

*Mémorandum du Comité interforce d'état-major
au ministre de la Défense nationale*

*Memorandum from Joint Staff Committee
to Minister of National Defence*

HQS 7410

[Ottawa,] April 21, 1938

SECRET

1. Following the receipt of the letter dated 11th April, 1938, from the Under-Secretary of State for External Affairs, arrangements were made for representatives of the three services to meet the Secretary of the Governor of Newfoundland. On Tuesday, 12th April, Colonel Crerar (D.M.O. and I.), Group-Captain Breadner (A.S.O.) and Commander Lane (D.N.I. and P.) met Captain C.M.R. Schwerdt, R.N., Secretary to the Governor, at Naval Service Headquarters.

2. It was made quite clear to Captain Schwerdt that discussions in regard to the Newfoundland Defence Scheme were purely exploratory and Captain Schwerdt, on his part, made it equally clear that he was in no way able to give any official view, but that he was permitted by His Excellency the Governor to explain any matters referred to in the Scheme, on which information was desired, to the best of his ability.

These discussions, therefore, involved no commitment to either Government.

3. Captain Schwerdt pointed out at the outset of the discussion that the defence of Newfoundland under the particular conditions now obtaining rested entirely in the hands of the British Government authorities and that any points on which we required an official opinion must be raised with that Government.

He also observed that while the Newfoundland Commission of Government desired to take every possible step for Newfoundland defence in accordance with the fundamental principle of Imperial Defence—(i.e. that each part of the Empire should provide, as far as possible, for its own local defence), Newfoundland's financial resources available for defence were very limited.

4. Questions were then raised regarding certain aspects of the problem of Newfoundland defence of particular concern to this country. It was pointed out that unless forces were made available for the effective air and naval reconnaissance of the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador that [sic] enemy air, surface or submarine raiders might establish bases in these waters from which attacks could be directed against our shipping in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and off the East Coast. A further item of marked importance to Canada is the security, in war, of the iron ore mines on Bell Island, Conception Bay, on which the activities of the Dominion Coal and Steel Corporation at Sydney, N.S. depend.