

Recovery planned for Alaska B-25

A mission to recover a long-lost North American B-25J Mitchell is set to unfold this summer near Fairbanks, Alaska, reports *Richard Mallory Allnutt*.

The Mitchell, 44-30733, force-landed following double engine failure shortly after take-off on a firefighting mission in June 1969. It has lain where it

fell, on a sandbar in the Tanana River, for the last five decades. The B-25 was relatively intact following the crash, but was worth too little to recover at that time, although the operators salvaged the engines, propellers, control surfaces and wheels by boat and helicopter. Sadly, over the following years, the forward and rear fuselage sections, as well as the outer wing panels, have been removed, but the all important centre section remains.

Patrick Mihalek and Todd Trainor of Brighton, Michigan, are behind the recovery efforts. The pair visited the crash site in April, and were very pleased

with what they found. The centre section is in far better condition than they initially suspected, with no corrosion to speak of. Both men have significant experience with aircraft restoration, and are sure the B-25 is capable of being restored to flying condition. They already have a cache of replacement parts, including a spare forward fuselage, with which to repair the old medium bomber. Mihalek and Trainor have formed the not-for-profit Warbirds of Glory Museum to recover, restore, and eventually operate the B-25. Anyone wishing to help them with their project should visit www.sandbarmitchell.org



North American B-25 44-30733, pictured on a sandbar in the Tanana River, near Fairbanks, Alaska, during the summer of 1969.