

Unidentified Planes Caused 1942 Alert in California

San Francisco, Oct. 28 (AP).—As many as five unidentified airplanes, either Japanese, civilian or commercial, were over southern California the night of February 24-25, 1942, during the "Battle of Los Angeles," Fourth AAF headquarters disclosed today.

Some three million people in the Los Angeles area shivered and trembled that night as anti-aircraft fire ripped the skies and Army searchlights tracked unidentified airplanes over Beverly Hills through Long Beach and out to sea.

"The blackout and anti-aircraft firing in the Los Angeles area on the morning of February 25, 1942, were caused by the presence of one to five unidentified airplanes," reported Lieut. Gen. John L. Dewitt, then commanding general of the Fourth Army and the Western Defense Command. He added it was

his belief that three planes appeared over Beverly Hills.

Believed Launched From Subs

However, commenting on a supposition the aircraft had been launched from an enemy submarine, the officer said, "My belief is that those three planes could have been launched from submarines somewhere close into shore under our detectors."

The officer said only 45 fighter planes were available for interception that night, and that if the unidentified aircraft preceded an attack "we did not want to have our pursuit in the air, half out of gas when the attack came in." Therefore no planes were sent up. Both pilots and planes were alerted and ready for action and bombers were poised to attack any possible enemy carriers, he declared.

Naval intelligence at Los Angeles advised the same evening an attack

could be expected during the next 10 hours, following which the Pacific Coast from Monterey, Calif., to the Mexican border was on "yellow alert," indicating the enemy possibly was about 30 minutes away.

Balloon Fired Upon

During the night Army headquarters received many reports of blinking lights and flares near defense plants, aircraft factories and oil fields. Coast artillery batteries near Santa Monica fired in the

early morning on a balloon carrying a red flare.

Gen. De Witt said a Japanese submarine had been sighted the previous night when oil derricks and docks were bombarded at Elwood, Calif., about 100 line miles northwest of Los Angeles. That submarine is listed in the Navy document on Japanese boats as carrying one aircraft and a catapult," he said.