



COMMEMORATIVE AIR FORCE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CAF's B-29 Gets First New Engine

MIDLAND, TEXAS (June 16, 2009) – The Commemorative Air Force B-29/B-24 Squadron members worked diligently this past weekend to “hang” the first of four new engines for the B-29 Superfortress *FIFI*.

The “hanging” of the new engine is the first step in a lengthy process. In April, the engine arrived in Midland after a long haul from Anderson Aeromotive in Grangeville, Indiana. CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron members worked throughout the month of May to prepare the new engine for installation. Now that the engine has been put into place on *FIFI*, the crew will begin working to connect the wires and get the engine ready to run.

“We have achieved a great milestone in the life of *FIFI*,” said CAF B-29/B-24 Squadron Crew Chief, Dave Miller. “The arrival and ‘hanging’ of the first engine is tangible evidence that the B-29 will be back in the air soon. The re-engine project is moving forward very well and we hope to have *FIFI* back in the air in 2010.”

The installation process will be repeated with the three remaining new engines as they are completed by Anderson Aeromotive and Ezell Aviation. Once all new engines are installed and tested, *FIFI* will be back in the air.

The B-29 was originally fitted with the Wright R-3350-57AM engine, which has had a less-than-desirable reputation since its inception. True to this reputation, *FIFI* has experienced numerous problems with her engines in the 30-plus years she has been flying with the CAF. Following the discovery of metal shavings in the engine oil, the B-29/B-24 Squadron held a lengthy series of meetings with CAF personnel and experts in the field of aircraft restoration and the decision was made to not fly the plane again until it could be fitted with engines that are a custom built combination of the R-3350-95W and R-3350-26WD engines. The refit will also require reworking the engine mounts and some of the engine cowling, thus making it a lengthy undertaking.

When the Commemorative Air Force (then Confederate Air Force) began searching for a B-29 for its collection of historical military aircraft, WWII had been over for 21 years. The Superfortresses that helped end it had long since yielded to new generations of jet-powered strategic bombers and vanished. According to the United States Air Force, no B-29s remained in inventory, even at storage or disposal depots. But the CAF colonels had faith and it paid off.

In 1971, a pilot reported sighting a number of what might have been B-29s in the California desert near China Lake. The CAF learned the aircraft were indeed Superfortresses that had been parked at a Navy weapons center for 17 years. They had been used for gunnery targets and abused by heat, sand and vandals. After much negotiation, paperwork and a pain-staking process of elimination to find the best survivor, the CAF became the owner of B-29 SN44-62070. That was just

the beginning of the task. The complete restoration to CAF standards of airworthiness was a long and expensive project involving more than three years of fund-raising and hard work. Late in 1974, the CAF's B-29 was christened FIFI and joined the other WWII fighters and bombers to preserve the memories and teach lessons of mankind's greatest war.

Collecting, restoring and flying vintage historical aircraft for more than half a century, the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) ranks as one of the largest private air forces in the world. The CAF is dedicated to Honoring American Military Aviation through flight, exhibition and remembrance. A non-profit educational association, the CAF has approximately 9,000 members and a fleet of 156 airplanes distributed throughout the country to 74 units located in 27 states for care and operation. For more information, visit www.commemorativeairforce.org or call (432) 563-1000.