

MYSTERY PLANES' FLIGHTS OVER DARWIN

Officials Puzzled

ACCURACY OF REPORTS ESTABLISHED

DARWIN, Wednesday:—Official inquiries to-day established beyond 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 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.

The reports caused great excitement in the town, and a prominent citizen said to-day he intended to open an

said to-day 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—were within hundreds of miles of Darwin at the time the mysterious visitors were observed.

BETRAYED BY ENGINE

About four months ago workmen engaged on the construction of a 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.

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 his notice but for the fact

that its presence was betrayed in a 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 has 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 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 no machines were scheduled to leave Darwin on Tuesday morning. He rushed outside and saw a machine in the air.

"TELLS NO LIES"

"Believe me there was 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 im-

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."

Mysterious Lights Reported

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.

Williams, the aerodrome employee who reported the presence of a strange plane on Thursday, said today he could secure a number of other witnesses if necessary. Colored silver grey and apparently high-powered, the machine was unmistakable.

AUTHORITIES PUZZLED

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 revealed that no registered machines were within range of Darwin at the times the mystery

Darwin at the times the mystery planes were reported. During the three months, and particularly at the 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 reach of foreign air powers. At least two nations have bases near enough to send aircraft to Australia and back without refuelling. Palao, the Jap-

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

SINGAPORE MANOUEVRES

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 the forces would be divided and one side

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.

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 be plainly detected in the note of the diesel engine's exhaust.