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L. A. Guns Shell Mystery Aircraft;

Object Of Fire Is Military Secret

Army Officials Scoff At Reports 200 Planes Were Seen; Tracer Bullets Cause Damage

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 25.—(AP)—Anti aircraft guns thundered over the metropolitan area early today for the first time in the war, but hours later what they were shooting at remained a military secret.

An unidentified object moving slowly down the coast from Santa Monica was variously reported as a balloon and an airplane.

Some observers claimed to have seen two planes over Long Beach.

The army's western command declared in a statement that unidentified aircraft had been reported, but Navy Secretary Knox, at a Washington press conference, said that his information indicated it was "just a false alarm."

"There were no planes over Los Angeles last night, at least that's our understanding," the secretary declared. "None have been found and a very wide reconnaissance has been carried out."

Army intelligence, although uncommunicative, scoffed at reports of civilian observers that as many as 200 planes were over the area.

There were no reports of bombing, but several instances of damaged property from anti aircraft shells.

Windows Shattered

A garage door was ripped off in a Los Angeles residential district and fragments shattered windows and tore into a bed where a few moments before Miss Blanche Sedgwick and her niece, Josie Duffy, had been sleeping.

A Santa Monica bomb squad was dispatched to remove an unexploded anti aircraft shell in a driveway there.

Wailing air raid sirens at 2:25 A. M. (PWT) awakened most of the metropolitan area's 3,000,000 citizens. A few minutes later, they were treated to a gigantic Fourth of July like display as huge searchlights flashed along a ten mile front to the south, converging on a single spot high in the sky.

Moments later the anti aircraft guns opened up, throwing a sheet of tracer fire.

Bullets Light Heavens

Tracer bullets and exploding shells lit the heavens.

Three Japanese, two men and a woman, were seized by police at the beach City of Venice on suspicion of signalling with flashlights near the pier. They were removed to FBI headquarters, where Richard E. Hood, local chief, said "at the request of army authorities we have nothing to say."

A Long Beach police sergeant, E. Larson, 59, was killed in a traffic accident while en route to an air raid post.

Henry B. Ayers, 63 year old state guardsman, died at the wheel of an ammunition truck during the blackout. Physicians said a heart attack apparently was responsible.

Reports Prove False

Police ran down several reports that planes had been shot down, but reported all were false alarms.

Aircraft factories continued operation behind blackened windows, while ack ack guns rattled from batteries stationed nearby.

A Japanese vegetable man, John Y. Harada, 25, was one of the three persons arrested on charges of violating a county blackout ordinance. Sheriff's Captain Ernest Siehler said Harada, driving to market with a load of cauliflower, refused to extinguish his truck's lights.

Others held on similar charges were Walter E. Van Der Linden, Norwalk dairyman, accused of failing to darken his milking barns, and Giovanni Chigo, 47, nabbed while driving to market with a truckload of flowers.

All Clear Sounded

It was broad daylight before the all clear sounded at 7:19 A. M.

Late homegoers and early workers, who had been flugged down by air raid wardens, started moving.

Soon traffic was snarled. Thousands of Angelenos were an hour or more late to their jobs.

The blackout was the first covering the metropolitan area since the first week of the war.

There were isolated instances of failure to comply with blackout regulations. Neon signs were left glowing inside stores. Traffic signals continued to flash in some areas.

Radio stations went off the air with the first alert, and were not

L. A. RESIDENTS GET RAID SCARE

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permitted to resume broadcasting until 8:23 A. M.

May Have Been Blimp

There was speculation, meanwhile, that the unidentified object might have been a blimp—although veteran fighter loan air experts in Akron, Ohio, the nation's center of such construction, said Japan was believed to have lost interest in such craft following experiments soon after World War No. 1. These sources said inability to obtain fire-proof helium was behind discarding of the plans.

Observers lent some credence to the blimp theory by pointing out that the object required nearly thirty minutes to travel twenty or twenty five miles—far slower than an airplane.

An official source which declined to be quoted directly told the Associated Press that United States Army planes quickly went into action. Later, however, another official said no United States craft had taken off because of possible danger from the army's own anti-aircraft fire.