir Geoffrey Layton, GBE, KCB, KCMG, DSO (then Vice-Admiral); C-in-C, China, 1940–42, Ceylon, 1942–45, Portsmouth, 1945–47.

³ RMS *Arawa*, Shaw Savill and Albion Company Ltd., 14,462 tons; converted to armed merchant cruiser.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

312 – THE NEW ZEALAND MILITARY LIAISON OFFICER (LONDON) TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

312

The New Zealand Military Liaison Officer (London) to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

9 November 1940

The 14th and 15th Forestry Companies arrived safely at Glasgow on 6 November.⁴ All well.

⁴ The 14th and 15th Forestry Companies left New Zealand with the **Third Echelon** in the *Empress of Japan* on 28 Aug 1940. At Bombay they left the contingent and re-embarked in the *Orcades* to continue the voyage to the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

SURVEY BATTERY, NEW ZEALAND ARTILLERY

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 August 1940

Information has been received by the Army Council that a Survey Battery is required in the Middle East. You will recall that in the War Office telegram of 3 October 1939 to the General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Military Forces,¹ inquiry was made as to whether the New Zealand Government would be prepared to provide a Survey Battery based on War Establishment 3/1931/13/4, and that it was stated in your telegram of 6 November² that the New Zealand Government had decided to defer the formation of a Survey Battery until information was available as to the future of the first contingent of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

In view of the plans which have now been made for the concentration of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Middle East, it is hoped that the New Zealand Government will be prepared to increase their Corps troops in the Middle East by raising a Survey Battery for despatch to that area after the necessary military training. The War Office consider that, before they are fit for action in a theatre of war, personnel should have three months' military training, followed by a month's survey and technical training.

The position as regards equipment is that survey equipment (especially theodolites) is very scarce, and it would probably be six months before such a unit could be completely equipped from United Kingdom sources. Therefore, we should be glad to know to what extent equipment can be provided from New Zealand if the New Zealand Government agree to provide the battery.

¹ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon and Arrival in*

² Not published.

314

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

14 August 1940

With reference to the last sentence of the second paragraph of your telegram of 26 July,³ and your telegram of 10 August (No. 313), His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would appreciate early advice regarding the future plans for the disposal of the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company.

The Survey Battery referred to in your telegram No. 313 will be provided, and if the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company is not required it is proposed to utilise personnel therefrom to form its nucleus.

The position in regard to equipment for the Survey Battery is now being investigated and advice in respect of this will later be sent to you.

³ See *Third Echelon (No. 220)*. The sentence referred to reads: It is suggested also that the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company should remain for the present in New Zealand, but we should be very grateful if a Headquarters Railway Operating Group (total all ranks, 26—see WE 4/1931/17/2) could be raised and despatched with the other Transportation units in US 4.

315

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

20 August 1940

Your telegram of 14 August (No. 314). There is no immediate

operational role seen for the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company and at present it is impossible to forecast when the unit could be so employed. The Army Council therefore agrees with the proposal that the personnel from the Railway Survey Company should be utilised to form the nucleus of the Survey Battery, but hopes that the New Zealand Government will be prepared, if and when one is required later, to raise another Railway Survey Company to replace the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company.¹

The readiness in meeting the request for the formation of a Survey Battery is highly appreciated.

¹ The 36th Survey Battery sailed with the third section, 4th Reinforcements, on 1 Feb 1941, and after a short period in India (Deolali Camp) arrived in Egypt on 23 Mar.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

313 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

313

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

10 August 1940

Information has been received by the Army Council that a Survey Battery is required in the Middle East. You will recall that in the War Office telegram of 3 October 1939 to the General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Military Forces,¹ inquiry was made as to whether the New Zealand Government would be prepared to provide a Survey Battery based on War Establishment 3/1931/13/4, and that it was stated in your telegram of 6 November² that the New Zealand Government had decided to defer the formation of a Survey Battery until information was available as to the future of the first contingent of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

In view of the plans which have now been made for the concentration of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Middle East, it is hoped that the New Zealand Government will be prepared to increase their Corps troops in the Middle East by raising a Survey Battery for despatch to that area after the necessary military training. The War Office consider that, before they are fit for action in a theatre of war, personnel should have three months' military training, followed by a month's survey and technical training.

The position as regards equipment is that survey equipment (especially theodolites) is very scarce, and it would probably be six months before such a unit could be completely equipped from United Kingdom sources. Therefore, we should be glad to know to what extent

equipment can be provided from New Zealand if the New Zealand Government agree to provide the battery.

¹ See *Formation and Despatch of First Echelon and Arrival in Egypt* (No. 44).

² Not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

314 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

314

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

14 August 1940

With reference to the last sentence of the second paragraph of your telegram of 26 July,³ and your telegram of 10 August (No. 313), His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would appreciate early advice regarding the future plans for the disposal of the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company.

The Survey Battery referred to in your telegram No. 313 will be provided, and if the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company is not required it is proposed to utilise personnel therefrom to form its nucleus.

The position in regard to equipment for the Survey Battery is now being investigated and advice in respect of this will later be sent to you.

³ See *Third Echelon* (No. 220). The sentence referred to reads: It is suggested also that the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company should remain for the present in New Zealand, but we should be very grateful if a Headquarters Railway Operating Group (total all ranks, 26—see WE 4/1931/17/2) could be raised and despatched with the other Transportation units in US 4.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

315 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

315

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

20 August 1940

Your telegram of 14 August (No. 314). There is no immediate operational role seen for the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company and at present it is impossible to forecast when the unit could be so employed. The Army Council therefore agrees with the proposal that the personnel from the Railway Survey Company should be utilised to form the nucleus of the Survey Battery, but hopes that the New Zealand Government will be prepared, if and when one is required later, to raise another Railway Survey Company to replace the 12th New Zealand Railway Survey Company.¹

The readiness in meeting the request for the formation of a Survey Battery is highly appreciated.

¹ The 36th Survey Battery sailed with the third section, 4th Reinforcements, on 1 Feb 1941, and after a short period in India (Deolali Camp) arrived in Egypt on 23 Mar.

**DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION
IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I**

21ST MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT COMPANY, NEW ZEALAND ENGINEERS

316

Letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

12 September 1940

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

In a letter of 17 May ² you were good enough to detail the excavating machinery in the possession of the Public Works Department which might be suitable for military purposes. The Minister of Public Works later gave me some further information as to the machinery which could be made available immediately, if necessary, and I understand that, in response to a request from the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, some machinery has already been shipped. The readiness of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to make this plant available has been warmly appreciated.

I have now received a telegram to say that both machinery and operators to work it could be usefully employed in the Middle East, and the United Kingdom military authorities have suggested that the most convenient course would be to form a New Zealand Mechanical [Equipment] Company, Royal Engineers.

Such a company consists of a Headquarters ... ¹ of seven officers and forty-one other ranks, plus a variable number of mechanical equipment sections of Royal Engineers ... ² each comprising one officer and forty-nine other ranks. District Headquarters contains administrative personnel and a small repair section of engineer artificers, fitters, and welders.

Each section operates from ten to fourteen machines, according to type, either tractors or excavators or mixed, and containing mostly drivers. Sections are employed on constructional works which require the use of heavy machinery in co-operation with normal engineer

personnel and unskilled labour.

The number of sections in this case would depend upon requirements in the Middle East and upon what New Zealand could provide-In Practice it has been found that Headquarters can control up to a total of nine sections if necessary.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have asked me to inquire whether the New Zealand Government would be prepared to raise and to provide equipment for such a unit. If the suggestion is acceptable, the War Office would submit detailed recommendations for the training, lasting some two months, which the personnel should undergo.

I have been asked, in putting the suggestion to you, to say that the provision of such a unit would constitute a very valuable form of fresh co-operation on the part of New Zealand in the Empire war effort, and the United Kingdom Government much hope that it may be practicable.

Yours, &c.,

H. F. BATTERBEE

² Not published.

¹ The War Establishment reference has been omitted.

² War Establishment omitted.

317

Letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister

30 October 1940

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

With reference to my letter of 12 September regarding mechanical equipment, Mr. Semple ¹ will no doubt have told you of the conversation which I had with him earlier this month. As a result of that conversation I sent a telegram to London explaining that a survey of all machinery available in New Zealand was being made with a view to considering what could be spared, but that in their consideration of the matter the New Zealand Government felt bound to take account of the Far Eastern situation.

I have now received a telegram from the Secretary of State saying that the United Kingdom Government appreciate the reasons for the New Zealand Government's hesitation to release machinery for a Mechanical Equipment Company. In the circumstances, steps are being taken in the United Kingdom to purchase machinery, but the problem of providing men is not an easy one. As you are aware, there is not in the United Kingdom the same experience in the use of earth-moving machinery as there is in New Zealand. The telegram states that a Mechanical Equipment Company is most urgently required in the Middle East and that it would be of the greatest assistance if New Zealand could provide the personnel only for such a company. Details of the composition of a Mechanical Equipment Company are explained in the third paragraph of my letter of 12 September. It is suggested that the financial arrangements would appropriately be the same as those agreed upon in the case of the Forestry and Transportation units.

Having regard to the serious situation now developing in the Middle East, the United Kingdom Government desire me to express the strong hope that this suggestion may receive most early and sympathetic consideration. Such a from a co-operation would be of the utmost possible value at the present time.

Yours, &c.,

H. F. BATTERBEE

¹ Hon. Robert Semple, Minister of Public Works, 1935–41;
Minister of Works, 1943–49.

318

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

11 November 1940

Arrangements are being made for the preparation and despatch of personnel for a Mechanical Equipment Company, consisting of headquarters and four sections totalling 263 all ranks, in accordance with the request conveyed to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand by the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand. These troops will go into camp during the present week and will be despatched early next month with the reinforcements due to leave for the Middle East.¹

¹ When the shipping position prevented the despatch of the full complement of the 4th Reinforcements, General Freyberg asked that the despatch of the 21st Mechanical Equipment Company be delayed and their places taken by infantry. As a result, the company left New Zealand with the third section of the 4th Reinforcements in the *Nieuw Amsterdam* on 1 Feb 1941. With the other reinforcements they had a period in India at Deolali Camp before leaving Bombay in the *Empress of Australia* on 11 Mar 1941; they arrived at Port Tewfik on 23 Mar.

319

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

18 November 1940

Your telegram of 11 November (No. 318).

The ready response of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to

the request of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for personnel for a Mechanical Equipment Company is greatly appreciated. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, has been advised.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

316 – LETTER FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM (WELLINGTON) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

316

Letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom (Wellington) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

12 September 1940

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

In a letter of 17 May ² you were good enough to detail the excavating machinery in the possession of the Public Works Department which might be suitable for military purposes. The Minister of Public Works later gave me some further information as to the machinery which could be made available immediately, if necessary, and I understand that, in response to a request from the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, some machinery has already been shipped. The readiness of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to make this plant available has been warmly appreciated.

I have now received a telegram to say that both machinery and operators to work it could be usefully employed in the Middle East, and the United Kingdom military authorities have suggested that the most convenient course would be to form a New Zealand Mechanical [Equipment] Company, Royal Engineers.

Such a company consists of a Headquarters ... ¹ of seven officers and forty-one other ranks, plus a variable number of mechanical equipment sections of Royal Engineers ... ² each comprising one officer and forty-nine other ranks. District Headquarters contains administrative personnel and a small repair section of engineer artificers, fitters, and welders.

Each section operates from ten to fourteen machines, according to type, either tractors or excavators or mixed, and containing mostly drivers. Sections are employed on constructional works which require the use of heavy machinery in co-operation with normal engineer personnel and unskilled labour.

The number of sections in this case would depend upon requirements in the Middle East and upon what New Zealand could provide-In Practice it has been found that Headquarters can control up to a total of nine sections if necessary.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom have asked me to inquire whether the New Zealand Government would be prepared to raise and to provide equipment for such a unit. If the suggestion is acceptable, the War Office would submit detailed recommendations for the training, lasting some two months, which the personnel should undergo.

I have been asked, in putting the suggestion to you, to say that the provision of such a unit would constitute a very valuable form of fresh co-operation on the part of New Zealand in the Empire war effort, and the United Kingdom Government much hope that it may be practicable.

Yours, &c.,

H. F. BATTERBEE

² Not published.

¹ The War Establishment reference has been omitted.

² War Establishment omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

317 – LETTER FROM THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER

317

Letter from the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister

30 October 1940

MY DEAR PRIME MINISTER,

With reference to my letter of 12 September regarding mechanical equipment, Mr. Semple ¹ will no doubt have told you of the conversation which I had with him earlier this month. As a result of that conversation I sent a telegram to London explaining that a survey of all machinery available in New Zealand was being made with a view to considering what could be spared, but that in their consideration of the matter the New Zealand Government felt bound to take account of the Far Eastern situation.

I have now received a telegram from the Secretary of State saying that the United Kingdom Government appreciate the reasons for the New Zealand Government's hesitation to release machinery for a Mechanical Equipment Company. In the circumstances, steps are being taken in the United Kingdom to purchase machinery, but the problem of providing men is not an easy one. As you are aware, there is not in the United Kingdom the same experience in the use of earth-moving machinery as there is in New Zealand. The telegram states that a Mechanical Equipment Company is most urgently required in the Middle East and that it would be of the greatest assistance if New Zealand could provide the personnel only for such a company. Details of the composition of a Mechanical Equipment Company are explained in the third paragraph of my letter of 12 September. It is suggested that the

financial arrangements would appropriately be the same as those agreed upon in the case of the Forestry and Transportation units.

Having regard to the serious situation now developing in the Middle East, the United Kingdom Government desire me to express the strong hope that this suggestion may receive most early and sympathetic consideration. Such a from a co-operation would be of the utmost possible value at the present time.

Yours, &c.,

H. F. BATTERBEE

¹ Hon. Robert Semple, Minister of Public Works, 1935–41; Minister of Works, 1943–49.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

318 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

318

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

11 November 1940

Arrangements are being made for the preparation and despatch of personnel for a Mechanical Equipment Company, consisting of headquarters and four sections totalling 263 all ranks, in accordance with the request conveyed to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand by the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom in New Zealand. These troops will go into camp during the present week and will be despatched early next month with the reinforcements due to leave for the Middle East.¹

¹ When the shipping position prevented the despatch of the full complement of the 4th Reinforcements, General Freyberg asked that the despatch of the 21st Mechanical Equipment Company be delayed and their places taken by infantry. As a result, the company left New Zealand with the third section of the 4th Reinforcements in the *Nieuw Amsterdam* on 1 Feb 1941. With the other reinforcements they had a period in India at Deolali Camp before leaving Bombay in the *Empress of Australia* on 11 Mar 1941; they arrived at Port Tewfik on 23 Mar.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

319 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND

319

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Governor-General of New Zealand

18 November 1940

Your telegram of 11 November (No. 318).

The ready response of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to the request of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom for personnel for a Mechanical Equipment Company is greatly appreciated. The Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, has been advised.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

LONG RANGE DESERT GROUP

Long Range Desert Group

320

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

1 July 1940

The following is for **General Freyberg** from **Brigadier Puttick**:

A detachment of two subalterns and eighty-five other ranks for special patrols of strategic importance in the **Western Desert** has been asked for by British Troops in Egypt. This detachment includes eighteen administrative and technical personnel. All vehicles and equipment other than personal arms are to be provided by British Troops in Egypt. The force operates under the command of a Major, MI (R), ¹ **Middle East**, with special topographical knowledge, and undergoes three weeks' training, ending 1 August. The greater part can be provided from the Divisional Cavalry, and the remainder from various units without impairing efficiency, using personnel for whom equipment is not available. The Divisional Cavalry welcome the opportunity of higher training and experience and relief from monotony. I recommend that you approve. I am proceeding with organisation and training and request authority.

¹ Military Intelligence (Reconnaissance). The Long Range Desert Group (original title, Long Range Patrol) was raised and first commanded in Egypt by Brigadier (then Major) R. A. Bagnold, OBE.

321

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEF

2 July 1940

The following is for **Brigadier Puttick** from **General Freyberg**: Your telegram of 1 July approved.

*Memorandum from General Freyberg to General Headquarters,
Middle East*

10 October 1940

DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

Confirming the verbal request made to your BGS by my GSO 1, ² I would be grateful if you would arrange for the New Zealand personnel lent to the Long Distance Patrol to be returned to their units at the earliest possible moment so that the units concerned may re-commence collective training.

If, in the interests of the service, it is not practicable to return these men at once, will you please give me a firm date on which you will be able to release them.

B. C. FREYBERG,

Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Division

² Lieutenant-Colonel K. L. Stewart. See Page 45, note 2, for biographical details.

Letter from General Headquarters, Middle East, to General Freyberg

11 October 1940

The Commander-in-Chief has heard with some concern that you are anxious to withdraw the New Zealand personnel from the Long Range Patrol. He very much hopes that you will see your way not to press this request in view of the excellent work this patrol is doing and the long time it takes to train a patrol. The patrol is definitely carrying out a very

important role in our war effort in that it watches the Western Desert towards the Kufra Oasis.

If you still feel that the New Zealand personnel should be returned to their units, the Commander-in-Chief will be glad of an opportunity of discussing the matter with you.

¹Christian names and, in some cases, nicknames were used throughout this correspondence; for this reason, addresses and signatures have been omitted.

Yours, &c., ¹

324

*Letter from General Freyberg to Major-General Arthur Smith,²
General Headquarters, Middle East*

13 October 1940

The history of this patrol is a bad one. In the first place they immobilised our Divisional Cavalry Regiment by taking all or nearly all of its best officers, NCOs, and men from it against the CO's wishes. This was under the distinct understanding that they were to be returned to him at the end of one journey. They then came back and I was informed that they had been lent for a year, which is quite incorrect.

As a matter of fact, I have written to Middle East saying I will not raise any more difficulties. My sympathies are, however, entirely with Pierce,³ my Divisional Cavalry commander, who has had his training gravely interfered with.

Perhaps you do not realise that my force has been dispersed and used in a way that makes it impossible to train as a Division. When I approached ... [General Wilson] and tried to get them, he said not until after December, which of course I cannot agree to, and I have reported the whole matter of detachments to my Government who hold very strong views on the NZEF being kept intact.¹ We started by doing

everything that we were asked to do at great personal inconvenience. We lent our Divisional Signals complete with instruments, all our mechanical transport, &c. We were told at first for three weeks; now, after nearly five months, when we want to train, we are looked upon as unreasonable.

The position that distresses me most is that I am rapidly forced into a position where even my old friends subject me to a form of suspicion and reproach. Anyway I will not place any more obstacles in the way of the patrol. Stewart will see Pierce and arrange to minimise the damage done by substitution, and when they come back you must either take men from depot units or give the Long Range Patrol to somebody else.

PS.—This is a very funny war. I feel that what is really wanted is a little more fighting and less patrols.

Yours, &c.,

² Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Headquarters, Middle East. See page 205, note 1, for biographical details.

³ Lieutenant-Colonel C. J. Pierice, MC, ED, commanded 2nd New Zealand Divisional Cavalry, Oct 1939-Mar 1941; invalided back to New Zealand through ill-health, Mar 1941; died Aug 1941.

¹ See *Concentration of the 2nd New Zealand Division (No. 245)*.

325

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

17 October 1940

Thank you for your letter of 13 October. Since this was written I understand you have discussed the whole matter with ... [General] Wilson. The Commander-in-Chief is very grateful to you for allowing the New Zealand Long Range Patrol to carry on. I am quite sure myself that

their value cannot be overestimated.

Yours, &c.,

326

Letter from General Freyberg to General Smith

18 October 1940

The patrol will be done once more and Stewart, my G1, is seeing Bagnold about changing over key men.

After that Shearer² and Bagnold will have to arrange for themselves. Later, when our Base is started, we may be able to help, but only on a trip-to-trip basis as my Government will not sanction any longer detachments.

No answer of course.

Yours, &c.,

² Brigadier E. J. Shearer, CB, CBE, MC, Director of Military Intelligence, Middle East Force, 1940–42.

327

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

26 January 1941

I understood you to say yesterday during your conversation with General Wavell that you were now prepared to leave your men with the Long Range Desert Group indefinitely. I would be grateful if you would confirm this and, if correct, whether you would maintain that number or whether you would allow them to waste away.

At the moment they form two complete patrols, and Bagnold is very keen to keep them as such, not only because there is plenty of work for them in the near future but because your men are particularly suited to the job. They have been doing splendid work recently.

328

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MEN OF 2ND NZEF ARE LENT FOR SERVICE WITH THE MIDDLE EAST LONG RANGE DESERT PATROL [Extract]

4 February 1941

1. The NZEF will provide two patrols at full strength, *i.e.*, a total of four officers and fifty-four other ranks, plus nine spares. Personnel will be supplied by 2 NZEF Base by arrangement between Colonel Bagnold and Brigadier Falla, Officer Commanding NZEF Base... ¹

3. Colonel Pierce will furnish Headquarters New Zealand Division with a list showing the order in which he wishes his twenty-seven men returned to him, nine of whom are to return at once. The balance will be returned by arrangement between Colonel Bagnold and the G2, NZEF, keeping to the priority list as far as the interests of the Long Range Patrol will allow.

4. Vacancies caused by the return of men to their units and wastage will be filled by volunteers at the Base....

6. The period of service of volunteers in the patrol will be limited to six months, after which, in the interests of the NZEF, they will be replaced by others.

7. The NZEF will maintain two patrols until Tripoli has been captured.

¹ The parts of the text omitted refer to administrative arrangements, including the retention and promotion of certain officers and the selection from volunteers of men to replace those returning to their units.

329

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

6 February 1941

Many thanks for your letter of 4 February.¹

The conditions which you have arranged will suit us splendidly and I am very grateful to you for the trouble you have taken to reconcile the difficulties.²

Yours, &c.,

¹ Not traced. This was clearly the covering letter which accompanied the conditions of service for the New Zealand personnel of the Long Range Desert Group.

² The following appreciation of the services of the Long Range Desert Group appeared in General Wavell's official Despatch covering the 7 Feb–15 Jul 1941:

I should like to take this opportunity to bring to notice a small body of men who have for a year past done inconspicuous but invaluable service, the Long Range Desert Group. It was formed under Major (now Colonel) R. A. Bagnold in July 1940, to reconnoitre the great Libyan Desert on the western borders of Egypt and the Sudan. Operating in small independent columns, the group has penetrated into nearly every part of desert Libya, an area comparable in size with that of India. Not only have patrols brought back much information, but they have attacked enemy forts, captured personnel, transport and grounded aircraft as far as 800 miles inside hostile territory. They have protected Egypt and the Sudan from any possibility of raids and have caused the enemy, in a lively apprehension of their activities, to tie up considerable forces in the defence of distant outposts. Their journeys across vast regions of unexplored desert have entailed the crossing of physical obstacles and the endurance of extreme summer temperatures, both of which would a year ago have been deemed impossible. Their exploits have been achieved only by careful organisation, and a very high standard of enterprise, discipline, mechanical maintenance and desert navigation. The personnel of these patrols was originally drawn almost entirely from the New Zealand forces; later officers and

men of British units and from Southern Rhodesia joined the Group. A special word of praise must be added for the RAOC fitters whose work contributed so much to the mechanical endurance of the vehicles in such unprecedeted conditions.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

320 – HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO) TO THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND (LONDON)

320

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the High Commissioner for New Zealand (London)

1 July 1940

The following is for General Freyberg from Brigadier Puttick:

A detachment of two subalterns and eighty-five other ranks for special patrols of strategic importance in the Western Desert has been asked for by British Troops in Egypt. This detachment includes eighteen administrative and technical personnel. All vehicles and equipment other than personal arms are to be provided by British Troops in Egypt. The force operates under the command of a Major, MI (R),¹ Middle East, with special topographical knowledge, and undergoes three weeks' training, ending 1 August. The greater part can be provided from the Divisional Cavalry, and the remainder from various units without impairing efficiency, using personnel for whom equipment is not available. The Divisional Cavalry welcome the opportunity of higher training and experience and relief from monotony. I recommend that you approve. I am proceeding with organisation and training and request authority.

¹ Military Intelligence (Reconnaissance). The Long Range Desert Group (original title, Long Range Patrol) was raised and first commanded in Egypt by Brigadier (then Major) R. A. Bagnold, OBE.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

321 – THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR NEW ZEALAND TO HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF

321

The High Commissioner for New Zealand to Headquarters 2nd NZEF

2 July 1940

The following is for Brigadier Puttick from General Freyberg: Your telegram of 1 July approved.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

322 – MEMORANDUM FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST – DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

322

*Memorandum from General Freyberg to General Headquarters,
Middle East*

10 October 1940

DETACHMENTS FROM NEW ZEALAND DIVISION

Confirming the verbal request made to your BGS by my GSO 1,² I would be grateful if you would arrange for the New Zealand personnel lent to the Long Distance Patrol to be returned to their units at the earliest possible moment so that the units concerned may re-commence collective training.

If, in the interests of the service, it is not practicable to return these men at once, will you please give me a firm date on which you will be able to release them.

B. C. FREYBERG,

Major-General,
Commanding New Zealand Division

² Lieutenant-Colonel K. L. Stewart. See Page 45, note 2, for biographical details.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

323 – LETTER FROM GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO GENERAL FREYBERG

323

Letter from General Headquarters, Middle East, to General Freyberg

11 October 1940

The Commander-in-Chief has heard with some concern that you are anxious to withdraw the New Zealand personnel from the Long Range Patrol. He very much hopes that you will see your way not to press this request in view of the excellent work this patrol is doing and the long time it takes to train a patrol. The patrol is definitely carrying out a very important role in our war effort in that it watches the Western Desert towards the Kufra Oasis.

If you still feel that the New Zealand personnel should be returned to their units, the Commander-in-Chief will be glad of an opportunity of discussing the matter with you.

¹Christian names and, in some cases, nicknames were used throughout this correspondence; for this reason, addresses and signatures have been omitted.

Yours, &c., ¹

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

324 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO MAJOR-GENERAL ARTHUR SMITH, 2 GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST

324

*Letter from General Freyberg to Major-General Arthur Smith, 2
General Headquarters, Middle East*

13 October 1940

The history of this patrol is a bad one. In the first place they immobilised our **Divisional Cavalry Regiment** by taking all or nearly all of its best officers, NCOs, and men from it against the CO's wishes. This was under the distinct understanding that they were to be returned to him at the end of one journey. They then came back and I was informed that they had been lent for a year, which is quite incorrect.

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Perhaps you do not realise that my force has been dispersed and used in a way that makes it impossible to train as a Division. When I approached ... [General Wilson] and tried to get them, he said not until after December, which of course I cannot agree to, and I have reported the whole matter of detachments to my Government who hold very strong views on the NZEF being kept intact.¹ We started by doing everything that we were asked to do at great personal inconvenience. We lent our Divisional Signals complete with instruments, all our mechanical transport, &c. We were told at first for three weeks; now, after nearly five months, when we want to train, we are looked upon as unreasonable.

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PS.—This is a very funny war. I feel that what is really wanted is a little more fighting and less patrols.

Yours, &c.,

² Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Headquarters, Middle East. See page 205, note 1, for biographical details.

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¹ See *Concentration of the 2nd New Zealand Division (No. 245)*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

325 – LETTER FROM GENERAL SMITH TO GENERAL FREYBERG

325

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

17 October 1940

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Yours, &c.,

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

326 – LETTER FROM GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL SMITH

326

Letter from General Freyberg to General Smith

18 October 1940

The patrol will be done once more and Stewart, my G1, is seeing Bagnold about changing over key men.

After that Shearer ² and Bagnold will have to arrange for themselves. Later, when our Base is started, we may be able to help, but only on a trip-to-trip basis as my Government will not sanction any longer detachments.

No answer of course.

Yours, &c.,

² Brigadier E. J. Shearer, CB, CBE, MC, Director of Military Intelligence, Middle East Force, 1940–42.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

327 – LETTER FROM GENERAL SMITH TO GENERAL FREYBERG

327

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

26 January 1941

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Yours, &c.,

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

328 – CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MEN OF 2ND NZEF ARE LENT FOR SERVICE WITH THE MIDDLE EAST LONG RANGE DESERT PATROL [EXTRACT]

328

CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH MEN OF 2ND NZEF ARE LENT FOR SERVICE WITH THE MIDDLE EAST LONG RANGE DESERT PATROL [Extract]

4 February 1941

1. The NZEF will provide two patrols at full strength, i.e., a total of four officers and fifty-four other ranks, plus nine spares. Personnel will be supplied by 2 NZEF Base by arrangement between Colonel Bagnold and Brigadier Falla, Officer Commanding NZEF Base... ¹

3. Colonel Pierce will furnish Headquarters New Zealand Division with a list showing the order in which he wishes his twenty-seven men returned to him, nine of whom are to return at once. The balance will be returned by arrangement between Colonel Bagnold and the G2, NZEF, keeping to the priority list as far as the interests of the Long Range Patrol will allow.

4. Vacancies caused by the return of men to their units and wastage will be filled by volunteers at the Base....

6. The period of service of volunteers in the patrol will be limited to six months, after which, in the interests of the NZEF, they will be replaced by others.

7. The NZEF will maintain two patrols until Tripoli has been captured.

¹ The parts of the text omitted refer to administrative

arrangements, including the retention and promotion of certain officers and the selection from volunteers of men to replace those returning to their units.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

329 – LETTER FROM GENERAL SMITH TO GENERAL FREYBERG

329

Letter from General Smith to General Freyberg

6 February 1941

Many thanks for your letter of 4 February.¹

The conditions which you have arranged will suit us splendidly and I am very grateful to you for the trouble you have taken to reconcile the difficulties.²

Yours, &c.,

¹ Not traced. This was clearly the covering letter which accompanied the conditions of service for the New Zealand personnel of the Long Range Desert Group.

² The following appreciation of the services of the Long Range Desert Group appeared in General Wavell's official Despatch covering the 7 Feb–15 Jul 1941:

I should like to take this opportunity to bring to notice a small body of men who have for a year past done inconspicuous but invaluable service, the Long Range Desert Group. It was formed under Major (now Colonel) R. A. Bagnold in July 1940, to reconnoitre the great Libyan Desert on the western borders of Egypt and the Sudan. Operating in small independent columns, the group has penetrated into nearly every part of desert Libya, an area comparable in size with that of India. Not only have patrols brought back much information, but they have attacked enemy forts, captured personnel, transport and grounded aircraft as far as 800 miles inside hostile territory. They have protected Egypt and the Sudan from any possibility of raids and have caused the enemy, in a lively apprehension of their activities, to tie up considerable forces in the defence of distant outposts.

Their journeys across vast regions of unexplored desert have entailed the crossing of physical obstacles and the endurance of extreme summer temperatures, both of which would a year ago have been deemed impossible. Their exploits have been achieved only by careful organisation, and a very high standard of enterprise, discipline, mechanical maintenance and desert navigation. The personnel of these patrols was originally drawn almost entirely from the New Zealand forces; later officers and men of British units and from Southern Rhodesia joined the Group. A special word of praise must be added for the RAOC fitters whose work contributed so much to the mechanical endurance of the vehicles in such unprecedented conditions.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

MUNITION WORKERS

Munition Workers

330

The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs

6 June 1940

In view of the acute strain now being placed on the British armament industry, because of the enormous losses of war material resulting from the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire to know whether the services of experienced and skilled mechanical engineers and operatives from this Dominion could be availed of by the authorities in the United Kingdom. Should this suggestion prove acceptable, my Ministers would be glad to receive early advice as to the conditions and the arrangements they should make to give effect to this proposal, after which a call could be made for volunteers.

331

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

13 June 1940

....¹ We have also under close examination the New Zealand Government's telegram of 6 June (No. 330) in regard to the possible despatch to this country of engineers and operatives for munition work. A reply will be sent as soon as possible. We are very grateful for this helpful suggestion.

¹ See *Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies* (No. 293) for rest of text.

332

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

14 November 1940

The following telegram has been received from Jordan:

The United Kingdom Government have written me with reference to the possible release from the Dominion forces in the United Kingdom of skilled men for service in industry, particularly munition making. Such an arrangement is already in operation for the release of skilled men from the United Kingdom Forces. I understand that the transfer would be voluntary. Please advise if you agree.

Would you let me have your comments please.

333

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister [Extract]

15 November 1940

While I sympathise with the Minister of Supply, I am strongly against the proposal contained in your message of 14 November (No. 332) as we shall want all our trained personnel in the Middle East next spring. Already New Zealand is supplying skilled non-divisional units to the total of 2600 all ranks divided between Army Troops companies, Forestry companies, Transportation units, and now a new Mechanical Equipment Company. After the infantry of the Division these form the second strongest body of troops in the New Zealand Forces.

As has been indicated in recent telegrams, there is to be a marked increase in units and size of the Division. ¹ The years 1941 and 1942 may see very heavy fighting. If you will forgive me for giving my opinion unasked, I feel that caution should be exercised before agreeing to the formation of any similar units or any weakening of our present strength. We are counting numbers very carefully in view of the possible role of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the spring. I would like to have your decision on the above question.... ²

¹ See Volume II, *Formation of New Zealand Armoured Brigade.*

² A reference to the arrival of Brigadier N. S. Falla from the United Kingdom has been omitted.

334

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

18 November 1940

We are largely agreed with the views in your telegram of 15 November (No. 333) concerning the transfer of New Zealand forces to industry, but in view of the importance of munitions we are reluctant to refuse the request entirely and accordingly would consider limited assistance in the special circumstances of the United Kingdom.³ Therefore the following message has been sent to the High Commissioner, London:

Your telegram of 12 November, regarding the withdrawal of troops for industry.⁴ We do not wish the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to be seriously depleted, but are prepared to consider the voluntary transfer of a limited number of highly-skilled personnel from the Forces. Would you please indicate the number contemplated and all details of the proposals, including conditions of transfer and employment, and consult Hargest.

Your views regarding the formation of additional units are fully appreciated. We have no present intention of agreeing to additional units, and in any case will consult you before committing ourselves further.

³ No munition workers were, in fact, provided from the New Zealand Military Forces.

⁴ See telegram in No. 332.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

330 – THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

330

*The Governor-General of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

6 June 1940

In view of the acute strain now being placed on the British armament industry, because of the enormous losses of war material resulting from the evacuation of the British Expeditionary Force, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand desire to know whether the services of experienced and skilled mechanical engineers and operatives from this Dominion could be availed of by the authorities in the United Kingdom. Should this suggestion prove acceptable, my Ministers would be glad to receive early advice as to the conditions and the arrangements they should make to give effect to this proposal, after which a call could be made for volunteers.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

331 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND [EXTRACT]

331

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand [Extract]

13 June 1940

.... ¹ We have also under close examination the New Zealand Government's telegram of 6 June (No. 330) in regard to the possible despatch to this country of engineers and operatives for munition work. A reply will be sent as soon as possible. We are very grateful for this helpful suggestion.

¹ See *Railway, Forestry, and Army Troops Companies* (No. 293) for rest of text.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

332 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

332

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

14 November 1940

The following telegram has been received from Jordan:

The United Kingdom Government have written me with reference to the possible release from the Dominion forces in the United Kingdom of skilled men for service in industry, particularly munition making. Such an arrangement is already in operation for the release of skilled men from the United Kingdom Forces. I understand that the transfer would be voluntary. Please advise if you agree.

Would you let me have your comments please.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

333 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER [EXTRACT]

333

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister [Extract]

15 November 1940

While I sympathise with the Minister of Supply, I am strongly against the proposal contained in your message of 14 November (No. 332) as we shall want all our trained personnel in the Middle East next spring. Already New Zealand is supplying skilled non-divisional units to the total of 2600 all ranks divided between Army Troops companies, Forestry companies, Transportation units, and now a new Mechanical Equipment Company. After the infantry of the Division these form the second strongest body of troops in the New Zealand Forces.

As has been indicated in recent telegrams, there is to be a marked increase in units and size of the Division.¹ The years 1941 and 1942 may see very heavy fighting. If you will forgive me for giving my opinion unasked, I feel that caution should be exercised before agreeing to the formation of any similar units or any weakening of our present strength. We are counting numbers very carefully in view of the possible role of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the spring. I would like to have your decision on the above question....²

¹ See Volume II, *Formation of New Zealand Armoured Brigade*.

² A reference to the arrival of Brigadier N. S. Falla from the United Kingdom has been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

334 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

334

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

18 November 1940

We are largely agreed with the views in your telegram of 15 November (No. 333) concerning the transfer of New Zealand forces to industry, but in view of the importance of munitions we are reluctant to refuse the request entirely and accordingly would consider limited assistance in the special circumstances of the United Kingdom.³ Therefore the following message has been sent to the High Commissioner, London:

Your telegram of 12 November, regarding the withdrawal of troops for industry.⁴ We do not wish the New Zealand Expeditionary Force to be seriously depleted, but are prepared to consider the voluntary transfer of a limited number of highly-skilled personnel from the Forces. Would you please indicate the number contemplated and all details of the proposals, including conditions of transfer and employment, and consult Hargest.

Your views regarding the formation of additional units are fully appreciated. We have no present intention of agreeing to additional units, and in any case will consult you before committing ourselves further.

³ No munition workers were, in fact, provided from the New Zealand Military Forces.

⁴ See telegram in No. 332.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

GREECE 1

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DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

335 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS² TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

335

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs² to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

25 February 1941

At a meeting on 24 February Cabinet considered the whole Middle Eastern position. The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs³ and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff held exhaustive discussions at Cairo with Wavell, Cunningham, and Longmore,⁴ and the following is a summary of the conclusions which they reached:

We should do everything in our power to bring the fullest measure of help to the Greeks at the earliest possible moment. If the help that we are in a general position to offer were accepted, they believed that there was a fair chance of halting a German advance and preventing Greece from being overrun.

The maximum land force which could be sent to Greece would comprise three divisions and the Polish Brigade,⁵ and most of one armoured brigade, with certain specialised troops.

As regards the air, the existing seven British squadrons in Greece could be increased to a maximum of fourteen squadrons by the addition of three bomber, one Army co-operation, one long-range bomber, and probably two fighter squadrons.

The command of the British forces to be entrusted to General Maitland Wilson.

Should they agree in the first instance, the Greeks to be urged to

accept the above forces as soon as they can be despatched, in view of the time factor.

From Cairo, Eden and Dill, with Wavell, went to Athens, where, after discussion with the Greek representatives, they reported that the Greek representatives had accepted the offer and were in full agreement on the following points:

The movement of British troops should begin forthwith, the utmost secrecy being preserved

General Wilson should be under the immediate authority of the Greek Commander-in-Chief,¹ with the right to refer in case of necessity to the Commander-in-Chief.

Greece immediately should begin preparations to withdraw her advanced troops from the Bulgarian frontier to the line in Macedonia, which, in the event of a Yugoslav refusal to join us against Germany, would have to be held initially, and to improve communications to facilitate the occupation of that line.

A further effort to persuade the Yugoslav Government to join us should be made by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

An effort should be made to persuade the Turkish Government to reaffirm its assurance that it would come into the war if Greece were invaded or, better still, if Bulgaria was entered openly by German formations.

The Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs also reported that he and Dill and Wavell were impressed by the frank and fair dealing of the Greek authorities on all the subjects discussed, and by their clear determination to resist to the utmost of their strength.

After considering the above recommendations, and taking into account the fact that our advisers at present in the Middle East (including as they do the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and Wavell)

represent the most prudent and experienced military opinion at our disposal, Cabinet came to the conclusion that the recommendations should be accepted and immediately acted upon.

We have taken full cognizance of the risks involved in the despatch to **Greece** and the maintenance there of so large a proportion of the troops available in the **Middle East**. However, we are satisfied that the above force should be able to reach the positions in **Greece** in time to meet the German advance, and that the plan offers a reasonable prospect of achieving its objects. It was felt that we must take this only remaining chance of forming a **Balkan** front and persuading **Turkey**, and possibly **Yugoslavia**, to enter the war on our side. Looking at the situation from the strategic point of view, the formation of a **Balkan** front would have the advantages of making **Germany** fight at the end of long lines of communication and expending her resources uneconomically, of interfering with **Germany's** trade with the **Balkans**, and particularly the oil traffic from Roumania, and of enabling us to establish a platform for the bombing of **Italy** and the Roumanian oil fields. Further, it would keep the war going in **Albania** and prevent **Italy** from devoting her energies to re-establishing her position in North Africa. Moreover, should we fail to support **Greece**, **Germany** would obtain naval and air bases from which to threaten our position in the Eastern Mediterranean, including **Crete** and the **Suez Canal**, and interfere with our communications to **Turkey**; she would also become free to concentrate on **Turkey** and to run oil traffic from the Black Sea to the Adriatic. Finally, from the political point of view, our failure to help this small nation putting up a gallant fight against one aggressor, and willing to defy another, would have a grave effect on public opinion throughout the world, particularly in the **United States of America**.

² Viscount Cranborne.

³ Rt. Hon. Anthony Eden had become Foreign Secretary in Dec 1940.

⁴ Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Murray Longmore, GCB, DSO; AOC-in-C, Royal Air Force, Middle East, 1940–41; Inspector-General of the Royal Air Force, 1941; retired 1942.

⁵ This was the 1st Polish Carpathian Brigade, under the command of Major-General S. Kopanski. The brigade did not, in the event, go to Greece, but was later to play a distinguished role as part of the garrison of Tobruk.

¹ General Alexander Papagos, GBE, Commander-in-Chief, Greek Forces, 1940–41, and of the Greek and Allied Forces, 1941; resigned 21 Apr 1941.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

336 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

336

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

25 February 1941

My telegram of today (No. 335). The immediate despatch of the 2nd New Zealand Division as soon as it is ready to sail forms an essential part of the plan for the reinforcement of Greece. His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom earnestly hope for the concurrence of His Majesty's Government in New Zealand in this course. It will, of course, be understood that the Division would be fully equipped before leaving, and that it would be accompanied by an armoured brigade.

The whole plan has been discussed with Mr. Menzies, who was present at a meeting of Cabinet on 24 February. He is immediately inviting the Government of the Commonwealth of Australia to endorse his own concurrence in the despatch to Greece from North Africa of two of the Australian divisions.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

337 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

337

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

26 February 1941

Having given urgent consideration to the request contained in your telegram dated 25 February (No. 336), His Majesty's Government in New Zealand concur with the course proposed on the understanding that the Division will be fully equipped before leaving and that it will be accompanied by an armoured brigade. That the 2nd NZEF should now be ready to play the full operational role for which it was formed is a matter of great satisfaction to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, as is the fact that once again Australian and New Zealand forces should be chosen to stand together in a common theatre of war.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

338 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG (CAIRO)

338

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg (Cairo)

26 February 1941

The information contained in your telegram of 23 February ¹ to the Minister of Defence is greatly appreciated. The Government have now given their concurrence to the request from the United Kingdom.

We know that you and the splendid army of men under your command will face all the dangers of the task ahead with accustomed courage and the determination, whatever the odds, to win through. We are proud indeed that our full confidence in the splendid quality of New Zealand soldiers is shared by those who are allotting this vitally important role.

¹ See *Concentration of the 2nd New Zealand Division (No. 274)*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

339 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

339

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

26 February 1941

With reference to my earlier telegram (No. 337)

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand have examined the proposals contained in your telegram of 25 February (No. 335). This message had not been received when the reply to your telegram No. 336 was despatched.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand fully appreciate the necessity for making the most effective use of the comparatively limited military resources available in the Middle East. They fully realise also the urgent need at this juncture of affording every possible assistance to Greece, and for their own part are most anxious and willing to make the New Zealand Division available in the manner proposed.

They cannot help feeling, nevertheless, that the task confronting an expedition of the size proposed is a most formidable and hazardous one, and they would like to have the assurance of His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom that this aspect has been given full consideration and that the force is in fact adequate to meet the probable scale of attack. His Majesty's Government in New Zealand would also be grateful to learn what arrangements are proposed after the operations have commenced for providing support for the Australian and New Zealand force. ¹

¹ In a message dated 28 Feb the acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia (Mr. A. W. Fadden) informed the Australian Prime Minister (Mr. Menzies), who was then in London, that the Commonwealth's War Cabinet had decided to concur in the proposed use of two Australian divisions in Greece. It made the condition, however, that its 'consent to their participation must be regarded as conditional on plans having been completed beforehand to ensure that evacuation, if necessitated, will be successfully undertaken and that shipping and other essential services will be available for this purpose if required.' This telegram was repeated to the New Zealand Government.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

340 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

340

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

26 February 1941

We are most grateful for the very welcome reply contained in your telegram (No. 337) and appreciate highly the promptitude with which the **New Zealand Government** have given their decision. We are greatly heartened to think that a [*word mutilated*] New Zealand Expeditionary Force is available to step into the breach.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

341 – SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY BY GENERAL FREYBERG TO 2ND NEW ZEALAND DIVISION – SPECIAL ORDER UPON SAILING FOR GREECE

341

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY BY

In the Desert,

Helwan Camp
1 March 1941

DEAR SIR

SPECIAL ORDER UPON SAILING FOR GREECE

Before leaving Egypt for the battlefield I had planned to say a last word to you.¹ I find that events have moved quickly and I am prevented from doing so. I therefore send this message to you in a sealed envelope to be opened on the transport after you have started on your journey.

In the course of the next few days you may be fighting in defence of Greece, the birthplace of culture and learning. We shall be meeting our real enemy, the Germans, who have set out with the avowed object of smashing the British Empire. It is clear therefore that wherever we fight them we shall be fighting not only for Greece, but also in defence of our own homes.

A word to you about your enemy. The German soldier is a brave fighter so do not underestimate the difficulties that face us. On the other hand, remember that this time he is fighting with difficult communications, in country where he cannot use his strong armoured forces to their full advantage. Further, you should remember that your fathers of the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force defeated the Germans during the last war whenever they met them. I am certain that

in this campaign in Greece the Germans will be meeting men who are fitter, stronger, and better trained than they are. I have never seen troops that impressed me more. You can shoot and you can march long distances without fatigue. By your resolute shooting and sniping and by fierce patrolling by night you can tame any enemy you may encounter.

A further word to you, many of whom, I realise, will be facing the ordeal of battle for the first time. Do not be caught unprepared. In war, conditions will always be difficult, especially in the encounter battle; time will always be against you, there will always be noise and confusion, orders may arrive late, nerves will be strained, you will be attacked from the air. All these factors and others must be expected on the field of battle. But you have been trained physically to endure long marches and fatigue and you must steel yourselves to overcome the ordeal of the modern battlefield.

One last word. You will be fighting in a foreign land and the eyes of many nations will be upon you. The honour of the New Zealand Division is in your keeping. It could not be in better hands.

¹ General Freyberg and party left Alexandria in HMS *York* on 6 Mar, arriving in Athens next day.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

342 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

342

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 March 1941

My telegram of 25 February (No. 335).

The name given to the operation is SALADIN.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

343 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

343

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

2 March 1941

Your telegram of 26 February (No. 339). The question of the size of the force has been most carefully considered in all its aspects by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom. They agree that judging by continental standards it cannot but appear relatively small, and they would not wish to suggest that the plan is without hazard. However, having taken into account the forces at present available from the Middle East, the size of the Greek Army and the plans for its employment, and the likely scale of German attack having regard to the difficulties of terrain, our advisers at present in the Middle East have recommended the enterprise. Every care has been taken to ensure that in formulating their recommendations they should not feel subject to pressure in any way to report in favour of the enterprise rather than against it. In fact, they were specifically requested to report accordingly if they considered 'no good plan could be made.'

With regard to the arrangements for support, it will in any case be some weeks before the whole force can arrive. Thereafter we have in mind the despatch of a United Kingdom division, which is already in the Middle East, this possibly to be followed by another if shipping is available; in addition, as soon as the situation in Italian East Africa has been cleared up further forces will become available to support the enterprise.

It will be recognised also by His Majesty's Government in New

Zealand that the enterprise carries with it not only the retention in active operation of eighteen Greek divisions now in the field against the Italians, but also the possibility that we shall receive the armed support of twenty-five Turkish divisions in **Thrace** and the area of the Straits. A combination of the latter with our own would constitute a substantial force compared with any which the Germans could put into the field against us for several months. The possibility of Yugoslav assistance to us must also not be ruled out.

His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom unhesitatingly repeat their assurance to His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that their troops will not be despatched unless and until they are equipped to establishment in all essentials. Specific instructions on this point will be issued to the Commander-in-Chief, **Middle East**.

The spirit animating the **New Zealand Government's** communications on this subject is again highly appreciated by the United Kingdom Government.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

344 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

344

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

5 March 1941

My telegram of 1 March (No. 342). The name of the operation has been changed to LUSTRE.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

345 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

345

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 March 1941

In forwarding you the appended series of telegrams (Nos. 346– 352), which shows how the matter has been thrashed out, War Cabinet wish me to ask your assent to the employment of the New Zealand Division in the dangerous and glorious duty which now falls to their lot in common with the Imperial Forces concerned. ¹

¹ The New Zealand Government had given its assent on 26 Feb to the use of the New Zealand Division in Greece on the understanding that it would be fully equipped and accompanied by an armoured brigade (see No. 337). The movement of troops from Egypt to Greece had begun on 6 Mar. In the changed circumstances, as outlined in telegrams Nos. 346– 352, the Dominion Governments were asked to renew their approval to the use of their troops in Greece.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

346 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

346

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram from **Athens**, dated 4 March, from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff to the Prime Minister of the **United Kingdom**:

We found a changed and disturbing situation on our arrival here and an atmosphere quite different from that of our last visit. On the last occasion General Papagos had insisted strongly that the withdrawal (of all?) troops in **Macedonia** to the Aliakmon¹ line was the only sound [military?] solution.² Our expectations were that this withdrawal would have already begun. Instead we found that no move had been made, General Pagagos alleging that it had been agreed that the decision taken at our last meeting was dependent on the receipt of an answer from **Yugoslavia** as to their attitude. He now stated that in view of the German entry into **Bulgaria** the withdrawal was no longer possible since his troops would risk being caught on the move. Moreover, both he and the King³ stressed the fact that a withdrawal from **Macedonia** now must have serious internal political consequences by causing panic among the civil population. Papagos also stated that since his troops on the Albanian front were all exhausted and greatly outnumbered it was quite impossible to make any withdrawals there. Papagos therefore proposed to hold the line of fortifications near the **Macedonia** frontier with four divisions in **Macedonia**, although he thought that they could not hold out for long, and also simply remain where he was on the Albanian front. As he himself practically admitted, this seemed an admission of

despair.

It was his proposal that the British troops should be moved up piecemeal to the Macedonia frontier line as they arrived, although it was more likely that they could [not?] arrive in time.⁴ We naturally refused to accept this proposal, which was so entirely

¹ Four different versions of the spelling of this place-name are to be found in the originals of these telegrams: Aliakhmon, Alyakmon, Alaikmon, Aliakmon. The last is used throughout this series.

² The text reads '(naval-military?) solution.'

³ George II, KG, GCMG, King of the Hellenes. Succeeded to the throne 1922; abdicated 1924; recalled 1935; evacuated from Greece to Crete, 23 Apr 1941; left Crete on 22 May and was escorted safely to Egypt; spent remainder of the war years in Egypt and the United Kingdom; recalled to the throne of Greece after national plebiscite, 1 Sep 1946; died 1 Apr 1947.

⁴ The text here is uncertain.

different from the conditions under which we had agreed to send our troops, and we telegraphed the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to come to Athens for discussion. Since his arrival yesterday, 3 March, discussions have been practically continuous during the afternoon and evening of 3 March and today, 4 March. As the attitude of Papagos was unaccommodating and defeatist we had to enlist the aid of the King, who was, throughout the very trying discussions which followed, calm, determined, and helpful.

We were finally offered three Greek divisions (12th from Macedonia, 20th from Florina, and a newly formed motorised division), together with battalions from Western Thrace, provided the Turks would agree to release them and they arrived in time, to hold the position on the

Aliakmon line until reinforced by British troops.

We were thus faced with these alternatives:

- (To accept the plan of Papagos, to which he constantly returned, of
 - a) attempting to dribble our forces piecemeal up to the **Macedonia** frontier.
- (To accept the three Greek divisions offered for the **Aliakmon line**,
 - b) equivalent of about sixteen to twenty-three battalions instead of the thirty-five we had been led to expect on our previous visit, and to build up our concentration behind this. Against this we had to set the delay likely to be imposed by the defence of Rupel and other passes by the three divisions remaining in **Macedonia**.
- (To withdraw our offer of military support altogether.
 - c)

We were agreed that the first course could only lead to military wavering while the last course seemed equally disastrous because it would lead inevitably to the rapid elimination of **Greece** from the war, and because of the effect which the abandonment of **Greece** would have throughout the Near and **Middle East** as well as in the Empire and the **United States**. Also, in withdrawing our **Air Force** and other troops already in **Greece**, we should have been faced with considerable difficulties.

Therefore, after some misgivings, we agreed to the second solution, but with the proviso that the command and organisation of the whole **Aliakmon line** be entrusted to General Wilson as soon as he was in a position to take over. This was agreed to.

While recognising the dangers and difficulties of this solution, the military advisers did not consider it by any means a hopeless proposition to check and hold the German advance on this line, which is naturally strong and with few approaches. A fighting withdrawal from this line through country eminently suitable for rearguard action should always be possible at the worst.

The most depressing feature of the situation is the attitude of Papagos, who, deprived of the guidance of Metaxas,¹ seems to have lost

confidence. At the final interview, however, after we had taken the decision, he seemed recovered.

We are all sure that we have arrived at the correct decision in a very difficult situation. These two days have been indescribably anxious, but there is a marked improvement in the general atmosphere on the Greek side now that the decision has been taken. The hard fact remains that our forces, including the Dominion contingents, will be engaged in an operation more hazardous than it seemed a week ago. You will no doubt decide on any communications to be made to the Dominion Governments.

See also my immediately following telegram of elucidation.

We will telegraph separately the agreed French text of the decisions made at the final meeting.

Later: With regard to the Greek troops mentioned in paragraph 4 above, we have just heard that the Turkish Government agree to their release.

¹ General Ioannis (John) Metaxas, Prime Minister of Greece, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and acting Minister of War, Marine, and Air, 1936 – death, 29 Jan 1941.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

347 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

347

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram from **Athens** from the Secretary of State and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom:

The military problem is essentially one of time and space. Reports from **Bulgaria** suggest that the Germans may arrive on the Greek frontier in sufficient strength to enable an attack to be delivered during the next six or seven days. The rate of the German advance will of course depend on the weather, and the date of attack may also be affected by the need to build up dumps of supplies and ammunition near the Greek frontier.

The resistance which the Greek divisions can be expected to put up in prepared positions on the Nestos-Rupel line should delay the Germans for some days. Then before contact is made on the Aliakmon position there will be a further advance of 100 miles from the **Rupel Pass**. The time required for this advance should be considerably increased by demolitions which Wilson will prepare as rapidly as possible.

The concentration of three Greek divisions on the Aliakmon position should be complete within five days. The seven battalions from **Thrace** will require a further five or six days to complete concentration, and the Aliakmon position itself needs considerable work on communications and defences.

The concentration of British forces on the Aliakmon position will be as follows: The bulk of one armoured brigade and one New Zealand infantry brigade between 16–19 March. The bulk of a second New Zealand infantry brigade about 26 March. The New Zealand infantry division should be quite satisfactory in essential men and weapons by the end of March.¹ The subsequent programme is not yet arranged.

All possible measures to speed up the programme are being examined, including the use of Greek ships for the transport of British forces from Egypt.

The question of bombing German communications in Bulgaria was discussed with the Greeks yesterday. Their attitude is that to avoid retaliation no attack should be made during the concentration of Anglo-Greek forces. However, bombing will begin at once if Germany attacks Greece by land or air during this concentration.

Thus the margin is narrow and the risk considerable. Nevertheless, as we stated in our telegram of 4 March, this risk appears to us the least dangerous of the three possibilities with which we were faced.

¹ Another version of this telegram on file in the Prime Minister's Department reads: 'should be *complete* in essential men.'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

348 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

348

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram from **Athens** from the Secretary of State and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff for the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Chiefs of Staff:

Following is the translation of the agreement in French signed on 4 March between the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and General Papagos:

As a result of discussions between the Greek and British High Commands held at **Athens** on 2 March, 3 March, and 4 March, 1941, the following decisions were taken:

1. The Greek Army will leave three divisions in **Macedonia** to defend prepared positions on the Nestos–Rupel line.
2. The Greek Army will concentrate with all possible speed on the position **Mount Olympus** – Veria – Edessa – Kajmakcalan (Aliakmon position) the following forces:
 - (The 12th Division from Western Thrace already moving towards
 - a) the west by train;
 - (The 20th Division from **Florina**;
 - b)
 - (The 19th Motorised Division from **Larissa**;
 - c)
 - (Seven battalions from Western Thrace, provided the Turkish Government agree to release them as requested by the Greek and British Governments.

- 3. A separate Greek commander will be appointed forthwith for these forces.**
- 4. The British forces will be despatched to Piraeus and Volos as rapidly as shipping will permit.**
- 5. The British forces will concentrate on the Aliakmon position on which it is intended that the Greco-British forces should be able to battle.**
- 6. The command of all forces on the Aliakmon position will be entrusted to Lieutenant-General Sir H. M. Wilson under the High Command of General Papagos. The date when General Wilson assumes his command will be settled by General Papagos in consultation with him and will depend on the arrival of General Wilson's headquarters and establishment of his Company. ¹**

NB.—As regards paragraph 6, it had already been agreed during the conversations held at the Royal Palace at Tatoi on 22 February that in the event of the General Officer Commanding British troops finding himself in disagreement with General Papagos, he would have the right to refer to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East. In the event of being unable himself to settle the question with General Papagos, the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, would similarly have the right to refer to His Majesty's Government.

¹ The wording is curious but clearly implies the date by which General Wilson's headquarters would be in full operation.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

349 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

349

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

7 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram to Cairo from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for Mr. Eden:

The situation has indeed changed for the worse. Following on their No. 54582 (MO 5) ¹, to which a reply has not yet been received, the Chiefs of Staff have presented a commentary which follows in my next. Owing to the failure of Papagos to act as agreed upon with you on 21 February, the obvious difficulty of his extricating his army from contact in Albania, and the timetable of our possible movements furnished by Wavell in his O. 45461 of 3 March ², together with other adverse factors recited by the Chiefs of Staff, e.g., the postponement of MANDIBLES ³ and closing the [Suez] Canal, it is difficult for Cabinet to believe that we now have any power to avert the fate of Greece unless Turkey and/or Yugoslavia come in, which seems to be most improbable. We have done our best to raise the Balkan combination against Germany. Care must be taken not to urge Greece against her better judgment into a hopeless resistance alone when we have only handfuls of troops which can reach the scene in time. The committing of New Zealand and Australian troops to the enterprise which, as you say, has become even more hazardous, raises grave Imperial issues. We are bound to lay before the Dominion Governments your telegram of 4 March and the Chiefs of Staff's appreciation, but we cannot forecast their assent to the operation. We do not see any reasons for expecting success except, of course, that we attach great weight to the opinions of Dill and Wavell. As indicated in

my telegram No. 396 to Athens⁴, we must liberate the Greeks from feeling bound to reject a German ultimatum. If, on their own, they resolve to fight, we must share their ordeal to some extent, but a rapid German advance will probably prevent any appreciable British Imperial forces from being engaged. Provided that Turkey remains honestly neutral, the loss of Greece and the Balkans would be by no means a major catastrophe for us. We could take MANDIBLES and consider plan(s) for (influx?) or [on?] Tripoli⁵. Advice has been received from many quarters that our ignominious ejection from Greece would do us more harm in Spain and Vichy than the fact of the submission of the Balkans, which we have never been expected to prevent with our scant forces alone. In the absence of facts very different from those now before us, I send this to prepare your mind for what will probably be expressed tomorrow in Cabinet's decision.

¹ Not available.

² Not available.

³ The plan for which this was the codename was not put into operation. It envisaged the capture of Rhodes and certain other islands of the Dodecanese before the landing of Allied troops in Greece.

⁴ Not available.

⁵ The text here is uncertain.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

350 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

350

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

8 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram to Cairo from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom for Mr. Eden:

With reference to my immediately preceding telegram, the following is the commentary of the Chiefs of Staff:

The principal changes in the situation since the decision was taken to go full speed ahead with the Greek enterprise appear to us to be as follows:

At their first interview with the King of Greece and General Papagos our envoys reported that they were 'greatly impressed by the attitude and spirit' of Papagos, but at their recent interview they found him 'unaccommodating and defeatist', though towards the end he appears to have cheered up. This change of attitude on the part of General Papagos was perhaps only to be expected in view of the German arrival on the Greek-Bulgarian frontier and of the failure of any support from Yugoslavia or Turkey. Nevertheless, it is bound to react unfavourably on the fighting spirit of his army.

The Greeks undertook on 21 February to begin the withdrawal of their advanced troops to the line which we should require to hold if the Yugoslavs were unwilling to come in, and to start work immediately on the improvement of communications in Greece to facilitate the occupation of this line. Today (twelve days later) we learn that no

withdrawal has commenced and we gather that no work has been done. This is serious in view of the paramount importance of the time factor.

At first we were to have had thirty-five Greek battalions to help us hold the line. We are now told that we are to have three Greek divisions and seven battalions from Western Thrace, these amounting only to twenty-three battalions at the most. With the exception of the 12th Division, these troops are all newly formed and have not yet fought. One of the divisions can have hardly any guns, while the remainder can only have captured Italian material. But in addition to the thirty-five battalions for which we had hoped, we had contemplated that the Greeks would be able to withdraw some divisions from their Albanian front. According to General Papagos this cannot now be done as they are 'exhausted and outnumbered'.

It always has been contemplated that MANDIBLES would be captured before, or at least simultaneously with, the move to Greece. It now appears that MANDIBLES cannot be undertaken until the move to Greece has been completed. This means that instead of being able to concentrate all available air forces against the German advance, considerable air operations will have to be conducted against MANDIBLES in order to protect our lines of communication to Greece.

The mining of the Suez Canal has become a more acute handicap. It was to have been open on 3 March but on that date the Germans put in ten more mines. The canal is now completely closed and on past form may not be clear until 11 March. Only half of the MT¹ ships required for the move to Greece are north of the canal and all personnel ships are south of it. Even if the personnel for Greece are carried in men-of-war, the whole force cannot be dealt with by this means.

We have estimated that one armoured and three motorised divisions could reach the Bulgarian-Greek frontier on 5 March and, in addition, an infantry division by 11 March. It is further estimated that, assuming weak delaying action by the Greeks in the Rupel area, the Germans could have two divisions on the Aliakmon line by about 15 March and

could concentrate the whole five divisions there by 22 March.

We are now told that General Papagos intends to fight with three divisions in the Rupel area. Since much will depend on the strength of the position, the equipment and morale of the Greek troops, and on whether an effective scheme of demolitions has been prepared and can be executed, we have no means of knowing how much delay will be imposed on a German advance until we receive an answer to our telegram No. 64². If the delay imposed is short we should at the best have one armoured brigade and one New Zealand brigade to oppose the first two German divisions on the Aliakmon line.

Our conclusion is that the hazards of the enterprise have considerably increased. In spite of our misgivings and our recognition of a worsening of the general situation, we are not as yet in a position to question the military advice of those on the spot, who describe the enterprise as not by any means hopeless.

¹ Mechanical transport.

² Not published. This was a telegram asking whether the Commanders-in-Chief agreed with the estimated timetable of German movements given in the Chiefs of Staff's commentary, and requesting information about Greek positions and intentions and whether the Allied forces would arrive on the Aliakmon line in time to hold it.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

351 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

351

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

8 March 1941

The following is the text of three telegrams from the British Minister to Greece¹ (Athens) to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Cairo):

I have just read the Prime Minister's message to you². I need not emphasise to you the effect of our now withdrawing from the agreement actually signed between the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Greek Commander-in-Chief which is now in process of execution here by General Wilson himself. How can we possibly abandon the King of Greece after the assurances given him by the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff as to the reasonable chance of success? This seems to me quite unthinkable. We shall be pilloried by the Greeks and the world in general as going back on our word.

There is no question of 'liberating the Greeks from feeling bound to reject the ultimatum'. They have decided to fight Germany alone if necessary. The question is whether we help or abandon them.

¹ Sir Michael Palairet, KCMG; British Minister to Greece 1939–42; British Ambassador to Greece 1942–43 (i.e., to Greek Government in exile); Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, 1943–45.

² See telegram in No. 349.

The British Minister (Athens) to Secretary of State (Cairo)

The King of Greece spoke to the Air Attaché today with deep appreciation of your visit and was absolutely determined to carry on the agreed plan of action against German attack. He is satisfied that his confidence in the chances of success is shared by General Papagos and his Government.

He emphasised the great importance of speed, and particularly in the supply of adequate air forces here in order to break up the German air attacks which are their customary opening offensive. Initial German defeat in the air would, more than anything else, do away with the myth of German invincibility and would give the whole country the same confidence as is held by him in the prospects for success. I have not myself seen him since your departure.

The British Minister (Athens) to Secretary of State (Cairo)

This morning ¹ General Wilson has had a most satisfactory talk with General Papagos. He is greatly encouraged by the marked improvement in the latter's attitude and found him most helpful and anxious to co-operate in every way possible.

¹ 6 Mar.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

8 MARCH 1941

8 March 1941

The following is the text of three telegrams from the British Minister to Greece¹ ([Athens](#)) to the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs ([Cairo](#)):

I have just read the Prime Minister's message to you². I need not emphasise to you the effect of our now withdrawing from the agreement actually signed between the Chief of the Imperial General Staff and the Greek Commander-in-Chief which is now in process of execution here by General Wilson himself. How can we possibly abandon the King of Greece after the assurances given him by the Commander-in-Chief and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff as to the reasonable chance of success? This seems to me quite unthinkable. We shall be pilloried by the Greeks and the world in general as going back on our word.

There is no question of 'liberating the Greeks from feeling bound to reject the ultimatum'. They have decided to fight [Germany](#) alone if necessary. The question is whether we help or abandon them.

¹ Sir Michael Palairet, KCMG; British Minister to [Greece](#) 1939-42; British Ambassador to [Greece](#) 1942-43 (i.e., to [Greek Government in exile](#)); Assistant Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office, 1943-45.

² See telegram in No. 349.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE BRITISH MINISTER (ATHENS) TO SECRETARY OF STATE (CAIRO)

The British Minister (Athens) to Secretary of State (Cairo)

The King of Greece spoke to the Air Attaché today with deep appreciation of your visit and was absolutely determined to carry on the agreed plan of action against German attack. He is satisfied that his confidence in the chances of success is shared by General Papagos and his Government.

He emphasised the great importance of speed, and particularly in the supply of adequate air forces here in order to break up the German air attacks which are their customary opening offensive. Initial German defeat in the air would, more than anything else, do away with the myth of German invincibility and would give the whole country the same confidence as is held by him in the prospects for success. I have not myself seen him since your departure.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE BRITISH MINISTER (ATHENS) TO SECRETARY OF STATE (CAIRO)

The British Minister (Athens) to Secretary of State (Cairo)

This morning ¹ General Wilson has had a most satisfactory talk with General Papagos. He is greatly encouraged by the marked improvement in the latter's attitude and found him most helpful and anxious to co-operate in every way possible.

¹ 6 Mar.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

352 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

352

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

8 March 1941

The following is the text of a telegram from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Cairo) to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom:

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff and I, in consultation with the three Commanders-in-Chief, have re-examined the question this afternoon. We are unanimously agreed that despite the heavy commitments and grave risks which are undoubtedly involved, especially in view of our limited naval and air resources, the right decision was taken in Athens. [Palairet's] telegrams to Cairo showed the position from the Greek angle. This is merely to indicate to you how our minds are working while awaiting the Cabinet view which was foreshadowed in your telegram ².

The following telegram was sent today from the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to Mr. Eden:

The project was considered by Cabinet this morning in the light of your telegrams from Athens and Cairo and of my two telegrams to you. The Chiefs of Staff advise that in view of the steadfastly expressed opinion of the Commanders-in-Chief on the spot, of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the Commanders of the forces to be employed, it would be right to proceed. Cabinet decided to authorise you to carry on with the operation and in doing so accepts for itself the fullest responsibility. The Australian and New Zealand Governments will

be communicated with accordingly.

² See No. 349.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

353 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS

353

*The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Secretary of State for
Dominion Affairs*

9 March 1941

The most careful and most earnest consideration has been given by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand to your telegrams Nos. 345 to 352 inclusive, the last of which was not deciphered until 11 o'clock last night. Their first reaction is that the operation, which they had always regarded as highly dangerous and speculative, is now obviously much more hazardous than that previously contemplated. They generally agree with the comments of the United Kingdom Chiefs of Staff as set out in telegram No. 350.

With the experience of Norway and Dunkirk in mind they would like to add the following appreciation of the situation as it appears to them:

There seems to be little prospect of Yugoslav or Turkish assistance, and consequently the possibility of such assistance should be disregarded entirely as a factor in the consideration of the matter.

The risk is grave that, with the Greeks, the first British troops on the scene may be overwhelmed before an adequate British force can be in position. In any case, the position must at all times be one of extreme gravity even when all the British troops available are operating with the Greeks.

The Germans have an almost unlimited number of divisions which in time can be utilised for an attack through Bulgaria, through Yugoslavia, or through Albania, and to these forces must be added the possibility of

further reinforcements from the Italians.

While the Axis are moving on interior lines, the British reinforcements (apart from those—obviously limited in number—which may be available from the African theatre of war) can arrive only at the end of a very long sea voyage, except in the unlikely event of the Mediterranean route being available. Similar remarks of course apply to supplies, munitions, and equipment of all kinds.

Aided by the Italian Air Force, the German Air Force can be brought to bear in very great strength upon troop concentrations, communications, ports of landing, transports, and supply ships, and the Suez Canal. British air action must necessarily be weak.

Constant attacks upon sea communications may be expected from the Italian fleet, perhaps reinforced by units of the German fleet. These attacks, both by sea and by air, will be facilitated by enemy control of islands flanking the sea communications.

It may be expected that the Suez Canal will be the object of constant attack and it might be prudent largely to discount its use.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand are not without apprehension that pressure by the Germans might perhaps lead to a rapid collapse of the Greeks, which would leave the British force in the air.

Nevertheless, having regard to all these considerations, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand look upon the first and last of the alternatives set out in the fifth paragraph of the Secretary of State's telegram ¹ as completely unacceptable. In particular they cannot contemplate the possibility of abandoning the Greeks to their fate, especially after the heroic resistance with which they have met the Italian invader. To do so would be to destroy the moral basis of our cause and invite results greater in their potential damage to us than any failure of the contemplated operation. Therefore, in the circumstances,

they find themselves in agreement with the conclusions arrived at by the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, as now approved by His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom—a decision which they consider to have been correct in a most difficult situation.

His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, with a full knowledge of the hazards to be run, align themselves with His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and agree with the course now proposed. They are confident that New Zealand troops in this dangerous enterprise will worthily uphold their traditions and indeed would be the first to approve of the decision now taken.

However, in the light of the hazards involved, they urge His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom and the authorities on the spot to direct the most careful attention, first, to the provision of the strongest possible sea and air escort for transports, and, second, to a full and immediate consideration of the means of withdrawal both on land and at sea should this course unfortunately prove to be necessary.

Finally, it is assumed by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand that unless the full British force contemplated can clearly be made available at the appropriate time the operation will not be undertaken.

¹ See No. 346.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

354 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

354

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

12 March 1941

We are deeply moved by your reply which, whatever may be the fortunes of war, will shine in the history of New Zealand and be admired by future generations of free men in every quarter of the globe. Our faithful, unremitting endeavour shall be to make good the request and assumption at the end of your message.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

355 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

355

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

12 March 1941

On 9 March the Suez Canal was clear of mines and forty-two northbound merchant vessels passed through. A report from the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, states that this has now made the full LUSTRE programme possible.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

356 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

356

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

14 March 1941

The following is the text of a report by the Chiefs of Staff on the military case for assistance to Greece:

No appreciation has been received as yet of the tactical factors which led our envoys and Commanders-in-Chief to favour the Greek enterprise. These will probably be elucidated during the course of the next few days on the return of our envoys. Meanwhile, we give below some comments on the situation as it now is.

In our commentary on the military aspect of the enterprise we referred to Mr. Eden's description of General Papagos as having been 'unaccommodating and defeatist', and we expressed the view that this was bound to react unfavourably on the fighting spirit of his army¹. However, it is reassuring to learn that on 6 March General Wilson 'had a most satisfactory talk with General Papagos' and 'was greatly encouraged by the marked improvement' in his attitude. He found him most helpful and anxious to co-operate in every way.

¹ See No. 350.

That this improvement has been maintained is clear from another message dated 10 March¹ in which General Wilson is reported to have found General Papagos most 'cheerful and helpful'.

The outlook from a military point of view is essentially one of time, space, and numbers. When we considered the position on 5 March we were apprehensive lest the Germans should be able to break the **Aliakmon line** before it could be manned effectively. Briefly, our reasons for this misgiving were as follows:

- (We were informed that the Greeks had failed either to redeem
a) their undertaking to move troops on to the line or to start work on
improving communications to it.
- (On the information available to us we calculated that at the best
b) we could have one armoured brigade and one New Zealand brigade on
the line by 15 March, while the Germans could concentrate two
divisions there by 15 March and five divisions by 22 March.

With regards to (a), we have now learned that General Wilson has himself visited the **Aliakmon line** and found that it 'is being manned up to time'. Confirmation of this is contained in a telegram of the same date (10 March)² from the British Military Mission at **Athens**³ which states that concentration is proceeding satisfactorily.

As regards (b), our own movements are proceeding according to plan and a message on 10 March reports that the full programme has been made possible by the passing of ships through the **Suez Canal** (see my telegram of 12 March, No. 355). On the other hand, it is clear that the Germans are unable to achieve the timetable which we visualised. They have not yet crossed the Greek frontier and it is therefore impossible for them to concentrate any forces at all on the **Aliakmon line** by 15 March.

The view has been expressed by General Wavell that if his forces can be transported to **Greece** and concentrated on our chosen battle line there is a good chance of holding the enemy's advance. In view of the facts set out in the preceding paragraph, the prospects seem brighter than they did a week ago.

Another satisfactory change in the situation is that the **Suez Canal** was opened for traffic on 9 March and that, so far as we know, the shipping required for the movement is now on the right side of the canal.

We made no reference in our original commentary to the difficulties which confronted the German forces. It has been pointed out by Mr. Eden that 'the enemy have long and bad communications through

¹ Not available.

² Not available.

³ Headed by Major-General T. G. G. Heywood, CB, OBE; killed in aircraft accident, India, 31 Aug 1943.

'countries of doubtful friendship' and that 'weather conditions are likely to hamper them.' A recent visitor to Greece has also told us that the Aliakmon position is one of tremendous natural strength.

The Greek ammunition situation appears to be less serious than we were led to believe a short time ago. The head of the British Military Mission to Athens has expressed the opinion that 'provided [large?] part of raw material and ammunition already advised as sent from America and the United Kingdom could arrive by the middle of April the situation does not call for alarm.'

So far as the naval situation is concerned, Admiral Cunningham ¹ reported on 4 March that the movement of a large force to Greece involved considerable risk. Should the Germans start an air offensive from Bulgaria against convoys and ports of disembarkation, losses were to be expected, and in addition surface action by the Italian fleet against convoys could not be excluded. He summed up by stating that his resources were taxed to the limit but that nevertheless he had considerable hope that all his difficulties could be overcome.

As regards air forces, the present position is that Greek aerodromes now available on the mainland south of the Aliakmon line will accommodate thirteen squadrons in all. Within the next two or three months additional aerodromes for a further seven squadrons will become

available.

The British air forces now in Greece comprise three Blenheim bomber squadrons, one Blenheim bomber-fighter squadron, and three fighter squadrons. In addition, the Greeks have about twenty-one bomber aircraft, forty-six fighter aircraft, and forty-eight old reconnaissance aircraft. Their serviceability, however, seldom exceeds 50 per cent. The programme of reinforcements is as follows: one Blenheim bomber squadron now; two Blenheim bomber squadrons, one single co-operation squadron (Hurricanes and Lysander), all during March; three heavy bomber squadrons. Depending on the arrival of necessary aircraft, a further two fighter squadrons may become available later.

It should be possible ultimately to accommodate up to twenty squadrons south of the Aliakmon line. The provision of these units and their maintenance will be dependent on the receipt of aircraft direct from the United Kingdom and via Takoradi², on the situation in other Middle Eastern theatres, and on the results of experience of our ability to maintain air forces in Greece in the face of German attack.

For the last four months the reinforcement of the Middle East with aircraft has been given the highest priority. Every possible

¹ Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

² On the Gold Coast, approximately 400 miles west of Lagos. Aircraft were flown by this route to Khartoum and thence to Cairo and the North African theatre.

aircraft has been sent by every possible route, crated or flown, to the Middle East; and this process will continue by every means that can be devised.

In the annex to this report, details of the air forces which the Germans have concentrated in the Balkans and further information

about our own air forces in the Middle East are shown.

Finally, it is clear that the commanders on the spot take a more favourable view of our chances than they did a week ago. Mr. Eden, in a telegram dated 7 March, writes that, 'We are all convinced, not only that there is a reasonable fighting chance, but that we have here an opportunity, if fortune favours us, of perhaps seriously upsetting the German plans.'

AIR FORCES IN BALKANS AND MIDDLE EAST

GERMAN: The Germans have concentrated the following air forces:

In Roumania:

40 dive bombers

120 single-engined fighters

40 twin-engined fighters

42 bomber-reconnaissance aircraft

120 Army co-operation aircraft

70 to 80 transport aircraft

In Bulgaria:

40 long-range bombers

80 dive bombers

Preparations are being made in addition which we estimate will allow a further 80 single-engined fighters and up to 120 Army co-operation aircraft to be operated from Bulgaria in about ten days. It would be possible to operate from Bulgaria the whole of the German air forces in Roumania by about the first week in April, but it is unlikely that Roumania would be left without air forces.

From Bulgaria German long-range bombers could reach the whole of **Greece, Crete, and the Dodecanese**. Their dive bombers could reach a line approximately Komitsa, Larissa, south of Lemnos and including the Sea of Marmara. Single-engined fighters could be provided for the bombers from **Bulgaria** up to, approximately, Aliakmon northward, and from the **Salonika** area as far as Lamia. Twin-engined fighters could cover **Greece** up to the **Corinth Canal** from **Bulgaria**, and could include most of Morea from the **Salonika** area. The aerodromes in the **Salonika** area could accommodate approximately nine squadrons now and perhaps three or four more by late spring.

BRITISH: The present air forces in the **Middle East** include the following aircraft serviceable, or serviceable within fourteen days, in **Egypt, the Sudan, and Greece:**

71 S9 Blenheim I

71 Blenheim IV

102 Gladiator

61 Hurricane

134 Wellington

38 Wellesley

100 Lysander

In addition, there are three **Royal Air Force** squadrons at **Aden** and four **South African Air Force** squadrons in **Kenya**. Some of these aircraft are engaged in operations against Italian East Africa and will become available to reinforce **Greece** if and when Italian resistance collapses.

On the way to Egypt at present there are:

110 Hurricanes

90 Blenheim IV

24 Lysander

39 Glen Martin

16 Mohawks

102 Tomahawks

The capacity of the reinforcement route via Takoradi is now 80 to 120 aircraft each month and as soon as possible this is being expanded.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

14 MARCH 1941

14 March 1941

The following is the text of a report by the Chiefs of Staff on the military case for assistance to Greece:

No appreciation has been received as yet of the tactical factors which led our envoys and Commanders-in-Chief to favour the Greek enterprise. These will probably be elucidated during the course of the next few days on the return of our envoys. Meanwhile, we give below some comments on the situation as it now is.

In our commentary on the military aspect of the enterprise we referred to Mr. Eden's description of General Papagos as having been 'unaccommodating and defeatist', and we expressed the view that this was bound to react unfavourably on the fighting spirit of his army¹. However, it is reassuring to learn that on 6 March General Wilson 'had a most satisfactory talk with General Papagos' and 'was greatly encouraged by the marked improvement' in his attitude. He found him most helpful and anxious to co-operate in every way.

¹ See No. 350.

That this improvement has been maintained is clear from another message dated 10 March¹ in which General Wilson is reported to have found General Papagos most 'cheerful and helpful'.

The outlook from a military point of view is essentially one of time, space, and numbers. When we considered the position on 5 March we were apprehensive lest the Germans should be able to break the Aliakmon line before it could be manned effectively. Briefly, our reasons for this misgiving were as follows:

(We were informed that the Greeks had failed either to redeem
a) their undertaking to move troops on to the line or to start work on
improving communications to it.

(On the information available to us we calculated that at the best
b) we could have one armoured brigade and one New Zealand brigade on
the line by 15 March, while the Germans could concentrate two
divisions there by 15 March and five divisions by 22 March.

With regards to (a), we have now learned that General Wilson has himself visited the **Aliakmon line** and found that it 'is being manned up to time'. Confirmation of this is contained in a telegram of the same date (10 March)² from the British Military Mission at **Athens**³ which states that concentration is proceeding satisfactorily.

As regards (b), our own movements are proceeding according to plan and a message on 10 March reports that the full programme has been made possible by the passing of ships through the **Suez Canal** (see my telegram of 12 March, No. 355). On the other hand, it is clear that the Germans are unable to achieve the timetable which we visualised. They have not yet crossed the Greek frontier and it is therefore impossible for them to concentrate any forces at all on the **Aliakmon line** by 15 March.

The view has been expressed by General Wavell that if his forces can be transported to **Greece** and concentrated on our chosen battle line there is a good chance of holding the enemy's advance. In view of the facts set out in the preceding paragraph, the prospects seem brighter than they did a week ago.

Another satisfactory change in the situation is that the **Suez Canal** was opened for traffic on 9 March and that, so far as we know, the shipping required for the movement is now on the right side of the canal.

We made no reference in our original commentary to the difficulties which confronted the German forces. It has been pointed out by Mr. Eden that 'the enemy have long and bad communications through

¹ Not available.

² Not available.

³ Headed by Major-General T. G. G. Heywood, CB, OBE; killed in aircraft accident, India, 31 Aug 1943.

countries of doubtful friendship' and that 'weather conditions are likely to hamper them.' A recent visitor to Greece has also told us that the Aliakmon position is one of tremendous natural strength.

The Greek ammunition situation appears to be less serious than we were led to believe a short time ago. The head of the British Military Mission to Athens has expressed the opinion that 'provided [large?] part of raw material and ammunition already advised as sent from America and the United Kingdom could arrive by the middle of April the situation does not call for alarm.'

So far as the naval situation is concerned, Admiral Cunningham ¹ reported on 4 March that the movement of a large force to Greece involved considerable risk. Should the Germans start an air offensive from Bulgaria against convoys and ports of disembarkation, losses were to be expected, and in addition surface action by the Italian fleet against convoys could not be excluded. He summed up by stating that his resources were taxed to the limit but that nevertheless he had considerable hope that all his difficulties could be overcome.

As regards air forces, the present position is that Greek aerodromes now available on the mainland south of the Aliakmon line will accommodate thirteen squadrons in all. Within the next two or three months additional aerodromes for a further seven squadrons will become available.

The British air forces now in Greece comprise three Blenheim bomber squadrons, one Blenheim bomber-fighter squadron, and three

fighter squadrons. In addition, the Greeks have about twenty-one bomber aircraft, forty-six fighter aircraft, and forty-eight old reconnaissance aircraft. Their serviceability, however, seldom exceeds 50 per cent. The programme of reinforcements is as follows: one Blenheim bomber squadron now; two Blenheim bomber squadrons, one single co-operation squadron (Hurricanes and Lysander), all during March; three heavy bomber squadrons. Depending on the arrival of necessary aircraft, a further two fighter squadrons may become available later.

It should be possible ultimately to accommodate up to twenty squadrons south of the Aliakmon line. The provision of these units and their maintenance will be dependent on the receipt of aircraft direct from the United Kingdom and via Takoradi², on the situation in other Middle Eastern theatres, and on the results of experience of our ability to maintain air forces in Greece in the face of German attack.

For the last four months the reinforcement of the Middle East with aircraft has been given the highest priority. Every possible

¹ Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean.

² On the Gold Coast, approximately 400 miles west of Lagos. Aircraft were flown by this route to Khartoum and thence to Cairo and the North African theatre.

aircraft has been sent by every possible route, crated or flown, to the Middle East; and this process will continue by every means that can be devised.

In the annex to this report, details of the air forces which the Germans have concentrated in the Balkans and further information about our own air forces in the Middle East are shown.

Finally, it is clear that the commanders on the spot take a more favourable view of our chances than they did a week ago. Mr. Eden, in a

telegram dated 7 March, writes that, 'We are all convinced, not only that there is a reasonable fighting chance, but that we have here an opportunity, if fortune favours us, of perhaps seriously upsetting the German plans.'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

AIR FORCES IN BALKANS AND MIDDLE EAST

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The capacity of the reinforcement route via Takoradi is now 80 to 120 aircraft each month and as soon as possible this is being expanded.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

357 – GENERAL FREYBERG, GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION (GREECE), TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

357

General Freyberg, General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Division (Greece), to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

6 April 1941 1

¹The absence of messages during the period 15 Mar - 8 Apr 1941 (the date on which No. 357 was received) is due to the United Kingdom Government's anxiety 'that no information regarding LUSTRE should be released whilst movement is still in progress.' A telegram to this effect was sent by the Dominions Secretary to the Prime Minister of New Zealand on 24 Mar. News of the arrival of British, Australian, and New Zealand troops in Greece was released on 7 Apr.

After a difficult journey from Egypt the complete Division has moved forward into Macedonia and is preparing a defensive position. We are now linked with the 6th Australian Division; thus the Anzac Corps is again in being. ² General Blamey's experience and the Australians' fighting qualities will prove great assets.

The Government must be following the present events with anxiety. It should give them confidence that the year's intensive training overseas has seasoned and fitted the New Zealand Division for war. I can assure the Prime Minister that our officers are excellent and our men well trained and equipped. The Greeks and Yugoslavs are good fighters but are short of modern equipment and motor transport.

It would be wrong to minimise the difficulties of the present situation or the importance of armoured forces in modern warfare, but,

on the other hand, the German communications are not good and this theatre of war is not suited to his tactics.

I know that our men will do well in the difficult days ahead. They are fit and in great heart, and I have great confidence in them.

² See Volume II, *Proposed Formation of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.*

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

358 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

358

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

7 April 1941

My colleagues and I together with all the people of this Dominion extend to you and to the officers and men under your command our earnest and heartfelt good wishes in the operations that you are now about to undertake. Our thoughts and prayers are constantly with you, particularly so at this moment. We have every confidence that the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force will add fresh lustre to the laurels earned by its famous predecessor. All good fortune and may God be with you.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

359 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER

359

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister

10 April 1941

If the present emergency so requires ¹, I suggest it would be most helpful to offer General Wavell liberty of action to use our troops in Egypt. He would work in consultation with Brigadiers Falla ² and Inglis ³, who would ensure that the New Zealanders in Egypt were used to the best advantage in this difficult moment. I have confidence in Brigadier Inglis as Commander in the field. We have left first-class officers and NCOs at Maadi and, if the necessity arose, they could form an infantry brigade in Egypt.

¹ This was the first appearance of German troops in action in North Africa. British forces had evacuated Benghazi on 3 Apr, the seige of Tobruk had begun, and Bardia was to fall on the 13th.

² Commandant 2nd NZEF Base, Maadi Camp.

³ Commanding 9th New Zealand Infantry Brigade, Maadi.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

360 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

360

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

11 April 1941

The following is the text of a war communique which is to be issued here shortly:

German troops advancing into Northern Greece came into contact with the forces of the British Empire on 10 April.

There is no objection to the immediate issue of this news in Australia and New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

361 – THE PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

361

The Prime Minister to General Freyberg

12 April 1941

The proposals made in your telegram of 10 April (No. 359) are approved and you should immediately advise General Wavell accordingly.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

362 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

362

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

14 April 1941

I am sure that you are anxious for information on how we view the present situation in the Middle East, and the following will supplement my remarks in the House of Commons on Wednesday.¹

Of the two main attacks, that in Cyrenaica appears secondary to that in the Balkans, but the Cyrenaica attack has achieved unexpected success and reports indicate that the Germans are moving more land forces to exploit it, but are at present unable to spare additional air forces. If they should be able to do so we may be faced later on with the threat of the development of a large-scale attack on Egypt. The deciding factors here are our power to hamper or cut the enemy's communications from Italy and Sicily to Tripoli, the speed with which we can reinforce with tanks, anti-tank guns, and aircraft, and the enemy's ability to maintain his forces. As Benghazi will be unusable for some time, this will be no easy task for him and his road line of communication will be long. The Germans are also making trouble for us in Iraq and are attempting to do so in Syria. It does not appear that they intend to attack Turkey at present.

As has always been the case, our vital strategic requirement in the Middle East remains the security of our main base of operations in Egypt, and so we are faced with the problem of how far we can maintain our forces in Greece and safeguard the security of Egypt at the same time.

We still consider the decision we made in sending our forces to Greece strategically correct, however the present situation may have developed. The situation in the Balkans is so fluid that it is impossible at present to give a considered appreciation, but even with the rapid German advance into Yugoslavia the picture is better than that which seemed probable before the Yugoslavian *coup d'état*. Therefore, there cannot be any question of withdrawing those forces now, quite apart from what we have said and undertaken *vis-à-vis* Greece and Yugoslavia. While our forces continue to operate in Greece they compel the enemy to fight, contain his forces, and prevent him re-establishing normal economic conditions in the Balkans.

At the same time, since all other available forces are required for the defence of the Egyptian frontier, we have decided that we must for the present hold up the despatch of the second Australian division to Greece, and limit our commitments in Greece to maintaining the forces which have already arrived there. This means that LUSTRE will be short by one division and the Polish Brigade of the strength that we put before you when you generously agreed to the inclusion of the New Zealand Division in that force, but I am sure that you will appreciate the overriding factors which have since intervened.

Various steps have been taken which will accelerate considerably the arrival in the Middle East of additional aircraft, tanks, antitank guns, and other reinforcements. Included in these measures are the reinforcement of our air forces in Egypt by squadrons withdrawn from Aden and East Africa, and the reinforcement of our fleet in the Eastern Mediterranean by destroyers from the Red Sea. Our aim will be to re-establish ourselves in Cyrenaica at the first opportunity, and in the meantime we propose to take strong action against the enemy's lines of communication in Tripoli and from Tripoli forward.

¹ Not published.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

363 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

363

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

15 April 1941

I am most grateful to you for your thoughtfulness in laying before us at the earliest possible moment the position as you see it. My colleagues and I quite appreciate the situation as it has developed and we regard it as in no way affecting the correctness of the ~~LUSTRE~~ decision both on strategical and moral grounds. We are content to accept the position as outlined in your message (No. 362), but assume that should the worst come to the worst all possible preparations are being put in hand to facilitate evacuation. We assume also that adequate reinforcements will be despatched to **Greece** as and when circumstances in **Africa** allow. You should know also that late on 12 April a message was received from **Major-General Freyberg** suggesting that it would be helpful if we were to offer General Wavell liberty of action to use those of our troops still remaining in Egypt (amounting to an infantry brigade group) if the present emergency so requires, and that the same evening we replied approving his proposals and instructing him to inform General Wavell.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

364 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

364

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 April 1941

Late on 16 April His Majesty's Minister at **Athens** reported that he had been informed by the King of **Greece** that because of the serious disorganisation of the Greek armies in **Albania** the **Greek Government** cannot operate properly in **Athens** and is therefore leaving for **Crete**. The King and the rest of the Royal Family will follow the Government a day later. His Majesty's Minister will also leave for **Crete** when transport can be arranged.

With regard to the above, you will appreciate the great importance of the strictest secrecy being maintained.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

365 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

365

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 April 1941

Information was received very late last night that General Papagos, the Greek Commander-in-Chief, had represented to General Wilson that the Greek Army was being severely pressed and was in administrative difficulties owing to air action. Papagos considered that a further withdrawal was necessary, particularly in view of the enemy thrust into the Grevena area, i.e., on the left of General Wilson's forces. He also suggested that, as the situation might take a critical turn, we should re-embark the forces of the Empire to save Greece from devastation.

To cover such an evacuation a position farther back should be held. In these circumstances we have no alternative but to make immediate preparation for the evacuation of our forces, but before a final decision regarding evacuation is taken the British Commander-in-Chief, or His Majesty's Minister at Athens, has been instructed to obtain the Greek Government's endorsement of General Papagos's request.

In any case, Crete will be held in force, and instructions have been issued to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to provide for this in the re-distribution of his forces. We consider it important that strong elements of the Greek Army should establish themselves at Crete, together with the King and the Government, and we propose to aid and maintain the defence of Crete to the utmost.

The necessity for complete secrecy as to the above cannot be

impressed too strongly.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

366 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

366

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

17 April 1941

Your telegram of 15 April (No. 363).

You will have received a message regarding the probability of the withdrawal of our forces from Greece and the decision to hold Crete to the utmost. You have my assurance that all possible steps are in hand to secure that in this event the gallant New Zealand troops are evacuated successfully with as much of their equipment as can be carried away. [Officers?] to arrange for embarkation have been sent to a selected area.

¹

I should also like to say that General Freyberg's consideration for our difficulties elsewhere and New Zealand's prompt and generous invitation to General Wavell to use in Africa the New Zealand troops which remained behind in Egypt have deeply touched all of us here, including, of course, our military advisers. At this time the offer may well be as welcome as it is typical of the wholehearted co-operation of your Dominion.

¹ The naval evacuation of troops from Greece was organised by Rear-Admiral H. T. Baillie-Grohman. See page 61, note 2.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

367 – GENERAL WAVELL, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

367

General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

18 April 1941

For your personal information, the following is the general situation in the Middle East:

By air and land, and as far as possible by sea, the enemy is undoubtedly going to make a supreme effort against our whole position in the Eastern Mediterranean in the next few months.

The Greek resistance is on the point of collapse. I am flying to Athens tomorrow and the Greek Government will probably urge the earliest re-embarkation of our troops. We know that the full weight of the German air forces will be directed against us in order to prevent our embarkation and cause us losses in ships and men. At present we are withdrawing to the Thermopylae line, which is to be held by us until we can embark. No recent news has arrived of the progress being made. Representatives of the three services in Athens are planning the re-embarkation.

The situation in Cyrenaica at present is stabilised at Tobruk and in the Sollum- Bardia area, but further German reinforcements, especially of tanks, are expected in the forward area. The garrison of Tobruk, our forward troops near Sollum, and the Air Force have all been harrying the enemy with good success, but a disturbing factor is our shortage of armoured troops compared with those of the enemy.

The internal situation in Egypt may be a serious factor in the

situation, and morale is not likely to stand much strain.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

368 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

368

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

19 April 1941

On 18 April at a meeting in Greece with the King and General Papagos, General Wilson was able to reassure His Majesty as to the safety of himself and his Government, and the King decided that for the present neither he nor any of the Government would move. Last night His Majesty's Minister telegraphed that he did not think that they would leave for at least another week. There is a further conference today at which General Wavell will be present.

Since General Papagos had stated that the report of the intended departure had had a serious effect on the morale of the Greek Army, and as there was other evidence of some deterioration of military and civilian morale fostered by small pro-German elements, His Majesty's Minister welcomes the decision of the King and Government to remain in Greece.

After telling the King that he felt that he had failed him in the task entrusted to him the Greek President of the Council (M. Koritsis)¹ committed suicide yesterday evening. His Majesty's Minister reports that Koritsis has always suffered from bad health and that the strain has been too much for him; his action was not due to any immediate deterioration in the military situation. The King has decided to take over the Government himself.

His Majesty's Minister was subsequently informed by the King that

he proposed to appoint M. Kotzias ² as Vice-President for the time that the Government would remain in **Athens**. This appointment occasioned His Majesty's Minister some surprise since Kotzias has been accused of pro-Germanism, but, after talking with the King, His Majesty's Minister received the impression that the King sincerely meant to work for the Anglo-Greek cause. Two Cabinet posts are also being offered by the King to Venizelists. ³

¹ M. Alexander Korizis, Minister of Social Welfare under General Metaxas; became Prime Minister on the death of Metaxas on 29 Jan 1941; died 18 Apr 1941.

² At the time of his appointment, Minister-Governor of Athens, the **Piraeus**, and suburbs. He held office as Vice-President until 20 Apr.

³ Political adherents of the late M. Eleutherios Venizelos. Born near **Canea, Crete**, in 1864, Venizelos led the Cretan revolt in 1905 and was Prime Minister of **Greece** 1910–15, 1917–20, 1924, 1928–32 and 1933; died 18 Mar 1936.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

369 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

369

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

20 April 1941

Further to my telegram of 19 April (No. 368), the following are the views of our military advisers on the situation in Greece as known up to 18 April:

Both the Greeks and the Imperial forces have fought magnificently and from all accounts have maintained their positions well and have inflicted heavy casualties both in men and material on the enemy.

However, the forces under General Wilson are being subjected to strong pressure, particularly on the left in the area of Grevena-Kalabaka, and Generals Wilson and Papagos agree that it is sound tactics to withdraw immediately to the Thermopylae line, which is both short and strong.

This increasing enemy pressure, both on the ground and in the air, further points to the probable necessity of an early evacuation [for which arrangements?] are already in hand if it should prove necessary. The Air Officer Commanding ¹ may already have moved, or be about to move, two fighter squadrons from Greece to Crete in order to give fighter cover to the convoys leaving Greece. This must of course have a bearing on the possibility of holding the position at Thermopylae, strong though it is, for more than a limited period.

The final decisions must depend on the further steps to be taken by the Greek Government as a result of yesterday's conference at Tatoi

between Generals Wavell and Wilson and the Greeks.

It will be realised that military considerations must govern the decisions regarding the time, place, and methods of evacuation and the destination of the forces evacuated.

The importance of providing all possible support to the Imperial forces has been emphasised to all three Commanders-in-Chief, due account being taken of the paramount importance of the maintenance of our position in Libya, the successful defence of which is as essential to our troops in Greece as to those in Egypt. Clearly this must take precedence over all other considerations.

Emphasis should also be given to the fact that the Greek Government have throughout maintained their fine spirit and have shown themselves ready to subordinate the interests of their own troops to those of our Imperial forces. Therefore, unless they tell us that we may go, or our Generals are convinced that it is the only thing to do, we are in honour bound to give them all the assistance in our power.

I will keep you in constant touch with further developments.

¹ Air Marshal Sir John Henry D'Albiac, KBE, CB, DSO; Air Officer Commanding, British Air Force in Greece, 1940–41; AOC, Iraq, 1941–42; Ceylon, 1942; AOC, Tactical Air Force, Great Britain, 1943–44; Deputy Commander, Mediterranean Allied Tactical Air Force, 1944; Director-General of Personnel, Air Ministry, 1945–46.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

370 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA¹ TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

370

The acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia¹ to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

22 April 1941

I have received a cablegram from the GOC, AIF (Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Blamey) informing me that the 6th Australian Division and Australian Corps troops in Greece have with your New Zealand Division been formed into a Corps Command, which at the request of the New Zealand Division and with Blamey's full agreement is now described as the Anzac Corps. Australia is indeed proud that her troops are again joined with their New Zealand comrades to serve in a new Anzac Corps, which by its deeds already accomplished in the field has nobly upheld the traditions associated with the name. We have now received a despatch dated 20 April from General Blamey, the text of which is as follows:

The force withdrew successfully seventy miles from Florina to the Aliakmon position on 13 and 14 April. The 19th Australian Brigade and the Armoured Brigade² had great difficulty breaking away and suffered considerably on 14 April owing to the deterioration of Greek troops and the general position. The task of withdrawing the Imperial forces to the Thermopylae position, a distance of 140 miles, was imposed on me by Wilson. This is now going on. Half of the force is back to the position and is trying to complete on the right although the situation is difficult and the right flank is still severely engaged. All routes are being bombed by continuous patrols of the enemy air force which is completely in control. There is a great shortage of arms and fighting stores, and our Air Force is reduced to lamentable strength. The position is naturally

strong but the troops are weary and the supply of equipment, chiefly weapons, is inadequate. If we succeed in establishing this position the troops will be subjected to an overwhelming preponderance of the enemy air force. All control has been lost by the Greek Command on this front. I understand that the morale of the political leaders is very shaken but am not well informed on this point.

General Blamey's despatch caused us so much concern that in forwarding a copy of it to our Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, who is at present in London, we cabled the following comments:

From earlier messages we had realised the gravity of the situation but Blamey's latest message is most alarming. In view of the seriousness of the position disclosed regarding the shortage of arms, the inadequacy of fighting equipment, and the heavy reduction of Air Force strength, evacuation of our troops will now be rendered doubly hazardous and it is feared that if extreme measures are not taken it will end in a catastrophe. We must demand that the utmost protection is given our troops and that everything possible is done to provide additional Air Force cover for them. Blamey's message is so alarming that we ask you to give it your almost exclusive attention to ensure that in whatever possible way help can be given it is most definitely forthcoming.

¹ Mr. Fadden.

² 1st (British) Armoured Brigade Group.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

371 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA

371

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the acting Prime Minister of Australia

22 April 1941

I am much obliged to you for your telegram of 22 April (No. 370) which has today been considered by the New Zealand War Cabinet. We have most heartily welcomed the formation of an Anzac Corps and we are happy to feel that the imperishable traditions of its illustrious predecessor have already been fully maintained by the new generation of Australians and New Zealanders. We could ask nothing better than that our troops should fight side by side with yours.

The views that you have expressed as the result of General Blamey's communication have received our careful and anxious consideration. We had already—and more than once—requested the British authorities to take every step to ensure that if the worst came to the worst evacuation from Greece could be successfully accomplished, and as a result of your communication we have today despatched a message to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the text of which is contained in my immediately following telegram. ¹

¹ No. 372.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

372 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

372

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

22 April 1941

Through the kindness of the acting Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia I have today received by telegraph the text of a report made to the Commonwealth Government by Lieutenant-General Blamey, a copy of which I understand has been forwarded to Mr. Menzies in London. Together with the Australian Government we are of course much perturbed at the situation that has developed, and I should like at once to add my representations to those which will no doubt be made by Mr. Menzies, firstly, that all possible steps be taken to supply our troops with the necessities of war to enable them to defend themselves in the position in which they are placed, and secondly, to request you again to instruct those responsible on the spot to take every step that is possible, having regard to the situation as it has developed and is developing both in Greece and in Africa, to ensure a safe and rapid evacuation from Greece should this become necessary. We feel that we can ask no more and I am sure you will agree that we can expect no less.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

373 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

373

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

22 April 1941

I am very grateful for your message (No. 372) and for its generous and courageous terms. We have been kept very short of information ourselves, but as most brigades were working independently and moving fast, these complicated operations were apparently most difficult to follow. The Anzacs and New Zealanders have hit the enemy far harder than he has hit them and have acquitted themselves in a glorious manner. Our troops are now on the Thermopylae position, but I have no doubt that their early re-embarkation will be necessary. All plans were made some time ago for this operation and have only to be applied to existing circumstances. The three Commanders-in-Chief are re-uniting at Cairo in order to concert the highest possible action. You can be sure that the safe withdrawal of men will have precedence over any other consideration except that of honour. However, the battle in Libya cannot be endangered by withdrawing too much of our Air Force from there. I have so greatly admired the [word mutilated] your Government and my thoughts turn many times a day to the fortunes of your one splendid New Zealand Division and of my heroic friend Freyberg. Highly competent officers on the spot seem to feel good confidence in their ability to solve the problem in the Greek theatre, but, undoubtedly, a phase of acute anxiety lies before us there.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

374 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

374

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

22 April 1941

Further to my telegram of 20 April (No. 369), the latest developments in Greece are as follows:

After a meeting on 21 April between Wavell, Wilson, and Palairet with the King of Greece and Tsouderos,¹ the President of the Council later in the day communicated to Palairet a document which, after expressing to the British Government and to the gallant Imperial troops gratitude for the aid extended to Greece, stated that it was impossible for the Greeks to continue the struggle with any chance of success. The document added that in the opinion of the Greek Government further sacrifices by the British Expeditionary Force would be in vain, and that its withdrawal in time seemed to be rendered necessary by circumstances and by interests common to the struggle.

The position of the Greek forces in Epirus and Southern Albania is confused and obscure, but it appears that already, and without authority, one of the local commanders has entered into negotiations with the German authorities for an armistice. There is no question of the Greek Government giving this action their approval, and indeed steps have been taken by them to repudiate any such arrangements, which they hope to keep secret.

Nevertheless, in the existing conditions, it has been thought safer that the King and the President should leave for Crete immediately, and

they are doing so this morning. An assurance has been given to General Wilson by the President of the Council that order will be completely maintained in **Athens** as long as the Government remains, and, when it leaves, a strong military commission will be set up to ensure General Wilson's operations.

Palairet is evacuating as many as possible of the British colony from **Athens** and will himself probably leave shortly for **Crete** with a skeleton staff.

Meanwhile our forces have withdrawn to a defensive line in the region of **Thermopylae**, and our commanders have full authority to take all steps necessary in their judgment for the safety of the forces. They have very fully in mind the considerations which you have advanced concerning the Australian and New Zealand troops.

¹ M. Emmanuel Tsouderos, a Venizelist, ex-Minister of Finance; appointed Prime Minister and President of the Council, 21 Apr 1941; Prime Minister of the Greek Government in exile (London).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

375 – HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

375

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

23 April 1941

You are probably aware that it has been decided to evacuate from Greece all British, Australian, and New Zealand troops. Arrangements are now being made to receive our troops some days hence at Alexandria and Port Said, pass them through [transit?] camps near ports, and concentrate them at Helwan. All efforts are being directed towards making their journey from the docks to the camps and their reception in camp comfortable. There is as yet no authoritative information regarding likely casualties, but the difficulties of evacuation will be obvious.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

376 – GENERAL WAVELL, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE CHIEF OF THE GENERAL STAFF (WELLINGTON)

376

General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington)

26 April 1941

The following general review of the situation in the Middle East is private and most secret for the Prime Ministers of Australia and New Zealand and for Generals Sturdee ¹ and Duigan:

GREECE: Heavy enemy attacks have been delivered; the evacuation plan has been accelerated due to the Greek collapse in Epirus leaving open the route via Agrinion to Athens. A total of 13,000 troops embarked during the nights 24–25 and 25–26 April, but advice of their safe arrival at Crete or Egypt has not yet been received. The chief danger is from attack on shipping during the passage. This includes the bulk of the 19th Australian Brigade and one New Zealand, believed the 6th, brigade.

² There are 23,000 for embarkation on the night 26–27 April, leaving 12,000 for embarkation on the nights 28–29 and 29–30 April. Enemy attacks on aerodromes destroyed our fighter air force in Greece, but heavy air attacks on troops have not so far caused serious casualties. One New Zealand brigade, believed to be the 4th, assisted by the Australian Royal Artillery and the Royal Engineers, are in position

¹ Lieutenant-General Vernon Ashton Hobart Sturdee, CB, CBE, DSO; Chief of the General Staff, Australian Military Forces, 1940–42; Head of Australian Military Mission to Washington, 1942–44; GOC 1st Australian Army, 1944–45; Chief of the General Staff, Australia, 1945–to date.

² It was in fact the 5th New Zealand Infantry Brigade.

at Erithrai, north of Athens, covering the evacuation and withdrawal to the Peloponnese for final evacuation. General Blamey is now in Cairo and reports that the spirit of the troops is excellent.¹ The Australian troops will refit in Palestine and the New Zealand troops in Egypt. I fear that all equipment will be lost.

CYRENAICA AND EGYPT: The Tobruk garrison under Morshead² is carrying out a very active defence and is inflicting heavy losses on the enemy at small cost whenever he attacks. The enemy has certainly been forced to pause for reinforcements and, owing to the difficulty of maintenance, I do not anticipate a reinforced German armoured advance before the second week of May. The internal Egyptian situation is steadier, but it will react violently to any enemy success or air bombing.

Included in future German moves may be the reinforcement of his present weak Libyan air force from the Balkans, possible air-and sea-borne attacks on Crete or Cyprus, airborne landings in Syria and the use of Syrian aerodromes, pressure on Bundar Abbas, and the support of anti-British elements in Iraq.

¹ General Blamey had been appointed Deputy Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.

² Lieutenant-General Sir Leslie James Morshead, KCB, KBE, CMG, DSO; Officer Commanding 18th Infantry Brigade, AIF, 1940–41; GOC 9th Division, AIF (Tobruk), 1941–42; commanded Australian Corps in Middle East, 1942–44; GOC 2nd Australian Army, 1944.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

377 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE WAR OFFICE

377

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the War Office

28 April 1941

This message is personal for the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from General Wavell. Repeated to the Chief of the General Staff (Wellington) for the Prime Minister of New Zealand and to General Sturdee for the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia.

The evacuation situation so far as is known at present, is that 30,000 to 35,000 troops have been embarked, including those on the night of 26–27 April. Of the above, about 20,000 are believed to be in Crete, and the remainder on the way to Egypt. Those in Crete being organised for the defence of the island apparently comprise part of the New Zealand Division with some British and Australians.

It was hoped to embark 7000 troops last night, leaving 8000 for embarkation on the night of 28–29 April; 4000 are reported to be cut off at Nauplion by an enemy air landing and may have been captured. The morale of the troops is reported to be good and the majority are complete with personal weapons and equipment.

There has been a number of ships sunk during the operations, but the casualties are not known.

Pending confirmation, all the above should be taken with reserve.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

378 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

378

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

28 April 1941

With reference to my telegram of 22 April (No. 374), the following is a translation of the Greek Government's document summarised in the first paragraph of that message:

While expressing to the British Government and to the gallant Imperial troops their gratitude for the aid extended to Greece in her defence against an unjust aggressor, the Greek Government are obliged to make the following statements:

After having for more than six months conducted a victorious struggle against strong, superior enemy forces, the Greek Army has now reached a state of exhaustion and, moreover, finds itself completely deprived of certain resources, such as munitions, motorised vehicles, and aeroplanes, which are indispensable for the pursuit of the war—resources with which it was, in any case, inadequately supplied from the outbreak of hostilities. These conditions make it impossible for the Greeks to continue the struggle with any chance of success and deprive them of all hope of being able to lend some assistance to their valiant allies. At the same time, in view of the importance of the British [contingents ?], of the aviation at their disposal, and of the extensive front heroically defended by them, the Imperial Forces have an absolute need for the assistance of the Greek Army, without which they could not prolong their own resistance for more than a few days.

In these conditions, while incapable of producing any useful effect, the continuance of the struggle would have no other result than to bring about the collapse of the Greek Army and bloodshed useless to the Allied forces. In consequence the Royal Government is obliged to state that further sacrifice of the **British Expeditionary Force** would be in vain and that its withdrawal in time seems to be rendered necessary by circumstances and by interests common to the struggle.

The release of this document for publication in connection with the evacuation is being discussed with the **Greek Government.** ¹

¹ The Greek Government agreed to the publication of the text of this document.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

379 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

379

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

30 April 1941

The following is the text of a statement made by the Prime Minister in the House of Commons today:

As I am most anxious to give the House, the Nation, and the Empire information at the earliest possible moment, and also in view of the extravagant claims made by the enemy, I think it right now to give the figures, so far as they are known to us, of the evacuation of the Empire Forces from Greece. Up to the time when evacuation was seen to be inevitable we had landed about 60,000 men in Greece, including one New Zealand and one Australian division. Of these, at least 45,000 have been evacuated. Considering that our Air Force was, through the superiority of the enemy, forced to leave the airfields from which alone it could effectively cover the retreat of the troops, and that only a small portion of it could cover the points of embarkation, this must be considered remarkable. The conduct of the troops, and especially the rearguards, in fighting their way so many miles to the sea merits the highest praise. This is the first instance where air bombing prolonged day after day has failed to break the discipline and order of the marching columns, who besides being thus assailed from the air were pursued by no less than three German armoured divisions as well as the whole strength of the German mechanised forces which could be brought to bear. In the actual fighting, principally on Mount Olympus, around Grevena, and at Thermopylae, about 3000 casualties, killed and wounded, are reported to have been suffered by our troops. This was a

very small part of the losses inflicted on the Germans, who on several occasions, sometimes for two days at a time, were brought to a standstill by forces one fifth of their number. Nor of course does it take any account of the German losses incurred in their assaults upon the Greek and Yugoslav armies. It will I daresay be possible to give a fuller account in the debate next week, but I think I have said enough to show the House that painful as are our losses we have much to be thankful for and the Empire Forces have much to be proud of.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

380 – GENERAL FREYBERG, GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, NEW ZEALAND DIVISION (CRETE), TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

380

General Freyberg, General Officer Commanding, New Zealand Division (Crete), to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

30 April 1941

After a most difficult month's fighting I have just arrived at Crete from evacuating the 6th Infantry Brigade, the last of the New Zealand Division, from the southern extremity of Greece. With the exception of stragglers, inevitable in such a campaign, I can assure the Government that the Division has been kept intact and that our losses have not been excessive; it is impossible to get the full figures until a great deal of sorting out has been done. I estimate our losses at between 100–200 killed, 500–600 wounded, and approximately 800 missing, but at the moment these can only be taken as a very rough estimate.

The Division has carried out a very difficult role and has done excellently. The readiness and fortitude of all ranks under very trying times has been commended by all and fully justifies the high opinion formed of the quality of our forces. I am not in a position to send any detailed account, which will follow later. As I had to destroy all codes and was cut off from all cable communication, I hope my Prime Minister will make allowances for the lack of communications during the operations. We are all in good heart. The 6th Brigade and details are *en route* to Egypt and the others I hope will follow. I am to see General Wavell today and will then travel with my staff to Cairo by air to carry out the refitting of the Division.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

381 – HEADQUARTERS 2ND NZEF (CAIRO) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

381

Headquarters 2nd NZEF (Cairo) to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 May 1941

During the last twenty-four hours a large part of the 24th Battalion arrived in Egypt together with elements of Divisional Headquarters, all the nurses, and Brigadiers Miles and Barrowclough.

General Freyberg is temporarily commanding Crete with the 4th and 5th Infantry Brigades, including the Maoris, and large parties of artillery, Army Service Corps, engineers, cavalry, and machine gunners, all organised as infantry.

In general, casualties have been light and are estimated by the Brigadiers at only 10 per cent over all, of which a proportion are probably prisoners of war and others may even yet turn up. In the 4th and 5th Field Regiments and the Machine Gun Battalion casualties have been very light. Battle casualties in the Divisional Cavalry have been light but some are still missing; the 6th Infantry Brigade is in a similar position to the Divisional Cavalry. The 21st Battalion is the only unit with heavy casualties, but exact details are not known.¹

So far we can account definitely in Crete and Egypt for 13,000 out of a total of about 16,000 in Greece, and the probabilities are that another 1000 will arrive in due course.

All ranks are in excellent spirits and are certain that they are far better men than the enemy.

¹ New Zealand casualties in Greece were:

Killed	180
Died of wounds	50
Died on active service (includes deaths through sickness, accident, &c.)	10
Missing	26
Wounded	371
Prisoners of war (includes 225 wounded and prisoners of war and 25 died of wounds while prisoners of war)	1876
Total	2513

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

382 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

382

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

2 May 1941

The whole Dominion will be greatly relieved and inspired by your message of 30 April (No. 380). With all its hazards the decision to help Greece has been nobly sustained and supported by the amazing achievements of your men. Whatever the future may bring, our souls are strengthened by the fact that the step was taken with all its known dangers and risks, and nations which make and carry out such decisions will face whatever may come, and conquer. It is on such achievements that the foundations of the future are being laid, and it is this knowledge which sustains and strengthens the inspiration to be free.

I extend to you personally, and to your officers and men, the heartfelt gratitude and congratulations of the Government, the War Cabinet, and the people of the Dominion for the truly magnificent stand you have made in the face of overwhelming odds. Never has the Dominion been more proud of its men than it is today.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

383 – GENERAL FREYBERG, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, CRETE, TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

383

General Freyberg, Commander-in-Chief, Crete, to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 May 1941

Your telegram gave us great satisfaction. Although we have had a hard time, the Division has done as well as was possible. We are now awaiting an attack which will be delivered in the next day or so. I know that, as you have done in the past, you will help us all you can, for which my very grateful thanks.

When Generals Wavell and Wilson got me to take on the job of Commander-in-Chief here as a temporary measure two or three days ago, they said to me: 'No division could have carried out the series of withdrawals in Greece except the New Zealand Division.'

The Division was attacked by five German divisions but it continued to carry out rearguard actions from the north to the extreme south of Greece, covering the withdrawal of the whole force, and eventually embarking upon an open beach.

Although a reverse, our expedition, in so far as the New Zealand Expeditionary Force is concerned, will ever remain an epic of endurance and military skill.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

384 – SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY BY GENERAL SIR ARCHIBALD P. WAVELL, GCB, CMC, MC

384

*Special Order of the Day by General Sir Archibald P. Wavell, GCB,
CMC, MC*

5 May 1941

I wish to congratulate all the troops who took part in the expedition to Greece on the magnificent courage, skill, and discipline which they showed in one of the most difficult and trying operations which Imperial Forces have ever experienced.

The heavy losses they have inflicted on the enemy and the fighting quality which they have shown will have a great effect on the war and enable us to face the coming struggle in the Middle East with confidence.

On behalf of the Army, I have thanked the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force for the self-sacrificing help which they gave during the operations and the re-embarkation.

A. P. Wavell,

Commander-in-Chief,

Middle East

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

385 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

385

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

8 May 1941

On 26 April, when the Division was south of the Corinth Canal,¹ I took over command of the British forces in Greece from General Wilson who was leaving. The position was most critical. We were in full retreat and had been ordered to blow up our guns and abandon all equipment, except personal weapons and equipment, and make for the beaches. The New Zealanders then under my command were the 4th and 5th Infantry Brigade Groups.²

The British authorities had issued sums of money to their troops to buy food or hire boats in the event of their being left on the beaches or cut off. I considered that I should do the same and distributed £2000 in Greek currency.

I wish to point out that it was [obvious ?] we were fighting a [hopeless ?] battle, the enemy having landed airborne troops against us at Corinth and bombing us without respite. The supply system had broken down entirely and we should be forced to live on the country. I issued money to all New Zealand officers I could contact to enable them to buy food and to pay Greek boatmen should this be necessary. Many New Zealand officers to whom I gave money spent it and others are still missing.

During the next three days the situation was as critical as can be imagined and I was unable to keep any records of decisions. Eventually we took 3820 men from Monemvasia and a like number from Marathon beach, east of Athens. Unfortunately, a certain number of New Zealanders who were at the Base and not under my orders have not yet

arrived; many men are still arriving by small boats from Greece.

Under these special circumstances I would ask the Government to approve my action and accept responsibility for the special sums that have been issued. As it is I have offered to pay any Greek shipowner [*four words uncipherable*] ³ for any New Zealand soldier, i.e., rescued from mainland or island, and I would request the Government to give me financial authority to deal with rescue work we are endeavouring to carry out.

You can gather from the foregoing what a critical position our forces were in during the last days in Greece when we carried out our role of rearguard covering the retreat of the British forces.

¹ One New Zealand brigade only, the 6th, plus Divisional Headquarters, crossed the Corinth Canal. On 26 Apr the 5th Brigade was in Crete while the 4th Brigade was south of Thebes holding the Kriekouki Pass. The 4th and 5th Brigades were evacuated from beaches east of Athens and the 6th from Monemvasia, in the south-east of the Peloponnese.

² This should read: '4th and 6th Infantry Brigade Groups.' The 5th Infantry Brigade had embarked on the night of 24–25 Apr.

³ This was probably the amount of the reward.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

386 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER¹ TO GENERAL FREYBERG

386

The acting Prime Minister¹ to General Freyberg

11 May 1941

With reference to your telegram dated 8 May (No. 385). Full approval has been given by the Government to all the sums disposed of by you in the manner stated, and you are authorised to expend any further sums you consider necessary to assist the rescue of New Zealanders from Greece.

¹ Hon. W. Nash. The Prime Minister had left New Zealand on 3 May for the Middle East.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

CRETE

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448 — The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the acting Prime Minister of New Zealand p. 325

449 — The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg p. 327

450 — The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg

451 — The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg p. 328

452 — General Freyberg to the acting Prime Minister of New Zealand

**453 — Supplementary Report by the Rt. Hon. P. Fraser on the
Evacuation of Troops from Crete — [Extract] p. 329**

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

387 – GENERAL FREYBERG¹ TO GENERAL WAVELL, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MIDDLE EAST

387

General Freyberg¹ to General Wavell, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East

1 May 1941

With reference to the War Office appreciation of the scale of attack on Crete.² The forces at my disposal are totally inadequate to meet the attack envisaged. Unless the number of fighter aircraft is greatly increased and naval forces are made available to deal with a seaborne attack I cannot hope to hold out with land forces alone, which, as a result of the campaign in Greece, are now devoid of any artillery, have insufficient tools for digging, very little transport, and inadequate war reserves of equipment and ammunition. The force here can and will fight, but cannot hope to repel invasion without full support from the Navy and Air Force. If, for other reasons, these cannot be made available at once, I urge that the question of holding Crete should be reconsidered. I consider it my duty under the terms of my charter³ to inform the New Zealand Government of the situation in which the greater part of the New Zealand Division is now placed.

¹ General Freyberg had been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the forces on Crete on 30 Apr 1941.

² For the text of this appreciation see No. 388.

³ See No. 39.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

388 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

388

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

1 May 1941

I feel it is my duty to report on the military situation in Crete where I am Commander-in-Chief of the British, Australian, and New Zealand troops.

The decision has been taken in London that Crete must be held at all costs. Hitherto the scale of attack envisaged was by aircraft and airborne troops only.

I have just received the following appreciation from the War Office:

The following is a summary of JIC ¹ appreciation of the scale of attack on Crete for your appreciation:

A German attack on Crete by simultaneous airborne and seaborne expeditions is believed to be imminent. The scale of airborne attack is estimated at 3000–4000 parachutists or airborne troops in the first sortie. Two or three sorties per day are possible from Greece and three or four from Rhodes if Rhodes is not used as a dive-bomber base. All the above with fighter escort. Heavy bombing attacks are to be expected immediately prior to the arrival of air and seaborne troops. The main fighter and dive-bombing support will probably be based on Rhodes.

The following is our estimate based on the establishment of operational aircraft available in the Balkans for all purposes: 315 long-range bombers, 60 twin-engined fighters, 240 dive bombers, and 270 single-engined fighters. The last two categories would require extra tanks if operated from north of the Corinth Canal.

Only very small attacks can be expected from points south of this owing to the shortage of aerodromes in Morea, but some sixty to ninety dive bombers and a similar number of single-engined fighters could operate from Rhodes, provided that the aerodromes in Rhodes are not required for other operations. It is estimated that both troops and shipping are ample for a seaborne operation and lighters for the transport of tanks are also believed to be available, hence the scale of seaborne attack is dependent on the extent to which the enemy can evade our naval forces. Reinforcements of enemy naval forces and shipping from Italy are possible, but would involve using the hazardous route round Cape Matapan if the Corinth Canal is unusable.

In my opinion Crete can be held only with the full support of the Navy and Air Force. There is no evidence of naval forces capable of guaranteeing us against seaborne invasion, and the air force in the island consists of six Hurricanes and seventeen obsolete aircraft. Troops can and will fight, but as the result of the campaign in Greece are devoid of any artillery and have insufficient tools for digging, little transport, and inadequate war reserves of equipment and ammunition.

I would strongly represent to your Government the grave situation in which the bulk of the Division is placed, and recommend that you bring pressure to bear on the highest plane in London either to supply us with sufficient means to defend the island or to review the decision that Crete must be held. Official representations upon this matter have of course been made by me to the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East.

¹ Joint Intelligence Committee.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

389 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE

389

General Freyberg to the Minister of Defence

1 May 1941

I have now had time to take stock of the position in Crete where we have 8000 New Zealanders, including the 4th and 5th Brigades¹ and parts of other Divisional units. After an evacuation such as the one we have been through, where units are taken from beaches in several ships, there is an inevitable splitting up of organisation, and we are now so split up that we must go as soon as possible to Egypt, where the balance of our force is situated, to sort out and fill up our casualties and re-equip. In the meantime we are being held for the defence of Crete, and until we are relieved by other troops of that responsibility we must stay here.

For the information of the Prime Minister, I saw General Wavell here yesterday, and he informed me that General Blamey had expressed the desire to keep the Anzac Corps in being for possible war in Palestine. I told the Commander-in-Chief that I had no power to make such a decision, and that my Government would have to be consulted. I think that General Wavell will approach you on this matter.²

Next, General Wavell asked me to take over command of all troops in Crete. I said that I did not want to but wanted to get the Division back to Egypt to reorganise and fit for further action. Further, I said that my Government would not agree to the splitting up of the Division and to its being kept apart.

General Wavell said that he realised this, but until he had troops from Home to replace us the New Zealand troops would have to remain. He also made a personal point of my taking over the job of Commander-

in-Chief in Crete, commanding all the New Zealand, Australian, and British forces here until after the possible attack had been delivered. I have therefore done so as a temporary measure only, and in the meantime have placed Brigadier Puttick in command of the two New Zealand brigades. I am now reorganising the defences of Crete, and will communicate to the New Zealand Government regarding the position in which the New Zealand forces are placed here. I hope these measures I have taken will meet with the Government's approval. I am most anxious to get all our men back to Base and again re-constitute the Division.

¹ The 6th Infantry Brigade was evacuated from Greece to Egypt.

² See Volume II, *Proposed Formation of Australian and New Zealand Army Corps*.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

390 – SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY – BY – MAJOR-GENERAL B. C.
FREYBERG, VC, CB, CMG, DSO, COMMANDER, BRITISH TROOPS IN CRETE

390

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

by

*Major-General B. C. Freyberg, VC, CB, CMG, DSO, Commander,
British Troops in Crete*

1 May 1941

The withdrawal from Greece has now been completed. It has been a difficult operation. A smaller force held a much larger one at bay for over a month and then withdrew from an open beach. This rearguard battle and the withdrawal has been a great feat of arms. The fighting qualities and steadiness of the troops were beyond praise.

Today the British forces in Crete stand and face another threat, the possibility of invasion. The threat of a landing is not a new one. In England we have faced it for nearly a year. If it comes here it will be delivered with all the accustomed air activity. We have in the last month learned a certain amount about the enemy air methods. If he attacks us here in Crete, the enemy will be meeting our troops on even terms, and those of us who met his infantry in the last month ask for no better chance. We are to stand now and fight him back. Keep yourselves fit and be ready for immediate action. I am confident that the force at our disposal will be adequate to defeat any attack that may be delivered upon this island.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

391 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO GENERAL FREYBERG

391

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to General Freyberg

c. 1 May 1941

Congratulations on your vitally important command. I feel confident that your fine troops will [thrash ?] the parachutists. Every good wish.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

392 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

392

General Wavell to General Freyberg

2 May 1941

With reference to your telegram of 1 May (No. 387).

The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, and I all consider the War Office scale of attack exaggerated and have so informed them in a telegram which is being repeated to you (No. 393). However, it is quite agreed that a serious scale of attack is likely and the urgent needs of your force are realised. It is possible that recent events in Iraq may divert part of the enemy's air force.

The Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, is prepared to support you if Crete is attacked.

The position regarding air support is difficult. We are going through a lean period as regards fighter aircraft, but every effort is being made from Home to reinforce us as early as possible.

Arrangements are being made to send you artillery, tools, and other requirements as soon as possible. A separate cable is being sent to you in this connection.¹

I am most anxious to re-form your Division at the earliest opportunity and am trying to make arrangements, reference my letter,² to relieve the New Zealand troops from Crete, but at the moment my resources are stretched to the limit. Would you agree, if necessary, to allow New Zealand reinforcements in Egypt to take over the protection of aerodromes and points on Lines of Communication in the Western

Desert to relieve British troops for Crete?

I have most definite instructions from the War Cabinet to hold Crete and, even if the question were reconsidered, I am doubtful if the troops could be removed before the enemy attack.

The difficulties and dangers of your situation are fully realised, but I am confident that you and the magnificent troops at your disposal will be equal to the task. We have very anxious times ahead in the Middle East for the next few weeks.

You are of course quite right to inform your Government of the situation.

¹ Not published.

² Not traced.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

393 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE WAR OFFICE

393

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the War Office

c. 2 May 1941

Repeated to Creforce.

It is agreed that information points to an early attack on Crete by simultaneous airborne and seaborne expeditions. We must however bear in mind the possibility that this is a cover for a plan to attack Cyprus, Syria, and Iraq. The latter possibility is suggested by latest developments in Iraq. Your estimated scale of air attack is considered excessive. Your figures regarding bombers appear to be based upon establishments of aircraft in the Balkans, Sicily, and Libya. Our estimate based on operational aircraft likely to be available in the Balkans is as follows: 150 single-engined fighters, 40 twin-engined fighters. We think that the bulk of the air force taking part would be based in Greece. Our information points to insufficient seagoing shipping being left in the Aegean for a large-scale seaborne operation, but if Turkey allows passage through the Dardanelles shipping and lighters should be available from Roumania.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

394 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

394

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

2 May 1941

I have been advised by the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Division that he is now in command in Crete. He is of the opinion that the island can be held only with full support from the Navy and Air Force, and he has set out the main points of a new appreciation of the scale of attack now believed imminent. As a result of the campaign in Greece our troops are devoid of any artillery, have insufficient tools for digging, little transport, and inadequate war reserves of equipment and ammunition. It is apparent also that the enemy can bring to bear upwards of 800 planes, whereas we are advised that the British air force on the island consists of only six Hurricanes and seventeen obsolete aircraft. These facts, taken together with the absence of naval forces capable of guaranteeing against seaborne invasion, lead us to feel that the situation is one of the utmost gravity. The considerations upon which a decision must be based are fully realised by His Majesty's Government in New Zealand, and they recognise the strategic importance of Crete, particularly in its proximity to Alexandria, Tobruk, and the North African coast. With this knowledge my Government is of the opinion that our troops should either be supplied with sufficient means to defend the island, or that the decision to hold Crete at all costs should be reviewed. I should be extremely grateful if you would give this matter your urgent and personal attention.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

395 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

395

General Freyberg to General Wavell

3 May 1941

The difficulties of the next few weeks are fully realised. You can depend upon all here. We have now sorted out and reorganised our forces and by this evening all will be as ready as can be made within the limits of our present organisation. So long as the Navy support our efforts I feel that all will be well. As regards the New Zealand reinforcement units, I agree to any arrangements Brigadiers Falla and Inglis make about their immediate employment. I know that there cannot be any question of our relief here until after the attack has been launched and repelled. During the last forty-eight hours I have seen all the officers and NCOs of the force; they are in great heart and will do their utmost. Every day we are given enables us to make our positions stronger.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

396 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

396

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

3 May 1941

Reference your telegram of 2 May (No. 394).

I am very glad that the exigencies of evacuation should have carried the New Zealand Division after its brilliant fighting in Greece in such good order to Crete. Every effort naturally will be made to re-equip your troops and, in particular, artillery, in which General Wavell is already strong, is being sent. The successful defence of Crete is one of the most important factors in the defence of Egypt. I am very glad that General Wavell has accepted my suggestion to put Freyberg in command of the whole island, and you may be sure that he will be sustained in every way possible.

The information we have points to an airborne attack being delivered in the near future and it is possible that a seaborne attack may be attempted. The Navy will certainly do their utmost to prevent the latter, which would be a hazardous operation on any large scale. So far as airborne attack is concerned, this should suit the New Zealanders down to the ground, for they will then be able to come to close quarters, man to man, with the enemy, who will not have the advantage of the tanks and artillery on which he so largely relies. Should the enemy get a landing in Crete that will not be the end of his embarrassments. The island is hilly and rough, giving peculiar scope to the qualities of your troops.

It is possible, however, that the enemy is only feinting at Crete and will make farther east. We have to consider all contingencies in the employment of our scant and overpressed air force. Why is it scant and overpressed? Not because we do not possess evergrowing resources and reserves here; not because we have not done everything in human power to reinforce the Middle East with air[craft]. It is simply because of the physical difficulties of getting aircraft and their servicing personnel to the spot by the various routes and methods open to us. You may be sure that we shall try our best to reinforce our air power, and we are at this moment making very far-reaching but hazardous efforts. The disposition between competing needs of such air forces as are in the East must be left to the Commander-in-Chief. I am not without hope that in a month or so things will be better in the Middle East.

The dignity and stoicism of New Zealand in enduring the agonising suspense of the evacuation is admired by everyone here. It is an inexpressible relief to the Empire that, after inflicting so much loss upon the enemy and paying our debt of honour to Greece, the enterprise has been concluded so successfully.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

397 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

397

The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

4 May 1941

With reference to your telegram (No. 388) setting out the position in Crete, the Government have made urgent representations to His Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom on the lines indicated by you. We would like you to know also that at the request of Headquarters, 2nd NZEF, we are taking urgent steps for the provision and shipment from New Zealand of additional motor equipment. ¹

¹ This request was made in a telegram dated 29 Apr 1941.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

398 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

398

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

5 May 1941

Many thanks for your cable.¹ Cannot understand nervousness. I am not in the least anxious about an airborne attack. I have made my dispositions and feel that with the troops now at my disposal I can cope adequately. However, a combination of seaborne and airborne attack is different. If that comes before I can get the guns and transport here the situation will be difficult. Even so, provided the Navy can help, I trust that all will be well.

When we get our equipment and transport, and with a few extra fighter aircraft, it should be possible to hold Crete. Meanwhile, there will be a period here during which we shall be vulnerable. Everybody is in great form and most anxious to renew the battle with our enemy whom we hammered in Greece whenever we met him.

All the New Zealanders are greatly and justly incensed at not being mentioned adequately in the BBC and press accounts of the vital and gallant part played by them in the Greek rearguard action.

¹ This could hardly refer to Mr. Churchill's cable of c. 1 May (No. 391) congratulating General Freyberg on his 'vitally important command' nor to his No. 396 of 3 May to the Prime Minister of New Zealand. The reference to 'nervousness' fits neither cable. No other can be traced.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

399 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

399

General Freyberg to General Wavell

5 May 1941

There are some 10,000 other ranks here without arms and with little or no employment other than getting into trouble with the civil population. Can these men be evacuated as soon as possible? Between the Greeks and ourselves an excellent relationship exists, but it will be imperilled unless we can quickly get rid of our surplus personnel.

By Royal proclamation of the King of Greece what remains of the Greek Army are now placed under my command. Sooner or later the question of feeding, clothing, and equipment will become a problem that must be considered. Am I right to take over the remnants of the Greek Army and re-form them and are we to accept the responsibility of their administration by helping them should it be necessary with food, clothing, and equipment?

Meanwhile, I am proceeding with the job of reorganisation. I have asked the Prime Minister to pick a young Commander and work through him. I am going to pick a small staff of officers to administer the eight battalions that exist. I intend putting in Brigadier Salisbury-Jones ¹ and a number of British officers to help them with their training. What I am doing is, I know, very irregular but action was necessary to keep the Greek authorities in good heart.

I would now be glad if guidance can be given me before I embark upon a full-scale policy. Can I also be told what arms can be spared and when I can expect them for the eight existing Greek battalions?

¹ Major-General A. G. Salisbury-Jones, CBE, MC; head of British Military Mission in Syria 1939–40, South Africa 1941–44; Supreme Headquarters, Allied Expeditionary Force, 1944–45; Head of British Military Mission to France and Military Attaché, Paris, since 1946.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

400 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

400

The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

6 May 1941

The greatest interest and pleasure has been shown in New Zealand on the announcement of your appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Imperial Forces in [Crete](#). I am sure that I am expressing the wishes of both the Government and the people in offering heartiest congratulations. The gravity of the situation is fully understood by the Government and they are confident that you and the men under your command will fulfil your difficult task as magnificently as you did in [Greece](#).

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

401 – LETTER FROM THE CONVICTS OF THE ISLAND OF CRETE TO GENERAL FREYBERG, GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING, ALLIED TROOPS IN CRETE

401

*Letter from the convicts of the island of Crete to General Freyberg,
General Officer Commanding, Allied Troops in Crete*

c. May 1941

SIR

Most unfortunately our dearest Greece succumbed to the higher forces of the Hitlerian regime and the Italian barbarism. Fortunately, however, our island, thanks to its powerful ally, is still free, and she will not only resist against any invader but will in time take up the offensive and free our defenceless Greece.

Every soul in Crete is looking with confidence towards you, our firm allies, and also towards our King and his National Government.

We, too, the convicts, look towards you with gratefulness and hope for the future of our nation, and kindly ask you to stand by our King and Government so that they will take care of us when we get out of prison and see that we also do our little bit in winning this sacred struggle of ours for people's liberty, which is put under the darkness of tyranny.

We whole-heartedly put ourselves under any service, dangerous or not, provided that the cause of our Allied effort is fulfilled.

Trusting that we shall enjoy your proper attention.

We remain,

Respectfully yours,

The convicts of the island of Crete

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

402 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO LIEUTENANT-GENERAL ARTHUR SMITH, GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST

402

General Freyberg to Lieutenant-General Arthur Smith, General Headquarters, Middle East

9 May 1941

Your letter of 5 May.¹ By now you should have received full details of all British units in Crete. The Australian and New Zealand figures have been sent to their respective headquarters.

The following is a summary of the troops organised: three British battalions of 14th Brigade; four weak and improvised battalions from Rangers, Northumberland Hussars, 7th Medium Regiment, 106th Royal Horse Artillery; five Australian battalions; seven New Zealand battalions and two other improvised units. As guns arrive I am forming artillery batteries. In addition there are some 10,000 British and Imperial troops and 10,000 Greeks without arms, 800 Greek airmen without aeroplanes, and 15,000 Italian prisoners of war.

The Greeks are pressing me to raise a Cretan militia but, however desirable this may be, it is dependent on the receipt of arms and the settlement of the policy for the future of the Greek Army. I am impressed with the Greek rank and file but a great deal of dead wood must go, especially officers. However, the King of Greece and the Prime Minister and senior officers are willing at the moment that Greek troops should be put under British officers. As far as manpower is concerned, I am certain that one division could be

¹ Not traced.

raised at once, and two divisions eventually, if the problem is tackled at once before they become despondent from lack of equipment and employment. The problem of officers and instructors will not be so easy and they will require help. There is great scope here for a really live commander, but the man you ask about is not the right man.

Until the Greeks are equipped and trained, four brigade groups is the minimum garrison required for the island. Further details have been given to your Brigadier General Staff. ¹

¹ Brigadier A. Galloway. See

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

403 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL SMITH

403

General Freyberg to General Smith

11 May 1941

As you know, the Greek troops here are under my command by Royal proclamation. There is now the possibility that the King and the Prime Minister will be leaving Crete, and we have endeavoured therefore to settle the conditions under which the Greek Army should be trained and employed. I have already prepared certain proposals as a basis of negotiation to enable my staff to work out detailed proposals. I explained to the King and the Prime Minister that I had been asked by General Headquarters, Middle East, for my recommendations regarding the size and organisation of the Greek Army. I put forward the following proposals which were agreed to in principle:

Firstly, that the Greek Army should be organised on British war establishments.

Secondly, that Greek troops should be brigaded with British troops and that Greek commanders should serve directly under the command of British brigadiers and staffs, and that the British commander in Crete should have the right to draft Greek soldiers into technical units, such as British artillery, engineers, medical, and other services, with a view to forming Greek technical units eventually. I also suggested that the British Commander-in-Chief should have the right to send Greek officers and NCOs to Egypt for instruction.

Thirdly, I suggested that in questions of procedure and detail of drill and training, &c., Greek practices should as far as possible apply, but where British equipment is used the Greek Army should adapt itself to our methods of training.

Fourthly, that the Greek Army should be under Greek Army Headquarters for discipline.

As regards the size of the Greek Army, I had hoped to discuss this with the Brigadier General Staff, Middle East, when he came over. I have worked out that in all we shall require twelve Greek battalions and three Greek field batteries, and I consider that we should go ahead and raise these as soon as it is possible to arm and equip them, beginning with the equipment of the best as arms arrive and continuing until the twelve units have been raised. Should they be needed it would be quite possible to raise at least double the suggested number. I send you this information because it is necessary to start reorganisation at once. I am moving certain Greek battalions to dig defensive positions and have allotted them minor operational roles. The men are as yet mostly untrained, but I think the material will be good. Can you send me word letting me know if I am to be given a free hand, and do you want me to report progress from time to time?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

404 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

404

General Freyberg to General Wavell

16 May 1941

My plans for the defence of Crete have been completed, and I have just returned from a final tour of the defences. The visits have encouraged me greatly. Everywhere all ranks are fit and morale is now high. All the defences have been strengthened and the positions wired as much as possible. We have forty-five field guns in action with adequate ammunition dumped. There are two infantry tanks at each aerodrome. Carriers and transport are still being unloaded and delivered. The 2nd Battalion, Leicesters, have arrived and will make Heraklion stronger. Although I do not wish to seem over-confident, I feel that at least we will give an excellent account of ourselves, and with the help of the Royal Navy I trust that Crete will be held.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

405 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

405

General Freyberg to General Wavell

16 May 1941

I have arranged for the King to come inside our perimeter with the Prime Minister.¹ With regard to possible evacuation under

¹ The King was occupying a house at Bella Capina, some two miles to the west of Canea, situated in the middle of a plain and surrounded by olive groves—an ideal place for a paratroop landing. On 19 May he moved to the house in which the Prime Minister (M. Tsouderos) was living: it was situated against the foothills to the south of the village of Perivolia.

pressure, I presume we could get him to a port south-east of Canea, Selinos Kastelli. If that is not possible arrangements will have to be made for him to be evacuated from Suda Bay by flying boat.¹

¹ The evacuation from Crete of the King of Greece, members of the Royal family, and the Greek Government had been the subject of a long exchange of cables since their arrival on the island from Greece.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

406 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

406

General Freyberg to General Wavell

18 May 1941

My telegram of 16 May (No. 405). The plan for the safety of the King and the Government has been altered at the King's request and with my approval. He will remain in the house in the hills to the south with a platoon of New Zealanders as guard in addition to the Greeks, all under the command of Colonel Blunt.² In an emergency, they will cover the party's retreat to the southern port of Ag Rumeli, twenty-five miles due south of Canea, which can be reached by tracks, and where arrangements would have to be made for their evacuation by flying boat or warship. Please inform me if these plans are approved.

² Colonel J. S. Blunt, British Military Attaché.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

407 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

407

General Freyberg to General Wavell

20 May 1941

Further to my telegram of 18 May (No. 406). The party will arrive at Ag Rumeli on the night of 22-23 May. The Ambassador's party of fifteen will arrive at Sphakia on the morning of 21 May. If they are not taken off before daylight on 22 May they will endeavour to move to Ag Rumeli. If they are not at Ag Rumeli when the aeroplane or ship arrives for the Royal party please call for them at Sphakia. Their signal will be SOS.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

408 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

408

General Freyberg to General Wavell

20 May 1941

Today has been a hard one.¹ We have been hard pressed. I believe that so far we hold the aerodromes at Maleme, Heraklion, and Retimo and the two harbours. The margin by which we hold them is a bare one and it would be wrong of me to paint an optimistic picture. The fighting has been heavy and large numbers of Germans have been killed. Communications are most difficult. The scale of air attack upon us has been severe. Everybody here realises the vital issue and we will fight it out.

Later: A German operation order with most ambitious objectives, all of which failed, has just been captured.

¹ A situation report from Creforce to GHQ, Middle East, at 9 a.m. on 20 May read: 'Attack started. Troops landed by parachute and glider. Estimate approximately 500 parachutists south-west of Canea. Approximately 50 troop-carrying aircraft. More now approaching. Situation obscure.'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

409 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO)2

409

*General Freyberg to the Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo)*²

20 May 1941

We have had a hard day. Everything depends on the next few hours. The whole of my force has been in action. The importance of the battle is realised by us all. The men are in great form and fighting well.

² Mr. Fraser had arrived in Cairo on 15 May.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

410 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO GENERAL FREYBERG

410

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to General Freyberg

21 May 1941

I am grateful for your telegram. I realise fully the magnitude and the critical importance of the task that confronts you, and the result is anxiously awaited. Every person in New Zealand will I know join with me in heart-felt prayers for your success and in the fullest confidence that all that man can do will be done by you, by every member of the New Zealand forces in Crete, and by your Greek, British, and Australian comrades. May God be with you all.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

411 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

411

General Wavell to General Freyberg

21 May 1941

Your telegram of 20 May (No. 407). It is not considered that the present situation necessitates the immediate evacuation of either party. A premature departure would have a serious adverse effect on Greek opinion. Please pass to the Minister ¹ for comment.

¹ Sir Michael Palairat, British Minister in Crete.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

412 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

412

General Freyberg to General Wavell

21 May 1941

Your telegram No. 411. This place has become no fit abode for important people. The King and the Prime Minister were yesterday morning nearly taken prisoner when fifty parachute troops landed within 500 yards of their house in the hills. I learnt of their escape only from a faint signal picked up last night. With their New Zealand escort, which I can ill afford to be without, the party will be on the south coast as per my telegram of 18 May (No. 406). They are now out of touch with us, even by wireless. As the enemy have landed motor-cycles the risk of capture is now increased.

The Minister left at 3 o'clock this morning to join the Royal party if possible, see telegram of 20 May (No. 407). They had been bombed all day and the Consul had actually to be dug out. From the military point of view, during the parachute attacks and heavy bombing such as we have been through in the last thirty-six hours, nobody is safe. Will you please deal with the Royal and diplomatic situation direct with those concerned as I am out of touch and most anxious about the safety of both parties. Please let me know also that my responsibility for their movements is at an end.²

² The King and his party were evacuated from Ag Rumeli about 4 a.m. on 23 May. A message notifying their safe arrival in Egypt was sent to General Freyberg on 25 May by Sir Michael Palairet.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

413 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

413

General Freyberg to General Wavell

22 May 1941

The position at **Heraklion** is that the enemy appears to have penetrated the town but, as far as can be ascertained, the aerodrome holds. At Retimo we are still in a position to deny the enemy the use of the landing ground but the garrison is being attacked from the east. A successful counter-attack was carried out this morning. At Suda we are occupying a perimeter defence and are in full possession of all our base organisation.

The position at **Maleme** is less secure. The enemy has made tremendous efforts to knock us out and I am bringing in help from Georgiopolis.¹ Owing to severe bombing and heavy casualties one battalion² withdrew from the defences in the immediate vicinity of **Maleme** aerodrome during the night of 20–21 May. Early in the day we still commanded the landing area with machine-gun, trench mortar, and artillery fire. However, at 9.15 a.m. the enemy dropped approximately 500 parachutists just west of the aerodrome, also another lot in the vicinity of the enemy's main concentration at the prison and on the road five miles south-west of **Canea**. At 4.15 p.m. 500 parachutists dropped behind the aerodrome defences and our field guns were put out of action by air action. At 5 p.m. thirty planes landed on the aerodrome and others on the beaches. I am hoping to reinforce **Maleme** tonight but the situation is now obscure and, I feel, perhaps precarious. Everybody here is determined to fight hard. Do all you can to damage the surface of the aerodrome.

I have been informed of the Wellington raid for tonight.

¹ Two battalions of 19th Australian Infantry Brigade.

² 22nd New Zealand Battalion.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

414 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

414

General Wavell to General Freyberg

22 May 1941

The matter has been closely examined with the Navy but I regret that it is impossible to land reinforcements at Suda Bay at present. Your gallant troops must stick it. I have great hopes that the enemy cannot stay the pace much longer. You will be relieved as soon as the situation permits.

I am trying to arrange for a special service commando to land in the south of the island and cross the hills to your assistance,³

If you report that the situation at Maleme is really serious, I hope to arrange for the Royal Air Force to send fighters to strafe the enemy early tomorrow till their ammunition and petrol are exhausted and then land within your protection.

Your magnificent effort is having a great effect and the enemy is in serious difficulties by land and sea. Well done.

³ This commando (800 all ranks) known as 'Layforce', under the command of Colonel R. E. Laycock (Chief of Combined Operations, 1943–47, with the rank of Major-General; CB, DSO) arrived in Crete on the nights of 24 and 26 May.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

415 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO GENERAL FREYBERG

415

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to General Freyberg

23 May 1941

The whole world watches your splendid battle on which great things turn.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

416 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

416

General Freyberg to General Wavell

23 May 1941

Reference your telegram of 22 May (No. 414). The situation at Maleme is really serious. Send all available air help. A full report follows.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

417 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

417

General Freyberg to General Wavell

23 May 1941

The following is a report on the situation as at 10 p.m. GMT, 22 May. The position is clear at Heraklion and also at Retimo, but the enemy have withdrawn at the flanks and have blown the road. Heraklion is now in touch by road with the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders ¹ and I have ordered them to concentrate a battalion and tanks at Heraklion preparatory to reinforcing the Suda garrison, if possible by road. Enemy action has prevented road communication between Force [Headquarters] and Retimo and also, I believe, between Retimo and Heraklion. Retimo has no transport. I have ordered the two garrisons concerned to clear up the situation and they will do so provided the enemy do not carry out any further landing against them.

At Maleme the enemy have been most active. I want you to get the true picture so that our difficulties can be appreciated. They have continued to land troop-carriers, not only on the aerodrome under our shellfire but also on the beaches and a strip to the west, in the most methodical way. In all, fifty-nine landed between 1 p.m. and 4 p.m. today, and this rate of arrival can be taken as the approximate guide for today, 22nd, and yesterday. To deny

¹ A battalion of the Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders had landed at Tymbaki on the night of 18–19 May and had moved inland to guard the Messara Plain, with its potential landing grounds, against capture.

vulnerable area. He is in strength in an area on the road south-west of Canea, and by attacking in the direction of the coast this evening he cut off the troops at Maleme. It was my intention to attack the aerodrome again tonight but the threat to my rear has forced my hand. I have decided to readjust the present insecure position and make ready for secure defence. The serious situation is that Maleme becomes an operational aerodrome within 20,000 metres of Suda Bay.

Small ships landed Germans on the peninsula behind Canea today and this may become a problem. Parachute and beach landings can cut any of our routes at any moment.

All these questions have to be considered and I have decided firstly, that I cannot continue to chance all the rear areas and coastline, and, secondly, that the troops cannot fight without a rest. Therefore I am taking up a line which will lessen my responsibilities. The enemy is now approaching equality in numbers. We shall continue to fight here and at other points in Crete, and we can fight on as long as maintenance does not break down. Everything depends on maintenance in the finish. In my opinion we must continue to use Suda. The only southern ports open are Tymbaki and Sphakia; the road to the latter is not completed and both must be protected, while further transport is essential before they can be used.

Later: 4.30 a.m. GMT, 23 May. Reference your telegram of 22 May (No. 414). I have already cabled you regarding Maleme and the air assistance required. A cable from my AOC, No. A.35,¹ deals with landing grounds and re-fuelling. Our approximate line runs north-west and south-east 200 yards west of Galatas. I consider that RAF help, especially fighters, may alter the outlook and it is for very deep consideration whether this help can be made available and maintained for the next few days, which are critical. Enemy troop-carriers continue to arrive today.

¹ Not published. Group-Captain G. R. Beamish (later Air

Commodore; CB, CBE, commanded the Royal Air Force in Crete.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

418 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

418

General Freyberg to General Wavell

23 May 1941

The enemy have attacked with a view to taking Suda Bay. They have dive-bombed our forward troops and used artillery freely against them. Troop-carriers continue to arrive at Maleme and the position in front here is obscure. Casualties have been heavy and the men are tired but will fight on. I hope to reorganise my position at dusk but fear that some of my troops and wounded were cut off last night. The situation here is critical.

We have been greatly cheered by the Blenheims' attack which has just been delivered on Maleme aerodrome.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

419 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO) TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER

419

The Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo) to the acting Prime Minister

23 May 1941

At the special request of the First Lord of the Admiralty ¹ I have in the circumstances at once agreed to the *Leander* being despatched to the Mediterranean. The help of the *Leander* type of cruiser is essential to support our men in Crete. I would be glad of your endorsement of my action.

¹ Rt. Hon. Albert Victor Alexander, PC, CH.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

420 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER (CAIRO) – [EXTRACT]

420

The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister (Cairo)

[Extract]

24 May 1941

Your action is heartily approved. Events in Crete are being anxiously followed here... ²

² A personal message has been omitted

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

421 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO) TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

421

The Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo) to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

24 May 1941

I am very anxious about the position in Crete. Although our men are fighting courageously and desperately, the odds against them seem to be accumulating. I feel that every effort is being made here to assist them, and much is already being done, both by sea and air, including an attempt to land sufficient adequately equipped troops to enable the men engaged to get some rest which is essential to enable them to fight on. But in the name of the New Zealand Government I would strongly urge that all possible additional support by air and sea be immediately provided, and especially the full air assistance that can be released from all other quarters, including the United Kingdom.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

422 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

422

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

24 May 1941

Although I sympathise and share your feelings of anxiety I cannot accept the implications of the final sentence of your telegram. The suggestion that we are holding back air assistance for the sake of the United Kingdom is really quite unfounded. There are ample aircraft in the United Kingdom and we have been sending them as fast as possible by every route and by every method. As far as the Navy is concerned, Admiral Cunningham has been directed by the Admiralty to give the strongest support to Crete in spite of his losses. On the question of military reinforcements you should communicate with General Wavell, who has received similar instructions. I have done, and will continue to do, everything in my power. I hope to see you in England soon.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

423 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

423

General Freyberg to General Wavell

24 May 1941

An enemy attack upon us here [Galatas] seems to be indicated. Since our move back our dispositions are on a better basis. We are in depth and more capable to withstand attack.

As I feel we are on the eve of an attack I want you to know the full picture of the last four days. The fighting has been very fierce and we can definitely say that the much-vaunted parachutists have been heavily defeated. I cannot believe that they will be used again for a similar objective.

The total casualties of Creforce since 20 May are 1909, as follows: killed 396, wounded 1118, missing 395. Three-quarters of these are from the New Zealand Division at Maleme. The German casualties are, however, much higher: at Heraklion—790 killed, 20 wounded, and 178 prisoners; at Retimo—approximately 500 dead, 300 wounded, and 50 prisoners. Maleme and the surrounding country saw the hardest fighting of all. At the aerodrome there was a shambles of German dead and burning planes and, I am afraid, a large number of our 22nd Battalion. Estimated [enemy] killed were over 1000, prisoners 320, wounded 80 (making no allowance for wounded left in their hands). Thus the total enemy losses are in the vicinity of 3340.

As I have said, the fighting has been savage and man for man we have beaten him. I feel that you should know that the scale of air attack we have been faced with has been far worse than anything I had visualised. It has been savage. Further, our men are very tired. Indications today are that the Germans will attempt to blast their way

through using 500-pound bombs. We have seen the result of this during the last two days. I know that the men will do their best but with the lack of any air support whatsoever the result with tired troops must always be in the balance. I have not discussed this question with anyone and you can count on us to do our best. Anything you can do to neutralise the air situation would help us materially.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

424 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

424

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

25 May 1941

Many thanks for your telegram (No. 422). I accept with deep gratitude your assurance that everything possible is being done to assist Freyberg and his force in Crete.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

425 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

425

General Wavell to General Freyberg

25 May 1941

I have just returned from Iraq. Your magnificent fight is having a profound effect on the whole situation and will cripple the enemy elsewhere and wreck his plan for the Middle East. Every effort is being made to reinforce you, but you realise the difficulty; the weather, too, has prevented landing recently. The Air Force will do everything possible. The enemy has lost a high proportion of his aircraft and specially trained troops, and the survivors must be tired and dismayed at their reception. They were promised a cheap victory and are facing a costly defeat.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

426 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

426

General Freyberg to General Wavell

25 May 1941

Today has been one of great anxiety for me here. Last night the enemy carried out one small attack and again this afternoon he attacked with little success. At 5 p.m. this evening bombers, dive bombers, and ground strafers came over and bombed our forward troops and then his ground troops launched an attack. It is still in progress and I am awaiting news.

Later: Puttick has informed me that the line has gone and we are trying to stabilise. I do not know if they will be able to and I am apprehensive. I will send messages as I can later.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

427 – THE [GREEK] HIGHER COMMAND, CRETE, TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, ALLIED FORCES – [TRANSLATION]1

427

*The [Greek] Higher Command, Crete, to the Commander-in-Chief,
Allied Forces*

[Translation] 1

26 May 1941

We have the honour to inform you that, according to information we have collected, the position of the Greek forces is so difficult that they have begun to disintegrate at many points as a result of the hard and constant struggle which has been waged for so many days. This must be attributed to the lack for many days of war material, food supplies, and Red Cross supplies.

The enemy air force, acting with conspicuous brutality while it is itself safe owing to the lack of friendly aircraft, is razing to the ground cities and villages without pause. This destroys the morale of the fighting forces and civilians. The army, despite all this, has maintained its spirit until now and destroyed single units.

According to the statements made by Mr. Churchill, which we had the honour to hear also from your lips, it was necessary for the successful conduct of the war to await the timely despatch of impressive forces which if sent at this, the last moment, may prove decisive for victory. Otherwise the end of the struggle in Crete is revealed as near at hand and disastrous.

ACHILLES SCOULAS,

General,

¹ This translation appears in General Freyberg's report on Crete. The text differs, in small details only, from another copy on the GOCs files.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

428 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

428

General Freyberg to General Wavell

26 May 1941

I regret to have to report that in my opinion the troops under my command here at Suda Bay have reached the limit of endurance. No matter what decision is taken by the Commanders-in-Chief, from a military point of view our position here is hopeless. A small, ill-equipped, and immobile force such as ours cannot stand up against the concentrated bombing that we have been faced with during the last seven days. I feel you should be informed that from an administrative point of view the difficulties of extricating this force in full are now insuperable. A certain proportion of the force might be embarked provided a decision is reached at once. Once this sector has been reduced, the reduction of Retimo and Heraklion by the same methods will only be a matter of time. With the exception of the Welch Regiment and the commando, the troops we have are past any offensive action. If, in view of the whole Middle East position, you decide that hours help, we will carry on. I would have to consider how this would be best achieved. Suda Bay may be under fire within twenty-four hours. Further, our casualties have been heavy and we have lost the majority of our immobile guns.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

429 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

429

General Freyberg to General Wavell

27 May 1941

It is obvious that you do not realise the position here. ¹ Retimo is practically foodless and without ammunition, and is cut off by road in every direction. Because of the absence of gun tractors, all artillery in this sector has been lost. We can survive only if food is landed at Sphakia at once. Although our ration strength is large, our effective strength is very small. Unless given adequate air support there is no possibility of our existing as a fighting force.

¹ The message referred to cannot be traced. General Freyberg in his report on the campaign in Crete refers to the receipt early on 27 May of a telegram from General Headquarters, Middle East, notifying the arrival of General Evetts, 'an expert in I tanks', as liaison officer, and suggesting that he (General Freyberg) should retire on Retimo and hold the eastern part of the island. This is most probably the telegram to which this message refers.

General Evetts was Major-General (later Lieutenant-General) J. F. Evetts, CB, CBE, MC, who in 1942 became Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

Under the present conditions the Retimo plan courts disaster. Our only chance with the present force, which has been battered and shaken by an overwhelming air force, is to hide by day and return by night to selected beaches. Once engaged in battle we are an easy prey for dive bombers.

Therefore, my outline proposals are to fight a rearguard action. Can commandos be spared to cover the remainder of the force? I repeat that

the bulk of the troops in this area have never been fit for offensive action and at the present time have deteriorated to a marked degree.

I urge, therefore, that the only course is to go to Sphakia, which seems to give some chance of saving some of my force. Retimo is also in difficulties unless moved at once.

Your O. 67722 has just been received.¹ Infantry tanks cannot be used in the open here as they would last only a few minutes against dive bombers. We have counter-attacked and succeeded, only to be bombed out in each case in the course of a few hours. No troops can stand up to 500-pound bombs and our men have been blown out of the ground. What we require is air support.

Reference liaison officer: A suitable officer who has the whole picture cannot be spared. Your request for a liaison officer arrived within a few minutes of the arrival of the plane. A package for the Intelligence Branch is in the bag for HQ 2nd NZEF on the flying boat. An urgent reply to this is vital.

¹ See note on page 308.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

430 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

430

General Freyberg to General Wavell

27 May 1941

Although the situation in the forward area is obscure I believe that the enemy is temporarily held north-west of Suda. The rearguard of Layforce is in position just east of Suda. The majority of the Base details, some wounded, and remnants of the troops from the Maleme sector have been withdrawn to Stilos and Kalibes areas.

The forward troops are pressed and all are being attacked from the air. No choice of action appears open to us. I urge that a decision on evacuation be taken at once so that plans can be made.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

431 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO) TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER

431

The Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo) to the acting Prime Minister

27 May 1941

I deeply regret to have to state that I feel the situation in Crete has become impossible and that no adequate measures to hold the position can be taken in time. I have reason to believe that a decision to evacuate will shortly be made,¹ and although confident that all precautions will be taken, I am afraid it must be accepted that the operation will be a hazardous one and that New Zealand losses are to be expected.

¹ In his despatch on the Battle of Crete, dated 4 Aug 1941, Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham, C-in-C, Mediterranean, states that in a message timed 8.24 a.m. on 27 May, General Wavell informed Mr. Churchill ‘that he feared we must recognise that Crete was no longer tenable and that the troops must be withdrawn as far as possible.’ The Chiefs of Staff replied that Crete was to be evacuated forthwith.

General Wavell's message to General Freyberg ordering the evacuation of the island cannot be traced.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

432 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

432

General Freyberg to General Wavell

28 May 1941

Creforce Headquarters is now at **Sphakia**. We have been unable to disengage our front and it is most unlikely that we shall be able to hold out here until the night of 31 May–1 June. Please do all you can to expedite our embarkation. We have only the New Zealand divisional infantry and the Australians who are formed military bodies fit to fight. I think that an optimistic view of our numbers of fighting troops would be under 2000 strong, with three guns and 140 rounds all told, and three light tanks. I am certain that tomorrow night will be the last on which we can hope to get our people away. There is a very large number of unarmed stragglers. I intend to concentrate on the evacuation of fighting troops tomorrow and, if any are left over, tell them to go west to Port Lutro and Franco Kastelli for the next night for stragglers.²

² There are two copies of this telegram on the GOC's files. The first reads: '... to go west to Ag Rumeli for next night.' A correction substituting Port Lutro for Ag Rumeli followed and then a second cable, as above, was sent. Ag Rumeli is approximately 10 miles west of **Sphakia**; Port Lutro, 4 miles west; and Franco Kastelli, 6 miles east.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

433 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

433

General Wavell to General Freyberg

29 May 1941

Your telegram of 28 May (No. 432).

We will do our best to help you. Hold on as long as you can. What has happened to the SS battalions? ¹ Are they cut off?

¹ Layforce. See page 301, note 3.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

434 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

434

General Freyberg to General Wavell

29 May 1941

Your No. 433. Layforce was the rearguard in the withdrawal from Suda. I have no definite information but believe that some posts were cut off. There are a number of stragglers in Sphakia. We were heavily bombed this evening.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

435 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO)

435

General Freyberg to the Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo)

30 May 1941

Can you get more ships to evacuate us tomorrow night?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

436 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

436

General Freyberg to General Wavell

30 May 1941

I am in despair about getting these British, New Zealand, and Australian Imperial Force units off who have fought most gallantly in the rearguard. Do your best for us. Send one last lift tomorrow night. We could embark anything up to 7000.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

437 – GENERAL WAVELL TO GENERAL FREYBERG

437

General Wavell to General Freyberg

30 May 1941

Everything possible is being done to rescue you and risks more than justifiable are already being taken. Fraser and Blamey are being fully consulted and are behind all decisions. ¹ If possible, Vasey ² is to embark tonight.

¹ See No. 453.

² Major-General G. A. Vasey, CB, CBE, DSO, DSC; then Brigadier commanding 19th Australian Infantry Brigade; GOC, 7th Australian Division; later Deputy Chief of the General Staff, Allied Land Forces, South-West Pacific Area; died 5 Mar 1945.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

438 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO GENERAL WAVELL

438

General Freyberg to General Wavell

30 May 1941

I leave Crete tonight in accordance with your orders.³ I have handed over command to General Weston.⁴ I again urge you to do all that is possible to send ships tomorrow night to evacuate the gallant remnants of the British, Australian, and New Zealand troops who have borne the brunt of the fighting in the battle for Crete.

³ General Freyberg had received the following order from General Wavell on 29 May: ‘You yourself will return to Egypt first opportunity.’ He replied next morning that the signal had arrived too late for him to comply and that he was depending on the arrival of a Sunderland flying boat that night. He left Crete by flying boat on the night of 30–31 May.

⁴ Lieutenant-General E. C. Weston, CB, Royal Marines; then Major-General commanding 1st Royal Marine Group, Mobile Naval Base Defence Organisation, and Commander of Suda area.

In accordance with his orders General Weston left from Sphakia by flying boat on the night of 31 May – 1 Jun. Before leaving, he directed the senior British officer remaining behind to capitulate on the morning of 1 Jun.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

439 – THE ADMIRALTY TO THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MEDITERRANEAN

439

The Admiralty to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean

31 May 1941

The following is from the First Sea Lord ⁵:

Should there be a reasonable prospect that any substantial formed body of men is capable of embarking tomorrow night, 2 June, His Majesty's Government considers that an attempt should be made to bring them off, especially in view of the unexpected success on the last two nights. ¹

It is presumed that the work of aircraft has contributed largely to this success, and it is assumed by His Majesty's Government that this air support will also be available for a further day operation.

If the experience tomorrow proves to be very different from that of the last two days the matter should be further considered.

Inform Mr. Fraser, General Freyberg, Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, and Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East.

⁵ Admiral of the Fleet Sir Dudley Pound, GCB, OM, GCVO.

¹ In his despatch on the Battle of Crete Admiral Cunningham states that he replied that General Weston had returned with the report that the 5000 troops remaining in Crete were incapable of further resistance owing to strain and lack of food and had therefore been instructed to capitulate; in the circumstances, no more ships would be sent.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

440 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO) TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER

440

The Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo) to the acting Prime Minister

2 June 1941

Last night I returned from Alexandria after meeting Freyberg and some of the New Zealand troops coming back from Crete. I found them all in great heart, whether wounded or fit, and convinced of their superiority man for man over the Germans, given equal weapons and equal air support.

I had long discussions in Alexandria with Admiral Cunningham and naval officers and am entirely satisfied that everything possible has been and is being done to facilitate the evacuation, indeed, that the greatest risks have been taken by the Navy with that object.

From General Freyberg's report it is clear that the fighting was of the most intense description, and though the proportion of dead to wounded is reported to be low we must, I fear, expect heavy casualties.² As soon as possible you will be advised of the details as they become available, but you will understand that it will take a long time to clear up the situation. Most of the fit men and most of the walking wounded appear to have been evacuated, but a proportion impossible to estimate still remains in Crete, and it has been necessary to leave many wounded cot cases.

The following appears to be as accurate a summary of those factors that led to the loss of Crete as can be made at the present time:

Firstly, the complete air superiority of the Germans and the

extraordinarily large aggregation of aircraft that they brought to bear. On the whole this was the decisive factor. Parachute troops were a failure and were almost entirely obliterated, but the dive-bombing of aerodromes and certain landing places, using bombs of up to 500 pounds, literally blasted our troops from the ground and facilitated the continuous arrival of troops in troop-carrying aircraft which came in like trams at intervals of about five minutes. Wherever our troops made a stand they were blasted out by dive-bombing, which was for all practical purposes completely unmolested, and as further German troops arrived it became impossible to hold the situation and evacuation was the only course.

Secondly, our troops had insufficient artillery and practically no transport or tanks, and those they had were destroyed by air attack as soon as they were discovered.

Thirdly, road communications on the island were extremely few and were soon destroyed, while wireless and other means of communication were rapidly destroyed by bombing.

The air attack appears to have been of an order of violence completely unprecedented, and although the Germans undoubtedly lost a very large number of planes and some 80 per cent of their parachute division and experienced very heavy casualties, all through the battle the outstanding lesson is that Germans working in sufficient numbers, and in co-operation with their air arm, can be countered only by fighter protection from the air, which in this case was not possible with the machines available here, whose range would not allow them to operate over Crete from Egypt and who could not be based in Crete owing to the contiguity and superiority of the German air force.

In my opinion the Navy has been beyond praise. Nothing could have been finer or more helpful than the attitude throughout of Admiral Cunningham. He has exceeded what the Middle East military and air commands considered advisable or possible; he has taken great risks and borne extreme losses, and, on one occasion, ignored an Admiralty order

in an attempt to rescue our men. That to a large extent the Navy has succeeded in doing this is, I feel, greatly due to his personal efforts, for which we owe him a deep debt of gratitude. Naval losses have been severe as you probably know, but he has never failed, either on his own volition or from time to time at my request, to undertake further efforts, and he is still doing so.

The German troops' equipment is reported to have been remarkably complete. Motor transport, bicycles, guns, ammunition, food, a few light tanks, and even such details as razor blades and toilet paper were landed by troop-carriers. Our troops were able to obtain much of this for themselves by using German landing signs, but on the German side the operations appear to have been thought out to the most minute detail.

I feel that our men have done magnificently, particularly in view of the highly adverse circumstances they had to contend with against the most intense air attack that history has ever afforded, and this view is shared by General Wavell and all authorities here. All agree that the work of the Maoris has been outstanding.

A lengthy period of refitting is now obviously necessary and in the meantime Freyberg¹ will devote his whole attention to this matter irrespective of whether or not an Anzac Corps is formed.

Your telegram of 1 June has just been received.² The foregoing contains all the information that can be given at present. I have just been informed that news of the evacuation has now been released for publication.

² New Zealand casualties in Crete were:

Killed	507
Died of wounds	136
Died on active service (includes deaths through sickness, accident, &c.)	10
Missing	1
Wounded	1039

Prisoners of war (includes 496 wounded and prisoners of war and 31 died of wounds while prisoners of war)	2205
Total	3898

¹ In a copy of this telegram on the files of the Prime Minister's Department 'Wavell' is substituted for 'Freyberg'.

² Not published. This telegram requested that the New Zealand Government be kept informed of the situation and emphasised the desirability that any major announcement concerning the New Zealand troops should first come from the Government rather than from Daventry or from Australian sources.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

441 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO ADMIRAL CUNNINGHAM, COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MEDITERRANEAN FLEET (ALEXANDRIA)

441

*The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to Admiral Cunningham,
Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet (Alexandria)*

2 June 1941

We have been told by our Prime Minister and have read of the wonderful work of yourself and the men under your command in sustaining, succouring, and relieving our men in Crete. Your efforts have inspired the people of New Zealand to continue to give all that they have to free the world from the menace of Nazi domination. For your magnificent enterprise and courage during the past twelve days, please accept for yourself, and convey to your officers and men, the heart-felt thanks of the Government and people of New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

442 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER (CAIRO) – [EXTRACT]

442

The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister (Cairo)

[Extract]

2 June 1941

I have just completed a short broadcast covering the news of the evacuation and extracts from your cable, for which many thanks. At present feeling in the Dominion is quiet and should remain so as I am arranging for all information that can be made public to be broadcast as soon as possible after its receipt. Parliament has been called for Tuesday of next week. Your presence in Egypt has strengthened us all. I am looking forward each day for the maximum of news that can be broadcast for public information.... ¹

¹ A personal message has been omitted.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

443 – GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, MIDDLE EAST, TO THE WAR OFFICE

443

General Headquarters, Middle East, to the War Office

3 June 1941

The following is for the Chief of the Imperial General Staff from General Wavell; repeated to Wellington for General Duigan.

I have now seen Freyberg and several Brigadiers from Crete and think you might like to have a brief general summary of operations.

On the island our troops were disposed in three groups. The main group held the area from Maleme aerodrome, about ten miles west of Canea, to Suda Bay. The second and third groups were at Retimo and Heraklion respectively. The general composition of these groups was given in my O. 67416 of 25 May.²

The enemy launched his attack at approximately 8 a.m. on 20 May. The first and main objective was Maleme aerodrome which was subjected to extremely heavy bombing and machine-gunning attacks. The majority of the anti-aircraft artillery was put out of action practically at once. Following this, parachutists were dropped and gliders landed in the area between Maleme and Canea. Except for those who landed outside our defended area, principally at the prison,³ practically the whole of these were accounted for, the

² Not published.

³ In another version of this telegram 'beaches' is substituted for 'prison'.

greater proportion being killed. The number estimated to have been dropped on the first day was about 3500. The parachutists were dropped from heights varying from 300 to 600 feet. Although extremely well equipped, prisoners taken did not appear to be picked troops. They had obviously expected an easy victory and were completely surprised by the resistance encountered. A captured document showed the enemy's objectives in the Canea area for the first day, none being achieved. It appeared that after the initial failure at Canea and Maleme the enemy sought success at the two other aerodromes. Both Retimo and Heraklion were heavily attacked by bombers later in the day and there were parachute landings. About 1000 parachutists landed at Retimo and all but about 200 were accounted for during the first three days. Much the same occurred at Heraklion where about 2000 were dropped. Our troops buried 800, not including over 300 killed by the Greeks, and undoubtedly many others were killed. At the end of the first day the enemy had failed to gain control of any aerodrome.

On the second day bomber and fighter attacks were repeated and further parachutists were landed at Maleme and Canea outside the areas occupied by our troops. Our troops had withdrawn from the outskirts of Maleme aerodrome which, however, remained under fire. In spite of close-range artillery and mortar fire, troop-carriers began to land in the evening on the aerodrome, on the beaches, and on the area west of the aerodrome, which was then out of range of the guns. The enemy losses in personnel and machines were heavy. It was estimated by observers that there were at least 100 wrecked planes in the Maleme area. The arrival of these reinforcements made it necessary to reinforce the Maleme defences and plans for an attack in the Canea area had to be altered. In the night the Royal Navy were seen to deal satisfactorily with an attempt by the enemy at seaborne reinforcement.

On the third day troop-carriers continued to arrive and depart again at the rate of more than twenty an hour, and observers estimated that 600 arrived. Maleme became an operational aerodrome. As an enemy attack threatened to cut off troops in the western sector, the plan to

counter-attack had to be dropped. A withdrawal to a new line was commenced. Meanwhile, the enemy had not attempted further attacks at Retimo and Heraklion, but had landed forces outside the range of our troops and had taken up positions with the object of containing them and pinning them to the ground until the battle in the Canea area was finished.

On the fourth day a new line was formed in the Maleme- Canea sector. On the sixth day, late at night, this position was broken after several attacks had been repulsed, and with the enemy through to Suda Bay the decision to evacuate Crete was taken. Both Retimo and Heraklion were secure, but at Retimo there was an acute shortage of food and ammunition and communications were severed.

Our positions during the whole of the operations were subjected to bombing and machine-gunning from enemy planes which is described by experienced officers who fought in the last war as far exceeding in severity any artillery barrage they had ever encountered. Very heavy bombs up to 500 and 1000 pounds were used. The enemy's method was to reconnoitre carefully at low height until the exact position of our troops had been ascertained and then to put down a relentless barrage. Directions to enemy aeroplanes in the air were also given by wireless.

The enemy infantry did not show high fighting qualities and did not face counter-attacks. Our counter-attacks were always successful, but once the enemy had ascertained our new positions dive-bombing attacks began and the infantry were blasted out. All counter-attacks had to take place at night. By these methods and by generally increasing the weight of numbers (it is estimated that the enemy landed approximately one division alone in the Maleme area) our troops, after six days' fighting, were driven from their positions and compelled to withdraw. The severity of the fighting in this area, the number of casualties, and the weight of the enemy bombardment are described as far exceeding anything seen in a similar space in the last war.

As you know, reinforcement of the island was not possible except in

small numbers by warships, as enemy dive bombers made it practically impossible for any ship to remain afloat near the island during the hours of daylight, and only fast ships which could get in and out during the night stood any chance of survival. When it became obvious that Crete could no longer be held, orders were given for withdrawal and arrangements made to try to evacuate the force. The details of evacuation will be given in a subsequent cable.

The failure to defend the island was due to the enemy's complete superiority in the air and his persistence in continuing to land despite losses. The extremely heavy scale of air attack could only have been countered by fighter aircraft, which could not operate over Crete from the only air bases available—those in North Africa. ¹

The enemy was no match for our troops in close fighting. He was very quick to follow up a success but otherwise showed no particular tactical skill. His observance of the Red Cross seems to have been uncertain; generally speaking he respected it, but there were undoubtedly instances of attacks on hospitals. Captured Royal Air Force personnel were on one occasion driven in front of

¹ Another version of this telegram reads '... countered by fighter aircraft, which were not available.'

the attacking lines. The report that enemy parachutists landed in New Zealand uniform apparently originated from an incident where parachutists drove some New Zealand walking wounded in front of their advance, and there appears to be no truth in it. ¹

¹ The above text, taken from the GOC's files, differs in a number of respects from the telegram received in New Zealand by the Chief of the General Staff.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

444 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER (CAIRO)

444

The acting Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister (Cairo)

5 June 1941

The following telegram has been sent today to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs:

In a secret session on Tuesday next, 10 June, His Majesty's Government in New Zealand will be called upon to give to Parliament the fullest information possible concerning, the recent events in the Middle East in which their forces have been engaged. So that they can prepare a comprehensive and accurate statement for use on this occasion, they are most anxious to obtain a full appreciation of the question of air support in relation to the campaigns in Greece and Crete, and particularly the reasons why it was not possible to afford more adequate air support for the protection of their forces and more anti-aircraft defences for the protection of aerodromes. If such information, together with any further facts with regard to the relation of Crete to the strategical plan for the Middle East and the necessity for holding the island by the Imperial Forces, could be received on or before 9 June it would be most helpful.

The full details as set out in cables relative to Crete are in my possession, but there is already a considerable volume of criticism concerning the lack of air support, and I am of the opinion that it is essential that the Government is in a position to explain fully its own attitude before and during the campaign, and to explain, in as full detail as possible, the facts concerning air support. In this connection I shall

be greatly obliged for your comments.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

445 – COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, MEDITERRANEAN FLEET (ALEXANDRIA) TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

445

*Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean Fleet (Alexandria) to the
acting Prime Minister of New Zealand*

6 June 1941

I have to thank you very much for your most kind telegram (No. 441), the contents of which have been communicated to all officers and men of the Fleet. It gives us much satisfaction to learn that our efforts to bring away their countrymen from Crete have been appreciated by the people of New Zealand, and we only wish we could say that every New Zealander was out of the island.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

446 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

446

General Freyberg to the acting Prime Minister of New Zealand

6 June 1941

After taking part in the campaigns in Greece and Crete, the New Zealand Division is now concentrating in Helwan Camp, Egypt, preparatory to re-equipping. It is my duty to report to you on these two distinct operations: see also my telegram from Greece of 6 April (No. 357) and my telegram of 30 April from Crete (No. 380).

In Greece we fought for the first time as a complete division. We fought under most adverse conditions. The enemy was numerically superior by as much as four to one, and a very large proportion of his force was armed with armoured fighting vehicles. He quickly achieved air superiority. The Division fought in a gallant manner and the troops demonstrated that man for man they were better trained and better fighters than the Germans. Unfortunately, the early collapse of the Greek Army and the absence of air support told heavily against our forces, and eventually a general withdrawal was ordered. Covering the withdrawal with courage, tenacity, and steadiness, which showed conclusively their quality, the New Zealand Division fought on successive lines. Finally, with the splendid co-operation of the Royal Navy, the evacuation was carried out by our units in excellent order, and all the equipment that could possibly be saved was brought away.

Without fear of contradiction I can say that the general bearing of our men during those difficult weeks aroused universal admiration. The battles fought by the 4th and 5th Brigade Groups at Servia Pass and at the passes on either side of Mount Olympus, the stalwart defence of the

Thermopylae line by the 6th Brigade Group, and the final rearguard action of the 4th Brigade Group near Marathon are achievements worthy of the highest traditions of the British Army.

Following the evacuation from Greece, the Division was split, one part returning to Egypt and the other remaining in Crete. The latter were set the difficult task of trying to hold this important naval and air base. As you know, I was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Allied forces in Crete.

The War Cabinet will remember my candid criticism of the situation in the island and the peril in which I considered the bulk of the Division had been placed. See my No. 388 of 1 May. I felt that it was my duty to report on the situation at that time, and I can assure the Government that their representations to the United Kingdom Government had a far-reaching effect. Everything was done that could be done in the difficult position. Having made this protest we set about making the island as secure as the limited time and materials at my disposal allowed.

The attack came on 20 May and for three days our fate hung in the balance, but we were slowly blown out of our positions by what was possibly the largest concentration of battle aeroplanes ever committed to a single battle. All troops—British, Australian, New Zealand, and Greek—fought with determination and gallantry. The brunt of the main battle was borne by the New Zealand Division in the Maleme- Canea sector, where the severity of the hand-to-hand fighting exceeded anything experienced in the last war; our troops' magnificent counter-attacks and fighting qualities will ever be remembered. I wish to mention in particular the great gallantry of the Maori Battalion.

During the withdrawal the New Zealanders fought alongside the Australians in desperate rearguard actions, fighting all day and marching all night. I cannot begin to tell you what a terrible experience those last few days were. We were short of food and water. We knew that even if we got to the south, the steep, rocky coastline and a shortage of shipping, quite apart from enemy action, would make it impossible to

evacuate more than a proportion of our troops. Once again no praise can be too great for the work of the Royal Navy.

In the battle for Crete our forces can claim to have damaged very severely the highly trained parachute formations which carried out the attack, and it is doubtful if they will be fit for active operations for a long time. We also destroyed a large number of troop-carrying aircraft. As you are aware, the Royal Navy took tremendous toll of the enemy's attempt at a seaborne invasion, and in the great battle between the Navy and the German Air Force many more German planes were accounted for, though not without serious loss to our Fleet. In this battle, and on several occasions in Crete, the Royal Air Force formations played a part, but, owing to the distance from the African bases, assistance was only spasmodic and had little real effect. Although the battles for Crete and Greece were lost, valuable enemy formations and much enemy equipment has been used, so that precious time has been gained for the making of preparations to meet the enemy, if and when he continues his march to the south-east. Further, the lessons of these campaigns will not be forgotten.

In Greece our losses were approximately 2200 and in Crete about 2450. I believe that in Crete nearly 500 were killed, and a high proportion of the missing were wounded and had to be left in hospitals and on the battlefield during the withdrawal. The picture is a grim one, but I wish the Government to know that everything possible was done for the wounded, and doctors and Royal Army Medical Corps personnel remained to care for them. To the people of New Zealand who have suffered loss in these campaigns the men of the New Zealand Expeditionary Force send their deepest sympathy.

The men are now in camp having a few days' well-earned leave and are recovering quickly from the strain under which they have been working. We are now getting down to the job of refitting the Division as quickly as possible.

The troops back from Crete were addressed by Mr. Fraser on a parade

this morning, and he has seen and talked to all the men in hospital. During the anxious days of the evacuation the Prime Minister was indefatigable in ensuring that everything possible was done to rescue the maximum number from Crete. Since my return I have been able to discuss many matters with him. His presence here was most opportune.

¹

¹ In a number of details the text of several of the preceding messages in this section varies from that of the telegrams on the files of the Prime Minister's Department. Mutilations and omissions in transmission are responsible for most of these discrepancies, and typing errors for others. In cases of doubt, the text on the GOC's files has been followed.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

447 – THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND (CAIRO) TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER

447

The Prime Minister of New Zealand (Cairo) to the acting Prime Minister

7 June 1941

Before I received your telegrams of 2 and 5 June (Nos. 442 and 444), I had tentatively prepared some reflections for my guidance in London and for your consideration and comments. After further consideration, and after obtaining from returned officers and men and from the authorities here as much additional information as was possible, I forward them herewith, practically unaltered. I would be glad if you would telegraph your views to London to reach me on arrival.

The campaign in Greece was carefully considered by us with a full knowledge of all the implications and dangers involved. It is, however, most regrettable that the possibility that the Germans would obtain such complete air superiority that they could operate quite unmolested was apparently not foreseen by those, both here and in London, technically qualified to do so. I still think that the decision was right, although I find here some tendency to differ, and am surprised to learn now from Freyberg that he never considered the operation a feasible one, though, as I pointed out to him, his telegrams to us conveyed a contrary impression. In this connection he has drawn my attention to the difficulty of a subordinate commander criticising the plans of superior officers, but I have made it plain to him that in any future case where he doubts the propriety of a proposal he is to give the War Cabinet in Wellington full opportunity of considering the proposal, with his views on it, and that we understood that he would have done so in any case.

The operations in Crete seem to me to have been largely the result of chance. Driven from the Greek mainland, various forces (including New Zealanders) with different degrees of equipment but on the whole ill-supplied and to some extent disorganised, with an embarrassing number of refugees (owing to the necessity of a quick turn-round of shipping to facilitate further evacuations on the island) seem to have found themselves on Crete, which it was then decided to hold. As you know, we had no previous knowledge that it was intended to retain our troops on the island, or indeed that it was intended to defend it, and it seems clear to me now that with the means at Freyberg's disposal the island was in fact indefensible against the scale of attack which actually developed. It seems to me also, that it should have been as clear before the decision to defend Crete as it is now, that troops without adequate air protection (which it was known could not be provided) would be in a hopeless position, though obviously the scale of German air attack was larger and more intense than was foreseen. As far as the New Zealand troops are concerned, the net result has been that all our care, before committing them to battle, to ensure that they should fight only on reasonably equal terms as far as equipment and supplies are concerned, and that they should have a fair opportunity to defend themselves, has been rendered nugatory by the turn of events.

Before the attack on Crete Freyberg told us that he was greatly short of supplies. It must in fairness be said that considerable arrangements had been made here to provide him with the necessary weapons, tools, and equipment, but, unfortunately, much of this equipment was lost at sea through enemy action and more was destroyed on landing by dive bombing. As a result, there was a marked shortage of many essential requirements, including such obvious tools as picks and shovels, and our troops were therefore on occasion obliged to use their steel helmets, mess tins, &c., in an endeavour to provide themselves with those trenches which alone could give them protection against incessant bombing and machine-gunning from the air. Indeed, in the final stages, many of them were short of food and water.

Individual deeds of gallantry on the part of the Royal Air Force were as usual many, but there can be no doubt that the Air Force here was not in a position to play that effective part in the defence of Crete upon which alone success depended. This has been as much a question of the want of a particular type of machine as of numbers, and I am satisfied that before the decision was made to defend Crete this vital factor of air protection could not have received the consideration it demanded.

It seems to me that there are several lessons to be learned from this operation. However unfortunate it may have been in its results for the Navy and British prestige, particularly in this part of the world, the operation has perhaps this advantage to the United Kingdom that it has proved that parachute landings can be effectively countered. These lessons appear to me to be as follows:

- (i) Unless the necessary adequate air protection is available, we must voluntarily embark on, or acquiesce in, no further adventures, and in no case must we again allow our New Zealand troops to be exposed to a situation requiring them to meet a highly-developed mechanised attack armed solely with their rifles and their courage.
- (ii) More effective co-operation and co-ordination must be arranged between the Air Force and the Army.
- (iii) While Crete provided an opportunity, almost unique in its advantages, for air attack, having regard to the complete enemy superiority, the large number of their available aircraft, the paucity of our artillery, anti-aircraft guns, transport, and communications, &c., nevertheless the development of an attack on the same lines, but on a larger scale, on other portions of the Middle East must, in my opinion, be regarded as probable and perhaps imminent, and the necessary steps to strengthen the Middle East must be taken immediately if we are to be sure of avoiding further setbacks in this part of the world. In fact so impressed am I with the dangers that I am forced to the conclusion that unless adequate air protection is provided we may well be obliged to evacuate Egypt.¹

Unless any reason to the contrary is indicated by you, I intend to discuss these matters in London on the foregoing lines and to emphasise these views as forcibly as possible.

¹ See Appendix 4, Appreciation by Major-General Freyberg, dated 29 Jul 1940.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

448 – THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR DOMINION AFFAIRS TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

448

The Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs to the acting Prime Minister of New Zealand

8 June 1941

Your telegram of 5 June.² Mr. Fraser's telegram to you of 2 June (No. 440) which has been repeated here, and General Wavell's telegram of 3 June (No. 443) to the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, which has been repeated to the General Officer Commanding, Wellington, should, we think, give you the information required so far as the facts of the campaign in Crete are concerned.

On the particular points raised in your telegram we hope the following observations will be of help:

The strategical value of Crete in relation to the defence of the Eastern Mediterranean has always been fully recognised. As soon as Italy gave us the opportunity by attacking Greece, we occupied the island and set to work to strengthen its defences.

The only aerodrome when we first went to Crete was at Heraklion, and this was only suitable for the Gladiator. We developed it as rapidly as possible into a fully-equipped aerodrome, suitable for all types of machines. In addition, a landing ground was prepared at Maleme and an emergency landing ground at Retimo.

Owing to essential requirements of our aerodromes and troops in Greece, of Malta, and the army of the Nile, besides those of the United Kingdom and our merchant shipping in the Atlantic, it was not possible to give full protection to Crete, but the importance of providing anti-

aircraft defences was fully recognised from the beginning.

Extensive preparations for a German airborne expedition were observed after the fall of Greece on aerodromes in Greece and in the Dodecanese, and it seemed practically certain that the enemy's objective would be Syria, Cyprus, or Crete. The conclusion was reached that Crete was the most likely of these, and steps were taken further to strengthen the garrison and the defences with all the additional material that could be made available. Every anti-aircraft gun that could possibly be spared was put into the island and in the person of General Freyberg a proved and resolute Commander was appointed.

The defence of Crete against air attack clearly represented our greatest difficulty, in view of the distance from our bases at which Royal Air Force fighters would have to operate should our aerodromes on the island prove untenable. We realised that although the air forces which we had operated in Greece represented the maximum number practicable, having regard to the state of aerodromes at the time, the Germans would be able to operate a much larger number because of the rapid drying up of marshy ground from April onwards. Nevertheless, good hopes were entertained that the defenders would prove strong enough and numerous enough to destroy all parachutists and airborne troops as they arrived, and prevent them effecting, and then nourishing, a lodgment by air. We were confident also that the Navy, although they would be subjected to constant air attack with inadequate air protection, would be able to hold off any seaborne threat, so as to give the Army the opportunity to bite off the head of an airborne invasion.

However, in the event, the scale and intensity of the German air attack, combined with the complete disregard of casualties with which their airborne troops, both parachutists and carrier-borne, were thrown into the fray, proved too strong. The island's garrison was kept under continuous air bombardment, which pinned our troops to their positions by day and prevented them counter-attacking the enemy's lodgments except at night, when tanks could not operate. The Navy played its full

part in keeping the ring, but sustained very severe losses. Once the enemy was firmly established and in a position to reinforce to a practically unlimited extent by air, there was no alternative but to evacuate the island. An attempt to hold on any longer would have meant not only the destruction or surrender of the whole garrison, but also the reduction to a critical extent of our naval strength in the Eastern Mediterranean.

To sum up, General Freyberg was given the maximum forces and maximum equipment which we could afford. We gave battle in Crete fully recognising that through lack of adequate air protection the defence was likely to suffer, but with good hopes that it would be possible to prevent German airborne troops effecting and nourishing a lodgment, whether by sea or air.

Generally, our view is that the operations in Crete must not be regarded in isolation but as a part of the whole Middle East situation. We must strike a balance. While these operations were in progress the German advance in Libya has been held, the conquest of Abyssinia has been virtually completed, and our position in Iraq has been restored. Crete should be regarded as a salient which it is necessary to try to hold in spite of risks. Its loss is serious to us, but counter-balancing advantages have been won. We succeeded in forcing the enemy to carry out a major operation there instead of a rapid occupation as he had hoped. His plans have been delayed and he has suffered heavy losses. Had it not been for this delay, the enemy might by now have entrenched himself in Syria and might have prevented us from crushing the Iraq rebellion. We had no illusions as to the risks involved, but they are risks such as must always be taken in war.

We cannot impress too strongly on you the importance of complete secrecy in regard to any detailed material which could be useful to the enemy.

² See telegram in No. 444.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

449 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

449

The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg

10 June 1941

The full information contained in your telegram of 6 June (No. 446) is very much appreciated by the Government. They congratulate you and the officers and men under your command on your courageous struggle made in the defence of Greece and Crete and on the safe withdrawal of so many of our troops.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

450 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

450

The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg

17 June 1941

The following motion has been adopted by both Houses of Parliament:

That the General Assembly of New Zealand in Parliament assembled records its enduring admiration of the courage, tenacity, and determination displayed by the officers and men of the New Zealand Division, Maori and pakeha alike, in the fight for liberty on the battlefields of Greece and Crete, its confidence in the distinguished leadership of the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Forces, Major-General B. C. Freyberg, and its expression of sympathy for all those who now sorrow for the loss of our gallant soldiers.

Formal notification will be sent to you in due course by the Speaker. In the meantime, I should be glad if you will convey the text of this resolution to the officers and men under your command.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

451 – THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER TO GENERAL FREYBERG

451

The acting Prime Minister to General Freyberg

28 June 1941

The following statement alleged to have been made by a New Zealand soldier returned from the present war is at present being; given currency here:

The only drawback was that they could not shoot owing to the limited equipment used in their training.

A further statement is:

The men in Greece and Crete were splendid specimens but the tragedy was that they could not handle a rifle.

An immediate statement from you which could be used in refutation would be much appreciated.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

452 – GENERAL FREYBERG TO THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

452

General Freyberg to the acting Prime Minister of New Zealand

4 July 1941

Reference your telegram of 28 June (No. 451). The matter is being investigated here by my Brigadiers but I send the following at once to enable you to reply to possible criticism.

In Crete, gunners, engineers, Army Service Corps, and other technical personnel, having lost their specialist equipment in the evacuation from Greece, were formed into rifle companies, and fighting as such they were undoubtedly at a disadvantage. They had fired only a modified musketry course in their previous training, while certain specialist categories were issued with only 60 per cent rifles. Therefore, it is true to say that such units had not reached the infantry standard of proficiency with the rifle.

The statements are without foundation as far as the Greek campaign or infantry units in Crete are concerned. Infantry, cavalry, and machine gunners, who form the largest part of the Division, had fired three complete musketry courses during the year and had reached a very high standard. This was made possible through the supply of ammunition from New Zealand. A very high standard was reported by unit commanders in Greece and Crete, and this was confirmed by enemy prisoners who said that the musketry of the New Zealanders was higher than anything they had previously experienced. I am convinced that our weapon training compares favourably with any troops, British or enemy. Instances of marksmanship can be quoted. On Crete on 20 May, when 136 parachute troops landed against one company of the 18th Battalion,

134 were shot in a minute, mostly through the head, and two wounded prisoners asked if all New Zealand troops were picked snipers. A similar story is told of the 19th Battalion at Servia Pass in Greece and of the 22nd Battalion at Katerine. The marksmanship of the New Zealand infantry, machine gunners, and cavalry was superb and stopped the enemy whenever they met in Greece and Crete.

Since the parachute experience of Crete we have recommended that all technical personnel, instead of only a proportion, should be fully armed, and that all should fire the full musketry course and be trained and well grounded in infantry minor tactics.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

453 – SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE RT. HON. P. FRASER ON THE EVACUATION OF TROOPS FROM CRETE – [EXTRACT]

453

*SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT BY THE RT. HON. P. FRASER ON THE EVACUATION OF TROOPS FROM
[Extract]*

5 October 1948

... On Thursday, 29 May, along with Mr. Berendsen, I was visiting Helwan Hospital when I received a telephone message from General Wavell informing me that he wished to see me urgently on most important matters.... As soon as we could return to Cairo I called upon General Wavell. He informed me that at a meeting of the Middle East General Staff, at which Admiral Cunningham and Air Marshal Tedder ¹ were present, it had been decided that our men would have to be evacuated from Crete and that no more ships would be sent to rescue the New Zealanders, Australians, and British troops who were still fighting there. However, Admiral Cunningham had expressed the wish to send another ship and that had been agreed to, but it would be the last.

After the interview with General Wavell, I, accompanied by Mr. Berendsen, motored to Alexandria and that evening met the first of our men returning from Crete. The number of injured British ships of war of various kinds which lay at the docks in Alexandria was convincing evidence of the seriousness of the situation and an indication of the risks that would have to be run by any ship crossing to Crete.

On Friday, 30 May, Mr. Berendsen and myself visited the wounded from Crete at various hospitals in Alexandria, and at a camp fifteen miles out of Alexandria ² we interviewed the first contingent of New Zealanders who had returned from Crete the previous night.

On my return to the Hotel Cecil about four o'clock in the afternoon I was informed that there was a message from General Wavell asking me to ring him immediately. This I did. General Wavell said that he had expected me back in Cairo that day and was anxious that I should sign a cablegram to General Freyberg in regard to the question of the cessation of hostilities in Crete. He asked me to go to Admiral Cunningham's headquarters where I would find General Evetts,³ who would give me a copy of the cablegram which he, General Wavell, wished me to sign.

In Admiral Cunningham's office General Evetts handed me a copy of a cablegram to General Freyberg which General Wavell wished me to sign. He also informed me that General Blamey had signed the cablegram on behalf of the Australian Command. The cablegram was one informing General Freyberg that no more ships were to be sent to take men off Crete and that he was to issue appropriate orders in regard to surrender. I understood General Evetts to say that the cablegram had been agreed to by the Chiefs of Staff, Wavell, Tedder, and Cunningham.

¹ Marshal of the Royal Air Force Lord Tedder, GCB; AOC-in-C, Royal Air Force Middle East, 1941–43; AOC-in-C, Mediterranean Air Command, 1943; Deputy Supreme Commander under General Eisenhower, 1943–45; Chief of the Air Staff, 1946–to date.

² Amiriya.

³ Military Liaison Officer on Admiral Cunningham's staff.

I read the cablegram and then informed General Evetts that I could not possibly sign it. I asked him to inform General Wavell that I was unable to sign such a cablegram as I considered that a further effort should be made and that another ship, or ships, should be sent to Sphakia, where a large number of our men were congregated, for the purpose of taking as many of them as possible back to Egypt. I stated that while the United Kingdom with its 45,000,000 people could sustain

a heavy loss of men without very disastrous effects, and that even Australia could sustain a large loss much better than New Zealand, it would be a crushing disaster for our country and its war effort if such a large number of our men fell into the enemy's hands without every effort being made to rescue them. I repeated a number of times that a further effort should be made to evacuate a large number of our men from Crete.

Admiral Cunningham, who had been listening to the brief discussion between General Evetts and myself, suddenly broke into the conversation and said, 'Mr. Fraser is right.' He said he did not know how much he could do to help but felt that every human effort should be made. Admiral Cunningham said that his resources were very limited and that he could not do very much to meet the situation. The only ship he had which could be used for the purpose was the cruiser *Phoebe*¹ which was on her way from Crete with a full load of passengers, and the crew, doctors, and nurses were very tired. The *Phoebe* had been bombed but, fortunately, it had not been hit. He said he would replace the ship's company of officers and men, and doctors and nurses, and send the ship back as soon as possible after it arrived and the men on board went ashore.

General Evetts rang the Commander-in-Chief, General Wavell, and was informed that a modified cablegram had been sent to General Freyberg and that, as there was delay in reaching me, officers of the General Staff had attached my name to it. I immediately stated that this should not have been done. Next morning General Freyberg was very much relieved to know that I had not authorised my signature to that particular cablegram.

That night (30 May) between 11 and 12 p.m. Admiral Cunningham, with his officers, came down to the dock at Alexandria to meet the *Phoebe*, and gave the necessary instructions for her to be turned about and sent back to Crete to rescue as many of our men as possible. At midnight, accompanied by Mr. Berendsen, I went by motor-car to Aboukir airport to meet General Freyberg, Brigadier Stewart, and others who had returned to Egypt from Crete in accordance with orders from

General Wavell.

Early next morning, along with General Freyberg and Mr. Berendsen, I waited on Admiral Cunningham, and after General

¹ HMS *Phoebe*, 5450 tons, ten 5·25-inch guns.

Freyberg had described events in Crete we requested Admiral Cunningham to issue instructions to the Commander of the *Phoebe* to take aboard at Sphakia every man he could pack on to his ship. Admiral Cunningham most readily agreed to do this and sent the necessary orders forthwith.

As a result of this extra voyage of the *Phoebe* agreed to by Admiral Cunningham, in spite of the General Staff decision that no more ships would be sent, over 3000 * New Zealand soldiers were rescued from the Germans.

P. F_RAESER,

Prime Minister

* *I think the specific number is mentioned in Admiral Cunningham's Despatch. ¹

¹ The despatch reads: 'The force [*Phoebe*, *Abdiel*, *Kimberley*, *Hotspur*, and *Jackal*] sailed at 0300 on 1 June, having embarked nearly 4000 troops.'

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX I – VISIT OF MINISTERS FROM DOMINIONS AND OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIA – AGREED CONCLUSIONS OF DISCUSSIONS BETWEEN OFFICIALS, HELD AT THE WAR OFFICE ON 2 NOVEMBER 1939

Appendix I

VISIT OF MINISTERS FROM DOMINIONS AND OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIA

*Agreed Conclusions of Discussions Between Officials, Held at the
War Office on 2 November 1939*

Subject to approval by the **New Zealand Government** of any matters of policy involved, the following conclusions were agreed upon at a meeting held at the **War Office** on 2 November 1939, at which New Zealand Military representatives were present.

1. *The despatch of New Zealand Military forces* A decision by the **New Zealand Government** to despatch military forces overseas would be governed primarily by the attitude of **Japan**. The subsequent conclusions are on the assumption that the **New Zealand Government** is satisfied on this point, and gives the necessary authority to despatch forces.
2. *The composition of the force and programme of despatch* The force would consist of one complete Division. Provisional dates for the sailing of the force would be—

Divisional Headquarters and First Brigade Group—15 January

Second Brigade Group—15 April

Third Brigade Group—15 July

The Division would thus be concentrated at the beginning of August, and should have completed training by 1 September 1940.

3. *Organisation* Generally speaking, the organisation of the New Zealand Division would be similar to that of a British division. The New Zealand authorities would have no objection to this being turned

into a motorised division, if this was found to be desirable, on its arrival at its destination. A machine-gun battalion could be provided (but see under *Equipment*). The New Zealand representative agreed to furnish the War Office with a provisional order of battle.

4. *Destination* The destination of the New Zealand Division should, in the first place, be the Middle East, where it would complete its training.
5. *Reinforcements* The first batch of reinforcements from New Zealand should arrive about 1 July. A reinforcement unit would be required in the Middle East, to deal with a rate of wastage of approximately 10 per cent per month.
6. *Equipment*
 - (Little equipment could be made available from New Zealand,
 - a) except web equipment, rifles, and bayonets. All other equipment would have to be provided from United Kingdom sources.
 - (The War Office undertook to provide sufficient equipment for the
 - b) New Zealand Division for training, on its arrival in the Middle East. Full war equipment would be provided a month before the Division was required to go into action.
 - (Mechanical transport should not be shipped from New Zealand.
 - c)
 - (Detailed questions concerning equipment would be settled in
 - d) subsequent discussions.
 - (The provision of clothing from New Zealand sources was under
 - e) consideration, but anti-gas clothing and equipment and steel helmets could not be provided.
7. *Training* The training of instructors and of tradesmen should take place in Egypt, the details being arranged by the Director of Military Training and the New Zealand Military authorities.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX II – VISIT OF MINISTERS FROM DOMINIONS AND OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIA – NEW ZEALAND FORCES – NOTE OF A MEETING HELD AT THE WAR OFFICE AT 5.30 P.M. ON MONDAY, 6 NOVEMBER 1939

Appendix II

VISIT OF MINISTERS FROM DOMINIONS AND OF A REPRESENTATIVE FROM INDIA

New Zealand Forces

*Note of a Meeting Held at the War Office at 5.30 p.m. on Monday, 6
November 1939*

Present:

The Rt. Hon. L. Hore-Belisha, MP, Secretary of State for War (in the Chair)

UNITED KINGDOM

**The Duke of Devonshire, MBE,
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
for Dominion Affairs.**

**Major-General R. H. Dewing, DSO, MC,
Director of Military Operations and
Plans.**

**Major-General L. Carr, CB, DSO, OBE,
Assistant Chief of the Imperial General
Staff.**

**Mr. J. E. Stephenson, CVO, OBE,
Dominions Office.**

Lieutenant-Colonel V. Dykes, MBE, RE, Secretary

NEW ZEALAND

**The Hon. P. Fraser, MP, Deputy
Prime Minister.**

**Mr. W. J. Jordan, High
Commissioner in London.**

**Mr. C. A. Berendsen, CMG,
Permanent Head, Prime
Minister's Department.**

**Colonel W. G. Stevens,
Secretary, Defence Council.**

Mr. FRASER said that the New Zealand Government had decided to raise a force of one division, totalling some 15,000 men, in three echelons. The first echelon, about 6600 strong, was in camp now, and

the second echelon was due to be called up in a month's time. The period of training proposed was about eight months. All the men enrolled had undertaken obligations to serve overseas if required.

In connection with these forces there were four main questions of concern to the New Zealand Government.

The first of these was whether the attitude of Japan would permit the despatch of New Zealand troops overseas. After hearing Lord Halifax and the strategical discussion on 2 November, he understood that the United Kingdom Government thought the possibility of Japanese intervention was becoming more remote. The question still remained, whether a break-through on the Western Front would bring in Japan and possibly Italy against the Allied Powers. He gathered, however, that the General Staff thought such a break-through to be most unlikely. Accordingly, there seemed to be no impediment to the early despatch of New Zealand troops overseas, provided always, of course, that adequate arrangements could be made for the protection of the convoy on its passage.

The next point to be considered was the disposal of the various contingents as their training progressed. If they were retained in New Zealand, very much larger provision would have to be made for training camps and equipment. The alternative was to send the echelons overseas either to the Middle East or to the United Kingdom to complete their training, or possibly to relieve British troops in overseas garrisons such as Singapore. He understood that the early despatch of Dominion troops overseas was considered likely to have a very good effect on world opinion, and he would certainly communicate that view to the New Zealand Government on his return.

A third point for consideration was the equipping of the New Zealand forces. The matter had already been discussed in general terms, and he understood that if Dominions so desired they would receive first priority in the matter of equipment, subject always, of course, to their fitting into the general War Office programme. It would clearly be wasteful to

take all the equipment out to New Zealand only to have to bring it back again the whole way to the theatre of war. The New Zealand Government would be quite prepared if their troops could receive their equipment either in the Middle East or in the United Kingdom, wherever they completed their training.

The only other question which still remained to be settled was that of the financing of the force. In the last war the money had been found by a loan from the United Kingdom, and the same procedure would have to be adopted now. New Zealand could not find the necessary finances from her own internal resources.

Mr. HORE-BELISHA expressed his warm appreciation of the generous response of New Zealand, and looked forward to the early arrival of the New Zealand forces to serve alongside those of the United Kingdom.

As regards the attitude of Japan and Italy, it was of course impossible to guarantee anything. The Foreign Office were preparing a political appreciation which would cover this point, but his own view was that it would be safe to take a chance on the continued neutrality of Japan. Naturally this attitude might change if we had a serious reverse, but this made it all the more necessary to ensure that we did not have a setback. The Chief of the Imperial General Staff was of the opinion that the Maginot Line was virtually impregnable—any attempt on it would involve an immense loss of life. We had reason to be very grateful to France for the great expense which she had incurred in the past in preparing this line, and for the way in which she was at present holding the Western Front with very limited assistance from us. It was most necessary that we should come to her assistance as early as possible and prevent any chance of a break-through in the West.

It was possible, of course, that Germany might invade Holland or Belgium. An invasion of Holland alone could not be looked on in any way as a defeat for the Allies, since, unless Belgium also was invaded, we should have no common frontier with Germany. He doubted whether it would have any adverse effect on Japan, though admittedly she might

be tempted to make trouble in the Dutch East Indies. On the other hand, it would certainly rouse intense feeling in the United States of America which would redound to our advantage. The seizure of Holland would lessen the distance between German air bases and the United Kingdom, but it would also lessen the distance to the vital area of the Ruhr.

The War Office were vitally interested in the early arrival of New Zealand forces, and they would make every sacrifice to equip them with the least possible delay. The financial aspect was, of course, a matter to be settled with the Treasury.

Assuming that the attitude of Japan remained satisfactory, it would be preferable for each echelon, as it became available, to be sent to the Middle East. This would avoid the necessity for duplicating accommodation in New Zealand. The Middle East was a very central position, and training facilities were excellent.

Mr. FRASER said that on the grounds of sentiment he would have preferred the New Zealand forces to have completed their training in the United Kingdom, but his Government would be guided in this matter by the wishes of the United Kingdom. The troops would have all the equipment which New Zealand could provide from her own resources, but mechanical transport and the more complicated armaments would have to be found from the United Kingdom. New Zealand was making a very big effort in proportion to her small population of 1½ millions.

Mr. HORE-BELISHA emphasised the desirability of the early despatch of the first echelon from New Zealand. It was the moral effect which had to be borne in mind. For this very reason the War Office were now considering the desirability of sending formations from the United Kingdom to complete their training in France.

Mr. FRASER said that details of shipping arrangements, &c., would have to be discussed by his staff with the War Office and the Admiralty. He expressed his appreciation of the ready assistance which had been forthcoming from the United Kingdom Departments, and paid a tribute

to the earnestness, efficiency, and modesty of all the officers with whom he had come in contact.

In conclusion, he referred to a telegram which he had just received from the Prime Minister of New Zealand, offering to place the New Zealand anti-tank battery which had been formed in this country, at the disposal of the United Kingdom authorities, on condition that it was released for service with the New Zealand contingent when the latter arrived. The remaining batteries to complete the whole anti-tank regiment were being formed in New Zealand. He proposed that a public announcement to this effect should be made by the New Zealand High Commissioner, and suggested that a suitable opportunity would be at the conclusion of his visit to Aldershot on Wednesday, 8 November.

Mr. HORE-BELISHA welcomed this suggestion. He proposed to arrange for the simultaneous issue of a statement expressing the United Kingdom Government's high appreciation of this offer by New Zealand.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX III – INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Appendix III

INTERCHANGE OF INFORMATION BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENTS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

Prime Minister's Office, Wellington
23 September 1938

DEAR SIR

I have to inform you that the New Zealand Council of Defence at a recent meeting discussed the question of co-operation in Defence matters between Australia and New Zealand. It appeared to the Council that while our liaison with the United Kingdom is completely satisfactory, the liaison with Australia, except on certain matters dealt with by individual services, is not as good as is desirable.

2. As an instance of the state of affairs, I would refer you to two papers of the Committee of Imperial Defence, numbered 440C, *Defence of Australian Ports*, and 473C, *Defence of New Zealand Ports*. In the case of the first paper, the document originating the paper was drawn up in Australia, was referred to the Committee of Imperial Defence, and subsequently reached New Zealand as a British paper. In the second case, the paper was originated in New Zealand and by this time has presumably reached Australia as a British paper.

3. Other similar instances could be quoted. While we will both agree that consultation with the United Kingdom is essential, I would suggest

that consultation with each other direct is of some value also. Our problems both in peace and war resemble each other even more than they resemble those of the United Kingdom.

4. I suggest for your consideration that we establish the principle of complete mutual interchange of information between Governments as opposed to between individual services. Presumably the details could be worked out in further correspondence, but in the meantime I suggest the following as some possible methods to adopt:

- (i) Exchange of brief summaries of decisions on defence policy.
- (ii) Furnishing each other with copies of any communications to the United Kingdom which might be of interest to the other side (e.g., the recent Pacific Islands scheme sent to you under cover of my memorandum of 19 May 1938).
- (iii) Exchange of copies of what I believe you know as 'War Book Papers' but which we know as papers of the Organisation for National Security, the local equivalent of the Committee of Imperial Defence.
- (iv) Exchange of copies of Government War Books or of particulars regarding compilation.
- (v) An understanding that in time of war the fullest possible information, both of enemy and own activities, should be mutually exchanged, e.g., copies of our replies to the telegrams set out in CID paper 664M (*Notification of Precautionary and War Measures*) might well be exchanged between us.

I should be glad if in due course you could let me have your remarks.

Yours faithfully,

(sgd) M. J. SAVAGE

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

Prime Minister

,

Canberra,
A.C.T.

3 March 1939

DEAR SIR

I desire to refer again to your letter of 23 September 1938, concerning the question of interchange of information between the Governments of New Zealand and Australia.

I have consulted my colleague the Minister for Defence, and am now in a position to reply in detail to your letter.

My Government fully agrees that, in principle, the exchange of information between the parts of the Empire cannot be other than beneficial to mutual understanding and co-operation in Empire Defence. This is particularly the case between Britain and the Dominions, and between Dominions in the same geographical region, as Australia and New Zealand.

It would, however, appear inadvisable to lay down hard and fast rules as to classes of documents that should be exchanged. I am sure you will agree that it would be preferable that the information exchanged should be at the discretion of the Governments concerned.

Committee of Imperial Defence and other papers of Dominion interest, or relating to Empire Defence, are forwarded overseas, and the Dominions Office also transmits copies of Parliamentary debates. Whilst my Government is in agreement that, similarly, Australian and New Zealand Governments should keep each other posted on broad questions of policy and plans, it considers that information regarding the conclusions reached, rather than the documentation relating to their evolution, is all that it is necessary to transmit between the two Governments.

Dealing, seriatim, with each of the classes referred to in paragraph 4 of your letter of 23 September 1938, I would offer the following specific comment:

- (1) This is now being done by the transmission of copies of Policy speeches, and, in addition, these subjects are covered by the quarterly letters exchanged between the Chiefs of Staff in each country.
- (2) This can be arranged on the basis determined by each Government as to the particular communication to be forwarded.
- (3) and (4) The Government will be glad to forward to you shortly a copy of the Australian War Book. As this Book contains the conclusions reached, it will not be necessary to forward the War Book papers as well. There is also the point that the documents and reports of the Committees which make up the War Book papers are of a secret and domestic nature and embody information furnished in confidence by private bodies. In view of this, it will be readily understood that these papers cannot be made available.
- (5) This would appear to be desirable and could be arranged so far as my Government is concerned.

There exist already, as you know, arrangements for interchange of information between the Services in the two countries. It is considered that the practice should be continued, as it serves a most useful purpose. The information exchanged by this method is not such that it need be exchanged between our Governments direct. You may, however, wish to consider the desirability of the New Zealand Organisation for National Security maintaining a close liaison with the Services. Much Australian information is furnished through this channel, and if this liaison is maintained, it will be unnecessary to duplicate the information by the method of inter-Government exchanges.

Suitable steps are being taken to ensure that information on the lines of the foregoing will be forwarded by my Government, and it is proposed that this shall be done on a quarterly basis.

Yours faithfully,

(sgd) J. A. LYONS,

Prime Minister

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

The Prime Minister of New Zealand to the Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Australia

Prime Minister's Office, Wellington

23 September 1938

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(sgd) M. J. SAVAGE

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE PRIME MINISTER OF AUSTRALIA TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NEW ZEALAND

The Prime Minister of Australia to the Prime Minister of New Zealand

Prime Minister

,
Canberra,
A.C.T.

3 March 1939

DEAR SIR

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concerning the question of interchange of information between the
Governments of New Zealand and Australia.

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My Government fully agrees that, in principle, the exchange of
information between the parts of the Empire cannot be other than
beneficial to mutual understanding and co-operation in Empire Defence.
This is particularly the case between Britain and the Dominions, and
between Dominions in the same geographical region, as Australia and
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It would, however, appear inadvisable to lay down hard and fast rules
as to classes of documents that should be exchanged. I am sure you will
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Security maintaining a close liaison with the Services. Much Australian information is furnished through this channel, and if this liaison is maintained, it will be unnecessary to duplicate the information by the method of inter-Government exchanges.

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Yours faithfully,

(sgd) J. A. LYONS,

Prime Minister

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX IV – THE POSITION IN EGYPT

Appendix IV THE POSITION IN EGYPT

MEMORANDUM BY MAJOR-GENERAL B. C. FREYBERG

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Appendix 'A'—Comparative Air Strengths, Middle East.

Appendix 'B'—Comparative Army Strengths, Middle East.

Appendix 'C'—Calculations for Air Supply Column for Desert Corps.

(Signed) B. C. FREYBERG, Major-General,

Commanding New Zealand Expeditionary Force

In Bivouac,

Coleman's Hatch, Sussex

29 July 1940

THE POSITION IN EGYPT

Preamble

I have been asked by the Prime Minister to give an appreciation of the position in the Middle East. It would be a difficult task even if I had the full facts and unlimited time. But, situated as I am at present, fully occupied in training the New Zealand Expeditionary Force, and being

only a subordinate Commander without full knowledge of many of the more important aspects of the problem, I feel that my information is too incomplete to cover the whole field. I must therefore confine my observations to the Egyptian theatre from the point of view of a subordinate Commander who knows the smallness of our Garrison, the incomplete state of our equipment and the inadequacy of our war reserves.

Defence of London v. Defence of the Empire

There are in England at the present moment two distinct schools of thought upon Defence—one that advocates a policy of concentrating all our military resources to safeguard the British Isles as the heart of the Empire, and the other that believes there should be no policy of defence which does not consider the defence except from the point of view of the Empire as a whole. This latter view brings automatically with it the problems of the defence of the Suez Canal and Singapore.

It is perhaps not beside the point to note that the further away one is from England the less one believes in invasion. In the Middle East itself few responsible people, if any, regard the invasion of the United Kingdom as a serious proposition. That was my own opinion when I arrived in England a month ago, and I still look upon it as a desperate action with little chance of success.

I believe the Defence of London School to be a dangerous one, and in the same category as the view held by many during the last few years who argued that it was not necessary to mechanise our Army or to send troops to France, and who inferred therefore that everything necessary could be done by the Air Force and the Royal Navy. The Defence of London School now hold that no equipment should leave England until the danger of an invasion is over, and that when the bad weather comes here it will be time enough to reinforce the Middle East.

In the same way people not connected with the Middle East are prone to minimise the risk there. Those of us, however, who have been

stationed in the Middle East know the true picture. We have watched the position deteriorate during the last eight months until the present deplorable state has been reached. We have seen our sea communications cut off both north and south, and with France, our Ally, out of the war, we are now facing single-handed the large armies on either frontier.

The Axis Powers now have the initiative and we face possible attacks in two theatres, in the United Kingdom and in Egypt. The present war has become one of material. There is no shortage of manpower. Since Dunkirk the rival demands for equipment of the various theatres of war cannot be fulfilled. It is natural that the claims of Home Defence should have a high order of preference, but they should not be enforced to the total exclusion of the needs of Egypt.

The Importance of the Weather and Climate

Although the German General Staff have the initiative, their position is hedged round with difficulties and limitations. If an attack is to be made upon either the United Kingdom or Egypt, weather and climatic conditions must come into their calculations. They will play a large part and place limitations upon the activities of the Axis Powers. To effect a beach landing in the United Kingdom will require settled weather conditions, and these are unlikely to occur after the equinoctial gales in September. If the Germans have not attacked by that time they know from the rate of our rearmament that we will be too strong for a successful invasion next Spring.

It is argued, therefore, that Germany must attack before 20 September of this year or give up the project for good.

On the other hand, owing to the excessive heat a campaign on the Western Desert of Egypt could probably not be undertaken before October.

The invasion of Egypt from Libya should not, therefore, be possible

until after the threat of a German invasion of England is over.

A further investigation of the administrative difficulties that face the Axis Powers gives us additional data to work upon. As stated, climatic conditions should preclude Germany and Italy staging a simultaneous attack upon the United Kingdom and Egypt. Further, the limited number of load-carrying aircraft of the Axis Powers would appear to compromise their chances of success. The losses to load-carrying aircraft which Germany would be forced to face in an attack upon the United Kingdom would minimise any chance of success in the Middle East later in the year. The Axis Powers can only attack one, not both.

Scale of Attack against Egypt

Any attack delivered on Egypt must be a full-scale one. In addition to an attack along the Coast we should prepare to meet a desert motorised column of not less than one mobile Corps of two motorised Divisions, together with an Armoured Force covered by air reconnaissance and protected by fighters. This force could be supplied by load-carrying aircraft. To cross the desert with such a force it would be necessary to dump by aeroplane large quantities of water, food, petrol and oil. The estimated load that would be required to be delivered each day by air would be 1,300,000 lb. To dump this heavy weight of material would require either 650 aeroplanes doing one trip, or 325 aeroplanes doing two trips. It would be possible for the Germans and the Italians to produce this number of aeroplanes, as Germany alone has approximately 500 load-carrying planes of this type.

Thus, although it would be possible to supply a mechanised column by air across the desert to Assuan or Cairo, this operation would require a very large combined effort on the part of the Axis. Very large stocks of fuel would have to be concentrated near the border at an early stage. The maintenance of supplies to enable so large a force to move 100 miles a day would be a great strain.

There is another point: would the reserves of petrol be adequate to

enable the Axis Powers to dump simultaneously and in advance the large quantities required in both theatres of war?

The Vital Importance of Air Power in the Middle East

Continuing the argument, when the Axis Powers are considering courses open to them for attack they must choose either the United Kingdom or Libya. It is unlikely that they would have sufficient load-carrying aircraft to carry out both campaigns.

Unfortunately for Great Britain there is also a difficult decision to make. We have a great aircraft shortage both here and in Egypt. In the next few weeks the air force reinforcement of the Middle East may become of primary importance. While the Axis Powers can reinforce Libya in the course of a few days, with France out of the war and the Mediterranean now closed, we are at a great disadvantage because our air reinforcement of the Middle East must now be ship-borne round the Cape of Good Hope, a long journey. It takes 40 days by fast convoy and up to 120 days by slow one. It is obvious, therefore, that should we decide it is necessary to reinforce the Air Force in Egypt we cannot afford to wait any longer.

Desert now not an Impassable Obstacle

In considering the question of the disparity of our Forces there is a tendency to take refuge in the comforting argument that the Western Desert of Egypt is a considerable barrier to an invasion by a large hostile force from Libya. This view has been put forward and argued over a period of years upon the basis that the Western Desert is wide, arid and waterless, which an army of any size, even without opposition, would find impossible to cross.

I hope that the Committee which has been set up to consider the question of the defence of the Middle East should be under no such misapprehension. They should appreciate the fact that the Western Desert is no longer an unknown area. As the result of air reconnaissance

and special desert motor transport, there is no part of its surface that has not been accurately explored, and every square mile has now been surveyed and charted. It is accepted that the wide tracts of hard sand are capable of being rapidly crossed by desert motor transport or track vehicles; in fact, it is acknowledged that Egypt is the best possible training ground for an armoured force. In the past years it has always been considered that the lack of water and petrol and the difficulty of supply would prevent an invasion by an army of any size. With load-carrying aircraft as a means of transport this is now altered. Given air superiority and the necessary load carriers and a fast-moving desert mechanised army, the question of the defence of the Suez Canal region assumes different proportions. Such an army operating with air-borne supplies would have a long radius of action and a speed that would be difficult to deal with except either by a similar column, supported by aircraft of all classes, or by the necessary fighters and bombers to prevent the supplying of the column.

Modern Armies require Machines, not Men, to Counter them

The Allies have just been out-fought on the Continent by a large, fast-moving mechanised striking force supported by a large Air Force. These two enemy forces are still in being and could be used at short notice in the Middle East. It is this aspect of the problem that I wish to emphasise. With the lack of cover from sight and of tank obstacles, and the favourable surface for armoured vehicles, the Western Desert is even more suited for this class of warfare than the fields of Flanders.

The Garrison of Egypt is totally inadequate for present requirements both in numbers of men and in equipment. While the officers and men in the Armies of the East are well up to standard in physique and training, the Army as a whole is greatly handicapped. It is a mixture of Units, hastily thrown together, the armoured force vehicles are in the main obsolete, and the troops are for the most part armed with old, out-of-date equipment, obsolete artillery, and with an inadequate supply of signal stores, medical supplies and war reserves generally. In addition to

the unserviceable nature and lack of essential equipment, our present garrisons, as compared with the Italians, show that we are weak in numbers and in aircraft:

British in Egypt, &c.—

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Immediate Defence of Egypt

In my opinion, and this opinion is shared by many soldiers, the Italian forces alone do not constitute a menace, because Italians in the past have lacked the incisiveness to attempt such an operation and the offensive spirit necessary to carry through to a successful conclusion a project of this nature. If, however, Italy is helped by Germany with up-to-date methods and equipment, then the whole position of the defence of Egypt is altered, and the problem must receive the most careful consideration in the light of the new developments.

In considering the problem of the defence of Egypt I have so far only considered the threat from Libya, although in the near future we may have to face the fact that Turkey may be forced to assist the Axis Powers and even to allow a German Army through her frontiers. This development would not seem to be practicable this year. I am afraid there is a lot of wishful thinking about the Middle East at the moment. We are gambling upon the desert being an impassable obstacle. In two month's time we may have the answer. There may be no warning. Libya can be reinforced in a few hours from Italy by aeroplanes of all types—fighters, bombers, troop-carriers, load-bearing aircraft, of all of which the Axis Powers are known to have a large supply. If we want to ensure against Egypt's being invaded there is only one certain way and that is to make the Air Force in Egypt sufficiently strong in fighters and bombers to prevent the load-carrying aircraft from penetrating into the

Western Desert and establishing the supply points without which no Army can move across it.

From the defensive point of view there are three areas vital to the life of Egypt, and these would have to be protected—the Coast road, Cairo and the Barrage, and the Assuan Dam. This would force us to disperse our already meagre forces over a large area. When a Commander is set a task he has the right to be told the scale of attack to be expected upon his front. That is the first consideration. The next consideration is when the attack is to be expected. If the attack is from the Italians alone I should say that the reinforcement of the garrison could wait until the late autumn. If, however, the German Army are coming to Africa in any numbers with modern, fast-moving, mechanised vehicles the question of bolstering up Egypt's defences is urgent. It is now too late to contemplate sending another armoured force, even if we had one available. All that can be achieved at present is the hurried reinforcement of Egypt's air power. Barely sixty days remain before the campaigning season opens. I understand that the route from Lagos to Cairo by land is being prepared, but this will only allow the transit of planes and not the ground organisation, personnel and stores. Nevertheless, time still exists to ship to Egypt by fast transport, fighters and bombers, and we must consider this problem very deeply before we decide our action.

Conclusions

1. The Axis Powers can choose whether they strike at the United Kingdom or at the Suez Canal. But they cannot strike at both, either at the same time or separately, because they have insufficient load-carrying aircraft.
2. Italy will not move against Egypt without solid German help. It is most important that we should prepare for the worst scale of attack possible.
3. The British Army in Egypt, excellent material though it is, and excellently trained, is comparatively weak in resisting power owing to the lack of equipment and war reserves.
4. In preparing for the defence of Egypt, we are laying the foundations

of ultimate victory. Because, if Italy attacks from Libya, even with German help, they can be made to suffer a great reverse. If they do not attack we shall be well situated to attack Libya before next hot weather.

Recommendations

1. We should push on with all speed with the Lagos- Cairo air-route. I came through this a month ago. It is, at the moment, most dangerous. The landing-grounds are too small, and very rough. There is no Directional Wireless, and no spare parts or ground service available. All these deficiencies require immediate attention if it is to be used in air reinforcement of Egypt. The opening of this route would save three weeks by enabling aircraft to be flown the last lap to Cairo, and this saving in time is most important. It still remains necessary to have a fast route, *i.e.*, through the Mediterranean or some other route, to provide for the transit of the essential ground organisation, personnel and stores in Egypt.

2. We should send, with all despatch, sufficient fighters to give the Royal Air Force in Egypt a reasonable chance of defeating a possible combined German and Italian Army and Air Force operating offensively from Libya against Egypt.

3. It is unfortunate that there is not a single completely-equipped Division in Egypt. The Armoured Division is not properly equipped; the Fourth Indian Division has only two Brigades; the New Zealand and Australian Imperial Forces are incomplete both in numbers, and even the equipment for the existing personnel is inadequate. It is recommended that full equipment be sent by fast convoy for the whole of the Divisions, especially for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

4. As war in the Middle East depends almost entirely upon Administration, we should examine and provide all means of transportation so that when we take the offensive in the near future we shall be able to reap the full advantage of any local success we may

achieve.

I recommend—

- (That all the Railway Construction and Railway Survey Units not
a) wanted at home be sent out to the Middle East.
- (That a thousand miles of broad gauge railway tracks be
b) accumulated in Suez or Alexandria area.
- (That the question of concentrating load-carrying aircraft in Egypt
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- (That as the Royal Navy are now too busy to undertake sea
d) transport the Army should organise and man a sea-borne transport service which would be prepared to carry and supply raiding-parties or even an Army operating along the Mediterranean coast. In this respect, I am certain I could get a Corps of yachtsmen and seamen from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who are trained and competent, and there are innumerable barges and similar small craft suitable for fitting with outboard motors, or small engines. Parent-ships could be supplied for these from captured enemy merchant vessels.

5. Finally, I am certain that the first move towards defeating the Germans is to ensure the defences of Egypt, and then a real start can be made by chasing the Italians out of Libya.

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Defence of London v. Defence of the Empire

There are in England at the present moment two distinct schools of thought upon Defence—one that advocates a policy of concentrating all our military resources to safeguard the **British Isles** as the heart of the Empire, and the other that believes there should be no policy of defence which does not consider the defence except from the point of view of the Empire as a whole. This latter view brings automatically with it the problems of the defence of the **Suez Canal** and **Singapore**.

It is perhaps not beside the point to note that the further away one is from England the less one believes in invasion. In the **Middle East** itself few responsible people, if any, regard the invasion of the United Kingdom as a serious proposition. That was my own opinion when I arrived in England a month ago, and I still look upon it as a desperate action with little chance of success.

I believe the Defence of London School to be a dangerous one, and in the same category as the view held by many during the last few years who argued that it was not necessary to mechanise our Army or to send troops to **France**, and who inferred therefore that everything necessary could be done by the **Air Force** and the **Royal Navy**. The Defence of London School now hold that no equipment should leave England until the danger of an invasion is over, and that when the bad weather comes here it will be time enough to reinforce the **Middle East**.

In the same way people not connected with the **Middle East** are prone to minimise the risk there. Those of us, however, who have been stationed in the **Middle East** know the true picture. We have watched the position deteriorate during the last eight months until the present deplorable state has been reached. We have seen our sea

communications cut off both north and south, and with France, our Ally, out of the war, we are now facing single-handed the large armies on either frontier.

The Axis Powers now have the initiative and we face possible attacks in two theatres, in the United Kingdom and in Egypt. The present war has become one of material. There is no shortage of manpower. Since Dunkirk the rival demands for equipment of the various theatres of war cannot be fulfilled. It is natural that the claims of Home Defence should have a high order of preference, but they should not be enforced to the total exclusion of the needs of Egypt.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WEATHER AND CLIMATE

The Importance of the Weather and Climate

Although the German General Staff have the initiative, their position is hedged round with difficulties and limitations. If an attack is to be made upon either the United Kingdom or Egypt, weather and climatic conditions must come into their calculations. They will play a large part and place limitations upon the activities of the Axis Powers. To effect a beach landing in the United Kingdom will require settled weather conditions, and these are unlikely to occur after the equinoctial gales in September. If the Germans have not attacked by that time they know from the rate of our rearmament that we will be too strong for a successful invasion next Spring.

It is argued, therefore, that Germany must attack before 20 September of this year or give up the project for good.

On the other hand, owing to the excessive heat a campaign on the Western Desert of Egypt could probably not be undertaken before October.

The invasion of Egypt from Libya should not, therefore, be possible until after the threat of a German invasion of England is over.

A further investigation of the administrative difficulties that face the Axis Powers gives us additional data to work upon. As stated, climatic conditions should preclude Germany and Italy staging a simultaneous attack upon the United Kingdom and Egypt. Further, the limited number of load-carrying aircraft of the Axis Powers would appear to compromise their chances of success. The losses to load-carrying aircraft which Germany would be forced to face in an attack upon the United Kingdom would minimise any chance of success in the Middle

East later in the year. The Axis Powers can only attack one, not both.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

SCALE OF ATTACK AGAINST EGYPT

Scale of Attack against Egypt

Any attack delivered on Egypt must be a full-scale one. In addition to an attack along the Coast we should prepare to meet a desert motorised column of not less than one mobile Corps of two motorised Divisions, together with an Armoured Force covered by air reconnaissance and protected by fighters. This force could be supplied by load-carrying aircraft. To cross the desert with such a force it would be necessary to dump by aeroplane large quantities of water, food, petrol and oil. The estimated load that would be required to be delivered each day by air would be 1,300,000 lb. To dump this heavy weight of material would require either 650 aeroplanes doing one trip, or 325 aeroplanes doing two trips. It would be possible for the Germans and the Italians to produce this number of aeroplanes, as Germany alone has approximately 500 load-carrying planes of this type.

Thus, although it would be possible to supply a mechanised column by air across the desert to Assuan or Cairo, this operation would require a very large combined effort on the part of the Axis. Very large stocks of fuel would have to be concentrated near the border at an early stage. The maintenance of supplies to enable so large a force to move 100 miles a day would be a great strain.

There is another point: would the reserves of petrol be adequate to enable the Axis Powers to dump simultaneously and in advance the large quantities required in both theatres of war?

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF AIR POWER IN THE MIDDLE EAST

The Vital Importance of Air Power in the Middle East

Continuing the argument, when the Axis Powers are considering courses open to them for attack they must choose either the United Kingdom or Libya. It is unlikely that they would have sufficient load-carrying aircraft to carry out both campaigns.

Unfortunately for Great Britain there is also a difficult decision to make. We have a great aircraft shortage both here and in Egypt. In the next few weeks the air force reinforcement of the Middle East may become of primary importance. While the Axis Powers can reinforce Libya in the course of a few days, with France out of the war and the Mediterranean now closed, we are at a great disadvantage because our air reinforcement of the Middle East must now be ship-borne round the Cape of Good Hope, a long journey. It takes 40 days by fast convoy and up to 120 days by slow one. It is obvious, therefore, that should we decide it is necessary to reinforce the Air Force in Egypt we cannot afford to wait any longer.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

DESERT NOW NOT AN IMPASSABLE OBSTACLE

Desert now not an Impassable Obstacle

In considering the question of the disparity of our Forces there is a tendency to take refuge in the comforting argument that the Western Desert of Egypt is a considerable barrier to an invasion by a large hostile force from Libya. This view has been put forward and argued over a period of years upon the basis that the Western Desert is wide, arid and waterless, which an army of any size, even without opposition, would find impossible to cross.

I hope that the Committee which has been set up to consider the question of the defence of the Middle East should be under no such misapprehension. They should appreciate the fact that the Western Desert is no longer an unknown area. As the result of air reconnaissance and special desert motor transport, there is no part of its surface that has not been accurately explored, and every square mile has now been surveyed and charted. It is accepted that the wide tracts of hard sand are capable of being rapidly crossed by desert motor transport or track vehicles; in fact, it is acknowledged that Egypt is the best possible training ground for an armoured force. In the past years it has always been considered that the lack of water and petrol and the difficulty of supply would prevent an invasion by an army of any size. With load-carrying aircraft as a means of transport this is now altered. Given air superiority and the necessary load carriers and a fast-moving desert mechanised army, the question of the defence of the Suez Canal region assumes different proportions. Such an army operating with air-borne supplies would have a long radius of action and a speed that would be difficult to deal with except either by a similar column, supported by aircraft of all classes, or by the necessary fighters and bombers to prevent the supplying of the column.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

MODERN ARMIES REQUIRE MACHINES, NOT MEN, TO COUNTER THEM

Modern Armies require Machines, not Men, to Counter them

The Allies have just been out-fought on the Continent by a large, fast-moving mechanised striking force supported by a large Air Force. These two enemy forces are still in being and could be used at short notice in the Middle East. It is this aspect of the problem that I wish to emphasise. With the lack of cover from sight and of tank obstacles, and the favourable surface for armoured vehicles, the Western Desert is even more suited for this class of warfare than the fields of Flanders.

The Garrison of Egypt is totally inadequate for present requirements both in numbers of men and in equipment. While the officers and men in the Armies of the East are well up to standard in physique and training, the Army as a whole is greatly handicapped. It is a mixture of Units, hastily thrown together, the armoured force vehicles are in the main obsolete, and the troops are for the most part armed with old, out-of-date equipment, obsolete artillery, and with an inadequate supply of signal stores, medical supplies and war reserves generally. In addition to the unserviceable nature and lack of essential equipment, our present garrisons, as compared with the Italians, show that we are weak in numbers and in aircraft:

British in Egypt, &c.—

Army	149,000 men
Air Force	436 aeroplanes
<i>Italians in Libya and Abyssinia—</i>	
Army	445,000 men
Air Force	764 aeroplanes

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

IMMEDIATE DEFENCE OF EGYPT

Immediate Defence of Egypt

In my opinion, and this opinion is shared by many soldiers, the Italian forces alone do not constitute a menace, because Italians in the past have lacked the incisiveness to attempt such an operation and the offensive spirit necessary to carry through to a successful conclusion a project of this nature. If, however, Italy is helped by Germany with up-to-date methods and equipment, then the whole position of the defence of Egypt is altered, and the problem must receive the most careful consideration in the light of the new developments.

In considering the problem of the defence of Egypt I have so far only considered the threat from Libya, although in the near future we may have to face the fact that Turkey may be forced to assist the Axis Powers and even to allow a German Army through her frontiers. This development would not seem to be practicable this year. I am afraid there is a lot of wishful thinking about the Middle East at the moment. We are gambling upon the desert being an impassable obstacle. In two month's time we may have the answer. There may be no warning. Libya can be reinforced in a few hours from Italy by aeroplanes of all types—fighters, bombers, troop-carriers, load-bearing aircraft, of all of which the Axis Powers are known to have a large supply. If we want to ensure against Egypt's being invaded there is only one certain way and that is to make the Air Force in Egypt sufficiently strong in fighters and bombers to prevent the load-carrying aircraft from penetrating into the Western Desert and establishing the supply points without which no Army can move across it.

From the defensive point of view there are three areas vital to the life of Egypt, and these would have to be protected—the Coast road,

Cairo and the Barrage, and the Assuan Dam. This would force us to disperse our already meagre forces over a large area. When a Commander is set a task he has the right to be told the scale of attack to be expected upon his front. That is the first consideration. The next consideration is when the attack is to be expected. If the attack is from the Italians alone I should say that the reinforcement of the garrison could wait until the late autumn. If, however, the German Army are coming to Africa in any numbers with modern, fast-moving, mechanised vehicles the question of bolstering up Egypt's defences is urgent. It is now too late to contemplate sending another armoured force, even if we had one available. All that can be achieved at present is the hurried reinforcement of Egypt's air power. Barely sixty days remain before the campaigning season opens. I understand that the route from Lagos to Cairo by land is being prepared, but this will only allow the transit of planes and not the ground organisation, personnel and stores. Nevertheless, time still exists to ship to Egypt by fast transport, fighters and bombers, and we must consider this problem very deeply before we decide our action.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions

1. The Axis Powers can choose whether they strike at the United Kingdom or at the Suez Canal. But they cannot strike at both, either at the same time or separately, because they have insufficient load-carrying aircraft.
2. Italy will not move against Egypt without solid German help. It is most important that we should prepare for the worst scale of attack possible.
3. The British Army in Egypt, excellent material though it is, and excellently trained, is comparatively weak in resisting power owing to the lack of equipment and war reserves.
4. In preparing for the defence of Egypt, we are laying the foundations of ultimate victory. Because, if Italy attacks from Libya, even with German help, they can be made to suffer a great reverse. If they do not attack we shall be well situated to attack Libya before next hot weather.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

1. We should push on with all speed with the Lagos- Cairo air-route. I came through this a month ago. It is, at the moment, most dangerous. The landing-grounds are too small, and very rough. There is no Directional Wireless, and no spare parts or ground service available. All these deficiencies require immediate attention if it is to be used in air reinforcement of Egypt. The opening of this route would save three weeks by enabling aircraft to be flown the last lap to Cairo, and this saving in time is most important. It still remains necessary to have a fast route, *i.e.*, through the Mediterranean or some other route, to provide for the transit of the essential ground organisation, personnel and stores in Egypt.
2. We should send, with all despatch, sufficient fighters to give the Royal Air Force in Egypt a reasonable chance of defeating a possible combined German and Italian Army and Air Force operating offensively from Libya against Egypt.
3. It is unfortunate that there is not a single completely-equipped Division in Egypt. The Armoured Division is not properly equipped; the Fourth Indian Division has only two Brigades; the New Zealand and Australian Imperial Forces are incomplete both in numbers, and even the equipment for the existing personnel is inadequate. It is recommended that full equipment be sent by fast convoy for the whole of the Divisions, especially for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.
4. As war in the Middle East depends almost entirely upon Administration, we should examine and provide all means of transportation so that when we take the offensive in the near future we shall be able to reap the full advantage of any local success we may

achieve.

I recommend—

- (That all the Railway Construction and Railway Survey Units not
a) wanted at home be sent out to the Middle East.
- (That a thousand miles of broad gauge railway tracks be
b) accumulated in Suez or Alexandria area.
- (That the question of concentrating load-carrying aircraft in Egypt
c) to support and supply Desert mobile columns be examined.
- (That as the Royal Navy are now too busy to undertake sea
d) transport the Army should organise and man a sea-borne transport service which would be prepared to carry and supply raiding-parties or even an Army operating along the Mediterranean coast. In this respect, I am certain I could get a Corps of yachtsmen and seamen from the New Zealand Expeditionary Force who are trained and competent, and there are innumerable barges and similar small craft suitable for fitting with outboard motors, or small engines. Parent-ships could be supplied for these from captured enemy merchant vessels.

5. Finally, I am certain that the first move towards defeating the Germans is to ensure the defences of Egypt, and then a real start can be made by chasing the Italians out of Libya.

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX 'A'

APPENDIX 'A'

STRENGTH OF ITALIAN AIR FORCE IN MIDDLE EAST: JULY 1940

East Africa—

Fighters	44
Recce	18
Bombers	139
Bomber recce	Nil
Seaplanes	Nil
Dive bombers	Nil

Libya—

Fighters	141
Recce	100
Bombers	128
Bomber recce	21
Dive bombers	Nil
Seaplanes	12
Ground attack	16
Transport	15

Dodecanese—

Fighters	21
Bombers	73
Transport	5
Seaplanes	31
Total	764

STRENGTH OF BRITISH AIR FORCE IN MIDDLE EAST: JULY 1940

Egypt, Palestine, Sudan—

Fighters—	
Gladiators	92

Hurricanes	3
Audax Fighters	2
Bombers	149
Army Co-operation	50
Flying boats	15
Transport: bombers	25

Aden, Kenya, Somaliland—

Fighters—

Gladiators	8
Hurricanes	4
Recce	18
Bombers	54
Army Co-operation	12
Transport: bombers	4
Total	436

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX 'B'

APPENDIX 'B'

**Present British Garrisons of Egypt, Palestine, East Africa,
Transjordank and Sudan are as follows:**

Egypt (Does not include the Egyptian Army) 55,500

Palestine 35,000

East Africa 47,000

White: 12,000

Black: 31,000

Irregulars: 4,000

Somaliland 2,800

Sudan 9,000

Total 149,300

The existing Italian Garrisons are—

Libya 290,000

White: 250,000

Black: 40,000

Abyssinia 155,000

White: 35,000

Black: 100,000

Irregulars: 20,000

Total 445,000

DOCUMENTS RELATING TO NEW ZEALAND'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR 1939-45: VOLUME I

APPENDIX 'C' – AIR SUPPLY COLUMN FOR DESERT ARMY CORPS

APPENDIX 'C'

AIR SUPPLY COLUMN FOR DESERT ARMY CORPS

The strength of a mechanised Division is 14,661 of all ranks, and of an armoured Division 12,146 of all ranks. An Army Corps of two Divisions and one armoured Division would number 41,468 men of all ranks, excluding possible additions for Corps Headquarters. To move an Army Corps, strength as above, across the desert 100 miles per day would require the following weights of Food, Water, Petrol and Oil to be delivered each day:

Food and Water—

Men require one quart of water per day, weight $2\frac{1}{2}$ lb., plus 50 per cent for containers and wastage, say, $3\frac{3}{4}$ lb. per man.

Food, in concentrated form, 1 lb. 12 oz. plus weight of containers, say, $2\frac{3}{4}$ lb. per man.

Total Food and Water, 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. per man	269,542
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Petrol—

Petrol per mechanised Division for 100 miles is estimated at 31,310 gallons, weight with containers 10 lb. per gallon	626,200
---	---------

Petrol for armoured Division, estimated at 1 gallon per 5 miles per vehicle (probably an under-estimate), for 2,565 vehicles (excluding motor cycles)	513,000
---	---------

Oil—

Only a guess can be made, and its weight is not included in these calculations.

In considering a move of this nature, a certain proportion of the vehicles, those used for carrying greatcoats, blankets, packs, &c., could be dispensed with, and the total petrol saving from this cause may be reckoned at 10 per cent of the whole. The final result on this basis is as follows:

Lb.

Food and water	269,542
Petrol for mechanised divisions	563,580
Petrol for armoured division	461,700
Total	1,294,822

No account has been taken of the water used in water-cooled engines on mechanical vehicles.

Taking oil into consideration, it may be assumed that a grand total of not less than 1,300,000 lb. weight of supplies will be needed per day.

It is difficult to say how many planes are required to deliver a given load a given distance, because the capabilities of the different types of aircraft that could be employed vary to a great extent.

The following are examples of this: Load—Lb. Range—Miles

JU 52	3,000	950
JU 52/3	7,700	1,000
JU 86	5,060	930

Fuel consumption of planes is very great and will eat into and reduce these loads. Further, a safety margin in mileage of $\frac{1}{5}$ must be allowed.

To sum up, the distance to be covered would be between 500 and 600 miles, of which the first day's supply for 100 miles would be in the echelon at the commencement.

Assuming a JU 52 requires one-third of its carrying capacity for its own petrol, it could carry 2,000 lb. of supplies on each trip. To dump 1,300,000 lb. per day would require 650 such planes to do one trip, or half that number if a second journey is made. By using the larger planes, the total number required would be reduced in proportion, but over the longer distances there would be a reduction in the loads. This should be possible because Germany has 500 such aeroplanes.

While it would be possible for the Italians, plus German help, to keep in petrol and supplies an expedition across the Desert to, say, Assuan, it would definitely require a very great effort on their part. Load-carrier

aeroplanes would have to be protected by fighters, which would be possible as German fighters have a range of about 470 miles.

Enormous stocks of fuel and oil would have to be concentrated and dumped near to the Frontier for the aircraft, as well as for the ground vehicles.

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