

# NEWS RELEASE

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## **Former US President, George Bush Sr., Welcomed to Moncton by WWII-Era Avengers**

MONCTON, NEW BRUNSWICK, CANADA – The world's last operational fleet of Grumman TBM 3-E Avengers was on hand to greet former US president and navy pilot, George Bush Sr., when he touched down at the Moncton International Airport on July 9, 2002.



“When we heard Mr. Bush was coming to town, we thought he might be interested in seeing our Avengers—considering he was an Avenger pilot back in World War II,” says Dave Davies, general manager for Forest Protection Limited—the company that owns the planes. “After a few phone calls to his people in the United States, we were extremely pleased when his chief of staff confirmed that Mr. Bush would like to spend a few minutes looking over our planes when he arrived in Moncton to attend a corporate event.”

Once Bush arrived though, Davies said the former President spent more than the original 10 minutes his staff had scheduled. “As soon as he saw the Avengers, he walked straight over,” said Davies. “He was clearly interested in the planes and impressed that they were in such good condition and still flying. Mr. Bush spent at least 20 minutes talking with the crew. I got the impression he didn’t want to leave.”

After learning how Bush’s exploits as an Avenger pilot in the South Pacific earned him a Distinguished Flying Cross, the crew asked Mr. Bush if he would be interested in buying one of the FPL Avengers since the entire fleet is for sale. Mr. Bush replied that he already had one—suspended from a ceiling in his museum in College Station, Texas.

The crew then asked him to sign one of the airplanes. Bush was a bit surprised when he was asked to autograph Tanker 23. “I don’t think he was expecting that,” said Davies. “He was very accommodating though. He signed the plane and just as he was about to walk away, he came back and added ‘41<sup>st</sup> president of the U.S.’ because he thought people might confuse him with his son.”

FPL's Avengers are currently being used as air tankers for fighting fires. Three of the company's 10 Avengers have already been sold. The remaining seven planes are being sold individually for approximately \$150,000 US each or as a package with a negotiable sales tag.

Davies says the historic value of these planes is considerable but what makes them really attractive to prospective buyers is that they are still operational and in excellent condition. Plus they come with the world's largest inventory of Avenger parts and the original US Navy 'owners manual'.

"I guess having a former president of the United States autograph one of the planes doesn't hurt their resale value either," jokes Davies.

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*Forest Protection Limited is a Transport Canada licensed aerial operator with facilities at the Fredericton and Miramichi airports in New Brunswick, Canada. They own and operate aircraft used for fire management, pest management and aerial surveys. Incorporated in 1952, FPL is a private, not-for-profit company, with its majority shareholder being the Province of New Brunswick and the remaining shareholders being New Brunswick's forest industry companies.*

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## PHOTO CAPTIONS

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*(George Bush Sr. signing airplane)*

Former US President George Bush Sr., signs one of the world's last operational Grumman TBM-3E Avengers—owned by Forest Protection Limited in Fredericton, New Brunswick. The plane is one of seven being sold by the company.

(Source: a Forest Protection Limited picture - <http://www.ForestProtectionLtd.com/pictures.html>)

*(man shaking hands with George Bush Sr.)*

Dave Davies (left), general manager of Forest Protection Limited, greets the 41<sup>st</sup> president of the United States, George Bush Sr., at Moncton International Airport on July 9, 2002. The former president was in town for a corporate event but managed to squeeze in some time to view the world's last operational fleet of Grumman TBM-3E Avengers.

(Source: a Forest Protection Limited picture - <http://www.ForestProtectionLtd.com/pictures.html>)

*(George Bush Sr. as WWII pilot in cockpit)*

US Navy Pilot George H.W. Bush in the cockpit of a TBM Avenger. On September 2, 1944, during his 58<sup>th</sup> mission, his Avenger was shot down by the enemy near the island of Chichi Jima. He was rescued at sea by the crew of the USS *Finback*. Bush received the Distinguished Flying Cross for bravery in action.

(Source: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/biographies/president/pilot.html> and <http://www.chez.com/georgebush/en/images/pilot/>)

*(George Bush Sr. between two men in front of "X2" tail)*

Lt.Jg. George H.W. Bush and his Grumman TBM Avenger crew in November 1944, aboard the carrier USS *San Jacinto*. Left to right - Joseph Reichert, George Bush and Leo Nadeau. (Source: <http://matinecock.org/advscripts/geobush.asp>)

*(Airplane suspended in Museum atrium)*

Grumman TBM Avenger aircraft identical to the one flown by Lt. JG. George Bush during WWII. The Avenger is a gift of Mr. and Mrs. Jack Guy and was restored by RRS Aviation in Hawkins, Texas. The only operational fleet of Avengers in the world are owned by Forest Protection Limited in Fredericton, New Brunswick. They are selling their seven Avengers for approximately \$150,000 US each—complete with parts and the original US Navy owners' manual. Tanker 23 is even autographed by George Bush Sr.

(Source: <http://bushlibrary.tamu.edu/>)