

Western Star 49X Hauls Historic Philippine Mars Aircraft

PORTLAND, OR, UNITED STATES, October 17, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- When the world's largest aircraft no longer takes to the air, they get a lift from a Western Star truck. In May 2025, the 76,000-pound World War II-era Philippine Mars flying boat, one of the last of its kind, was retired and relocated to the Pima Air & Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona. The epic 150-mile journey was made possible by utilizing a [Western Star 49X](#), a truck known in the industry for its strength and durability.



Image courtesy of Andy Perez

This feat follows a Western Star's 4900EX involvement in hauling a similar World War II bomber aircraft, [the Hawaii Mars](#), to an aviation museum in Victoria, British Columbia, in 2024.

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Aaron Goldstein, marketing director of Southwest Industrial Rigging

OVERCOMING THE CHALLENGES OF TRANSPORTING A FLYING GIANT

Just how massive are the Mars-series aircraft? They feature a 200-foot wingspan and, while serving as an aerial firefighting titan following WWII, could scoop up and drop more than 7,000 gallons of water.

Boneyard Safari, specializing in historic aircraft transport, partnered with Southwest Industrial Rigging, which

provided both the 49X heavy haul truck to move the nearly 80-year-old aircraft. The length from the tractor bumper to the tail of the plane measured over 140 feet, and the gross vehicle weight of the truck and aircraft exceeded 177,000 pounds.

"We started this project on February 10, 2025, when we met the Philippine Mars on Lake Pleasant in Arizona," said Aaron Goldstein, marketing director of Southwest Industrial Rigging. "Extracting her from the water and preparing her for the journey was a massive undertaking."

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Given the size and complexity, transport was conducted exclusively at night. This was a critical safety measure to minimize traffic disruption on public roads. Moving the oversized load at night allowed the convoy to travel slowly and safely, with the support of police escorts and utility crews. Says Goldstein, "Our Western Star 49X helped ensure the transport was a piece of cake for the entire entourage. We owned the road every night, and although the route was determined early on, some last-minute changes to avoid low powerlines didn't slow us down."

The convoy traveled five nights on state and local roads at an average speed of 25 miles per hour and included dozens of additional vehicles.

A LEGACY OF RELIABILITY

Southwest Industrial Rigging has relied on Western Star trucks for more than 45 years, with founder Harry Baker valuing their reliability and heavy-haul capabilities. "We've continued to

purchase Western Star trucks as our fleet expanded, adding four new 49X Series trucks to our heavy-haul division over the last few years," noted Goldstein.

The operator raved about the 49X saying it offered great visibility and the best turning radius he'd ever experienced, essential for maneuvering the massive load through challenging intersections and narrow roads. Just as important during overnight runs: the cab stays impressively quiet. Thanks to steel-reinforced aluminum and sound dampening materials like Quiet Steel in the engine tunnel, road noise is kept to a minimum. The redesigned cab mounts and Western Star's exclusive ISO-Tech Hood Suspension also help cut down on vibration, which can reduce physical strain and help drivers stay focused.



Photo courtesy of Andy Perez



Photo courtesy of Ramon C. Purcell

"When we heard the Philippine Mars would be transported by a Western Star truck, we were honored," said Alex Martin-Banzer, Western Star brand manager. "To have played a part in the final journeys of two historic Mars Aircraft is a point of pride for the Western Star brand and product."

With the Western Star 49X in the lead, this historic convoy delivered not just an aircraft but a flying legend that will continue to inspire museum visitors for decades to come.

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About Western Star Trucks

Western Star Truck Sales Inc., based in Portland, Oregon, specializes in producing heavy-duty Class 8 vocational trucks. Western Star is the leading manufacturer of purpose-built trucks and is a division of Daimler Truck North America. For more information, go to [WesternStarTrucks.com](https://www.WesternStarTrucks.com).

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