



AMONG THE MOST YOUTHFUL of the world's air arms, the air component of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force, whose aircraft sport this newly independent nation's flamboyant yellow bird of paradise emblem on concentric rings of black, red and green, has now assumed responsibility for the tasks hitherto performed by a contingent of the Royal Australian Air Force. With an initial strength of four ex-RAAF Douglas C-47s, delivered last year as part of a SA 16-4m Australian defence aid programme, the PNGDF air component is seen as the nucleus of an air force, the anticipated expansion of which during the remainder of the present decade will involve the procurement of STOL transports and support aircraft, such as the GAF Nomad 'Mission Master', and helicopters.

The Papua New Guinea Department of Defence began operating on 1 October 1974, in preparation for the transfer of responsibility in defence matters from Australian to its own armed forces, and 10 years of Australian military aviation in Papua New Guinea came to an end recently with the withdrawal of two flying units of the RAAF and the Australian Army Aviation Corps. The detachment of three DHC Caribous based at Port Moresby in support of the PNGDF has now been withdrawn, having flown a total of 26,500 hours during its stay in the country, and the Army Aviation Corps' Pilatus Turbo-Porters and Bell 47G Sioux helicopters contributed 10,000 and 16,000 flying hours respectively up to the time of their withdrawal.

The proposed PNGDF defence organisation is based on a personnel force of some 3,500 officers and men, this comprising two infantry battalions of Pacific Islands Regi-

THE "BIRD-OF- PARADISE" AIR ARM



ment, plus seagoing and air elements. Initial training and formation costs have been financed by the Australian government, and New Zealand has also provided military aid, including the secondment of Army and RNZAF instructors to the PNG Joint Services College at Lae. The PNGDF air component has bases available at Port Moresby, Lae,

Madang, Rabaul and Wewak, plus numerous strips. All training of air component personnel has so far been conducted by the RAAF, which may be expected to continue to furnish advanced instruction in the foreseeable future, but it is anticipated that *ab initio* and basic instruction will eventually be provided by a flying school to be established in Papua New Guinea. □

