

AERONAUTICS

Racon Lets Pilot Know His Position at All Times

➤ PLANES on the new transcontinental Racon-route, which is nearly completed, will be able to determine their exact positions at all times by means of 50 Racon stations along the Atlantic coast, across the south, and north along the Pacific.

The installation is jointly by the Navy, Air Force and the Coast Guard. It provides the United States with its first transcontinental radar airway. The route followed is generally used by military planes and, while the installation is primarily for such craft, it will be available for commercial transports.

Racon is a war development. The word is coined from radar and beacon. It is a system of short-range aerial navigation. The traveling plane sends out radar impulse which "trigger" the land-based station. The station responds in its identification code. This code appears on the radar scope or screen on the plane, from which the bearing and distance from the plane to the beacon can be read.

Racon airways have several advantages over ordinary radio-range routes. The principal one is that the pilot knows his position at all times. With the radio range he knows his direction only when directly "on the beam," and his location only when directly over a station or a radio marker.

Of the 50 stations on this route, the Navy will operate 22, the Air Force 14 and the Coast Guard 14. Additional Racon-routes are planned for the future, the next probably to be from Chicago to Seattle.

Science News Letter, November 1, 1947

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—American Journal of Physics

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