



A visiting Boeing Superfortress, finished with standard U.S.A.F. night-black on the lower surfaces. The small "wing" houses radar gear. This view also shows to advantage the cowlings of the Wright R-3350 18-cylinder radial engines, each rated at 2,500 h.p.

SUPERFORTS for BRITAIN

A Round-up of Essential Information on the Boeing B-29, Soon to Equip R.A.F. Bomber Squadrons : Possibility of Flight Refuelling

MONTH after month, rumour and counter-rumour concerning the supply to Great Britain of surplus American Superfortress bombers have besprinkled the pages of the daily Press. At length, on January 27th, came the official announcement that, under the bilateral Anglo-American arms agreement signed in Washington on that date, the R.A.F. will receive an initial quantity of seventy B-29s, with spares and equipment. The first reaction was one of gratification, for Bomber Command is sorely in need of a type of bomber to bridge the dangerous gap interposed between the Avro Lincoln and jet prototypes now under construction.

At the same time, there is a feeling of regret that, despite a thriving aircraft industry, our nation should have to accept such aid, even though it comes from friends, the

merits of whose products we have come to appreciate.

It must be recognized that, although superior to the unpressurized Avro Lincoln in speed, ceiling and range, the B-29 is already regarded by the U.S.A.F. as an obsolescent type, though it has been given a new lease of life—both as "receiver" and "tanker"—by flight refuelling. The latest development, now in service in considerable quantities, differs to such a degree that a new type-number, (B-50) has been allocated. As proved during air exercises over this country last year, the performance of the B-50 is greatly superior to that of the earlier model.

The design of the B-29 dates from early 1940, and the first prototype flew during September, 1942. After the war production was tapered off and ceased in May, 1946, whereupon some hundreds—each worth some £190,000—were "cocooned" in air-tight plastic.

The mid wing of the B-29 has an aspect ratio of 11.4 and is of the efficient Boeing 117 section. It has a butt-jointed skin with flush riveting, and electrically-operated flaps, which increase the area by nearly 20 per cent. The fuselage is largely of circular section and is built in five main portions. All three units of the nose-wheel undercarriage have dual wheels and are retracted electrically.

Some of 1,500 B-29's "cocooned" in air-tight plastic at Warner-Robins Field, Georgia. The covering is expected to maintain the aircraft in good condition for five to ten years.



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