

FROM ALL QUARTERS

R.A.F. Intentions

IN fifty-nine crisp paragraphs forming his memorandum* on the Air Estimates for 1959-60 the Secretary of State for Air, Mr. George Ward, makes some noteworthy disclosures about R.A.F. intentions not touched upon in the necessarily wider context of the defence plan "progress report" (*Flight*, February 13).

Thus, referring to Bomber Command, the Minister says that "a number of V-bombers" will be assigned to SACEUR in the tactical rôle. These squadrons will replace Canberras, the Canberra B.6s at present so assigned eventually replacing the B.2s in the Middle East. Initially, the V-bombers assigned to NATO will be Valiants; and, like the Canberras, they are to be based in this country. The build-up of Bomber Command with Victors and Vulcans continues, and the V-force has now reached a high pitch of efficiency. Six minutes is the standard time from the signal to crews in the crew-room to take-off, and readiness is being further improved.

Making next a reference to Fighter Command and its coming equipment with Lightnings, the memorandum states that these aircraft are to be fitted for flight refuelling to improve the Command's capacity for overseas reinforcement. During 1959-60, a number of Javelin squadrons will be re-equipped with Mk 8 aircraft, while Mk 7s already in service are to be modified for reheat. More Bloodhound sites are to become operational.

The earlier marks of Shackleton in Coastal Command are being modernized to the equivalent of M.R.3 standard. Transport Command is to receive "shortly" the first of its twenty Britannia 253s, after completion of clearance trials at Boscombe Down. A contract is being let for the development of the TSR.2—"a versatile aircraft"—to operate in NATO and overseas commands.

In Germany, the headquarters of the 2nd Allied Tactical Air Force is to have a fully international staff and the R.A.F. element has been re-named Royal Air Force, Germany; re-equipment of the F.A.W. squadrons with Javelins is to be completed in 1959-60. In the Arabian Peninsula, where trials of G/A aircraft were conducted last year, Hunters are to replace Venoms.

The memorandum gives some heartening news on the accident rate, which in 1958 (for both turbojet and piston-engined aircraft) was the lowest ever recorded. But it is rather gloomy on recruitment, pointing out that this has "fallen appreciably short of requirements" in the professional branches and for direct-commission aircrew. It emphasizes that the redundancy scheme has been largely completed; there will be no more redundancies of officer aircrew of squadron leader rank or below. It stresses the continued requirement for aircrew.

The net total of Air Estimates for 1959-60 is £490,800,000 (allowing for the receipt of £2,000,000 from the Federal German Government), compared with a net provision for 1958-59 of £467,050,000, allowing for an estimated receipt of £7,500,000 from Germany. The 1959-60 budget for aircraft and stores—£213,850,000—shows an increase of £17,050,000, principally because of increased expenditure on guided missiles.



Guided-Missile Navy

REFERENCE is made to the Royal Navy's guided missile destroyers and to a new aircraft carrier—*Hermes*—in the First Lord of the Admiralty's explanatory statement† on the Navy Estimates for 1959-60. Lord Selkirk says that two of the four destroyers on order are about to be laid down, and a third will be laid down later this year; *Hermes* is to start her trials by the end of 1959. Another carrier *Bulwark*, is being air-conditioned to enable her to operate with her commando "in the most exacting tropical conditions." Three aircraft carriers will be fully operational throughout the year, being provided from *Victorious*, *Centaur*, *Albion* and from *Ark Royal* when she finishes her refit.

The First Lord refers to the equipment of more F.A.A. squadrons with Scimitars and says that *Sea Vixens* (to be fitted with Firestreak) are expected to come into Fleet service within a year. NA.39 development is "proceeding satisfactorily." The A.S. squadrons will be equipped with Wessex helicopters in addition to the Whirlwinds already in use; and, as is well known, the Gannet AEW.3 is to replace Skyraiders.

Navais: British Statement

A STATEMENT issued last week by the representatives of the United Kingdom airlines attending the I.C.A.O. meeting at Montreal was in the following terms:—

"I.A.T.A. and the United States and United Kingdom delegations are in complete agreement that VOR should be retained as an I.C.A.O. standard aid. The disagreement is whether Decca or DMET should become supplementary standards at this time.

"All United Kingdom I.A.T.A. members disagree with the Association's advocacy of DMET as a standard. There is virtually no civil operating experience with this system to date. There are no I.A.T.A. statistics on Decca reliability. In the course of more than 350,000 hr of operating experience United Kingdom operators have found that the reliability of earlier versions of Decca equipment ranges between 90 and 97 per cent. Results from the new Mk 10 equipment are expected to be markedly better. One operator, Silver City Airways, has achieved serviceability figures for 1958 of 98.4 per cent, and of 99.25 per cent in January 1959. They have approximately 26,000 hours' experience with Decca Mk 9 over three years, involving approximately 75,000 flights to date.

"B.O.A.C. and B.E.A. support for Decca results from considerable experience in operating turbojet and turboprop aircraft in high-density areas. B.O.A.C. have also had more operational experience with DME (on 200 megacycles) than the rest of the world's airlines put together."

A.W.A. Directorships

CHANGES in the Board of Sir W. G. Armstrong Whitworth Aircraft Ltd. were announced last week. Mr. H. M. Woodhams was elected chairman and he also retains his position as managing director. Mr. F. Martin, Mr. J. T. Lidbury, Mr. J. A. R. Kay and Mr. S. D. Davies were elected to the Board; and Mr. E. D. Keen and Mr. C. Bayly were appointed executive directors.

Examining the Swallow

A JOINT Anglo-U.S. research programme on the Swallow variable-geometry concept was announced by the Minister of Supply, Mr. Aubrey Jones, last Monday. Replying to Parliamentary questions by Mr. Roy Mason (Lab., Barnsley) and Mr. Geoffrey de Freitas (Lab., Lincoln), he said that a series of tests and engineering studies would be undertaken—partly at

*Cmnd. 673, H.M. Stationery Office, price 2s.

†Cmnd. 674, H.M. Stationery Office, price 1s 6d.

MIGHTIER YET: The Handley Page Victor B.2, which first flew at Radlett on February 20 (pilot, F/L. J. W. Allam). The new Victor has four Rolls-Royce Conway RCo.11s of 17,250 lb thrust each; enlarged intakes; increased span; and retractable scoops near the fin taking in ram-air for two turbo-alternators which provide high-altitude emergency power. Emergency power for low altitudes comes from a Blackburn Artouste in the starboard wing-root; this provides air to start the starboard Conways, which in turn deliver air to the port units

