

DARWIN SCARE.

MYSTERY 'PLANES.

Detected By Power-house
Engine.

DARWIN, February 9.

Official inquiries to-day established beyond all 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 Mr F. Williams, an employee at the aerodrome, and Mr. P. Love, a wharf labourer, were standing near an 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, Mr. 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-coloured. The reports have caused great excitement in the town, and a prominent citizen said to-day that he intended to open an agitation for the immediate stationing of a Royal Australian Air Force squadron at Darwin. The reports are too authentic to be ignored, and no registered Australian 'planes, Government, commercial or private.

The registered Australian planes, Government, commercial, or private, were within hundreds of miles of Darwin at the time the mysterious visitors were observed.

MANTON GAP RESERVOIR.

About four months ago workmen engaged on the construction of the new water storage at Manton Gap, about 40 miles from Darwin, reported that a fast monoplane had passed overhead shortly after sun-down. 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. The Manton Gap Reservoir will be an essential part of the defence base in course of construction at Darwin.

Few people were out of bed, and the town was practically in darkness when Mr. Holtze observed the 'plane yesterday morning. It might easily have escaped notice but for the fact that its presence was betrayed in a 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 Mr. 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 a.m. on three mornings a week, he at first paid little attention to the antics of his unofficial sound-detector. Then he realised suddenly that the machines were scheduled to leave Darwin on Tuesday morning. He rushed outside and saw the machine in the air.

MULTI-ENGINE 'PLANE.

"Believe me, there is no doubt about it being an aeroplane," said Mr. Holtze this morning. "My engine tells no lies, and I am positive that what I saw was an aeroplane. Darkness, and the fact that the object was moving at high speed, made it impossible for

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 are of the opinion that it would be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtze. He holds a position of authority in the town, and is most unlikely to be subject to flights of imagination. Mr. 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. Coloured silver and grey, and apparently high-powered, the machine was unmistakable.

The authorities are at a loss to find an explanation for the visitors. It is difficult to imagine that foreign 'planes would run the risk of detection by flying so close to the town, but inquiries have revealed that no registered machines were within range of Darwin at the times the mystery 'planes were reported.

MYSTERIOUS LIGHTS.

During the last three months, and particularly at a time when the so-called "Japanese fisheries training ship," the Hakuyo Maru, was in Darwin, several residents claimed to have seen mysterious lights over and near the town at night. The reports have been dismissed as being unfeasible, however, and their origin attributed to shooting stars.

Recent long distance flights by defence machines of various nations have proved Darwin to be well within the reach of foreign air Powers. 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.

In their endeavour 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 forces would be divided, and one side would defend "an imaginary continental State, 1200 miles south of Malaya."

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SINGAPORE MANOEUVRES.

It has been suggested that the R.A.F. machines taking part in the preparations for this manoeuvre might have strayed as far south as Darwin. 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 Mr. Holtze claimed to have betrayed the presence of the 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's exhaust.