

A "SWIFT REPLY TO THE HUNTER".

11.014 29th Sept. 58

The Battle for supersonic supremacy moved to the sun-scorched desert of Libya with the arrival of the Supermarine Swift Jet Fighter at Castel Idris R.A.F. station.

The plane was piloted by Lt-Commander Michael Lithgow, who was welcomed to Libya, for his record-attempt, by Wing-Commander Denis - the Station C.O. And losing no time, "Lucky" Lithgow as he's called, took off for a practice run over the three kilometre course - a section of the road to Tripoli. So less than three weeks after Neville Duke in the Hawker Hunter had set up a new record - the "Swift" was being checked and refueled.

And Mike Lithgow (wearing a special heat-resisting suit) took off - hoping

to better by the necessary one-per-cent, the 727 miles per hour of the "Hunter".

A very light signalled the first of four runs over the course sign posted by Bir Ghenem Oasis at one end and a white fort at the other. Then - timed by official R.A.C. observers - Lithgow flashed over the desert at a height of only 130 feet.

And we now learn that the Swift flew at 745.3 miles an hour on one run which is faster than the average speed of a subsequent American attempt. Yet the camel looked unconcerned. He still holds the ground record for desert travel.

The attempt over - "Lucky" Lithgow signalled his confidence to the ground watchers by a victory roll - but, no doubt, to a desert dweller, it all seemed much ado about nothing.

When Lithgow landed, he told how stifling cock-pit heat had restricted his use of an engine re-heating device to gain added speed. But his speed was 737.3 miles an hour - subject to confirmation. So Britain had done it