

World's Largest Biplane Grounded by BMW in Mesa, AZ

July 18, 2001

The Vicker's Vimy replica has been grounded in Mesa, AZ because of legal action initiated by BMW Corporation of Munich, Germany.

The Vimy is well known for completing re-enactments of two famous first flights: the first flight from England to Australia in 1919 and the first flight from England to South Africa in 1920. The Vimy is operated by Vimy Restorations, Inc., a non-profit organization staffed by volunteers, including professional pilots, FAA-licensed mechanics, a German BMW-trained mechanic, and other support personnel.

The Vimy is powered by a pair of BMW M73 V12 engines. Although the replica has successfully flown many flight hours from England to Cape Town, South Africa with these engines, BMW Corporation does not want the aircraft to fly with BMW engines in the United States because of potential product liability lawsuits.

Even though the Vimy passed a surprise FAA airworthiness inspection requested by BMW attorneys in Santa Monica, CA on July 13th, a Los Angeles, CA judge issued an order yesterday to ground the aircraft.

The Vimy was on its way from Novato, CA to Oshkosh, WI, where it is scheduled to appear as one of the main attractions at EAA's Airventure, the world's largest air show. Along the way, it was scheduled to make appearances at airports and museums throughout the Southwest and Midwest. The Vimy's cross-country journey was planned to generate publicity about its final scheduled re-enactment: the first nonstop crossing of the Atlantic Ocean.

The position of Vimy Restorations is that the aircraft is maintained, managed, and flown responsibly by professional, well-trained personnel. As evidenced by the outcome of the FAA inspection, the Vimy is fit to complete all currently scheduled flights. The Vimy crew is vigorously appealing BMW's legal action.

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