

MYSTERY AIRCRAFT

VISITORS OVER DARWIN

Flew High Towards South-west

TOWN EXCITED

FROM OUR SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE

DARWIN, Wednesday.

Official inquiries to-day established beyond reasonable doubt that two unidentified aeroplanes, flying high and fast from the Timor Sea and disappearing in a south-westerly direction, were seen and heard over Darwin during the last few days.

No registered Australian aeroplane, either Government, commercial or private, was known to be within hundreds of miles of Darwin when the mysterious visitors passed over.

The persons who reported having seen the machines are positive that they made no error.

At 6 p.m. on Thursday Messrs. P. Williams, an aerodrome employee, and P. Love, a wharf-laborer, were standing near a hotel in the centre of the town, when they saw a silver-grey machine pass high to the westward. The sound of its engines was heard by others.

At 4.30 a.m. yesterday, the foreman of the electric power-station, Mr Maurice Holtze, heard a high-powered machine pass over the power-house and, rushing outside, he saw a large machine disappearing to the south-west.

This machine showed a single orange-colored light.

Australian aircraft flying at night show the usual red and green port and starboard lights.

These reports have caused great excitement in the town, coupled with suggestions for the immediate establishment here of an Air Force depot.

About four months ago workmen building the new water reservoir at Manton Gap, about 40 miles from Darwin reported that a fast monoplane passed overhead shortly after sundown. It had neither lights nor marks.

At the time this report was discredited, but it was revealed to-day that later inquiry resulted in a long report being sent to the Defence authorities.

The Manton Gap reservoir is to be an essential part of the defence base, being constructed at Darwin.

Foreman Positive

Few people were out of bed and the town was practically in darkness when Holtze saw yesterday morning's visitor.

"Believe me, there was no doubt

visitor.

"Believe me, there was no doubt about it being an aeroplane," he said to-day. "I am positive that what I saw was an aeroplane.

"The darkness and the fact that the object was moving at high speed made it impossible for me to get a good view of the machine, but it seemed to be a multi-engined monoplane."

Officials agree that it would be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtze, who holds a position of authority and is unlikely to have been deceived.

Mysterious Lights

Williams, the aerodrome employee who reported the passage of the first plane, said he could get a number of other witnesses if necessary.

Authorities are at a loss to explain the mystery, as they find it difficult to imagine that foreign planes would run the risk of detection by flying so close to the town.

During the last three months, and particularly when the Japanese fisheries training ship Hakuvo Maru was here, several residents claimed to have seen mysterious lights over and near the town at night. These lights were attributed to shooting stars.

At least two nations have bases near enough to send aircraft to Australia and back without refuelling.

Palau, a Japanese pearling base, is only 1200 miles from Darwin.

In their endeavor to unravel the mystery the authorities have been checking over a brief report received here of big manoeuvres at Singapore.

This stated that forces would be divided and one side would defend an imaginary Continental State 1200 miles south of Malaya.

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It has been suggested that R.A.F. machines taking part in this manoeuvre might have strayed as far south as Darwin.

A test was made this morning to check a statement by Hoeltze that his Diesels at the power house also betrayed the presence of an aero engine in the beat of their exhaust.

In the habit of listening for the tri-weekly departure of overseas mail planes, Hoeltze had noticed that the rhythm of the exhaust was affected by their engines.

When this occurred yesterday morning and he realised that no mail plane was due out on a Tuesday, he ran outside to confirm the evidence of his Diesels.

This morning when a Qantas plane left town on a course similar to that taken by the mystery aircraft, its presence could be detected quite plainly in the note of the power-house exhaust.

Twelve hundred miles south of Malaya would be 1000 miles off the north-west coast of Australia. Aircraft would have to stray a long way from that point to be seen over Darwin.

No Information

From Our Special Representative

CANBERRA, Wednesday.

No reports or information have been received here of mystery aeroplanes flying over Darwin.

MELBOURNE, Wednesday.

Neither the Air Board nor the Civil Aviation branch has yet received any report of unidentified planes having been seen or heard over Darwin, during the past five days.
