

1890.  
NEW ZEALAND.

# THE MILITARY FORCES AND DEFENCES OF NEW ZEALAND

(REPORT ON, BY MAJOR-GENERAL EDWARDS.)

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

*From Major-General J. BEVAN EDWARDS, C.B., Commanding the Troops in China and Hongkong, to His Excellency the EARL of ONSLOW, G.C.M.G., Governor and Commander-in-Chief of New Zealand.*

Wellington, New Zealand, 9th November, 1889.

MY LORD,

In accordance with the instructions contained in War Office letter of the 3rd June, 1889, I have the honour to forward, for the information of your Government, the following report on the military forces and defences of New Zealand.

The question of the defence of New Zealand, differs from that of the neighbouring Australian Colonies, on account of the greater extent of its coast-line, the numerous harbours, and the difficulties of communication; and if an enemy succeeded in establishing himself in any part of the colony it would be almost impossible to combine the local forces to operate against him. This difficulty will, however, gradually disappear as the railway system is developed, and communication opened up between Wellington and Auckland in the North Island, and between the east and west coasts of the South Island. As it will be impossible to prevent an enemy from landing at many points in the colony, its defence will be best secured by the formation of reliable field forces at the four great centres of population—Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and Dunedin. Major-General Schaw, C.B., has lately made exhaustive reports on the works for the defence of the harbours, and for the general defence of the colony, and I concur in his recommendations, with the exception that the field forces proposed for the four centres, are not organized so as to allow of sufficient expansion in time of war. These reports were, however, drawn up at a time of great financial depression, and framed to reduce expenditure to its lowest limits.

The forces generally, have not sufficient training to man the works for the defence of the harbours, nor is there any organization by means of which field forces could be created to protect the four centres. The material is all that

Forces  
generally.

could be desired, but, to make it of use, it must be trained and organized. The latest returns show the forces to be as follows:—

Permanent Artillery and Submarine Miners	...	...	196
<i>Volunteers.</i>			
Cavalry	....	....	700
Mounted Infantry	....	....	105
Naval Artillery	....	....	1,250
Garrison Artillery	....	....	170
Field Artillery	....	....	576
Engineers	....	....	169
Infantry	....	....	4,721
Total	....	....	<u>7,887</u>

In addition to these, there are 2,412 cadets.

#### PERMANENT ARTILLERY AND SUBMARINE MINERS.

Are a fine body of men, well drilled and instructed, and, with more gun-practice, will be capable of fulfilling their duties. An officer should be appointed to command. The guns, carriages, store-rooms, and magazines in their charge are in good order. It will, however, be difficult to keep this force efficient, on account of the smallness of its numbers and its scattered condition, but this might be obviated by amalgamating it with the permanent forces of the Australian Colonies, and form one "fortress corps," for the service of the guns and mines of the different works for the defence of the Australasian Colonies.

#### VOLUNTEERS.

Cavalry.

I have had little opportunity of forming an opinion of the condition of the Cavalry, but the corps which I have seen are well mounted, and presented a creditable appearance. Their services would be of greater use if they were drilled and equipped to act as mounted infantry.

Mounted Infantry.

The force of Mounted Infantry is very small. It should be considerably increased, because it is essential that the different field forces should have a proper proportion of this most important arm.

Naval Artillery.

The term "Naval" Artillery is a misnomer, as the majority of the men have never served afloat, or in any occupation directly connected with the sea. They are, in fact, chiefly garrison artillery dressed as seamen. The men are of good physique, and looked well on parade. To make them efficient they require gun-practice, as a considerable proportion have never practised with the guns they would have to serve in time of war. Their numbers are largely in excess, as, including the Garrison Artillery, only 670 officers and men are required.

Garrison Artillery.

There are only 170 Garrison Artillery, and I had no opportunity of seeing them at their guns. Their duties are much the same as those of the Naval Artillery; and they should be amalgamated with them so as to have one corps responsible for the service of the guns and submarine mines.

Field Artillery.

There are 576 Field Artillery, but, as only 360 are required, they should be

reduced to that number. The batteries paraded for my inspection drilled well, and the men took an intelligent interest in their work; but more complete arrangements should be made for the provision of horses and harness. The guns, however, are of an obsolete pattern, and should be replaced by others of later date.

The Engineers are a fine body of men, and their trades are those which are Engineers. useful for this branch of the service; but they require more instruction in field engineering.

The formation of Cadet Corps should be still further encouraged, and a Cadet Corps. proper system established for their instruction under the supervision of the district staff; this does not appear to be the case in some of the districts.

#### ORGANIZATION.

The troops required to man the batteries of the four centres should be separated from those which would form the field forces, and placed under the command of an officer who would be responsible to the officer commanding in the district for their efficiency. 670 Artillery and Submarine Miners are sufficient for the service of the batteries and mines—as they could be rapidly increased in war, from the Government service, which contains many men who have been trained in the Permanent Militia. They would be distributed as follows: Auckland, 220; Wellington, 210; Lyttelton, 110; and Dunedin, 130. Besides these, small local corps of infantry will be required for the immediate defence of the batteries and positions in rear of them.

In order to create efficient field forces, regiments must be established, but on a different footing from those recently dissolved. They should be small in peace, but capable of great expansion in war. The peace establishment of the field force to be created at each of the four centres would be as follows:—

Infantry: A regiment of two four-company battalions—each					
battalion 300 strong	....	....	....	....	600
Three companies of mounted infantry	....	....	....	....	180
Battery field artillery, 6 guns	....	....	....	....	90
Company of engineers	....	....	....	....	30
Commissariat, medical staff, &c., &c.	....	....	....	....	55
					<hr/>
Total	....	....	....	....	955

Provided a sufficient number of rifle corps or clubs are established throughout the colony, this field force could easily be raised to 2,500 men, each battalion being made up to 1,000; but before it can be placed on a proper footing, something more reliable is required than the present Volunteer system, and I recommend the “partially-paid” system, which has been adopted by the Australian Colonies. The condition of service can then be made more binding, and cadres can be established, into which the Volunteers from the rifle clubs can be drafted to raise the forces to war strength. In the Australian Colonies the rates of pay vary from £6 to £12 a year for attending a certain number of whole or half days’ instruction, or night drills. The higher rate of pay has been adopted by Victoria and New South Wales, and it is found to give a much more efficient force than the lower.

The number of "partially-paid" men would be,—

Artillery and submarine miners	....	....	....	....	670
Four regiments of infantry	....	....	....	....	2,400
Four corps of mounted infantry	....	....	....	....	720
Four batteries of field artillery, 24 guns	....	....	....	....	360
Four companies of engineers	....	....	....	....	120
Commissariat, medical staff, &c., &c.	....	....	....	....	220
Total	....	....	....	....	4,490

This would still leave 3,397 men for the rifle clubs, provided the excess of men in the Naval and Field Artillery were transferred to them. They should be affiliated to the "partially-paid" regiments,\* and receive the same advantages in the shape of capitation-grant, ammunition, &c., as the present rifle corps. Their dress should be the same as the regiments to which they are affiliated.

#### DEFENCES.

The defences of the harbours are well planned, and the armaments are sufficient to repel the attack of several cruisers—*provided the defence is properly organized and competent officers appointed to command*. Auckland, being the base for the navy, should be made perfectly secure. A powerful gun should be mounted on Victoria heights, as it would not only command the entrance, but fire on the anchorage off the city. A gun should also be mounted at Stokes Point, and a mine-field placed between it and Ponsonby Point to prevent ships running up the harbour and shelling the city from a position which is not seen by the guns of the defence. A gun is also required to command the anchorage at Wellington. It is not necessary to mount the 8in. gun at Lawyers Point at Dunedin, as the two H.P. 6in. guns and the two 7in. guns already mounted on the Ocean Beach would prevent a bombardment of the city.

The submarine mining establishments are in a satisfactory condition, and, provided the officers and men are sufficiently trained, the mine defence should be effective.

There would appear to be no adequate provision for keeping the public out of the batteries; the regulations recently drawn up by the War Office for this purpose should be strictly enforced.

#### STAFF.

There is no one in command of the local forces. A commandant should be appointed who would be responsible for the discipline of the troops, their preparation for active service, and, in case of attack, for the disposal of the forces to resist it. The officer selected for this duty should have a thorough knowledge of his profession, and I recommend that application be made to Her Majesty's Government for the services of an officer as Commandant. Considering the frequent changes which take place in the art of war, it is desirable that this appointment should be made for not more than five years. He would require the assistance of a staff officer, who should be able to give the whole of his time to his military duties—the present Assistant Adjutant-General is also Inspector of Volunteers and Inspector of Prisons.

\* In order to do this, the companies of the "partially-paid" regiments should be distributed as much as possible, and become schools of instruction for the rifle clubs.

## MILITARY DISTRICTS.

The military districts are too numerous, and they should be rearranged in four, corresponding to the four centres. The officer commanding should also be the lieutenant-colonel of the regiment in his district, with a major in command of each battalion. An annual camp of instruction should be formed in each district.

## APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS.

Discipline and efficiency cannot be maintained if the selection of officers is left in the hands of the members of the Volunteer corps. The officers of the partially-paid force should be appointed on the joint recommendations of the officer commanding the battalion or corps, the officer commanding the district, and the Commandant of the colonial forces.

## ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

The ammunition for the 8in. and 6in. H.P. guns should be increased to Garrison 150 rounds per gun. For the 7in. there should be 200 rounds, and for the guns. 64-pounders 300. That for the 6-pounder Nordenfelt should be increased 400.

The quantity of ammunition for the field guns is too small; it should not Field guns. be less than 400 rounds per gun.

The Snider rifle is now obsolete, and should be replaced by rifles of more Rifles. modern date; 16,000 are required, so that after the forces have been armed there should be a reserve in store to meet unforeseen contingencies.

The rifle ammunition in store, should be increased, as, although Messrs. Rifle ammu- Whitney and Company have established an ammunition factory at Auckland, it nition. would probably tax its resources to meet your requirements in time of war. Under these circumstances, 150 rounds per rifle should always be in store in time of peace.

The supply of arms and ammunition will be greatly simplified when a federal ordnance store is established for the Australian Colonies, through which New Zealand could be supplied. There should be one pattern of rifle and a common field-gun among the whole of the Australasian Colonies.

I forward, herewith, a memorandum on the organization of the forces of the Australian Colonies, in which allusion is made to many points which also concern the forces of New Zealand, such as the amalgamation of the permanent forces, the "partially-paid" system, rifle clubs, dress, education of officers, the appointment of an Inspecting General, a federal small-arm factory, and an ordnance-store. On many of these points, combined action between New Zealand and Australia would lead to economy and efficiency; and it is a question for consideration, whether the forces of New Zealand should not eventually be federated with those of the Australian Colonies, so that they may be prepared to mutually assist each other.

I would, however, strongly recommend that your Government join with them, in obtaining the services of a General Officer to inspect your forces annually, and advise it on all military questions.

The propositions for the reorganization of the forces are as follow :—

1. The appointment of a Commandant.
2. Amalgamation of the districts into four: Auckland, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago.
3. The organization of field forces in each district.
4. The establishment of a “partially-paid” system.
5. The abolition of the selection of officers by the members of the corps.
6. Combining with the Australian Colonies, for an annual inspection of the forces, by a general officer, who would also be the military adviser of the Government.

These propositions cannot be carried out without increased cost, but it would not exceed the amount annually expended by the colony on the local forces up to 1887. No further sums should be expended upon works or batteries after the present works are armed and completed; but the field forces should be placed on a proper footing; or the expenditure which you have incurred in defending your harbours may be rendered useless. I would strongly impress upon your Government that batteries and forts are of little value unless they are supplemented by field forces to prevent their being turned.

In conclusion, I would request your Excellency to convey to your Government my grateful thanks for the kindness I have received, and for the arrangements which have been made by the Hon. T. Fergus for my journey through New Zealand.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

Your obedient Servant,

J. BEVAN EDWARDS,

Major-General.

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