

MYSTERIOUS AEROPLANES OVER DARWIN LAST WEEK

Caused Excitement in Town

AUTHENTIC REPORTS

DARWIN, Wednesday. — Official inquiries to-day established beyond reasonable doubt that two unidentified planes, flying high and fast from the Timor Sea, and disappearing in a south-westerly direction, were seen and heard over Darwin last week. At 6 p.m. on Thursday, P. Williams, an employee at the aerodrome, and P. Love, a wharf labourer, 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 a south-westerly direction. The plane showed only one light and this was orange coloured. The reports of this sight caused great excitement in the town. The reports were too authentic to be ignored, as no registered Australian Government, commercial or private planes were within hundreds of miles of Darwin at the time of the mysterious visitors.

REPORT SUBMITTED TO DEFENCE AUTHORITIES

About four months ago workmen engaged on the construction of new water storage facilities at Manton, about 40

miles from Darwin, reported that a fast monoplane passed overhead shortly after sundown. The machine carried no lights. At the time this report was discredited, but it was revealed to-day that subsequent inquiries resulted in a lengthy report being forwarded to the defence authorities.

Few people were out of bed and the town was practically in darkness when Holtze observed the plane yesterday morning. It might have easily escaped notice but for the fact that its presence was betrayed in a romantic manner by the exhaust note of a diesel engine used at the power house. This engine develops about 1000 revolutions at its normal speed, and Holtze had 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 Holtze was attending the engine when he noted a distinct change in the note of the exhaust. Accustomed to the departure of air mail planes from the local aerodrome at about 5 a.m. on three mornings a week, he at first paid little attention to the antics of his unofficial sound detector. Then he suddenly realised that no machine was scheduled to leave Darwin on Tuesday morning. He rushed outside and saw a machine in the air.

"Believe me, there is no doubt about it being an aeroplane," said Holtze this morning. "My engine tells no lies, and I am positive 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."

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Officials are of the opinion that it will be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtze.

Williams, who reported the presence

Williams, who reported the presence of a strange plane on Thursday, said today that he could secure a number of other witnesses, if necessary. Coloured silver grey, and apparently high powered, the machine was unmistakable. During the last three months, and particularly at a time when a so-called "Japanese fisheries training ship," *Hakuio Maru*, was in Darwin, several residents claim to have seen a mysterious light over and near the town at night. At least two nations have bases near enough to send aircraft to Australia and back without refuelling.

Palao, the Japanese pearling base in the Mandated Territory, is only 1200 miles from Darwin.

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

When the incoming Qantas mail plane left Darwin for Brisbane this morning, tests were made of the sound detection capabilities of the power house diesel engine, which Holtze claims to have betrayed the presence of a strange plane yesterday. The Qantas plane left town on a somewhat similar course and its presence could be plainly detected in the note of the diesel engine exhaust.