

Planes Over Darwin.

OFFICIAL INQUIRIES MADE.

TRUTH OF RUMORS
ESTABLISHED.

DARWIN, Feb. 9.—The local aviation officials are inquiring into the rumors current in Darwin that unidentified planes had been seen and heard over the town during the last five days.

The officials are sceptical regarding the rumors, but in view of there being two unrelated reports inquiries have been instituted.

DARWIN, Feb. 9.—Official inquiries to-day established beyond reasonable doubt that two unidentified planes, flying in high and fast from Timor Sea and disappearing in a south-westerly direction, were seen and heard over Darwin during the 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 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 had only one light and this was orange colored.

Great Excitement in Town.

The reports caused great excitement in the town. The reports are too authentic to be ignored, and no registered Australian planes, Government, commercial or private, were within

commercial or private, were within hundreds of miles at the time the mysterious visitors were observed. About four months ago, workmen engaged in the construction of the 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 subsequent inquiry resulted in a lengthy report being forwarded to the defence authorities.

Manton Gap reservoir will be an essential part of the defence base in course of construction at Darwin.

Presence Betrayed.

Few people were out of bed and the town 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 the 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 the air mail plane from the local aerodrome, about 5 a.m. 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 machine in the air. "Believe me, there is no doubt about its being an

there is no doubt about its 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 to be a multi-engined monoplane."

Aerodrome Witness.

The officials are of opinion that it would be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtze. Williams, an aerodrome employee, who was the reporter of a strange plane on Thursday, said to-day that he could secure a number of other witnesses if necessary. Colored silver-grey, and apparently high-powered, the machine was unmistakable.

Mysterious Lights.

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. 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.

Singapore Manoeuvres.

In their endeavor to unravel the mystery, the 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.

Test of Qantas Plane.

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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 a strange plane yesterday. The Qantas plane left town on a somewhat similar course and its presence could plainly be detected in the note of the Diesel engine's exhaust.
