

Black Baron puts Paris on a war alert

By Suzanne Lowry in Paris

THE phantom flier, who has been illegally soaring over Paris this summer, took to the air twice at the weekend.

This was in spite of dire warnings and the setting up of a wide-spread surveillance system, including the revival of 1914-18 War techniques.

A state of war now exists between the Minister of the Interior, M Pierre Joxe, and the pilot—known now as le Baron Noir.

Mirage F-1 fighters and a swarm of helicopters were scrambled as he buzzed the capital on Saturday and Sunday evening, but le Baron slipped out of the net.

The plane, seen five times

since late July, reappeared on Saturday around 10pm, making a pass over the fashionable 16th arrondissement, but getting away before the helicopters could take off.

On Sunday at the same time, a similar plane, thought to be a twin-engined Cessna, reappeared and disappeared just as skilfully.

The nearest security forces have got to the phantom was last Thursday night, when a Cessna was pursued by helicopters over the 5th arrondissement and the Jardin des Plantes.

But the pilot escaped by slip-

ping into the commercial air traffic lanes on the approach to Orly airport, where pursuit would have been dangerous.

But M Joxe is determined to catch the Black Baron on the ground if not in the air. "We will investigate all aircraft of this type in France," he said. "We will want an account of all their movements in the last month."

For the first time since the 1914-18 War, spotters are posted on monuments such as the Eiffel Tower and the Arc de Triomphe.

The proposed penalty for the illegal night-flyer is now £6,000, three months in prison and revo-

cation of his (or her) pilot's licence. The minister says he will be seeking power for even stiffer penalties.

But still le Baron takes to the air. As tension mounts, those Parisians who have not left the capital for the August holiday, are out on their balconies at night looking for the phantom.

Others are complaining that the noise of helicopters trying to catch him is keeping them awake.

"Let's hope," says a pilot from one of the many clubs round Paris that have been suspected of being the Black Baron's base, "that this nutcase is put out of harm's way before there is a crash over Paris that would cause many deaths."

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