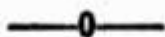


Mystery Planes Cause Excitement at Darwin

EVENING AND EARLY MORNING VISIT BY TWO UNIDENTIFIED MACHINES



Investigations To Be Made By Federal Authorities

DARWIN, Wednesday. — Official inquiries to-day established beyond reasonable doubt that two unidentified planes flying in high and fast from the Timor 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 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 Holtz, detected the sound of a high powered engine and saw a large machine disappearing to the south-west. The plane showed only one light, and this orange coloured.

The reports caused great excitement

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

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 Moth plane 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.

The Manton Gap reservoir will be an essential part of the defence base in the 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 notice but for the fact 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 Holtz 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

haust. 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 no machine was scheduled to leave Darwin on Tuesday morning. He rushed outside and saw the machine in the air.

"Believe me there is no doubt about it being an aeroplane," declared Holtz this morning. "My engine tells no lies, and I am positive what I saw was an aeroplane. Darkness and the fact the object was moving 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 it will be difficult to get a more reliable witness than Holtz.

Williams, the aerodrome employee who reported the presence of a strange plane last Thursday, said to-day 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 the so-called "Japanese fisheries training ship" Hakuyo Maru was in Darwin, several residents claimed to have seen mysterious flights 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 here

terested 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 had been suggested that R.A.F. machines taking part in preparations for these manoeuvres 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 Holtz claimed to have betrayed the presence of the strange plane yesterday. The Qantas plane left the town on a similar course, and its presence could be plainly detected in the note of the diesel engine's exhaust.

CANBERRA, Wednesday. — In-

quiries will be made by the Minister for the Interior (Mr. McEwen) on the report that strange planes have been seen over Darwin. The Administrator of the Northern Territory (Mr. C. L. Abbott) will be asked for a report. No official advice has been received by the Government.