

Strange Craft Unidentified

Los Angeles Scare Termed 'False Alarm'

Los Angeles, Feb. 25 (AP).—Metropolitan Los Angeles had chills and thrills early today as sweeping searchlights pierced the sky and anti-aircraft guns pumped thousands of rounds of ammunition toward an objective which hours later the Army had not identified.

In Washington, Secretary Knox said it was "just a false alarm."

"There were no planes over Los Angeles last night," he said at a press conference. "at least that's our understanding. None have been found and a very wide reconnaissance has been carried on."

The western defense command said no enemy bombs were dropped and no planes shot down, but there was tight-lipped official silence about virtually everything else that happened in a spectacular blackout which lasted from 2:25 a. m. (PWT) until 7:21 a. m.

At 3:45 p. m. Fourth Army Headquarters issued this statement, without elaboration:

Still Unidentified

"The aircraft which caused the blackout in the Los Angeles area for several hours this morning have not been identified."

The screeching wails of sirens awakened most of the area's three million sleepers and within a few minutes they saw a slow-moving object, which many thought was a blimp, caught in an intensely bright patch of light where scores of searchlights converged. The "poom, poom, poom" of anti-aircraft guns rattled windows in some of the beach areas and there were brilliant bursts of fire, somewhat like the spreading of Fourth of July skyrockets, around the sky craft.

It was noisy, breath-taking sky drama, played in almost utter blackness before an enormous and silent audience, a thrill-packed preview of war where the sleepy-eyed spectators wore nightgowns and pajamas.

Fragments Fall In Bed

In some areas ack ack shells exploded in residential districts, but no one was injured. Fragments crashed into a bed which a woman and a girl had left moments before to look at the raid. The "flak," as gunners call it, also shattered a window.

The Fourth Interceptor Command declined to comment on whether Japanese planes or a blimp flew over the harbor and aircraft factory areas.

One official source, which declined to be quoted directly, told the Associated Press that Army planes went into action as soon as the air raid signal was given, but another official source later reported the planes stayed on the ground because of the danger of being caught in their own anti-aircraft fire. He said ground crews saw unidentified planes.

Hold Japanese

Police recalled that 12, midnight, was the zero hour for Japanese aliens to leave the coastal defense areas. Significant in this connection was the arrest of eight Japanese, some of them aliens, as authorities investigated reports from air raid wardens and civilians that lights blinked from various points of vantage in the blackout. The eight later were released, however, after Army authorities said the lights referred to undoubtedly were tracer bullets fired from heavy calibre machine guns.

Flares also were reported to have fallen in several sections, on the beaches and far inland, some as late as 6 a. m., when many persons were walking to work because street cars were balked by the blackout. Police authorities in some areas said they were convinced Japanese had attempted to direct invading planes by use of red, green and white flares.