

1944
NEW ZEALAND

MILITARY FORCES OF NEW ZEALAND

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE GENERAL OFFICER COMMANDING

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency

REPORT

The Hon. the MINISTER OF DEFENCE.

Wellington, 10th August, 1944.

SIR,—

I have the honour to submit the following report on the New Zealand Military Forces for the period 1st June, 1943, to 31st May, 1944.

GENERAL REMARKS

The decrease in the threat of Japanese action against New Zealand is now much more obvious to the general public than when it was mentioned in my last report. This security against attack is measured in two ways—the first, obvious to every one, being by Allied tactical successes, and the second, recognizable only by those to whom the required information is available, being by the establishment of bases and the concentrations of strength by the Allies in the theatre of operations. Marked progress has been made in both directions, and this, together with the striking improvement in the situation in Europe and the threat, which Japan must take into account, of forces of overwhelming strength from the European theatre being concentrated against her, has finally removed any risk of serious attack on New Zealand.

Army policy has closely followed, and to some extent anticipated, the strategical situation throughout the world, and especially in the Pacific. When danger threatened in 1941 and the early part of 1942 our home Forces were raised to unprecedented strength, and, in addition New Zealand troops occupied advanced points of high strategical importance in the Pacific. As Allied strength mounted in the Pacific, so the necessity for strong home Forces and island garrisons decreased, and those Forces were reduced accordingly, from time to time, until the stage was reached when the retention of manpower for anti-invasion Forces was no longer justified.

The effect of the progressive decrease in strength is emphasized in the Budget, which shows a reduction of £21,000,000 in the expenditure required for the Army. But, important as it is, this is perhaps overshadowed by the benefit resulting from the return to civil life of tens of thousands of men who had been immobilized by the threat of enemy attack. This release and the consequent reduction or cessation of defence works (including buildings), and in the manufacture of certain munitions, clothing, and other requirements of the Army, have brought relief to industry and to the civil population in several very important directions. To the extent that production has been increased by these measures, New Zealand's contribution to the war effort of the Allies has been increased. Another most important effect, both financial and as a contribution to the war effort overseas, has been the release for active theatres of war of quantities of war equipment and ammunition which had been concentrated in New Zealand. This equipment has helped to meet requirements on active fronts and incidentally has brought a credit to New Zealand finances of an estimated amount of £12,000,000 to date. No equipment is

being held in New Zealand if it is required elsewhere to combat the enemy, and it is probable that large additional quantities will be despatched overseas. New Zealand's realistic attitude in this connection has been most favourably commented on by overseas authorities.

The demobilization of such large forces has produced serious equipment problems as the quantities disposed of abroad, mentioned above, have been comparatively small. It is quite impracticable to find storage accommodation on the necessary scale, and large numbers of men, including tradesmen, are required to keep the equipment in good order and to guard it. Whether or not certain out-dated or obsolescent equipment which it would appear is not likely to be required either abroad or in New Zealand should be guarded and maintained is receiving close attention in consultation with the War Office in order to avoid, if possible, the cost and the loss of man-power involved.

The policy of the Army in New Zealand now follows the principle that to the utmost extent possible every man and woman in the community should either be engaged directly or indirectly on war production or in serving or preparing to serve overseas. Adopting this principle as far as possible, the role of the Army in New Zealand is—

- (a) To administer, train, and despatch overseas reinforcements:
- (b) To guard, account for, and maintain in serviceable condition the large mass of war equipment, stores, vehicles, and ammunition in New Zealand; to overhaul, pack, and despatch equipment, &c., required by overseas authorities; to carry out technical inspection of war equipment manufactured in New Zealand for overseas:
- (c) To man such armament as is considered necessary from time to time by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff to meet submarine attack on our ports:
- (d) To guard vital points in accordance with periodical surveys of the situation by the New Zealand Chiefs of Staff:
- (e) To guard prisoners of war:
- (f) To administer and train secondary-school Cadets, and the non-mobilized Territorial Force to the extent considered necessary from time to time:
- (g) To carry out the administration of the Defence Department, including pay, accounts, and base records, the disposal of returning troops, and normal peacetime activities; and to retain the organization necessary to meet requirements of a changing war situation.

ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE OF AUSTRALIA

Eight New Zealand Cadets graduated at the Royal Military College of Australia during the year. There are at present nineteen New Zealand Cadets attending the College.

REDUCTION IN TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

Consquent upon the demobilization of the home-defence Force the following training establishments have been closed:—

| Establishment. | Opening Date. | Closing Date. | Total Number of Students who attended Courses. |
|---|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| New Zealand Tactical School | 19th August, 1942 | 9th September, 1943 | 450 |
| New Zealand School of Artillery | 11th April, 1942 | 4th February, 1944 | 2,300 |
| Forest and Jungle Warfare Wing, Army School | 3rd July, 1942 | 29th February, 1944 | 430 |
| New Zealand Staff College | 3rd November, 1941 | 4th March, 1944 | 400 |
| New Zealand Armoured Fighting Vehicles School | 5th November, 1941 | 6th April, 1944 | 8,500 |

ARMY SCHOOL OF INSTRUCTION

As the only remaining Army Headquarters training establishment, the Army School of Instruction continues to maintain a high standard of training efficiency. During the past year 2,300 students from mobilization camps, unit and area staffs, and reinforcement draft specialists have passed through the school.

Included in this total are 750 soldiers trained as Army tradesmen to meet 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force requirements in the following categories: motor mechanics, welders, turners, motor-cycle mechanics, blacksmiths, instrument mechanics, auto electricians, fitters, wireless mechanics.

SECONDARY SCHOOL CADET TRAINING

A successful year's training has been carried out by Cadet units at secondary schools. Interest in training has been stimulated by the liberal issue of modern equipment to the schools and by the holding during the May vacation of courses of instruction attended by 190 officers and 794 Cadet non-commissioned officers.

2ND NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE PERSONNEL

Training.—Drafts of reinforcements for the New Zealand Expeditionary Force have been despatched during the year in sufficient numbers to maintain the overseas Forces. As a rule these reinforcements receive only basic soldier training in New Zealand and complete their training overseas.

Furlough Drafts.—During the year some 7,500 personnel have returned from Middle East to participate in the "Furlough" Scheme.

A large percentage of these drafts has been exempted from further service because of medical unfitness or for reasons of personal hardship, &c.

Personnel for Essential Industry.—Arrangements were recently made for the return of some thousands of personnel from the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Pacific for direction to essential industry. The first drafts have already arrived in New Zealand.

HOME GUARD

As from 31st December, 1943, Home Guard was placed on the Reserve, and all training has been discontinued.

MAPPING AND SURVEY

The Lands and Survey Department has made further progress with military mapping, and of approximately 300 sheets in the standard series of maps, 109 have been published, whilst work on a further 44 sheets is nearing completion.

In addition to their military importance, the maps are of great value to certain State Departments and local authorities.

SIGNALS

With the reduction in home-defence Forces the Army signals network has been contracted, enabling a number of lines and a quantity of equipment to be returned to the Post and Telegraph Department. This has afforded some relief to the civil communications, which had been strained considerably in meeting the requirements of the Armed Services. The reduction of signals activities has also effected considerable savings in personnel.

The Signals Experimental Establishment has undertaken experimental work and developed special equipment for use by the New Zealand Forces in the Pacific. As this work is now completed the Establishment has been disbanded.

ESTABLISHMENTS

Following the re-organization, Army Inspecting Officers were appointed to examine all domestic establishments. These officers are responsible direct to Army Headquarters, and are constantly reviewing the establishments to ensure that the best possible means are utilized in conserving man-power. Considerable reductions have been made in New Zealand Temporary Staff and Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, and the releasing of personnel to civilian occupations is still proceeding.

EMPLOYMENT OF TERRITORIAL FORCE FOR HARVESTING AND SIMILAR WORK

During the 1943-44 harvesting season use was made of members of the Territorial Force to assist farmers and others in harvesting their crops. Men were called up for periods of twenty-eight days, and were employed in such work as the harvesting of grain, fruit-picking, and potato-digging.

ARMY EDUCATION WELFARE SERVICE

The Army Education Welfare Service has been functioning for more than a year, and has served all Army units at home and overseas. It also supplies study courses and current affairs bulletins and certain other facilities to the Navy and Air Force. Army Education Welfare Service has now published nineteen study courses in addition to weekly current affairs material.

WOMEN'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS

Recruiting for the New Zealand Women's Army Auxiliary Corps has now ceased except for small numbers accepted for overseas service, and the strength of the Corps has been substantially reduced.

MEDICAL

The health of the troops throughout the year has been good. There has been a marked fall in the incidence of epidemic diseases, the chief of which were influenza, measles, mumps, scarlet fever, diphtheria, and cerebro-spinal meningitis. The total deaths from all causes during the year was eighty-three, of which twenty-six were the result of accident.

During the year 3rd Division took part in several actions in the Pacific, and it was on these occasions that the Mobile Blood Transfusion Unit more than justified the expenditure on equipment for refrigeration of blood plasma, and the provision of facilities for anti-shock treatment. The work of the Field Hygiene Section and the Malarial Control Unit undoubtedly contributed to the good health of the troops and the low incidence of mosquito-borne diseases. The numbers of malaria cases reported from 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force in the Pacific indicate a most satisfactory state of affairs in the control of this disease, but, as expected, an increase in incidence occurred with the forward movement and actions of the Division.

The demand on the Army Optician Service has increased considerably, due to the extension of this Service to personnel of the Royal New Zealand Navy and the Royal New Zealand Air Force. A fully equipped Mobile Optician Unit was dispatched to the Middle East.

The Plastic Surgical Unit has continued to perform valuable service, and it has been arranged that this unit, for general administration, shall be under the North Canterbury Hospital Board, but that all male staff shall be Army personnel. A considerable number of cases, including Service personnel, war pensioners, and civilians are receiving treatment.

Close supervision has been maintained in respect of the treatment and welfare of all unfit soldiers. In addition to 5,231 invalided personnel from overseas, medical boardings were completed for approximately ten thousand furlough and duty personnel.

DENTAL

The routine dental examination and treatment carried out by the New Zealand Dental Corps during the last four and a half years has been steady and continuous and has resulted in a considerably higher state of dental health amongst the youth and adult members of the Forces.

Where practicable, members of the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force and home-defence Force are examined and treated to ensure that, upon being posted to indefinite leave without pay or discharged, they are "dentally fit."

SOCIAL WELFARE WORKERS

Social welfare workers employed in Army camps, stations, or hospitals in New Zealand are now members of the Army on the same conditions as obtain for such workers overseas. As camps, &c., are vacated the services of the workers employed therein are gradually being dispensed with.

PRISONERS OF WAR AND CIVILIAN INTERNEES

The Prisoner-of-war Camp at Featherston now holds 803 Japanese prisoners. No more prisoners have been received during the year.

In the internment camp certain male civilians are still held, but during the year some have been released from internment whilst others have been dispatched overseas preparatory to their repatriation.

ARMS, AMMUNITION, AND EQUIPMENT

Surplus Stores and Equipment.—Equipment in the possession of those units which have been disbanded, including the Home Guard, has been, or is in process of being, withdrawn into Ordnance and M.T. stores. This work is nearly completed.

In general, all units which remain on a non-mobilized basis are in possession of complete war equipment with a minimum care and maintenance staff. When it is found possible to do so, much of this equipment will be withdrawn into Ordnance and M.T. stores, leaving with units only their bare requirements for training purposes.

Surplus artillery equipments have been, or are being, put through Ordnance Workshops, thoroughly overhauled, and prepared for storage, and, together with their ancillary stores as far as possible, are being concentrated at Waiouru, Trentham, Burnham, Akaroa, and Motuiapu.

Mechanical Transport.—Except in the case of certain Army Service Corps companies, the establishments of mechanical transport vehicles for all units have been reduced to a training scale only. The amended requirements can be satisfied almost entirely from holdings of Army types of vehicles, thus freeing all commercial types for disposal through a Disposals Board working under the control of the Commissioner of Supply. The total number of used cars and trucks thus made available is approximately 10,800. Up to 31st March 4,740 used and 98 new vehicles had already been disposed of. Surplus mechanical transport parts are being disposed of through motor-distributing houses.

Tracked vehicles and surplus vehicles of Army type are concentrated at Waiouru, Ngaurawahia, Trentham, and Burnham, with special maintenance staffs to guard and maintain them.

Other Stores.—Considerable quantities of “controlled” stores—i.e., stores and equipment peculiar to Army—have become surplus to requirements. Such surpluses are regularly reported to the War Office, and very substantial quantities have been ordered for shipment from New Zealand to other theatres of war or to be held in New Zealand as a War Office reserve.

Petrol reserves which were held in wayside bowser stations have already been disposed of, and 44-gallon-drum reserves are being disposed of by drawing on them for current consumption and by sale to oil companies through the Oil Fuel Controller.

Surplus foodstuffs are being disposed of from time to time through the Food Controller, and all other general surplus stores will be disposed of through the War Assets Realization Board.

Small-arms Ammunition.—Reference was made in the last annual report to the high quality of small-arms ammunition being produced by the Colonial Ammunition Co. This standard has been maintained.

During the year under review our war reserve had reached the required figure, and with the change in the strategical situation it was agreed to release substantial quantities to the Eastern Group Supply Council. Up to 31st March, 1944, some 64,000,000 rounds had been released and shipped. It was also decided that, commencing 1st April, 1944, production in New Zealand was to be reduced to a quantity sufficient to take charge of local requirements, plus a monthly allotment for overseas.

Gun Ammunition.—Consequent upon the completion of the magazine-construction programme all gun ammunition is now stored in magazines or is in process of transfer thereto. Large quantities have been returned to New Zealand from the Pacific during the year, and this is all being carefully inspected and reconditioned. Except for a few special types, all orders overseas have been cancelled and there are indications that our surplus holdings of many types will be taken over by the War Office.

Uniforms and Clothing.—Production has been well maintained during the year, and although our local requirements have been very much reduced there have been very heavy demands from the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force following on the transfer of the 2nd Division to Italy.

Storage.—The storage of stores and equipment is still a difficult problem, although considerable improvement has been effected recently. It is expected that substantial storage space will shortly be vacated by the United States Forces and become available to Army.

Ordnance Workshops.—The enormous increase in our holdings of artillery, searchlight, wireless, and Radar equipments, and the ancillary stores and equipment that go with them, has thrown an enormous strain on Ordnance Workshops. The volume of work has long since outgrown the workshop accommodation and equipment, and, although many improvements have been made in these respects, further additions are required. Lack of trained staff, too, has been a difficulty, and for these reasons there is a large accumulation of work to be carried out during the next twelve months, particularly with respect to modifications of instruments and equipment and the preparation of equipments for shipment overseas to the order of the War Office.

RATIONS AND SUPPLIES

The Army Service Corps services have continued to function smoothly and efficiently during the year. A total of approximately 9,000,000 rations were issued to home-defence troops, as against a total of 21,000,000 for the previous twelve months. The cost of the daily ration has remained very constant, the average cost over the whole period of the war being 1s. 10-81d. A total of 281,584 prisoners-of-war rations was issued for the period.

With the removal of the threat against New Zealand and consequent upon the re-organization of the Forces, reserves of food which were distributed throughout New Zealand have now been withdrawn into Army Service Corps depots and have been, and are being gradually, disposed of by sale to New Zealand merchants and by transfer to United States Forces.

CANTEENS

The operation of the Canteen Board has continued to give general satisfaction. During the year canteen profits to the extent of £43,800 were distributed to Army units.

MOVEMENTS OF TROOPS: SHIPPING AND RAILWAYS

Troop movements within New Zealand have been on a large scale, but all have been carried out smoothly, thanks largely to the splendid co-operation of the New Zealand Railways Department and the various shipping companies.

Movements of troops overseas have been considerable—to and from the Pacific and Middle East, including two large furlough drafts from Middle East.

HOSPITAL SHIPS

The New Zealand Hospital Ship No. 1, “Maunganui,” made two return voyages to Middle East during the year, carrying a total of 712 sick and wounded; the “Oranje” did two trips, carrying 1,224, and the “Wanganella” one trip, with 212.

BUILDINGS AND WORKS

Little new construction work has been undertaken during the year, the chief activities of the Fortifications and Works Branch being in connection with the completion of coast defence works already in hand and the salvage of vacated camps in conjunction with the Buildings Section of the War Assets Realization Board.

PAY ACCOUNTS AND BASE RECORDS

The total staff employed at Base Records as at 31st March, 1944, was 579, including 432 women.

2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force casualties reported up to 31st March, 1944, were as follows:—

| Detail. | Theatre of War. | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------|--------|-----------------|--------------|--------|-----------|--------------|--------|-----------|--------------|--------|
| | Middle East. | | | United Kingdom. | | | Pacific. | | | Total. | | |
| | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. |
| Killed in action .. | 228 | 2,782 | 3,010 | .. | 2 | 2 | 8 | 84 | 92 | 236 | 2,868 | 3,104 |
| Died of wounds .. | 88 | 1,297 | 1,385 | .. | 1 | 1 | 6 | 15 | 21 | 94 | 1,313 | 1,407 |
| Deaths due to accident .. | 3 | 174 | 177 | .. | 10 | 10 | 5 | 30 | 35 | 8 | 214 | 222 |
| Died of sickness .. | 8 | 185 | 193 | .. | 8 | 8 | 5 | 25 | 30 | 13 | 218 | 231 |
| Prisoners of war .. | 383 | 6,439 | 6,822 | .. | .. | .. | .. | 4 | 4 | 383 | 6,443 | 6,826 |
| Missing .. | 17 | 525 | 542 | .. | .. | .. | 1 | 17 | 18 | 18 | 542 | 560 |
| Wounded .. | 843 | 12,015 | 12,858 | .. | 3 | 3 | 20 | 202 | 222 | 863 | 12,220 | 13,083 |
| Totals .. | 1,570 | 23,417 | 24,987 | .. | 24 | 24 | 45 | 377 | 422 | 1,615 | 23,818 | 25,433 |

CONCLUSION

The heavy reductions in the Home Army and Pacific garrisons have destroyed almost overnight many units and training establishments which had been built up to a high state of efficiency under emergency conditions by the zeal and hard work of the officers, non-commissioned officers, and men concerned. This sacrifice of the results of their labours was a sore disappointment to them and makes the efficient co-operation they displayed in carrying out the reductions all the more praiseworthy.

The Home Guard has now passed into Reserve after service of the greatest value, both to the Army and the people of New Zealand over a lengthy period. The keenness and self-sacrifice of this large body of officers and men in their preparations to defend their country were remarkable and an example to their fellow-citizens.

To the women of the Army—the Army Nursing Service and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps—the Army and the public owe a debt of gratitude for their devotion to duty, keenness, and quiet efficiency.

The co-operation of the sister Services, Government Departments, and civil organizations has continued on the same high level as before.

I must once more place on record my high appreciation of the efficiency, hard work, and devotion to duty displayed by the staff of all ranks at Army and other Headquarters throughout the year.

E. PUTTICK, Lieutenant-General,
Commanding New Zealand Military Forces.

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