

The full installation of the armament, however, cannot be completed in 1936, owing to the delay in procuring the necessary technical equipment from the United Kingdom. This delay is due to the fact that, in order to obtain delivery of special equipment within a specified period, it is necessary to place the actual order some eighteen months or two years prior to the date on which delivery is desired. Prior to such order being placed, financial authority is first required, but, owing to financial considerations, it has not always been possible to place the orders at the appropriate time.

I would stress the fact that the accelerated rearmament programme in the United Kingdom may, during the next two or three years, cause difficulty and further delay in the delivery of technical equipment and warlike stores. For these reasons it is essential that financial authority be given to place these orders at the earliest possible moment in each case.

4. AIR SERVICES.

(a) ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE.

The strength of the Royal New Zealand Air Force as at 31st May, 1936, was 20 officers and 107 airmen, new enlistments during the period under review being 11 officers and 11 airmen. One officer resigned his commission, 4 airmen were discharged, and 1 airman died.

Although there was a decrease in the Air vote as compared with that voted for the previous year, the amount actually expended for 1935–36 exceeded that of the year 1934–35 by £31,441. A net sum of £154,854 was voted for military aviation, the amount expended being £163,671, representing an over-expenditure of £8,817, which was primarily due to large commitments carried over from the previous year.

The flight of advanced training aircraft, ordered in the training year 1933–34, and referred to in my last report, arrived from England early in the year, and was brought into service at Wigram Aerodrome.

Co-operation with Naval and Land Forces has been carried out by both Air Force stations during the training year. The total actual flying time involved in these exercises being—with Naval Forces, 72 hours; with Land Forces, 123 hours. A further 137 hours' flying was done in movements to and from camps, &c.

(b) NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE.

The strength of the New Zealand Air Force totals 74 officers and 4 N.Z. Medical Corps Officers, and 1 N.Z. Artillery Officer attached. No new appointments were made during this year.

Annual training, consisting of a six-days' refresher course and ten days' annual camp, was carried out during the year at Wigram Aerodrome by the four squadrons. In addition, selected officers underwent training as Flying Instructors and in instrument-flying.

The refresher courses were held during October, 1935, and the annual camps during February and March of this year.

The attendance and flying times were as follows:—

—		Officers attending.	Hours flown.
Refresher courses (six days)	..	54	480
Annual camps (ten days)	57	1,031

The syllabus of training undertaken included practices in the following: Air gunnery, camera obscura, photography, musketry, navigation, wireless, and bombing with 8½ lb. practice bombs.

It is with regret that I have to report that during the annual camp of No. 1 (A.C.) Squadron, Flying Officer G. M. Owen, who was the pilot and sole occupant of a Bristol Fighter carrying out air-gunnery practice, was killed instantly as the result of an accident.

An Air Force Band is in process of formation. A number of players have been enrolled and regular practices are being held, under the conductorship of Flying Officer G. A. Booth.

A contract has been let for the making of uniforms. The material to be used is being manufactured in the Dominion, and is considered to be of a quality superior to that previously imported.

(c) AIRCRAFT AND EQUIPMENT.

The four Avro 626 advanced training machines, fitted with Cheetah engines delivered to Wigram Aerodrome, have proved themselves to be most valuable. Their adaptability enables a variety of training to be undertaken with a minimum of expenditure.

No other new aircraft have been received.

Four of the Air Force D.H. Moth machines have been handed over to aero clubs.

(d) ROYAL NEW ZEALAND AIR FORCE AERODROMES.

Very considerable progress has been made during the past few years in the development of the Service aerodrome at Auckland, and attention is now being directed more particularly to Wigram Aerodrome, Christchurch.