New Zealand Aviation History: 
The Early War Years

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Introduction

The history of New Zealand’s foreign policy, like that of its aviation policy, was determined by the nation’s involvement in the two world wars. As a British colony, then a Dominion of the British Empire, then a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, New Zealand’s overseas orientation centred on Great Britain until World War Two. From 1872 until well into the twentieth century New Zealand’s only significant overseas post - the Agent-General or trade commission - was in London. Her fledgling Ministry of Foreign Affairs was the Imperial Affairs Section of the Prime Minister’s Office from 1926 to 1943. Interest in Europe was a natural next step. New Zealand fought in Europe in both world wars and took a keen interest in post-war settlements and in trade opportunities.

In terms of the development of New Zealand’s aviation industry, both world wars had been beneficial in a number of ways. War had in fact been for the country, as it had also been to many other nations, a great “forging house of experience” ensuring that aircraft reliability and speed advanced in leaps and bounds. The experience of war also ensured the rapid development of the
necessary aeronautical skills which in turn formed the basis of the country’s post-war development in aviation.

After the First World War Germany, denied a military establishment by the Treaty of Versailles, grew restive when the Allies made little progress toward disarmament, and in many ingenious ways began to build up a clandestine air establishment. Aircraft companies set up branches abroad while at home the civil airline, Lufthansa, kept the industry alive.

Young Germans were encouraged to take up gliding, while others acquired valuable pilot experience training with the Russian Air Force. After a series of excellent modern prototypes were created, Germany secretly began to plan a new air force. And at Nuremberg in 1935 Hitler, with dramatic suddenness, unveiled the new Luftwaffe before a frightened world. Germany had become a major power in the air.

The period of the 1930s, haunted by the memory of World War One, displays a curious ambivalence. While Germany was rearming in the name of a New Order designed to redress its wartime grievances, the Allies still recoiling from the horrors of the war, were striving desperately to create a world without arms. The League of Nations Disarmament Conference, meeting in 1932, made a final, earnest effort to achieve agreement while the Allied nations, awaiting the outcome, let their defenses deteriorate. Meanwhile, the world began once more to slide toward war. Japan invaded China, Hitler began to create his new Germany, Italy snatched up Ethiopia, Spain (where Hitler tried out his new warplanes) erupted into civil war, and the League of Nations, after Germany, Italy, and Japan had resigned, began to disintegrate. The Disarmament Conference itself came to a weary, fruitless end in 1934.

Although the United States at this time possessed a few heavy bombers,
concept of strategic bombing was still under attack as being both barbarous and unnecessary. But as a result of the Munich crisis, and when General H.H. Arnold was appointed Chief of the US Air Corps, the future of the bomber programme was assured. In far-off Japan the American Navy for many years had quietly been building up a formidable fleet, with special emphasis on carriers and swift fighter craft. The Russians, following the ideas of Douhet after World War One, had specialised for a time in huge, four-engined bombers; but after the importance of attack-aviation had been demonstrated in the Spanish Civil War, they began to emphasize close cooperation with the army command. The massing of parachute troops was a Russian idea, although used for the most part by other nations during the war.

The stage was set for World War Two. With frightening suddenness Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, and a shocked world was quickly made to realize the new importance of air power.

Throughout the First World War New Zealand stayed within the framework of the British war effort. But there were two important changes that made the Second World War a very different war from the First. Soviet and American participation in the war and commitment to post-war collaboration promised a more successful transformation of international relations than had been managed after World War One by either the League of Nations or international socialism. And war against Japan forced New Zealand to conduct its own diplomacy, to establish a High Commission in Canberra and an embassy in Washington.

New Zealand was forced to think in terms of international rather than purely Commonwealth relations.1) But in the first year of the war these considerations

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were remote. This was a war against Germany fought by France and Britain - even in Europe most countries were neutral. The hesitation about Japan’s intentions apparently vanished with the outbreak of war. Having received assurances from the British Admiralty about Japan, New Zealand agreed to organise an expeditionary force which would train in Egypt, to be ready to fight later in France.

With war now underway in Europe, New Zealand, geographically isolated from the rest of the world, found herself vulnerable, particularly as she possessed only a small air force. And so in 1936 Wing Commander R.A. Cochrane, who had been involved in the development of Britain’s air force, arrived in New Zealand to oversee the development of a local force. New Zealand’s plan to build up a fleet of strategic bombers for her own defence was reinforced by her doubts expressed at the Pacific Defence Conference in Wellington in April 1939 as to whether Britain was able to hold the strategically important Singapore in the event of war in the Pacific. In any event the decision was made to use Fiji as an advance base from which to patrol the Pacific; and it was also agreed that New Zealand would share the costs of developing this base with Great Britain.2)

There were a number of reasons for the selection of Fiji. Most important was the island group’s strategic position, lying approximately a thousand miles to the north of New Zealand. It was also the centre of wireless, cable and air communications in the south Pacific, and it possessed a harbour that could easily accommodate a large fleet. By 1939 Fiji had been comprehensively surveyed and the development of air facilities in the island group was well underway3). The only other alternative as a strategic base worthy of development was Tonga but

2) National Archives, Army 12/22 Pacific Defence Conference Report.

that island group lacked a sufficient water supply. Construction of the three runways at Nausori commenced in September 1939 and was completed the following year in March. Britain also contributed half the cost of developing an airstrip in Tonga.

The Pacific Defence Conference marked the beginning of a period of cooperation between New Zealand and Australia whereby the two Dominions agreed to commence joint reconnaissance operations in the South West Pacific. It was agreed that New Zealand aircraft would become involved in operations in the event of an attack from Japan, and as this threat became ever more imminent, immediate plans were put in motion to reinforce not only Fiji but also the cable station at Fanning Island.

France’s capitulation in June 1940 necessitated the withdrawal of British warships from the Pacific to strengthen her fleet in the English Channel. Consequently this move left the Pacific theatre to be patrolled by Australian and New Zealand vessels. In effect, the four notable New Zealand warships, the *Leith*, *Wellington*, *Achilles*, and *Leander*, had been involved in patrolling the Pacific since 1936, with the latter two having also patrolled the South Atlantic and the Indian Oceans.

The Second World War nearly aborted New Zealand’s embryonic international airline before it was safely born. With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe, the British Overseas Airways Corporation (formed in 1939 by the amalgamation of Imperial and British Airways) would have preferred to retain the second two of the three flying boats earmarked for Tasman Empire Airways Limited in New Zealand for her own use. TEAL owed its ability to begin airline operations on April 30th 1940 to the steadfastness of Peter Fraser, the Deputy Prime Minister to Michael Joseph Savage.
In the face of considerable political pressure from Britain, Fraser remained adamant that the two remaining aircraft ordered from Shorts be delivered to New Zealand. The first Empire flying boat, the *Aotearoa*, had arrived on August 28, 1939, and it was only due to Fraser’s insistence on its importance to New Zealand that the second, the Awarua, finally arrived on April 3rd, 1940.

From Great Britain’s point of view, the loss of two flying boats from her shores at this time was of little consequence; but for New Zealand these craft represented her only regular and reliable contact with the outside world. Because of the danger from enemy raiders and submarines, normal shipping services were disrupted, so only the flying boats were capable of running an uninterrupted service. However to operate at a minimum such a basic service required at least two aircraft - hence the importance of the arrival of the *Awarua*.

The New Zealand government had been interested in the establishment of international air links throughout most of the 1930s, but its primary commitment was to Britain. Thus in 1934 it rejected separate proposals from Charles Ulm and Kingsford Smith for New Zealand - Australia - Pacific services which would fly American aircraft and link with Pan American Airways. British aircraft and Imperial Airways were the only acceptable options.

The initial concept for the formation of Tasman Empire Airways Limited arose out of the enthusiastic advocacy of a private individual, Colonel N. Falla, chairman of both the Union Steam Ship Company and Union Airways. He suggested to Imperial Airways in 1935 that a joint company be formed to operate a trans-Tasman service which would connect with the Qantas - Imperial Airways route to Britain. Following on from his initiative the three governments began

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4) The third aircraft, *Australia*, was seriously damaged at Basra on its delivery flight and after repair went on to the BOAC register under the name *Clare*. 

( 6 )
negotiations which led in 1937 to a preliminary agreement to form an airline with tripartite ownership.

Strictly speaking, ownership was shared between four parties as the New Zealand share was split between Union Airways and the New Zealand government. TEAL itself was not formally registered as a company until April 26 1940, five days before the first scheduled service. During the preceding establishment phase the three Union companies were the effective managers of the whole operation. The three Short S-30 flying boats for the trans-Tasman route were initially ordered by Qantas, and then transferred to Imperial Airways register to hold on behalf of the Union Steam Ship Company which paid for them. Union Airways staff carried out the practical duties which helped to establish a flying boat base and an airline service. And even when once the airline had been set up, the day-to-day running of the company remained with Union Airways, the company having been appointed managing agent for the fledgling airline.

The establishment of TEAL took place during a time of major political upheaval both within New Zealand and on the international scene, and this contributed to the prolonged and often difficult negotiations which preceded registration of the company. In 1935 New Zealand elected its first Labour government, an assembly filled with reforming zeal and strong ideas about the role government should play in the country’s affairs. The new Labour party related its policy to a vision of future development. Although many of Labour’s actions were in fact more pragmatic than theoretical, the new Government stimulated the economy, attacked economic problems in a more concerted, rational, and planned manner, and made a real if not entirely successful attempt to diversify and insulate the economy.5) However, as far as TEAL was concerned, government involvement

in the final negotiations which lasted just over two weeks ending on April 25th 1940, created a major problem in what dividend the company should pay.

Because of his socialist principles, Walter Nash, the Minister of Finance in the new government, grudgingly agreed on a three percent dividend and this was set as the maximum for the first year, with a maximum six percent set for subsequent years.

Nash also insisted that this new government should not hold a smaller share than any private company, especially one that was ultimately British-owned. Thus the final allocation of shares was: New Zealand Government 20 percent and Union Airways 19 percent, making a New Zealand total of 39 percent; Qantas Empire Airways 38 percent, and BOAC 23 percent. Initial capital was 250,004 pounds sterling, increased three months later to 500,000 pounds.6)

Though it was complicated enough trying to run a company which had three owners with often quite different and varying objectives, TEAL also faced another major frustration. All its decisions were subject to approval by the Tasman Air Commission, a specially established body which reported directly to the New Zealand, Australian and British governments. In effect it wielded the real power in the running of TEAL. All TEAL’s operations and administration staff were based in Auckland, while the Tasman Air Commission was in Wellington. To compound this awkward arrangement, the head office of Union Airways was also based in Wellington. It was no wonder that the deputy chairman of TEAL, A.E. Rudder, told the first meeting of the Commission that “the peculiar set-up and...

6) Slater, B., “A Case Study : Air New Zealand 1939 - 1978”, Research Essay, University of Auckland, 1979, pp18-21. With the passing of the New Zealand National Airways Act in 1945, the New Zealand government acquired as a result of nationalization of the country’s internal airlines, the entire New Zealand shareholding in TEAL, amounting to 375,000 One Pound shares.
organization under which the company is working at present is most unsatisfactory”. TEAL operated under this arrangement for the duration of the war.

In late November of 1940 Peter Fraser, the New Zealand Prime Minister, made approaches to the British government to secure Hudson aircraft for the New Zealand air force but was declined on the basis that no appropriate aircraft were available. New Zealand had previously ordered a fleet of Wellington bombers under Cochrane’s policy, but with war having broken out in Europe these craft had been diverted for employment within the European theatre. In short, Fraser’s insistence of air help proved luckless: the Battle of Britain had begun and by and large all British aircraft were employed at home in order to help defend the country. And so the British government suggested that New Zealand should approach the US for any future aircraft orders.

Pan American Airways had been the key proponent for the early development of a service along the trans-Pacific routes to Asia and to New Zealand, and the various bases involved now took on added significance with the outbreak of war. In September 1941, as tensions with Japan arose, the American government sought to reinforce the Philippines by way of a southern air route and instructed the State Department to contact the governments of Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, the Netherlands, and the Free French to obtain the necessary authority.

Certain features of the American policy resembled that of Britain, Australia, and New Zealand: as well as a mutual belief that a large bomber force would deter or destroy any attack, there was also a general reluctance to build or fortify

island bases lest they fall into enemy hands. The selected southern route was to pass through a series of bases comprising Palmyra, Christmas, Canton, American Samoa, Fiji, the New Hebrides, New Caledonia, and the east coast of Australia. When the British government approached its Dominions on the proposals, it was surprised to find that they had already accepted them, the pre-emptive decision on the part of New Zealand being significant, this being the first time New Zealand had acted decisively on an aviation issue without consulting Britain. In the interests of national defence she had swiftly contacted Washington advising that useful facilities had already been established in Fiji and that surveys already completed allowed for the construction of bases in Western Samoa and Christmas Island.\(^9\)

At the time of Japan’s bombing of Pearl Harbour, New Zealand had one hundred men stationed on tiny Fanning Island and an infantry brigade in Fiji. Fiji’s strategic position and its defence was of paramount importance, it quickly being understood that its fall put New Zealand in a perilous position bringing the country into the range of Japanese air strikes, thereby effectively cutting off New Zealand’s sea and air communications with the rest of the world. With these points in mind the respective governments of New Zealand, Australia and Britain mutually agreed with the American government that joint operations were necessary to not only defend the territories of the Pacific but to repel the enemy from the area. And so Churchill and Roosevelt agreed to divide up spheres of influence: Britain would control the Indian Ocean and the US the Pacific. New Zealand’s fears that the country would be left undefended by this scheme were waylaid by British guarantees to expose her control of the Middle East and India

\(^9\) EA 1, 86/1/11. Fraser to US Consul, Wellington, 24/10/1941.
and divert that region’s fleet to New Zealand if it was necessary.  

The Australians were not pleased by US plans to divide the Pacific into regions: arbitrary lines along the map of the Pacific placed New Zealand and Fiji in a different region to Australia and split her national interests, the concern being that both New Zealand and Fiji were the principal links in her communications with the US and Britain.  

During the Second World War the trans-Pacific route through Fiji became New Zealand’s primary means of communication with the rest of the world. The shortage of any shipping by sea not only meant that New Zealand became dependent upon air communications but also led to a massive volume of traffic along the route thereby demonstrating the potential of future trans-Pacific air transportation. At that time international mail carried by air along this route more than doubled the quantity carried by sea.  

And central to New Zealand’s wartime communications with the outside world were the two TEAL flying boats that serviced the routes with both Australia and Fiji. In January 1942 the Awarua became the first British trans-Pacific airliner when it flew Walter Nash as far as Honolulu.

**Discontented Australians**

The precedent set by the dominance of larger nations with the establishment

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12) EA 1, 110/3/7. Shanahan to Acting Controller Civil Aviation. 27/7/1944. Mail July-December 1943: by air (1009 lbs), by sea (409 lbs). All civilian mail carried by air free of surcharge.
of the Treaty of Versailles and the meetings of major powers at Cairo\(^1\) and Tehran\(^2\) had led to concerns that the future of the Pacific would be decided without any New Zealand or Australian input. Further, the Second World War had radically altered ANZAC perceptions of national security and defence. It was thus seen by the two governments as vitally important to establish common ground so that a united front could be presented in international conventions to lend greater weight to their views.

Japan’s rapid expansion throughout Southeast Asia had created an unprecedented threat to Australasian security. With Japanese land forces attacking Hong Kong and taking in February 1942 the British base in Singapore, the Asian and European streams of war converged, and the conflict became truly global.\(^3\) Britain’s disinterest in turning Singapore into a major naval base in the 1920s and 30s had demonstrated that British interests in the region were starting to differ from that of both New Zealand and Australia; at the same time New Zealand and Australia had realized that when it came to national defence, their policies were in fact interdependent and should be considered as a strategic whole.\(^4\) This view was reinforced by the fact that no European nation with colonial interests in Southeast Asia had been capable of mounting anything more than token resistance to Japan’s advance, in part due to more pressing concerns and commitments in the European theatre of war. This action - or inaction - demonstrated on another level the European powers’ lack of sufficient resources to deal with major

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\(^1\) Kay, R., *Documents on New Zealand External Relations, Vol I, Australia - New Zealand Agreement 1944* (ANZAG DOC), No 40, High Commissioner to Australia to Minister External Affairs, 4/12/1943.

\(^2\) Conference held November 28\(^{th}\) - December 1\(^{st}\) 1943.


\(^4\) ANZAG DOC, No 32, Charges d’Affaires Washington (Cox) to PM, 31/3/1943.
commitments both at home and abroad. The situation had caused particular concern to Australia who had traditionally viewed Dutch and Portuguese possessions in Timor as a cornerstone of national defence.\(^{17}\)

By late 1943 the Australian government had decided to formulate views on a post war Pacific, an approach that the American government had already adopted earlier the same year.\(^{18}\) And with the immediate crises and dangers of the war now subsiding, attention returned to some extent to pre-war concerns. However, both New Zealand and Australia were aware of the dangers as well as the opportunities in adopting a new policy.

Throughout 1942 and the following year Australia became increasingly dismayed with Churchill’s and Roosevelt’s grand strategy as a promulgation of the war. When Japan invaded both Papua and New Guinea in 1942, Churchill had tried to dissuade Curtin unsuccessfully from withdrawing the Australian 9\(^{th}\) Division from the Middle East to return to Australia, and New Zealand also expressed strong concerns about sending her forces home. Both New Zealand and Australia were pressured by the British and the Americans to leave their forces in the Middle East on account of the’broader picture’, and when New Zealand did finally agree to leave a division in place, Curtin, the Australian Prime Minister, went into a fury. According to Australia, New Zealand had agreed to a policy of interdependent defence and had not consulted Australia before making her decision.\(^{19}\)

The Australian government was now perturbed at the apparent lack of


\(^{18}\) ANZAG DOC, No 32, Charges d’Affaires Washington (Cox) to PM, 31/3/1943.

\(^{19}\) Ibid, No 26, 1/6/1943.
concern shown by both Britain and America in defending Australasian interests; moreover, it seemed that Britain and the USA were doing their best to convince New Zealand not to participate in operations. The military advice that the New Zealand government received from the US Combined Chiefs of Staff suggested that the New Zealand Second Division would be of greater use in the Middle East theatre. At this time Australia had advised the powers, including New Zealand, that the situation in New Guinea was now critical and that a further two divisions were urgently required to reinforce local defences.

Australian anger and frustration with both Britain and the US was further compounded by a particular clash with Britain involving certain air rights and sovereignty of Portuguese territory in the Pacific.

When in 1941 Japanese troops entered Portuguese Timor, the Australians unapologetically dispatched troops to the territory as its location was seen as strategically crucial to the defence of Australia. The British were quite unhappy about the situation, seeing the action as tantamount to an invasion. Portugal was not only a neutral nation, but also under an old treaty that had existed for over six hundred years, that nation was in effect Britain’s oldest ally. A neutral and friendly Portugal had helped to ensure the stability of the Iberian peninsula, particularly with regard to the British base at Gibraltar. Further, the British had been conducting secret negotiations with Portugal concerning the granting of air landing rights in the Azores, in return for which Great Britain would help to safeguard the sovereignty of Portuguese territories. The Australian government were infuriated in February 1942 when a Portuguese force heading for Timor had turned back after being threatened by an advancing Japanese force, calling the Portuguese force “unfit” to defend the island given their “vacillation and timidity
in the face of Japanese aggression**.20) Both Curtin and Evatt were careful not to claim or want to claim sovereignty over the island as Australia was still bound by the Atlantic Charter of 1941 which set out that Allied nations would not make any territorial acquisitions after the war. They were in agreement that a gentle approach needed to be taken so as not to jeopardize any future, ultimate plans to acquire the island.21)

Roosevelt understood Australia’s concern and involvement in the Portuguese colony of Timor and saw its future as a ‘free port’22), while Australia wanted the territory either demilitarized or turned into an Australian stronghold to be leased from the Dutch and the Portuguese.23) Either way there was general agreement to Australia maintaining a permanent military presence and taking over the defence of the territory. And as a concession to Britain, to help her to facilitate use of the Azores, the Australian government was willing to defer any claims on Timor until after the war when talks could be held with the Portuguese regarding a commercial agreement over air communications. The Australian government now saw the development of civil aviation as just as important and vital to national security as any military development.24)

Australia’s security concerns and desire for extraterritorial privileges were not only confined to Timor, but also concerned Dutch New Guinea, the French possessions of the New Hebrides and New Caledonia, as well as a number of

20) Australian External Affairs to the Secretary of State for Dominion Affairs, Sept. 3, 1945, pp323-334.
22) ANZAG DOC 32, New Zealand Legation, Washington to Fraser, 31/3/1944.
24) Ibid, Doc 292, Curtin to Bruce, and Doc 316, Bruce to Curtin 27/10/1943.
smaller British-controlled islands, and underlying this expansionist desire was a strong sense of disdain towards France, the Netherlands, and Portugal for their lack of any real war effort. Australia, like the US, doubted the merits of these nations’ post-war presence in the Pacific.

By now both the Australian and New Zealand governments were concerned at Britain’s lack of support in protecting Commonwealth Pacific interests; it now appeared to these two governments that Britain was acquiescing to American efforts to dominate the Pacific by continuously attempting to placate both New Zealand and Australian concerns. Australia saw the Britain could not guarantee any Commonwealth interests in the Pacific after the war, and thus initiated negotiations direct with the US on peace matters and arrangements without consulting other Commonwealth nations.²⁵) Both New Zealand and Australia were irritated by Britain’s decision at the Cairo Conference to give back Formosa to China, a move that was seen as brusque, particularly as it concerned Pacific interests about which neither Australia nor New Zealand were notified. Britain was seen to be courting the US and conducting the war according to a strategy that placed her own security above that of the rest of the Empire, one that appeared not unlike that of the First World War, and now which favoured placating her European neighbours over her Commonwealth interests. In any event, in New Zealand both Nash and Fraser became keen to guarantee New Zealand involvement in any post-war Pacific settlement by pushing for the continual use of RNZAF aircraft in the Pacific war, a move which was eventually stymied by American interests which called for American combat forces when the front lines...

²⁵) ANZAG DOC 44, Pacific Conference Agenda I, in particular the Cairo and Tehran Conferences. The Moscow declaration of October 1943 stated that the four powers would act on behalf of the community of nations until an international organization was formed. Australia did not welcome the interim limitation of security to only four powers.
advanced north over the Equator.

By 1944 when there was a plethora of both Allied military and air resources in the Pacific, brought in primarily to help establish a base to initiate a major offensive against the Japanese, certain members of the US Naval High Command commented that neither New Zealand nor Australia were going to be given an opportunity to lay any claim, in any form, on the future of Micronesia through their respective war efforts in the Pacific. 26) This comment was of major concern to New Zealand who wanted to maintain a presence in both the northern and western Pacific regions in order to enhance her position in post-war talks. However, New Zealand’s Chief of Staff, Leonard Issitt, believed that the US decision was not primarily a political one but rather one that was military-based. Fraser perceived that the US decision was based on a fear of apparent New Zealand aspirations in the northern Pacific, and directed Nash to assure him that the New Zealand government was agreeable to US claims to the Marshall and Caroline islands 27). In any event there was now widespread concern in the New Zealand capital that Britain’s traditional interests in the Pacific, including her former interest in developing civil aviation in the area, were abating, a concern which was fuelled by the comments of Lord Beaverbrook at the inter-Dominion Conference of October 1943 28). Beaverbrook suggested that the development of Empire air route links, concerning adjacent territories, should be the responsibility of Commonwealth members, citing the Indian route as one in which British airlines may be involved; no mention was made of any Pacific interest. 29) Now,

27) Ibid, No 84, TO 90.
in the apparent absence of direct British interest or concern in the Pacific, Fraser reminded his Australian counterpart of the need to "protect British interests".

**Conclusion**

From the New Zealand government’s point of view, American interest and involvement in the Pacific had both positive and negative aspects: on the one hand the US was a strong ally whose relationship with New Zealand was considered indispensable particularly during the war years. Fraser had publicly acknowledged that the future security and development of the Pacific region could only be achieved in cooperation with the US and for that reason he foresaw no difficulties in discussions regarding the fate of certain American bases\(^{30}\). However on the other hand and at the same time, New Zealand like Australia, maintained a strong desire to protect her interests in the Pacific and the Americans were well aware that both New Zealand and Australia favoured only to a limited extent an American presence in the Pacific. Irrespective of any view, one common point remained paramount: all the parties concerned realised the growing importance and significance of air communications throughout the Pacific region.

Before World War Two the US had made claims of sovereignty over British possessions in the Pacific by quietly depositing small groups of settlers on various islands, and by 1943 there was scarcely an Allied-occupied island in the region that did not have a sizeable garrison of American troops or least an American-built airstrip. However the build-up of American personnel throughout these islands did not constitute or could not be considered another “fatal impact” as on other Pacific shores. Although some land was procured from the indigenous people for the use

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30) ANZAG DOC, No 75, Press statement in Washington, 18 April 1944.
by Allied forces, the war did help usher in a period of unprecedented foreign expenditure. Garrisoned troops, made up mainly of Americans, spent their earning locally and interacted with the indigenous people on most islands, with the American forces being not only more numerous than those from the Commonwealth, but also spent more simply because they had more money to spend. In fact, it was usual even when the front lines were advancing for small groups of about a dozen soldiers to remain behind to maintain American control of facilities pending a decision on disposal.31)

From the early years of the twentieth century the United States Navy had played a significant role in American interest throughout the Pacific region, with their war-time dominance leading to calls for territorial remuneration for their efforts32). The Navy had been instrumental in not only helping to establish the pre-war “colonies” but also by conducting important surveys on potential aviation facilities, and even during the war had continued to conduct surveys on a number of French, British, and New Zealand-held possessions. With the outbreak of war in the Pacific, New Zealand realised that pre-war sovereignty issues had not been resolved, and the country now viewed this American dominance with concern as there were by this time indications that American aspirations in the Pacific were resurfacing. All these activities on the part of the New Zealand government - both political and military - in the early war years helped to lay the foundations for not only a firmer post-war aviation policy, but also for the development of the country’s post-war domestic and international civil air services.

31) EA 1, 110/3/7. Shanahan to Acting Controller Civil Aviation, 27/7/1944.
32) Renouf, A., Let Justice Be Done : The Foreign Policy of Dr.H.V. Evatt, p128.
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