

MYSTERY PLANES.

SEEN OVER DARWIN.

CONFIRMING REPORTS.

DARWIN, February 9.

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

At 6 p.m. on Thursday P. Williams, an employee at the aerodrome, 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 west of the town. The sound of the engines of the machine was heard by others.

At 4.30 a.m. yesterday the foreman of the Darwin electric power station, Maurice Holtze, detected the sound of a high-powered engine, and saw a large machine disappearing in the South-west. The plane showed only one light, and this was orange-colored.

"TOO AUTHENTIC."

The reports caused great excitement in town. The reports are too authentic to be ignored, and no registered Australian planes, Government, commercial or private, were within hundreds of miles of Darwin at the time the mysterious visitors were observed.

EARLIER INCIDENT.

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About four months ago workmen engaged on the construction of new water storage at Manton Gap, about 40 miles from Darwin, reported that a fast monoplane passed overhead shortly after sundown. The machine carried no lights or marks. At the time this report was discredited, but it was revealed to-day that a subsequent inquiry resulted in a lengthy report being forwarded to the defence authorities. Manton Gap reservoir would be an essential part of the defence base in course of construction at Darwin.

ROMANTIC BETRAYAL.

Few people were out of bed, and the town was practically in darkness when Holtze observed the plane yesterday morning. It might easily have escaped notice but for the fact that its presence was betrayed in romantic fashion by the exhaust note of a Diesel engine used at the power house. This engine develops about 1000 revolutions at normal speed, and Holtze observed that the presence of any other machine in the vicinity developing more or less than 1000 revolutions is reflected clearly in the exhaust beat of the power house engine. At 4.30 a.m. yesterday he was attending the engine when he noticed a distinct change in the note of the exhaust. Accustomed to the departure of air mail planes from the local aerodrome about 5 o'clock on three mornings of the week he at first paid little attention to the antics of his unofficial sound detector. Then he realised suddenly that no machines were scheduled to leave Darwin on Tuesday morning. He rushed outside and saw a

morning. He rushed outside and saw a machine in the air.

"NO DOUBT."

"Believe me, there is no doubt about it being an aeroplane," said Holtze this morning. "My engine tells no lies, and I am positive that what I saw was an aeroplane. The darkness and the fact that the object was moving at a high speed made it impossible for me to get a good view of the machine, but it seemed a multi-engined monoplane."

RELIABLE WITNESS.

Officials are of the opinion that it would be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtze. Williams, an aerodrome employee, who reported the presence of a strange plane on Thursday, said to-day that he could secure a number of other witnesses if necessary. It was colored silver grey, and apparently a high-powered machine. There was no mistake. During the last three months, and particularly at the time when the so-called "Japanese fisheries training ship," Hakuyo Maru, was in Darwin, several residents claimed to have seen mysterious lights over and near the town at night.

CLOSE NATIONS.

At least two nations have bases near enough to send aircraft to Australia and back without refuelling. Palau, the Japanese pearling base in the Mandated Territory, is only 1200 miles from Darwin.

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mystery, authorities have been interested in a brief report received here of the big defence manoeuvres at Singapore. This report stated that the forces would be divided, and one side would defend an "imaginary continental State, 1200 miles south of Malaya." It has been suggested that R.A.F. machines taking part in the preparations for this manoeuvre might have strayed as far south as Darwin.

DETECTION TEST.

When the incoming Qantas mail plane left Darwin for Brisbane this morning a test was made of the sound detection capabilities of the electric power house Diesel engine, which Holtze claimed to have betrayed the presence of the strange plane. Yesterday's Qantas plane left town on a somewhat similar course, and its presence could be plainly detected in the note of the Diesel engine's exhaust.