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For Immediate Release

B-29 *FIFI* Cleared for Flight

MIDLAND, TEXAS (July 7, 2010) – On Tues. July 6, 2010, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) issued an Airworthiness Certificate allowing the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) B-29 Superfortress crew to begin Phase I flight-testing.

Phase I flight-testing will begin in the afternoon on Fri., July 9 and continue through Sat., July 10. During these test flights, the B-29 crewmembers will be required to depart Midland International Airport for unpopulated areas. Upon returning from the flights, the crew will need to dismantle areas of the aircraft in order to review the aircraft's performance and safety.

On Mon., July 12, the B-29 will be in flight for crew training. This is the perfect opportunity for community members to join the CAF in celebrating *FIFI's* return to flight. During these training exercises the B-29 crew will be performing "touch-and-gos" at Midland International Airport. *

The CAF Airpower Museum will open its doors at 7 a.m. on Mon. July 12 for visitors who would like to get a front row seat for *FIFI's* pre-flight preparations and flight. Visitors to the museum will be ushered to the main hangar for an up-close view of the crew preparing this massive bomber for flight. Once *FIFI* begins to head for the runways, visitors will be escorted to a prime viewing area, to witness the B-29's crew training.

Monday will also mark the beginning of the museum's new summer hours. From Mon., July 12 through Mon., Sept. 6, the CAF Airpower Museum will be open Monday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The CAF Airpower Museum is located at 9600 Wright Drive near Midland International Airport. Admission to the museum is \$10 for adults age 18-64, \$9 for teenagers age 13-17 and seniors age 65 and older, \$7 for children age 6-12 and children age 5 and under receive free admission.

The B-29 was originally fitted with the Wright R-3350-57AM engine, which 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 required reworking the engine mounts and some of the engine cowling, 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, World War II 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 painstaking process of elimination to find the best survivor, the CAF added B-29 SN44-62070 to its fleet. 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 World War II 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.

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*Crew training schedule subject to change based on the successful completion of Phase I Flight-Testing or inclement weather.