

General, our attention this morning, very understandably, has been concentrated in Asheville, the scene of the most recent collision, and at National Airport here in Washington.

I would like to waft your attention westward, if I may, to what is probably the second or third most crowded airspace corridor in the Nation, that of southern California. I have ascertained from your office in Los Angeles that just this year, in April and again in May, there were two near midair collisions reported on flights leaving San Diego International Airport. The first was on April 22, involving a Western Airlines 720 which had taken off on a Los Angeles-bound flight shortly past noon. The plane had to take evasive action at 8,000 feet to avoid two Navy jet fighters, which were apparently doing acrobatics in the path of a commercial liner.

The WAL pilot said he had to take evasive action, and claimed a near collision.

Again on May 24, American Airlines flight 46, a Boeing 727, departed from Lindbergh Field for Dallas. Six minutes later the pilot reported he had passed in close proximity with an unidentified light aircraft. That unidentified plane turned out to be a single-engine Navion, which later landed at Lindbergh Field. The private pilot acknowledge he was unfamiliar with San Diego airspace and uncertain of his position at the time of the near collision. FAA wrote it up as an unofficial near midair collision.

In connection with this one, the FAA explained that planes are released visually for takeoff from Lindbergh Field by the control tower. Radar control, which is based at a Navy field some 5 miles away, is supposed to pick them up within 1 mile of the end of the runway.

The commercial pilot in this near mishap got no word from this radar protection, although radar had picked up the other plane. It was somehow not made available to the pilot.

Inasmuch as the mishap occurred some minutes after he left the runway, I was wondering why it is that here is a field which is protected by radar—and I don't expect that you right offhand can have the answer—why there should be a delay in getting messages like this to the pilots?

General McKee. I think Mr. Thomas is acquainted with the particular incident you are talking about.

Mr. THOMAS. I am acquainted with both of them. In the latter case, the radar is at Miramar, and we operate a Navy radar there for the benefit of the whole San Diego area. The American pilot, as I understand it, had not changed his departure control frequency. He was still working the local control frequency with the tower.

The radar did see both airplanes. They did pick up the light airplane. American passed almost immediately after takeoff. Neither of them declared it a near miss, although undoubtedly it was close. We examined both of them.

In the case of the Western and the two Navy airplanes, Western reported them as F4's. We followed them on radar until we lost radar coverage and had the other Navy bases try to pick them up. El Toro did pick up two A4's. There was not continuous radar contact and the A4's claimed they were not in the area. We went back to the Western