

therefore a very early reply on this matter and venture to suggest that at this stage post war problems should not be a decisive factor.

79.

DND HQS 35-8-1

*Le commandant de l'aviation, région aérienne de l'Est, au secrétaire,¹
ministère de la Défense nationale*

*Air Officer Commanding, Eastern Air Command, to Secretary,¹
Department of National Defence*

SECRET

Halifax, May 29, 1940

Subject: Air Defence of Newfoundland.

Reference: Your S.7410, dated 13th April, 1940.²

1. No communication has so far been received from the Newfoundland authorities concerning arrangements to be made by this Command for the Air Defence of that Colony.

2. In view of the present situation in Europe the Joint Service Committee, Halifax, considered it expedient to review the defence of Newfoundland particularly the possibility of the enemy seizing undefended air bases in that Colony with the object of conducting air operations against important objectives on the Atlantic Coast.

3. One of the largest airports in the world is located on the main line of the Newfoundland Railway at Gander Lake, Newfoundland. It has 4 hard-surfaced runways 3 of which are 4500 feet long by 600 feet wide and the remaining runway is 4800 feet long by 1200 feet wide. In addition there is one large hangar 120 feet by 150 feet, very complete W/T, D/F and Meteorological equipment, 7 very comfortable residences for married officials and a staff house having 50 single bedrooms, central dining-room, washrooms and control tower for the civilian operational staff. Approximately 400 gallons of 87 octane and 6000 gallons of 100 octane gasoline are kept on hand. A plan of the Airport runways is attached.³

4. Enemy possession of this airport would give control of the main line of the Newfoundland Railway and the Seaplane Base at Botwood, where enemy ships could unload war supplies for the Seaplane Base or for transportation by rail to the Airport. The Airport would bring enemy aircraft within 283 miles of Sydney, N.S. and 451 miles of Halifax. Enemy aircraft using this airport would also be able to attack and disrupt our shipping through the Strait of Belle Isle and Cabot Strait.

5. As stated in paragraph 39 of this Command's letter S. 3-5-2, dated 6th April, 1940², Newfoundland Airport may be of paramount importance to the Allied War Effort as the main aerodrome on this side of the Atlantic from which to dispatch long range bomber-reconnaissance aircraft, manufactured in Canada and the United States, for quick delivery by air to

¹ E. J. Boag.² Non reproduite.³ Non reproduit.² Not printed.³ Not printed.