

Flying Control is also responsible for the co-ordination of the R.N.Z.A.F. Air Sea Rescue Organization, which has resulted in the saving of twenty-three lives at sea during the past year, and has participated in many search operations on behalf of the Marine Department for missing vessels.

#### R.N.Z.A.F. AIR TRANSPORT SERVICE

The success of the war effort of the R.N.Z.A.F. in the South Pacific theatre was largely due to the development of a R.N.Z.A.F. transport organization, which enabled supplies and reinforcements to be flown from the base area in New Zealand to the operational stations in the Pacific, some 2,500 miles distant. By this means also the R.N.Z.A.F. was enabled to develop a scheme of rotational relief whereby aircrew were flown into the operational area for a tour of duty for a period of approximately eight weeks only at a time, after which they were rested in New Zealand. This procedure maintained the operational efficiency of these aircrews at a very high standard. During its three years of operation this transport service flew over 10,000,000 miles and carried 132,000 passengers and 207,900,000 lb. of freight and mail.

Orders were placed on the United States in November, 1942, for lease-lend Dakotas (C47) and Lodestar (C60) aircraft. The first squadron (No. 40) was established in July, 1943, with six Dakota aircraft and the second transport squadron (No. 41) in August, 1944. By this date there were a total of 20 Dakotas and 9 Lodestars on the strength of these units. In December, 1944, four Sunderland flying-boats arrived from England. During this period the steady increase in the number and variety of radio aids for navigation and the development of a New Zealand Meteorological Organization in the South Pacific were a major factor in the efficiency and safety of the R.N.Z.A.F. air transport organization, and fully proved their worth, if only in terms of the resultant economy in flying-hours.

#### *Period 1945-46*

The activities of the R.N.Z.A.F. Air Transport Service during the past year may be divided into three phases:—

- (1) Active air transport support for the operational units in the Pacific;
- (2) Repatriation of personnel from Pacific and Far East;
- (3) Establishment of air support for J Force and the running of quasi civil services in New Zealand and the South Pacific pending the establishment of a civil operating agency.

*Phase (1).*—At the beginning of the year R.N.Z.A.F. operational units were supported by three transport agencies—namely, Nos. 40 and 41 Squadrons and the Flying-boat Transport Flight. On this date these squadrons were equipped with twenty-seven Dakotas, nine C60 Lodestars, twelve C63 Hudson troop carriers, and four Sunderland flying-boats. A number of C47 aircraft were ferried direct from the U.S.A. to New Zealand by R.N.Z.A.F. transport personnel, bringing the total number of C47 aircraft in service at the close of hostilities to forty.

During this period and 1944-45 services had been developed which included those being operated from New Zealand to Norfolk Island, New Caledonia, New Hebrides, the Solomons, and for considerable distances north and west of this area. Services, in addition, were being operated to Fiji, Tonga, the Ellice Group, Western Samoa, American Samoa, Hawaii, and were extended to include the Cook Islands and the Gilbert Group. In addition, many special flights were arranged between New Zealand and various points in the South Pacific Area. At the cessation of hostilities plans were well in hand for the extension of the service to Borneo to support the projected operations in that area.