



NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WORLD WAR II BOMBER RETURNS TO CHANUTE AIR MUSEUM

SPRING, TEXAS – *Texas Raiders* is just one of only nine U.S. remaining flyable B-17 Bombers from World War II and will be joining the collection of vintage aircraft at the Chanute Air Museum in Rantoul, Illinois as it makes a Midwestern tour this summer. On Friday, July 27th, 2012 this previously award-winning Flying Fortress will arrive into Rantoul as part of its fourteen day mission through Missouri, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Kentucky. Celebrating its fortieth year of preservation flying, this unique aircraft has recently been highlighted in three major aviation magazines highlighting living history: *WARBIRDS INTERNATIONAL*, *FLYPAST MAGAZINE* and *AOPA MAGAZINE*.

In 2002, *Texas Raiders* was required to undergo an FAA mandated Airworthiness Directive (AD) which found damage to the wing spars and associated structures. Following a nearly complete dismantling of the aircraft and eight years of corrosion repair and restoration, the B-17 Flying Fortress became airworthy in October, 2009. To date, over \$600,000 of donations and sponsorship monies have been spent along with nearly 250,000 volunteer and contract hours of maintenance to bring the Bomber back into flying condition. Although the non-profit 501-(c)-3 organization, the Commemorative Air Force (CAF) is the owner of this vintage Bomber, the maintenance, restoration and operation is assigned to the Gulf Coast Wing, an all volunteer CAF membership group. It is estimated that the cost to operate this vintage Bomber is \$3,000 per flying hour.

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To introduce Central Illinois to this vintage aircraft and to support the flying operation of *Texas Raiders*, the volunteer members of the Gulf Coast Wing will be offering rides and tours at Chanute Air Museum on Saturday July 28, 2012 (9:30am – 5:00pm), Sunday July 29, 2012 (9:30am – 5:00pm) and Monday July 30 (10:00am – 5:00pm). The Museum is located at 1011 Pacesetter Drive, Rantoul, IL 61866. All donations for tours and rides are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Texas Raiders was delivered to the U.S. Army Air Force July 12, 1945 and became a member of the Commemorative Air Force's *Ghost Squadron* in September of 1967 and thereby assigned to the Gulf Coast Wing in 1971. Her last public flying mission prior to the restoration was November, 2001, when the National D-day Museum in New Orleans, LA celebrated its Grand Opening. She has appeared in two movies, *Ike The War Years* and *Brady's Escape*, one PBS Documentary *Honor Squadrons* and two television commercials.

Collecting, restoring and flying warbirds for more than half a century, the Commemorative Air Force 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 with a flying museum of classic military aircraft. A non-profit educational association, the CAF has approximately 9,000 members and a fleet of almost 160 airplanes representing more than 60 different types – including planes from several foreign countries and military conflicts since WWII. For more CAF information, visit www.commemorativeairforce.org or call (432) 563-1000. For more information regarding this preservation Tour of *Texas Raiders* or to reserve a B-17 Ride, call Col Sandy Thompson, Public Information Officer at (817) 341 1541 or send an email to B17Rides@gulfcoastwing.org .