

Liaison was maintained with the land forces of the Southern Command, and during the training season numerous flights, involving a total flying-time of some fifteen hours, were carried out for the purpose of co-operating with Signal and Artillery units.

(b.) *N.Z. Air Force (Territorial).*

The strength of this unit now stands at 104 officers.

Owing to shortage of machines it was not possible to increase the number of pilots attending refresher courses, and during the period under review only forty officers were called up, as against forty-eight in the previous year.

The courses were carried out on landplanes at Wigram Aerodrome, and were most satisfactory, the officers under instruction displaying the greatest keenness both in their ground duties and aerial work.

Ground training included instruction in theory of flight, aero-engines, rigging, air operations, wireless, musketry, and Vickers and Lewis guns. Flying training consisted of dual and solo flying on Avros, Bristol Fighters, D.H. 4's and D.H. 9's, including formation flying. The average flying-time per pilot was seven hours. Lack of appliances prevented advanced training in bombing, photography, aerial gunnery, &c.

During the course there was one accident, in which the pilot received only slight injury.

(c.) *Aircraft and Equipment.*

As yet no new machines have been received, but two Bristol Fighter aeroplanes and six Avro aeroplanes have been on order for some considerable time, and are due to arrive shortly. The former are to be fitted with wireless, and will be used for Army co-operation duties, whilst the latter are standard elementary training-machines.

Two cameras have been purchased, one for vertical and the other for oblique photography, but owing to non-arrival of the mounting for fitting them into aircraft it was not possible to use them during the period under review.

The aero-engine repair shop at Wigram Aerodrome has been improved by the installation of several new machines, and all woodworking machinery has been removed and installed in another portion of the building used solely for the repair and erection of aircraft. This rearrangement has made for increased efficiency in both departments.

(d.) *Ground Organization.*

(1.) *General.*—The present small annual appropriations for the Air Service render it impossible to organize a scheme which will permit of any degree of comprehensive flying being undertaken by Air units composed of either Permanent or Territorial personnel. Before such units can operate in the air it is essential that they have bases suitably equipped—in other words, ground organization must receive primary consideration, and the policy of development must consequently be such that any increase in the aerial arm is always preceded by the provision of new aerodromes or “forward landing-grounds,” in order to provide bases from which to operate or to increase the area over which aircraft can be successfully employed. This policy of preference to ground organization should be continued until such time as the “operation bases” are so distributed throughout the Dominion as to enable aircraft to work over all parts of it and its territorial waters.

(2.) *Air Station, Auckland.*—The plant of the New Zealand Flying School (Messrs. Walsh Bros. and Dexter Limited) was taken over by the Department as from 1st September, 1924. The site at Kohimarama was leased by the company, and has had to be vacated by the Department, the aeronautical equipment, &c., being temporarily stored at the R.N.Z.A. Depot, Devonport, pending the acquisition of a permanent site. The site previously selected at West Tamaki has now been definitely abandoned owing to its high cost, the land having been subdivided into building allotments. Great difficulty was experienced in finding an alternative site; many localities were visited and inspected before a place possessing the necessary combination of facilities was recently found near Hobsonville. Negotiations for its purchase are now in train.

4. TERRITORIAL FORCE.

The present strength of the Territorial Force is shown in Appendix I. The obligatory training laid down for the year was as follows:—

- (a.) Six days' continuous training.
- (b.) Six half-day parades.
- (c.) Twelve drills.
- (d.) Prescribed rifle course—to be carried out during the half-day parades under (b).

This programme was a distinct improvement on that of the previous year in that, though the actual hours of instruction were not increased, it definitely reintroduced after a lapse of some seven years—a period of continuous training for the Territorial Force, and this information was promulgated to all concerned at the commencement of the year.

In addition to the above scheme of unit training, special courses of instruction of six days' duration were arranged for the officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers of all arms and services. As stated in my last report, these special courses are essential if the officers, warrant officers, and non-commissioned officers of the Territorial Force are to become qualified leaders and instructors of their men.