



# ASIAN AIR ARMS Newsletter 37

## July 2023



Serving Asian Air Arm Enthusiasts and Modellers in 60 countries



# Chinese Flankers (Book Review)

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# Editorial - Change is in the air!

One of the key mantras of any good Special Interest Group is that it should be "A Special Interest Group by the members for the members". I very much regret to say that this does not seem to be the case for this Group at this particular moment in time. A quick census of both our official membership list and those that are members of our very popular Facebook page, suggests that we have a combined membership of just under 500 spread across almost 50 nations....and yet the bi-monthly newsletter that we all enjoy is put together by no more than 5-6 members every other month. i.e., circa 1% of our overall membership. To be clear, I do not expect **EVERY** member of the SIG to be able to contribute to the newsletter. There will be many reasons for this, be they work or family commitments, other SIG commitments, hobbies or interests, or a lack of confidence in one's ability to produce an article or material for the newsletter. It is also fully understood and appreciated that many of you may be concerned about your lack of skill at writing in English, although in all my travels around the world I have always been impressed with the English language skills demonstrated by non-native speakers.

As you know, this edition of the newsletter is a month late in publication. This is, as always, not the result of one single factor but several. It was, however, mainly due to the lack of input from members. We encountered what is often called 'the perfect storm'. Both Steve Komor and I were extremely busy during April and May with our respective 'day jobs' and simply did not have the time to produce content for the SIG Newsletter. This, combined with the total lack of input from others, meant that we were simply not in a position to meet the planned publication date. In addition, and as I have often stated, I do not want the newsletter to become the 'Steve & Mark Show' each and every month. We simply cannot become the single point of failure, otherwise the newsletter will ultimately fail. Fortunately, several of the 'usual suspects' have come to the rescue in the short term, and you will see this with the content of this latest newsletter, but we should not be working to 'catch-up' for each issue, with short-notice requests for material. We cannot and should not rely on a handful of contributors from a 500+ membership of the SIG to maintain the success and popularity of the newsletter. As you all know, I continue to strive for quality and variety in the newsletter, and to make it worthy of the standard that Brian Griffin set during his tenure as the SIG leader. I am very proud of what we have achieved in the past but it will require more and broader input in order to maintain the depth and quality of each newsletter. To be clear, we do not expect to receive Pulitzer Prize-winning articles each and every time. Steve and I, as co-editors, can take the raw material and shape it accordingly; this is part of our role in running the SIG. So, please now have a serious think about the way in which you can help us to make the newsletter even better as we move forward.

In order to ease the burden on those that are contributing, I have already taken the difficult decision to reduce the frequency of the newsletter from bi-monthly to Quarterly in order for the editorial team to start to build up a suitable and varied 'bank' of articles for future editions. I fully appreciate that this reduction in the frequency of publication will come as a disappointment to some, as it has to me, but it is the only way we can manage the newsletter at least in the short term. That said, we do hope to continue to publish the 'SMW Special' as a separate issue since this is largely reliant on input from the main editorial team in any case.

**Please think carefully about the contribution YOU can make, big or small, to OUR Newsletter and YOUR SIG!**

## Mark Attrill

Dear readers and fellow enthusiasts,

Some time in mid-May, those of you on the mailing list would have received an email from Mark encouraging more members to try their hand at producing something for the newsletter, which was due out at the end of May. At that time, the total amount of material I had for the issue stood at three articles, covering about 8 pages. Mark's plea elicited two more articles from regular contributors, and a couple of promises for articles which, sadly, have not so far materialised.

As you read through this edition, you will very quickly come to realise that, had it not been for an heroic effort by Mark, who has contributed, by my reckoning, 16 out of the 25 pages of 'content' (approximately 65%), there simply would not have been a newsletter worth the effort of distributing.

When I took over as Editor of the Newsletter some two-and-a-half years ago, I had never, up to that point, submitted an article myself, despite having been a member from a very early stage in the SIG's short but illustrious history. The only thing I'd ever had published was an article I'd written some 40 years earlier for an indie Computer Wargaming (my other passion!) magazine. My reasons were probably similar to those of most of you who have never contributed - a lack of confidence in my ability to write something others would want to read; uncertainty about how long it would take, and whether I would have the time; and the pathetic belief that somebody else would probably do it so I didn't need to bother.

With the benefit of hindsight, I can say that these concerns were completely unfounded. While it's true that 'you can't please all the people all of the time', enough will want to read it to make your effort worthwhile. Once you get started, you will find that your article will very quickly begin to take shape, and the words will start to flow. And, if you don't grasp the nettle and do it yourself, then nobody else is going to either!

As I've stated before, we **NEVER** turn **ANYTHING** away, as long as it is relevant to the SIG. **Whatever** you send us, in any format, long or short, large or small, can be turned into an article worth publishing. If English is not your first language, I can edit the text to make it more easily understood. I can usually source images to supplement any you can provide, or even if you can't provide any at all. So please, if you want **YOUR** newsletter to continue, think how **YOU** can help!

**Steve Komor**

# New Releases and News

ASIAN AIR  
ARMS



In the past the release, or announcement, of new kits tended to slow down over the summer months as everyone turned their attention to outside pursuits in better weather, but that no longer seems to be the case. The new kit programme for 2023 shows no signs of slowing down in spite of the dire forecasts with regard to a worldwide economic downturn. If anything, we are witnessing an unprecedented number of truly new kits in all of the most popular scales, which will be of interest to Asian Air Arm modellers in particular. I will start with 1:72 scale where we have already seen the release of the first of the much anticipated Great Wall Hobby family of Mikoyan MiG-29 Fulcrums. Their first release (GWHL7212) is for a MiG-29 '9-12' (Late Version) and although this does not include any decal markings for Asian Air Arms, it can form the basis for models portraying Bangladeshi, Indian, Iranian or Malaysian variants among others, since I have little doubt some enterprising aftermarket company will soon come up with a suitable decal sheet, and maybe even the resin IFR fairing that is a distinctive feature of the Malaysian MiG-29N variant. Fans of North Korean (KPAAF) subjects will have to wait a little longer for a '9-13' variant of this kit to be released. GWH have also promised a re-boxed Sukhoi Su-35S Flanker E in their 'Limited Edition Special Series' (GWHS7206), with markings for Chinese PLAAF aircraft. ICM of Ukraine have just released their 1:72 version of the Rockwell/North American OV-10A Bronco (ICM72185) too. This is another kit that modellers will be looking forward to since I have little doubt that it has been based on their excellent 1:48 scale family of OV-10s and will, therefore, be a worthy successor to the older Academy and Airfix kits of this unconventionally-designed twin-boom, twin-engined COIN/Observation aircraft that has seen widespread service with Asian Air Arms; check out the review of the Kits World decal sheet elsewhere in this issue of the AAA SIG newsletter. The next new kit release is one that could have easily slipped under the 'modelling radar' since it will be a limited edition kit from Sova-M of Ukraine. The company have released a family of Raytheon T.1 Jayhawks and this includes a boxing (SVM-72044) of the T-400 variant of this twin-engined advanced jet trainer that is operated by the JASDF. Last, but not least, is the surprise announcement by Tamiya that they will release a 1:72 scale kit of the Lockheed-Martin F-35A Lightning II (TA60792). This is a brand new tooling and should NOT be confused with their previously released version of the older Italeri kit. The new kit comes with a full weapons load and the decal marking options, not surprisingly, include examples operated by both 301 and 302 Hikotai of the JASDF.

For a change, the 1:48 release programme is a little lighter, although there are some nice surprises among the latest news. AMMO Mig have delighted fans of Cold War-era Soviet MiGs with the announcement of a new family of the early Mikoyan MiG-17F Fresco-C Fighter/Fighter Bomber, which is being developed in close cooperation with Kinetic. Four different boxings have already been announced; the Mig-17F/Shenyang J-5 (MIG-8510) kit will include decal markings for Chinese (PLAAF), North Korean (KPAAF) and North Vietnamese (VPAF) examples. Freedom Models of Taiwan have also announced the development of a brand-new Dassault Mirage 2000 which will excite fans of this attractive French delta-winged fighter since previous kits have suffered from some accuracy issues. Quite understandably, Freedom will focus on those variants operated by the ROCAF first so we can expect kits of the M-2000-5EI (FM18028) and M-2000-5DI (FM18029). Kinetic are fast becoming a major force in 1:48 scale aircraft kit production and are currently balancing the introduction of brand-new kits with re-boxings of previously released kits. Their recently released (2022) range of new-mould General Dynamics/Lockheed-Martin F-16 Fighting Falcons/Vipers (not to be confused with the older kits released back in 2008) will include, in the near future, a F-16V single-seat variant (K48-101) with decal markings for ROCAF aircraft. Kinetic have also announced the forthcoming release of a Canadair CT-114 Tutor advanced trainer. Although this kit (K48-082) is firmly linked to the operation of the CT-114 Tutor by the Canadian Armed Forces/Royal Canadian Air Force, including the world famous *Snowbirds* aerobatic display team, the Royal Malaysian Air Force (TUDM) operated an armed variant of this type, known as the CL-41G *Tebuan* (Wasp) for almost twenty years from the late 1960s, primarily in the COIN role. I suspect Kinetic (or some enterprising aftermarket manufacturer) will provide the necessary raw material to produce this Asian Air Arm sub-variant in the future. In another curious move, Minibase, a relatively new manufacturer from China, have announced a brand new kit of the Lockheed-Martin F-16A/B Block 20 Fighting Falcon, which will obviously now go head-to-head with the recent Kinetic kit. The first release appears to cater for the ROCAF variants of the aircraft, so fans of aircraft operated by this air arm will become somewhat inundated with choices, given all of the other releases from the likes of AFV Club, Freedom Models and Kinetic. Finally, Trumpeter have followed up their initial release of the Mil-8MT Hip-C medium lift helicopter with a second kit (TU5814) of the export version (Mi-17 Hip H) which includes decal markings for an Indian Air Force option, although online images suggest the roundels and fin flashes on the decal sheet may be off colour with the Saffron portion shown to be far too Crimson in colour.

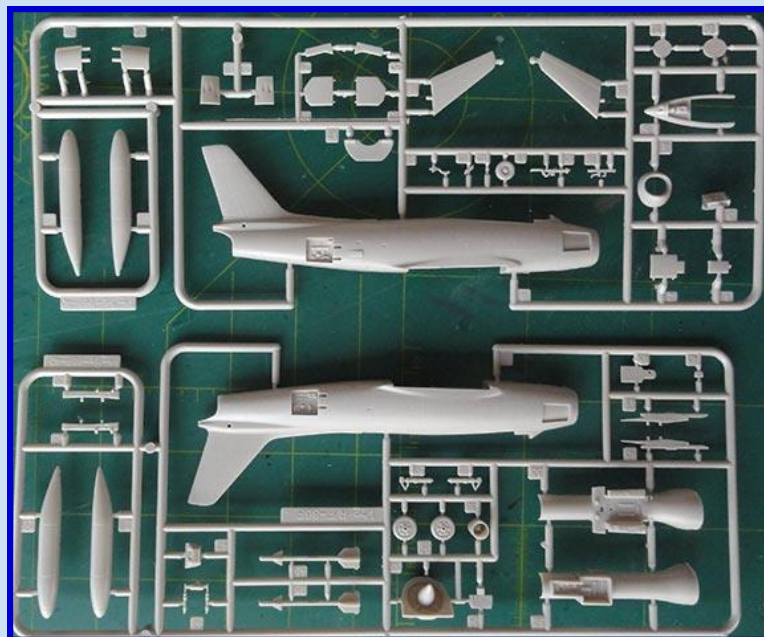
Moving up to 1:35 scale, Takom will add another Limited Edition boxing to their brand-new family of Boeing AH-64 Apache attack helicopters with one of the releases, SP-2606, for a Boeing AH-64D variant, including decal markings for a Republic of Singapore Air Force example. Interestingly Meng Models have also entered the fray with the recent announcement of their own version of the Boeing AH-64D Longbow Apache although it is not known at this time if this will include decal markings for aircraft other than those operated by the US Army.

Finally, in 1:144 scale, SOVA-M have recently released a kit (SVM14003) of the hugely popular Antonov An-26 'Curl' twin-engined medium transport aircraft, which has seen widespread past and present service with a large number of Asian Air Arms including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Laos, Pakistan and Vietnam. In spite of its 'Limited Edition' moniker, online images reveal a nicely moulded kit, although the decal options are limited to European operators only.

Mark ATTRILL

June 2023

# A Trio of Sabres



The JASDF acquired some 180 F-86 Sabres in the 1950s, and Mitsubishi built another 300 or so under license. The F-86F was called the "Kyokukō" (Rising Sunbeam). In 1986, Fujimi brought out a very nice 1/72 kit of the F-86F Sabre. Later, it was re-issued in other boxes with different decals and some alternative parts. Some parts with the same part number were modified in subsequent releases, such as the longer F40-type wing tips or the 6-3 wing. This depends on the version in the kit and Fujimi really did their homework here. It is clear that, as Japan also used the F-86 Sabre, they had access to the real jets and manuals.

Each Fujimi kit release is very nice and has delicate recessed panel lines. [In my opinion] it is the best kit of a F-86 Sabre in 1/72 scale. Detail parts look very good, it has an adequate cockpit and it has the option to open up the air brakes. There is also a complete air intake tunnel with fan bulkhead, but you can also use an optional intake cover. The jet pipe is quite deep but also comes with an optional cover.

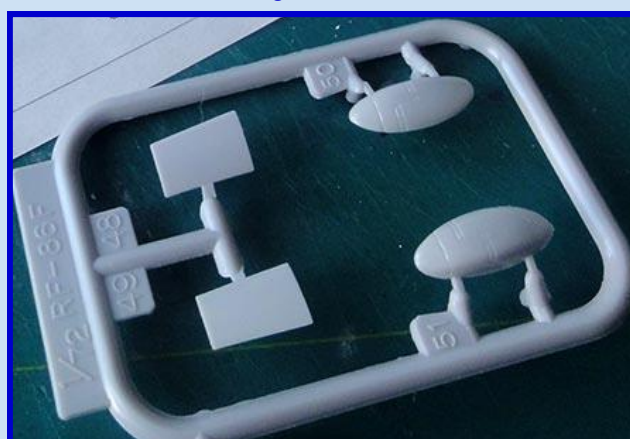
Fujimi kit number F-20 is for a RF-86F reconnaissance version with special bulges on and below the fuselage for the camera equipment. It had no guns in the nose. It has the slatted F-40 wing with extended tips.

The kit decals are for Japan Air Self Defense Force jets with a choice of serials/ codes. They have a natural metal scheme. The instructions are good and show adequate and correct paint details. In this kit, the introduction is in Japanese text, but details are also in English with Fed.Std colours. The decals are really well researched. You get decals for the instrument panels as well as the stencilling. The RF-86F kit has an extra



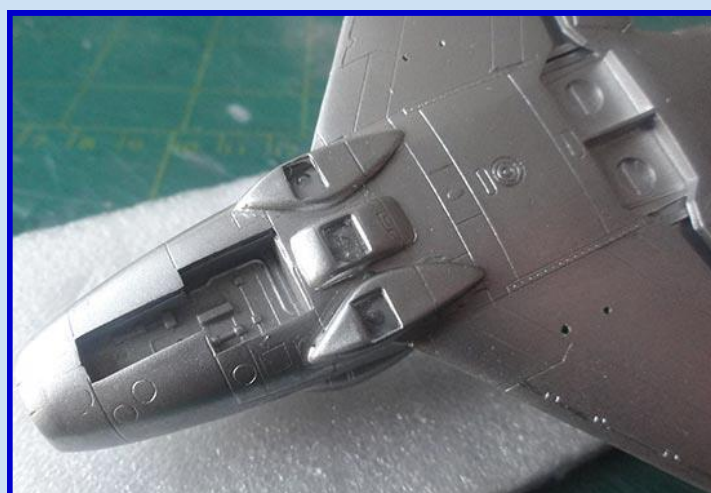
sprue with clear parts for the camera bulges as well as a sprue with a few parts for blisters and blanked-off gun panels. This release has "F-40" wing parts #52, 53, 54 with the longer wing tips and the straight pitot tube used on the RF-84F.

The fit of the kit is very good and it can be simply assembled. Use the blanked gun panels for the RF. A bit of putty and sanding was needed at the nose intake ring and the wing-fuselage junction. The tiny gaps of the blisters were closed up with white glue. The nose panels fit very well. The 200-gallon wing fuel tanks of the kit need to be fitted. The kit rudder lines were scribed a bit deeper, as were the flap outlines.



I had an old March 1979 Japanese BUNRIN DO / KokuFan #107 publication that showed many JASDF F-86 jets.

The model was to have a natural metal finish for a JASDF RF-86F of no.501 squadron. To ensure a smooth surface, I polished all surfaces to remove any scratches and sanding marks. The model was airbrushed, after masking the camera windows, with Vallejo metal coat acrylics. I used 77.701 aluminium. Some panels were masked for other metal colours. Various colours were added with a brush, such as medium aircraft grey for the cockpit. I did not install the gun sight, part C3. The model is seen here after the tapes were removed.



Decalling was done with the kit decals for scheme 1, and it took some 2 hours to put all the decals on the model. The landing



gear was installed. On many parked jets, the inner gear bay doors and big front nose wheel door are also often seen closed, so this was done on this model as well. The straight pitot tube was replaced by a metal pin fixed with superglue; and the

anti-collision lights on the wing tips were painted red and dark blue.

The canopy and wind screen frames were hand painted in aluminium with a fine sable brush. For a JASDF jet, the mid windscreen section is also sometimes tinted transparent blue, so this was painted with thinned Tamiya clear blue X-23 paint. A coat of gloss varnish was airbrushed to protect the decals and the canopy set open on the model, and that completed this very nice kit.

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Fujimi also released a double pack, number 35504, with 2 different F-86 kits in the box. These were a F-86F-40 with decals for two RoKAF aircraft with the slatted wings and extended tips, offering a choice of either a camouflaged jet or a natural metal jet with yellow markings; and a Philippine Air Force F-86F-30 with the 6-3 non-slatted "F-30" wing. Markings are for the Blue Diamonds aerobatic display team.

Both kits were made straight out of the box, so for general assembly comments see notes above.

The first kit made was for the Philippines aerobatic display team, using the decals from the kit. The team was formed in 1952 as the Blue Diamond (without the "s"), and in 1957 obtained F-86F Sabres, flying these until 1968, then under the Blue Diamonds name.

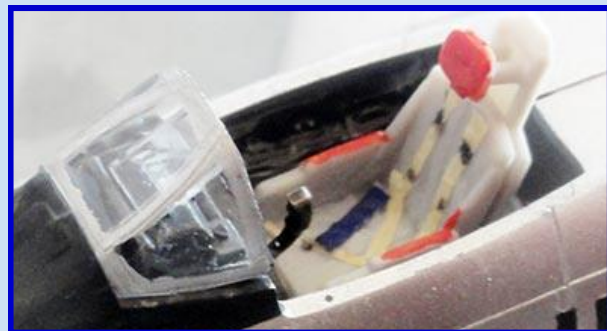


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Assembly was straight forward. The air brakes of the model were to be set open. After a light grey base coat airbrushed with Revell Aqua 75 steingrau, a few Vallejo metal acrylic paints were airbrushed, with the main colour being 77.701. The 6-3 non-slatted "F-30" wing is easily recognized through the small wing fence.

The kit decals are very good. I decided to build Blue Diamond F-86F-30-NA number "4", with serial number 113432 (note that another F-86F-30-NA, serial 24432, was also used later as number "2"). The gear bays were painted green and the gear doors were set open.



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The second "double" kit was similarly assembled as described above. But this kit has the "F-40" wing with the "long wing tip" and the straight pitot tube. The model was built as a F-86F-40 of the South Korean Air Force with the kit decals scheme "3", coded 2940. Note that initially "2940" was a F-86F-10, serial 51-12940; probably this aircraft was retrofitted later with the different "F-40" wing as seen in this model.

The air brakes were set closed and no stores were added. The gear bays were painted interior green and the gear doors were set open.

**Meindert de Vreeze**

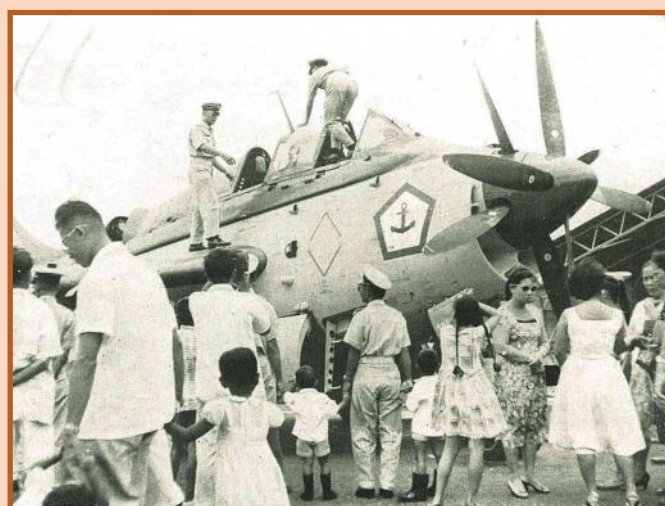




# THE FAIREY GANNET in INDONESIA

The Fairey Gannet was the first aircraft ordered for the nascent Indonesian Naval Air Service (which was created on 4<sup>th</sup> February 1950), becoming the Puspenerbal on 17<sup>th</sup> June 1956. Although the Breguet Br.1050 Alize was the Navy's preferred option for ASW and patrol work over the country's enormous island chain, the Dutch Government pressured the French not to approve an order, which then went to Britain for the Gannet.

The 18 aircraft ordered in January 1959 were based on the variants then in extensive service with the Royal Navy and designated as AS.4 (16) and T.5 (2) respectively. The airframes were bought back from the Ministry of Supply and modified, as they were to be purely land-based, by having the complicated wing folding mechanism deleted, which no doubt saved weight, complexity and cost. Additionally, the power plant was a more powerful type, the Double Mamba Mk.101.



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The offensive weapons to be used were identical to those in service with the Royal Navy, namely torpedoes and depth charges internally, and up to 16 unguided rockets under the wings.

The first two aircraft were delivered to 100<sup>th</sup> Anti-Submarine Squadron at Morokrembangan Naval Air Base Surabaya in 1960. While in service the Gannets saw action in two operations, Trikora and Dwikora during the 1960's, then stationed in Tanjung Pinang in Riu Archipelago.

The Gannets provided ten years' of service before being retired owing to the lack of spare parts.

## COLOURS AND MARKINGS

Indonesian Navy Gannets carried two schemes, both similar to those worn in RN service; the AS.4's had extra dark sea grey upper wings, tail planes and fuselage top over sky undersides, and the two trainers were overall silver with yellow training bands around the wings and rear fuselage. Full coloured pentagons with black anchors were worn on the front fuselage, upper left and lower right wings, with TNA-AL in black on the opposite sides, plus the usual national flag on the fin. No doubt the tropical climate soon lightened the DSG top colour. The spinners appeared to be black for the anti-submarine versions, although the preserved ones had it in red, with yellow for one of the trainers and black for the other. Confirmation for this would be





appreciated.

AIRCRAFT

Serial numbers ran from AS-00 to AS-16 (a display example carries an spurious number AS-101, and is in overall grey with low visibility markings!), and LA-01 and LA-02 for the T.5's. Additionally two aircraft were renumbered 105 (from AS-05) and 108. It is possible that two aircraft used the serial AS-16 as one was damaged during training after a belly landing.

PRESERVED GANNETS IN INDONESIA

AS-00 – at Satria Mandala Armed Forces Museum in Jakarta (Walkaround video on U-Tube)

AS-05 – marked as 105, at Bumi Moro Naval Academy

AS-07 – at Juanda Naval Air Station in Surabaya

MODELLING THE GANNET

In 48<sup>th</sup> scale both the Airframe kit and Dynavector vac form are soon to be eclipsed by Airfix's 2023 release, and in 72<sup>nd</sup> the best in the scale is from Revell, offering both the AS and T versions. Trumpeter also produces both, but these suffer from severe inaccuracies, especially around the rear fuselage area. Xtradecal are releasing a transfer sheet to complement the Airfix kit, one option appears to be an AS.4 LA-01 "111" (but LA-01 was a T.5, and 111 was not a code!).

Models have been seen built with their wings folded, which, according to the above narrative would not be correct, but no photographs have yet been published to disprove this!



All photos used are taken from sources in the public domain.

Mick Burton, May 2023



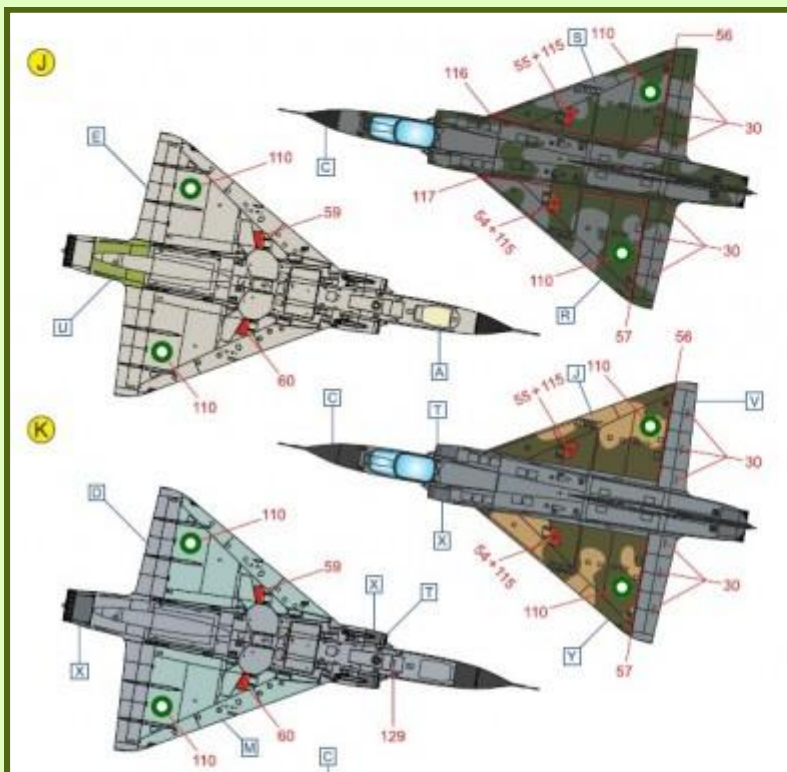
# Armymcast Decals - Mirages Volume 1 - Dassault Mirage IIIE/O & 5 Cyrano around the World



Armymcast Decals, a relatively new manufacturer from the Czech Republic, have established an excellent reputation for producing high quality decals of Post-War combat aircraft and helicopters. Their most recent release, ACD48-033, is for the ever popular Dassault Mirage III/5 family of fighter and fighter-bomber aircraft. The Dassault Mirage III/5 enjoyed considerable success in the export market during the 1960/70s, although its footprint in Asia was noticeably light with only one country, Pakistan, adopting the type for its Air Arm. An initial order for 24 aircraft of several sub-variants in 1967 has been subsequently supplemented by large numbers of new and second-hand Mirages IIIs and Mirage 5s spanning multiple variants. In 1991, Pakistan acquired 50 Australian-built ex-RAAF Mirage IIIOs, with eight immediately entering service with the PAF, while another 33 were upgraded under a PAF project known as ROSE I ("Retrofit of Strike Element"). Further aircraft have since been acquired from Lebanon, South Africa and Spain among others, to further supplement the operational fleet or to be cannibalized for spare parts. First used in combat during the brief Indo-Pakistan War of 1971, PAF Mirages have been at the forefront of combat air operations ever since, with the Pakistan Air Force remaining the largest operator of the type in the world today.



The Armymcast Decals release includes two Pakistan Air Force examples. The first is for one of the original Dassault Mirage IIIEP aircraft, operated by No.5 Squadron from Sargodha Air Base in the 1970s. No. 5 Squadron is perhaps the most notable PAF unit equipped with the type since it was fully operational during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971. During the conflict, while flying from bases in Sargodha and Mianwali, the Mirage IIIEP was used to conduct ground attacks against Indian military units and targets of interest and, in spite of Indian Air Force claims, the PAF denied that any Mirage was lost. This aircraft sports the standard export camouflage scheme of the period with dark grey/green upper surfaces, Light Grey undersurfaces and full colour national markings. The second PAF option is for a rather unusual ex-RAAF Mirage IIIO, operated by No. 7 Squadron 'The Bandits' from Masroor Air Base some 30 years later in the early 2000s. This aircraft sports a fairly complex interim 'patchwork' camouflage scheme with dark/light Ghost Grey fuselage and main flying control surfaces with the upper surfaces of the delta wing finished in a dark green/sand camouflage scheme with light blue undersurfaces; the latter as a result of mating ex-SAAF Mirage III wing sets with the RAAF Mirage IIIO fuselage. This aircraft also features dark grey air intakes and rear fuselage. The Dassault Mirage IIIO retains full colour national markings, with a



revised fin flash and the unit insignia of No.7 Squadron, and the overall look achieved with these decals would certainly generate discussion around any display.

As I have mentioned in previous reviews, Armycast have built up an excellent reputation for the accuracy and standard of their decal sheets so their quality is assured. Since this release covers no less than 15 options for 11 worldwide operators of the type, the decals are presented on no less than three A5-sized sheets, with one additional supplementary sheet, all of which provide for the national insignia, codes/serial numbers and special markings applied to each of the options, along with some 'peculiar-to-type' safety or maintenance markings. Further research may be necessary to determine whether any of these aircraft sported additional maintenance markings and stencilling and, if so, these will need to be sourced from the decals supplied with the particular kit. The decals themselves are nicely printed, with excellent colour saturation and in register. The decal placement instructions are presented in colour and are comprehensive, providing excellent colour side profiles and, where applicable, three-view drawings for particular camouflage schemes. The DPis also include a very comprehensive guide to the individual stencil markings with call-outs for those that are applicable to the specific

airframes included with this release. The DPis also include full FS colour references (where appropriate or available) together with specific paint references for the Gunze Sangyo Mr. Color range. There are no kit recommendations included with the DPis although I suspect they are designed to fit the Kinetic family of Dassault Mirage III/5 variants which, in my opinion, remain the best kit of this classic delta-wing fighter in 1:48 scale.



Highly recommended to anyone interested in the Dassault Mirage III/5 or the Pakistan Air Force

**Mark Attrill**

June 2023





# DP Casper 'India-Pakistan War 1971' Decal Sheet

This is not a brand-new release from DP Casper of the Czech Republic but it has somehow missed out on a previous review in our newsletter, although the vast amount of subject matter included in this very comprehensive decal sheet warrants at least a quick review. The decals cover the majority of combat aircraft and helicopters that featured prominently in the Indo-Pakistan Air War of 1971 with no less than twenty-two different subjects included. There are 11 Indian Air Force aircraft highlighting the diversity of manufacturers that equipped the Air Arm. British manufactured aircraft include an early Folland Gnat F.Mk.1, the predecessor to the licence-built HAL Ajeet, a Hawker Hunter F.Mk.56 and a BAC Canberra B(I) Mk.58 Bomber-Interdictor. French subjects include a Dassault Mystere IVA fighter bomber and a Sud-Aviation (Aerospatiale) SA.316B Alouette III. Soviet manufactured aircraft make up the bulk of the remaining IAF subjects including no less than three MiG-21FL Fishbeds, all sporting different camouflage schemes and markings, two Sukhoi Su-7BMK Fighter-Bombers and a single Mil Mi-4 'Hound' transport helicopter. As one can imagine there are a wide variety of colour schemes among the 11 aircraft featured with several also featuring individual unit markings. In the interests of impartiality and equality, the decal release also features a total of 11 Pakistan Air Force subjects, which underlined the country's reliance on US-manufactured aircraft together with several more from French and Chinese manufacturers. There are three F-86E/CL-13B Sabres, all sporting different colour schemes and markings that indicate the original sourcing of these aircraft at a time when Pakistan was attempting to overcome the numerical superiority of its larger neighbour; some aircraft were supplied under the US-sponsored Military Assistance Programme (MAP) while others took a more circuitous route via Iran from former European Air Force operators. At this time the United States also supplied the licence-built Martin B-57B Canberra and Lockheed F-104A Starfighters through the MAP, both of which are included on the sheet. There are two different F-104As with one sporting a rather attractive and unusual four-colour camouflage scheme reflecting its origins with the Royal Jordanian Air Force. The Peoples Republic of China were also a significant supplier of military hardware, so three Shenyang F-6 (licence-built Mikoyan MiG-19 Farmers) are also included, again sporting a wide array of markings including some spectacular 'shark's teeth' markings. Like India, Pakistan also relied on assistance from France, and this included the supply of Dassault Mirage IIIEP Fighter-bombers and Sud-Aviation (Aerospatiale) SA.316B Alouette III helicopters with one of each type also included with this decal release.

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12 F-86F Sabre, 26.sqn. PAF "Black Spiders", base Peshawar

13 CL-138 Sabre Mk.6, 18.sqn. PAF "War Hawks", base Masroor

14 CL-138 Sabre Mk.6, 17.sqn. PAF "Tigers", base Rafiqui

15 F-6, 11.sqn. PAF "Arrows", base Sargodha

16 F-6, 23.sqn. PAF "Talons", base Risalewala

17 F-6, 11.sqn. PAF "Arrows", base Sargodha

18 F-104A, 9.sqn. PAF, base Sargodha

19 F-104A, 9.sqn. PAF, base Sargodha

20 Mirage III EP, 5.sqn. PAF "Falcons", base Rafiqui

21 B-57B, 7.sqn. PAF "Bandits", base Mianwali

22 SA.316B Alouette III 83sqn. PAF

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DP CASPER 72014 tel: 737 197 625 www.dpcasper.cz

## India-Pakistan War 1971

1 Gnat F. Mk.I, 9.sqn. IAF, base Jamnagar

2 Mystere IVA, 31.sqn. IAF, base Hindon

3 H. Hunter F. Mk.56, 37.sqn IAF "Black Panthers", base Hashimara

4 MiG-21FL, 29.sqn. IAF, base Hindon

5 MiG-21FL, 8.sqn. IAF, base Poone

6 MiG-21FL, 8.sqn. IAF, base Poone

7 Canberra B(I) Mk.58, 5. sqn. IAF "Tuskers", base Agra

8 Su-7BMK, 32.sqn. IAF, base Ambala

9 Su-7BMK, 26.sqn. IAF, base Adampur

10 SA.316B Alouette III 104.sqn. IAF

11 Mi-4, 110sqn. IAF, base Dum Dum

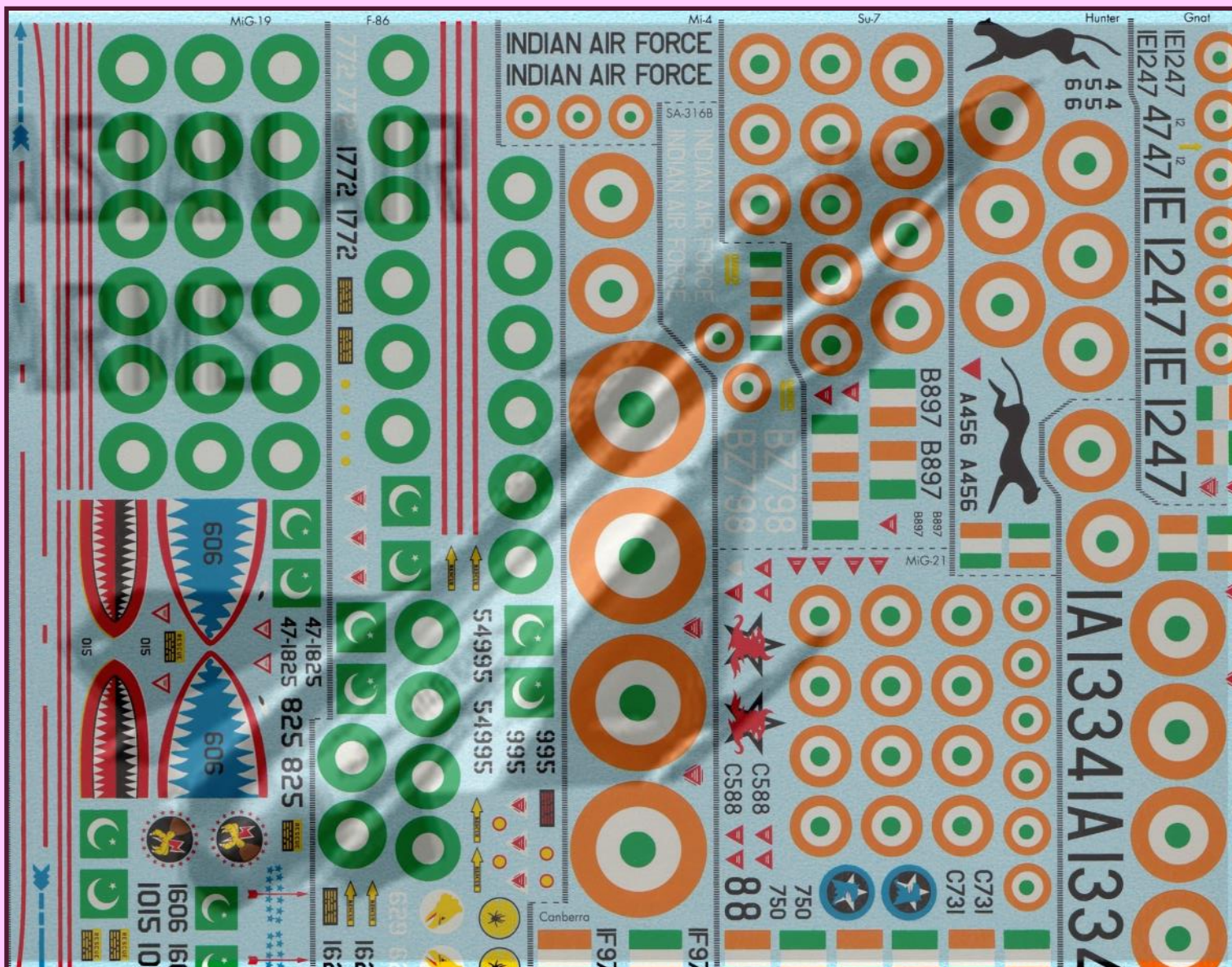
The aircraft surface was extremely worn, old and dirty.

A	Aluminium Humbrol 27001 Agama 777	B	Ocean Grey Humbrol 27 Agama 87	C	Dark Green Humbrol 116 Agama 81	D	Silver Humbrol 56 Agama 48Me	E	Dark Earth Humbrol 29 Agama 82	F	Green Humbrol 80 Agama P11	G	Olive Green Humbrol 150 Agama B16	H	Grey Humbrol 79 Agama N11	CH	Greygreen Humbrol 31 Agama N6	J	Iron grey Humbrol 11 Agama 98Me	K	Dark Green Humbrol 78 Agama B10	L	Light Blue Humbrol 65 Agama N5	M	Light Grey Humbrol 147 Agama J14	N	Sand Humbrol 121 Agama K5	O	Brown Humbrol 119 Agama L1	P	Dark Green Humbrol 137 Agama R6	R	Light blue Humbrol 65+34 1:1 Agama N5+01	S	barva tysek Humbrol 56+53 3:1 Agama 48Me+32Me	T	Black Humbrol 85 Agama C50P	U	Red Humbrol 154 Agama J15	Y	Orange Humbrol 82 Agama 03	W	Yellow Humbrol 154 Agama N20	X	Black Humbrol 33 Agama 07	Y	White Humbrol 34 Agama 01
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A very colourful A5 sized decal sheet, supplemented by a second smaller sheet, is literally crammed with decals and as one would expect, this includes all the national markings, serial numbers and titling together with individual Squadron or Unit markings and special markings, where appropriate. DP Casper's research has, once again, been very thorough since they include the variations in the size and colours used for the national markings and fin flashes. I believe the decals are printed by BOA Agency so their quality is assured and they do seem to be all in perfect register with excellent colour saturation. As always,

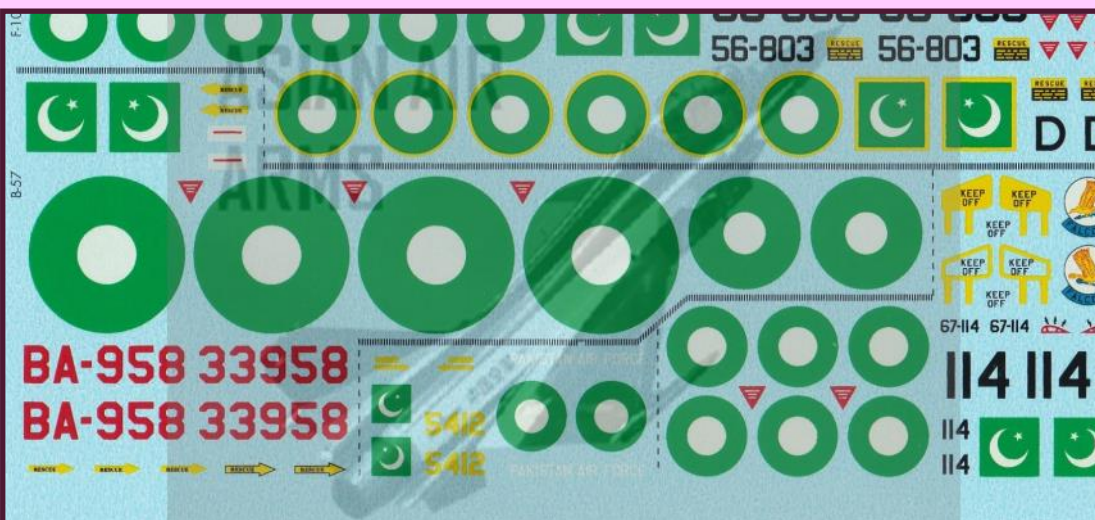


my only reservation with this release is the quality of the Decal Placement Instructions (DPIs). The modeler is left with one A4 sized fold out sheet which, due to the sheer number of subjects, contains some rather small colour side profiles with the internal 'centrefold' dedicated to a short description of the Indo-Pakistan Air War of 1971. The DPIs do include references to Humbrol and Agama paint shades but the modeler will have to do a fair bit of research to determine the nature of some of the colour schemes and, in particular, the accurate placement of some of the markings. Fortunately, there is a wealth of reference material available on most aircraft types operated by these two Air Arms, including at least three recent titles in the excellent Asia@War series by Helion and some superb on-line websites.



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In spite of my misgivings about the DPIs, this is a wonderful decal sheet for fans of the fixed-wing combat aircraft and helicopters operated by these two significant Asian Air Arms during a particularly challenging period in their history. An added bonus is that there are some very good mainstream 1:72 scale kits of all of the subjects featured on this excellent release.



The lack of detailed DPIs is a minor disappointment but this is compensated for with the sheer number and variety of subjects included and the high quality of the decals. As always, potential buyers should note that DP Casper decal sheets do tend to sell out quite quickly so I would also suggest you get them while you can since I suspect production will be limited.

Mark ATTRILL

June 2023



# Special Hobby 1:72 HAL (Folland) Ajeet Mk.1

## 'Indian Light Fighter'

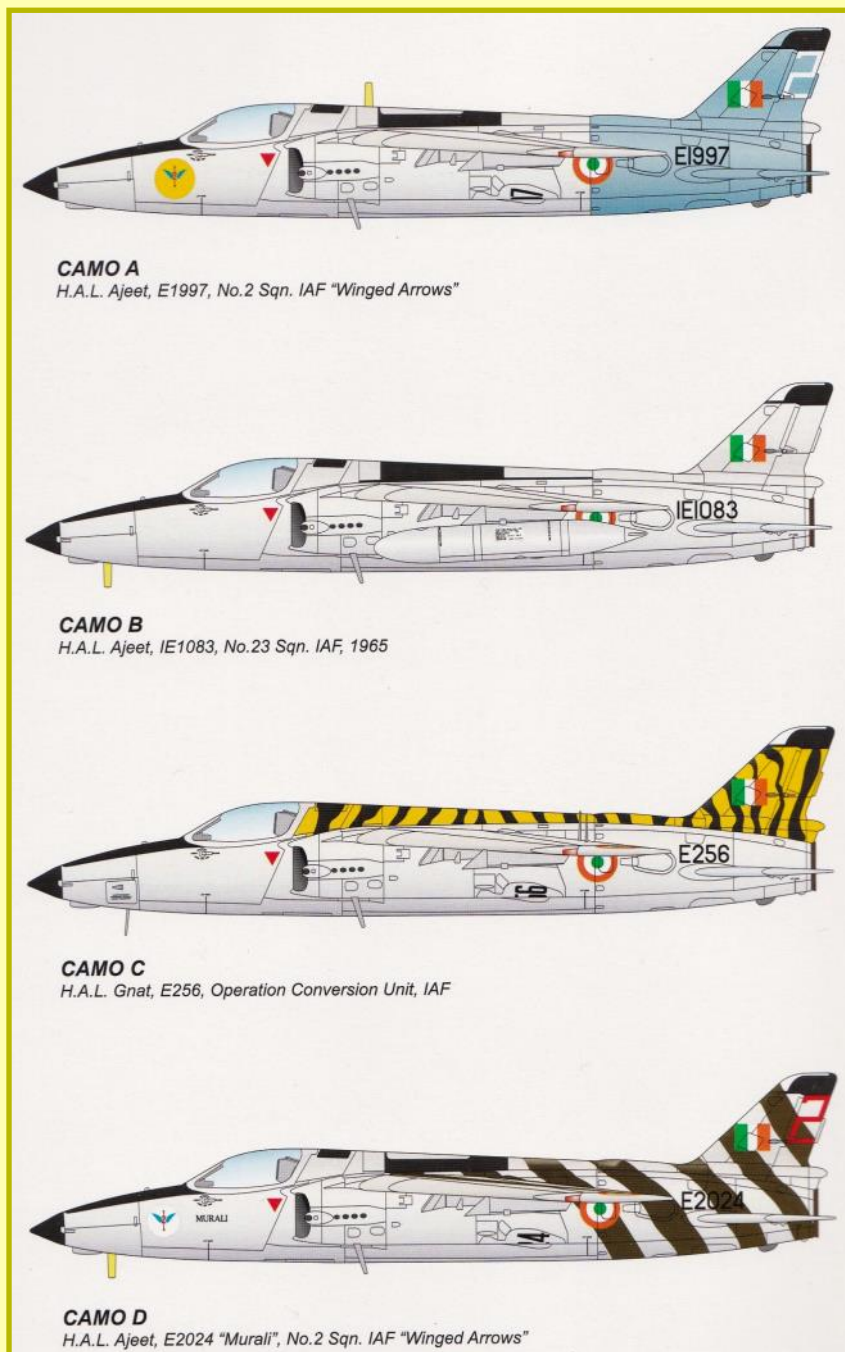
Although this SIG boasts a healthy number of 1:72 scale modellers, we do seem to focus most of our attention on 1:48 scale subject when it comes to reviews, so I am now pleased to take this opportunity to put this right with a quick look at the Special Hobby kit of the HAL Gnat/Ajeet Mk.I. This is not a new kit, since it first appeared in 2017, but it is one of only a very few kits that have ever been released of this diminutive fighter which influenced the Indian Air Force's early foray into the Jet Age, and ultimately equipped no less than eight IAF Squadrons. The primarily licence-built HAL Gnat F.1 proved to be a reliable and effective aircraft that saw action during the Indo-Pakistani air wars of 1965 and 1971, gaining the moniker 'Sabre Slayer' during the first conflict and as a result of its engagements with the PAF's F-86 Sabre. Hindustan went on to further develop the type, which ultimately led to the Ajeet F.1 variant, produced exclusively in India and continuing to serve well into the 1980s.



**Ajeet Mk.I "Indian Light Fighter"**

SH 72370

The kit is typical of the more recent releases from Special Hobby, providing three crisply moulded medium grey sprues with just over 100 parts and one clear sprue with four parts, including two different canopy styles. Since Special Hobby have offered several boxings of the basic Folland Gnat F.1 kit, there are a number of parts that are not used on the licence-built Hindustan/HAL variants of the Gnat/Ajeet and these are clearly marked on the parts map. The kit does however provide alternative parts to model one of three sub-variants together with decal markings for no less than four different aircraft in Indian Air Force markings. The clear kit assembly, painting and markings instructions are included in a neat 8-page booklet, complete with a parts map and paint references for Gunze Sangyo paints and accompanied by a nicely printed decal sheet. All in all, a very nice little package. Not surprisingly, construction starts with the cockpit and as one could imagine, this is relatively simple given the relative size of the 'office'. There is some neat sidewall detail on the fuselage halves and two different instrument panels are provided depending on whether the canopy is modelled in the closed or open position. The main instrument panel faces are presented in decal form. A four-part exhaust nozzle and one-piece nose undercarriage bay complete the initial fuselage construction before attention turns to the wings and main flying control surfaces. There are no less than three different variations in the nose cone, with the appropriate parts supplied for each, so you will need to take care when selecting the particular aircraft you wish to portray. Stage 6 of the construction sequence focuses on the installation of the undercarriage, stores pylons and weapons. The kit offers a wide range of weapons but quite a few of these relate to those variants of the Gnat operated by Finland and Yugoslavia and are not applicable to the Indian versions. As a result, there are on offer a pair of drop tanks which are, unusually mounted on the outer wing pylons with two variations of rocket pods which appeared to be mounted on the inner wing pylons. The last stage of construction concentrates on a return to the cockpit area with the installation of a rather neat multi-part ejection seat, gunsight and armoured glass cockpit canopy. It should also be noted that at this stage there is a requirement to cut out a part of the fuselage spine and replace it with a separate part, to reflect the subtle changes in contour found on the Indian variant.



As previously mentioned, the comprehensive decal sheet provides for four Indian Air Force Hindustan Gnat/HAL Ajeet options, with a nice variety of colour schemes or markings as follows:

Variant	Unit	Colour Scheme	Notes
HAL Ajeet E1997	No. 2 'Winged Arrow' Sqn	Natural Metal/Medium Blue	Medium Blue rear fuselage
Hindustan Gnat IE1083	No.23 Sqn	Natural Metal	Indo-Pakistan War 1965
Hindustan Gnat E256	Operational Conversion	Natural Metal	Black/Yellow striped spine/fin
HAL Ajeet E2024	No. 2 'Winged Arrow' Sqn	Natural Metal	Dark Green striped fuselage/fin

The decals are nicely printed with excellent registration and colour saturation and should work well using any of the proprietary brands of decal setting products.

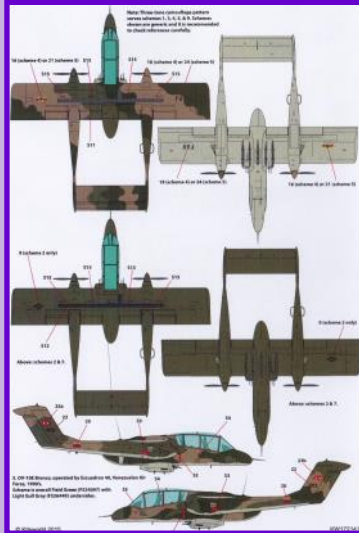
For those that would like some additional detail, Special Hobby do produce some bespoke resin aftermarket sets specifically designed to enhance the kit, including a Martin-Baker GF-4 ejection seat, Cockpit Detail Set (which includes the GF-4 Seat) and a flying control surfaces set with separate rudder & tailerons. Details of these sets are included in the kit instruction booklet.

This is an excellent little kit of the Hindustan/HAL Gnat/Ajeet F.1 and it will make a highly attractive addition to any Indian Air Force or Asian Air Arms collection of models.

Highly recommended

**Mark Attrill**

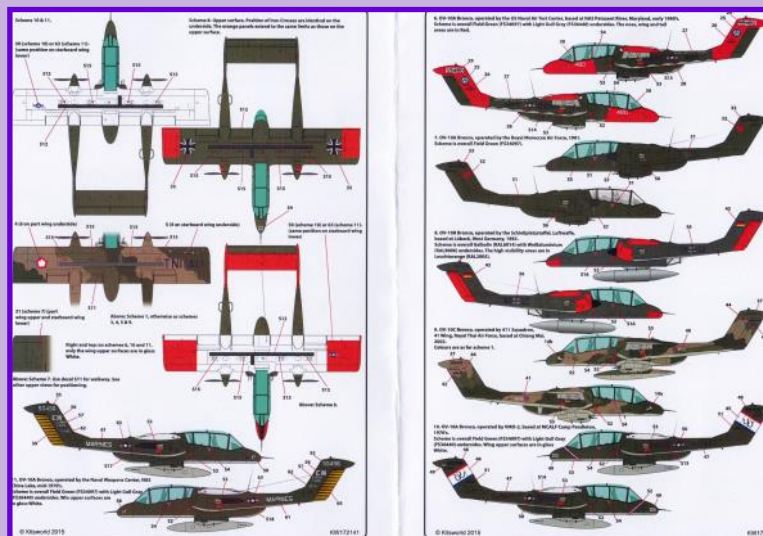
June 2023



Kits World Decals, a UK aftermarket decal manufacturer, are best known for their extensive range of World War II-era decals and, in particular, those that feature 'nose or tail art', although they will occasionally deal with some of the more esoteric post-war subjects. One such release deals with the US-manufactured Rockwell (North-American) OV-10A/C Bronco, a twin-engined Observation/Forward Air Controller/COIN aircraft that saw extensive service during the Vietnam War and enjoyed some success with the export market on four continents. This particular sheet was released some years ago and was obviously intended for the Academy and Airfix 1:72 scale kits of the OV-10 at that time. I have little doubt that the recent release of a brand-new kit of the OV-10 Bronco, by ICM of Ukraine will generate further interest in this particular decal sheet and since the subject matter includes aircraft operated by three Asian Air Arms, it warrants a quick review in the newsletter. The Kits World sheet includes markings for no less than eleven different aircraft.

The first Asian subject is for an OV-10F operated by Skadron Udara 21 of the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Udara*, (TNI-AU) (Indonesian Air Force) and features the standard 'South East Asia' camouflage scheme consisting of dark/medium green and tan upper surfaces with light grey undersurfaces, with high visibility red/white national markings and large TNI-AU titles. The second Asian aircraft to feature is a similarly camouflaged OV-10C variant operated by the 16<sup>th</sup> Strike Squadron of the 15<sup>th</sup> Strike Wing of the Philippines Air Force from Danielo Atienza Air Base in 2005. This aircraft carries low-visibility national markings and titles. The third example is for another OV-10C variant, this time operated by 411 Squadron, 41<sup>st</sup> Wing of the Royal Thai Air Force from Chiang Mai in 2002. This aircraft also features the standard SEA camouflage scheme although this is contrasted with high visibility national and unit markings.

The decals are nicely printed on a busy yet colourful decal sheet with one small supplementary correction sheet. The colour saturation and register are excellent, which is impressive given the complex nature of some of the markings. The sheet includes all national markings and titling together with any particular-to-type safety and maintenance markings, including appropriate walkway and exhaust markings. My one reservation is with the decal placement instructions (DPI) sheet, which are rather small and difficult to decipher. There are no hobby paint references although some Federal Standard colour callouts are annotated. Modellers should note, however, that several errors with these callouts are repeated throughout the text so it is highly recommended that you check other references before you commit paint or markings to a particular aircraft. The dedicated modeler will, of course, always conduct further research and fortunately there are now some excellent online photographic references for each of the three Asian subjects featured on this sheet.



I have little doubt that this previous release from Kits World will attract a small resurgence in sales with the availability of the brand new ICM kit, which I also hope to review very shortly.

Highly recommended - **Mark ATTRILL**

# Meng Models 1:48 McDonnell-Douglas F-4E Phantom

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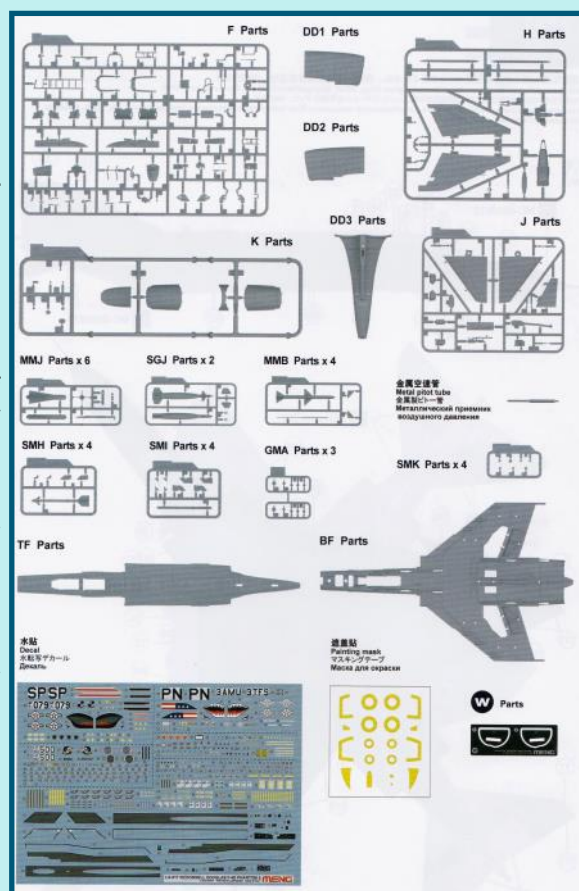
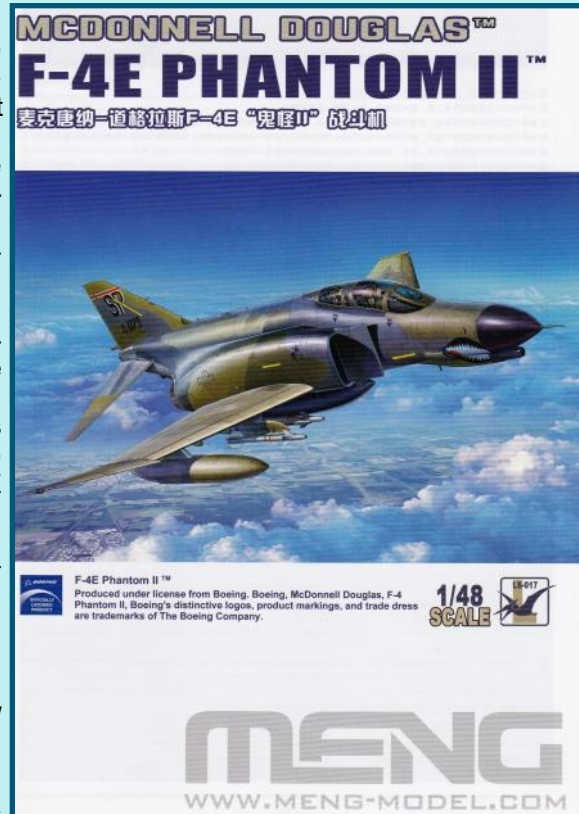


I have little doubt that the announcement of a new 1:48 scale kit of the legendary McDonnell-Douglas F4 Phantom would, for many modellers, be greeted with some dismay; 'What, another Phantom ...how many more do we need ?' I could almost hear them say, and to an extent this has been borne out by some online reaction on the more prominent modelling websites. In fairness, this kit is for one of the so-called 'long-nosed' F-4 Phantom variants which the likes of Academy and Tamiya have chosen to avoid so far and while Zoukei-Mura, after the release of some excellent 'short-nosed' F-4s, have now turned their attention to the F-4E/EJ, these have been limited to the earlier sub-variants with non-slatted wings. This has left modellers with a choice between the older Hasegawa and Italeri kits to reproduce one of the late variant F-4Es. Many were surprised when Meng announced that the first kit in their own F-4 family would be for the highly specialised F-4G 'Wild Weasel' sub-variant since this aircraft was only ever operated by the USAF and the kit was going to be in direct competition with Zoukei-Mura's own release of the F-4G, which was released within the same timeframe. That said, Meng were very quick off the mark with the release of their second Phantom, this time for a late-model F-4E complete with the slatted wing and sensors associated with the aircraft during the latter part of its operational career with the USAF and other operators. As an added bonus it also became apparent that the kit would include markings for an aircraft operated by the Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) so it is entirely appropriate to include a review in our newsletter.

The kit comes in a deep, top opening box with an attractive box art featuring a Spangdahlen-based USAF F-4E Phantom II in the three-tone dark green/grey 'European One' scheme with low visibility markings that was synonymous with USAF/E combat aircraft in the early 1980s. The box lid also provides CAD images of some of the features of this kit, together with a comprehensive paint reference table for the necessary AK Interactive paints to complete the kit. Despite its depth, the box is filled to capacity with over 360 dark grey parts, together with separately packaged clear sprues carrying 12 parts for the cockpit canopy etc, two photoetched stabilator hinge plates and a metal pitot probe. The kit also includes seven small sprues, in clear plastic, which originate from some of the Company's separately available weapons sets and provide seeker heads and lenses for the kit supplied weapons. A nicely presented 34-page Instruction booklet, together with a decal sheet offering markings for three different aircraft, and a full set of kabuki-type cockpit and wheel masks complete a very comprehensive package.

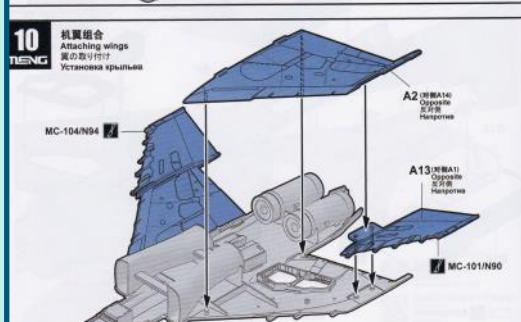
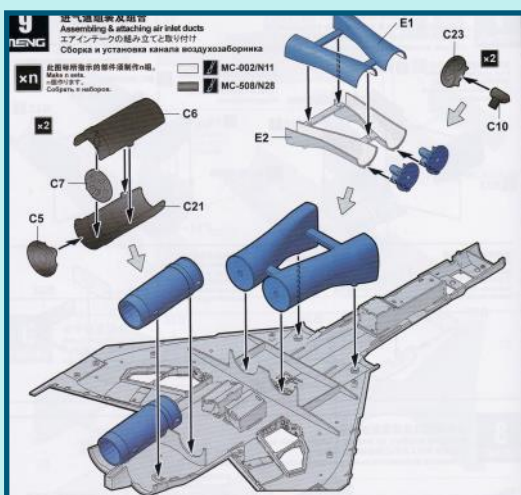
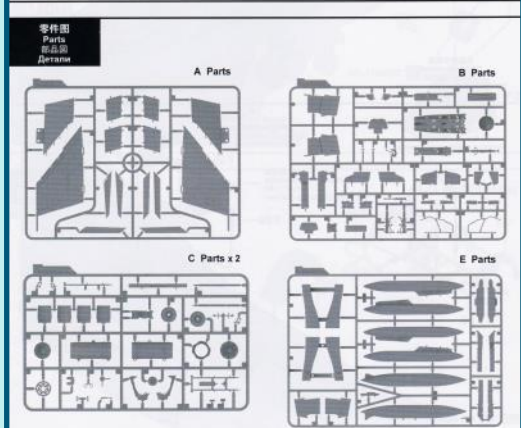
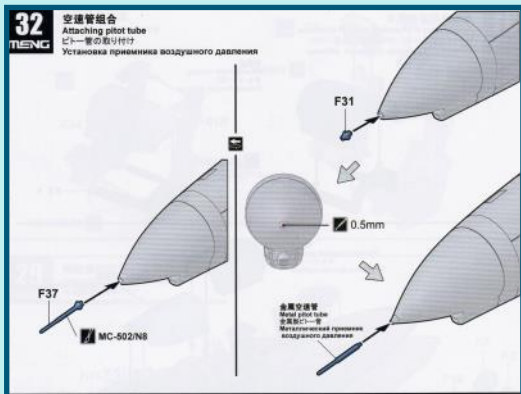
The one-piece main upper fuselage, and combined lower fuselage/wing parts, provide an immediate indication of how easily this kit may go together. One curious feature, also observed on my initial inspection, was the presence of prominent locating 'plugs' on many of the parts which indicate that Meng may have originally designed this kit to almost clip together rather than use plastic cement; this is particularly the case with the main airframe parts, all of which also feature nicely rendered recessed panel lines. A quick test of the main components served to confirm a superb fit although cement will most definitely be required for assembly. The slide moulded main fuselage is a work of art that removes any concerns with regard to filling extensive seam lines across the top of the fuselage; it goes one step further than the Zoukei-Mura kits, which have a 'drop in' panel to address this particular issue. Close inspection of the other parts also revealed excellent detail. This was a pleasant surprise since early online images of the kit, eagerly dissected by the usual armchair experts, had suggested some curious idiosyncrasies with some of the detail. The distinctive fairing immediately behind the exhaust nozzles was one of the areas that attracted particular attention at the time with concern about the portrayal of the exhaust panels and structure. I am pleased to report that any differences in the detail are insignificant in the eyes of your reviewer and will not detract from the appearance of the final model.

As with most kits, construction starts with a well detailed 18-part cockpit tub, although Meng have opted to recommend fitting the multi-part Mk.7H Ejection Seats towards the end of the build in a departure from 'tradition'. Attention then turns to the assembly of the prominent angled stabilizers, a distinctive design feature of the F-4 Phantom and another deviation from the way in which I have assembled previous F-4 Phantom kits. The undercarriage and auxiliary air intake bays are next and these, together with the aforementioned cockpit interior would all benefit from careful painting and the liberal application of appropriate washes to bring out the superb detail contained therein. Meng have included near full length air intake ducts and exhaust tunnels, which



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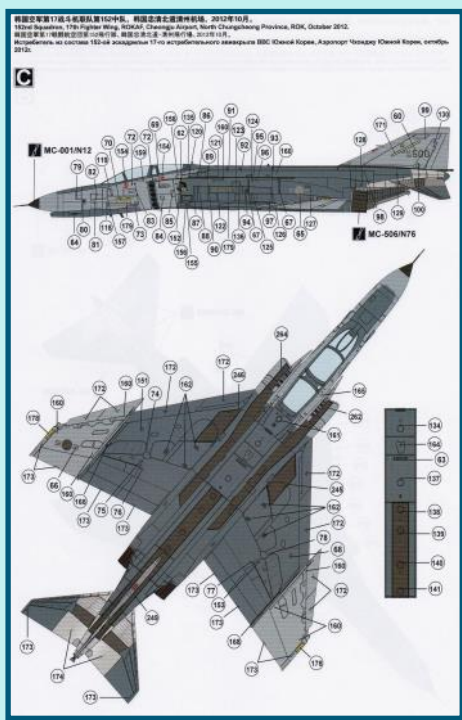
are fitted to the one-piece lower fuselage prior to the final assembly of the main wings. This provides the opportunity, at Stage 11, to bring the upper and lower fuselage/wings together by which time the final model is beginning to take shape. The next stage deals with the main air intakes which, in the past, have been one of the most challenging elements of any F-4 Phantom build, due to their prominence and complex shape around the forward fuselage. Having recently built both Tamiya and Zoukei-Mura 1:48 scale examples of the F-4, it appears that Meng have taken a similar approach in order to eliminate the inner seams of the intake trunk and to address the external fuselage join above the leading edge of the inner wing, both of which have been problematical on older kits. The flaps are moulded with two sets of locating tabs so they can be posed in the retracted or extended position and the prominent late-F-4E model leading edge slats can also be posed in the retracted or deployed position. The separately moulded multi-part fin also features a separate rudder, and the airbrakes can also be posed in the open or closed position, with finely rendered detail on all of the inner surfaces, so there are plenty of display options for the completed model. Meng have also included some nicely rendered multi-part exhaust nozzles, which may need careful construction to obtain the best results. As we approach the final stages of construction for the main airframe, attention turns to the assembly of the main and nose undercarriage; my only concern here are the two-part main wheels/hubs, which are split down the middle; this method almost always requires the modeller to deal with some difficult seams, so these parts may benefit from the acquisition of some aftermarket resin replacements. It should also be noted at this stage that the Meng kit does not have the prominent 'belly strap' that was a key feature on late-model F-4E aircraft; curiously this issue is not peculiar to the Meng kit, and I have already noted that at least one enterprising aftermarket company is planning to release a part to address this omission.

At this point, Meng suggest that the modeller select and assemble from the comprehensive set of weapons and stores that are provided with this kit. The kit provides the standard 370-US gallon drop tanks and a centreline mounted 600-US gallon drop tank, 4 x AIM-7M Sparrow AAMs, an AN/ALQ-131 ECM Pod and both AIM-9M and AIM-9NP variants of the Sidewinder AAMs. Offensive weaponry includes two GBU-10 Paveway 1 Laser-Guided Bombs and six AGM-65 Maverick Air-to-Surface Missiles complete with triple-rail LAU-88 launchers so there is plenty of ordnance to hang from your completed model and the inclusion of clear seeker heads and lenses will undoubtedly enhance the appearance of these items. The final sections of the kit instructions cover the assembly and fitting of the five-part Mk.7H ejection seats together with the cockpit coaming and canopies; the latter can be posed open or closed. The kit also includes an option for plastic or metal pitot probe and a fine example of the US-style cockpit access ladder. Apart from a very clear and comprehensive set of assembly diagrams, the instruction manual also includes some handy hints and tips on parts assembly and decal application. There is also a parts map, a full set of painting and marking instructions for the three decal options included with the kit and the comprehensive weapons fit. The booklet also includes instructions for the use of the canopy and wheel masks and a handy cross-reference table for the AK Interactive, Meng and water-based Acrycion paint ranges.

The three decal options include the USAF 'European One' F-4E Phantom II that is featured on the box art, together with a second USAF example in the later two-tone Hill Gray scheme. This aircraft has an Asian connection since it was as operated by the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing from Clark Air Base in the Philippines in the early 1990s. The third decal option offered with the kit is for a ROKAF F-4E operated by the 152<sup>nd</sup> Squadron of the 17<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing in 2012 and this example also sports the 'Hill Gray' camouflage scheme with low visibility national markings.

In summary, this is an excellent kit that compares very well with the recent Zoukei-Mura range of 'long nose' F-4 Phantom kits, in terms of the level of detail and fit. Early test-fitting would suggest that the Meng kit will be better with regard to the overall fit of parts. Since Zoukei-Mura have yet to release a late-model F-4E Phantom, this kit is currently and without doubt, the best 1:48 scale model available of this important sub-variant with the added bonus of those ROKAF markings for fans of Asian Air Arms. Highly recommended!

Review Sample courtesy of my wallet  
**Mark Attrill**, June 2023



# 'Red Dragon Flankers'

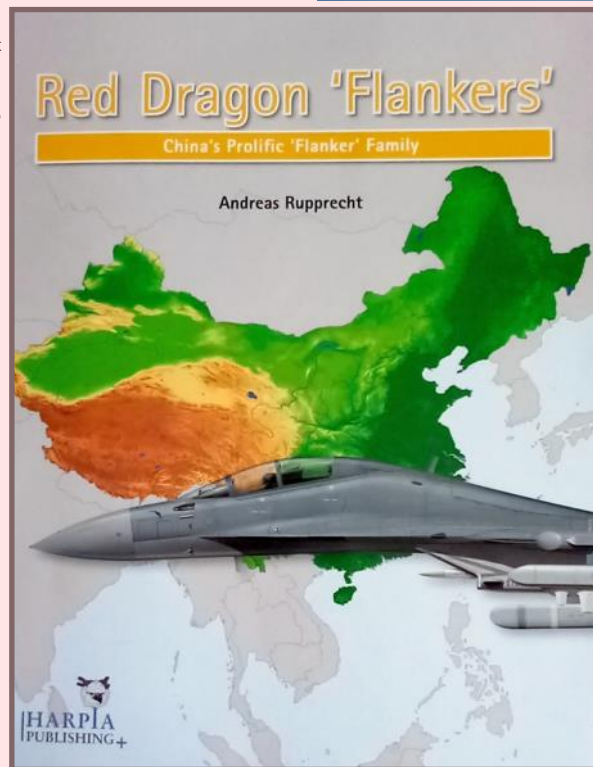


This is another excellent publication, written by Andreas Rupprecht and published by Harpia, about the development of military aviation in the early 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the People's Republic of China. However, for the first time in this series of books, this volume features just a single aircraft, the Sukhoi Su-27, as well as the growing number of sub-types that have evolved since the first of the type appeared in PLAAF and PLAN service back in 1992.



Beginning with 24 Russian manufactured single and twin seat aircraft the author traces the development and introduction to service of numerous Chinese built derivatives identified as J-11s, J-15s and J-16s and these in many cases with their own further sub-types. In all some 13 different members of the "Flanker Family" are identified and examined by the author.

Despite only comprising five chapters and a single appendix, the wealth of information contained in the book's 250+ pages is prodigious. The three initial chapters are devoted to the aircraft in all its variants, both those that are land based and those that equip the carriers of the PLA Naval Air Service.



In May 2021 it was first revealed via a TV report that the PLAN Naval Aviation had deployed some J-15s to Lingshui to support the second aircraft carrier Shandong, stationed at Hainan Island. It seems this is not yet a true permanent base, but based on this image, the pilots already wear a unit badge for the new unit.  
(沉默的山羊)

Chapter 4 deals with the weapons and stores either carried by or likely to be carried by the different members of the family. The photos in this chapter maintain the high standard set throughout the book and perhaps they are of greatest interest for those of us with a modelling perspective, illustrating what can be carried and where they fit on the aircraft as well as how many might be carried. In addition, for any diorama builders, there are several excellent images of various types of pods, missiles and bombs being transported and loaded.

The final chapter covers the Flanker contribution to the order of battle of Chinese air forces in 2022, identifying bases and units in a comprehensive manner. Again, photo coverage of this aspect of the force is excellent. This chapter also includes a full and useful explanation of the complexities of the serial numbering system applied to Chinese aircraft and details how changes introduced in 2012 have progressively come into use since then.



The single appendix contains what is at first sight is a highly complex “family tree” for the Chinese Flankers, illustrating when new types evolved and from which other variants they sprang. The appendix concludes with an excellent collection of 25 port-side profiles, produced by Ugo Crisponi, illustrating examples of all the various sub-types so far identified.

Before summing up what I thought about this book, it is important finally to include a reference to the fact that the author examines some of the more controversial aspects of the Flanker’s development in the PRC; especially, were these developments illegal, as it is suggested in some quarters, or not, as is stated elsewhere? I shall not spoil a good conspiracy story by explaining his conclusions here but will certainly encourage you to go away and read it.

You may well have arrived at the impression that I have enjoyed reading this book. I did and will continue to do so but I should warn you that it is not a book to be simply picked up and read from cover to cover. It is, however, one of that rare breed of non-fiction books that is to be savoured, to be dipped into and enjoyed and to return to time and time again to discover bits and pieces you had missed previously or had forgotten about. Do that and, like me, you will come to love it!

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Highly recommended...if you hadn't guessed!! Thank you to the publishers for the copy to review, a fact which has no bearing on my appreciation of it!!

David Thomas



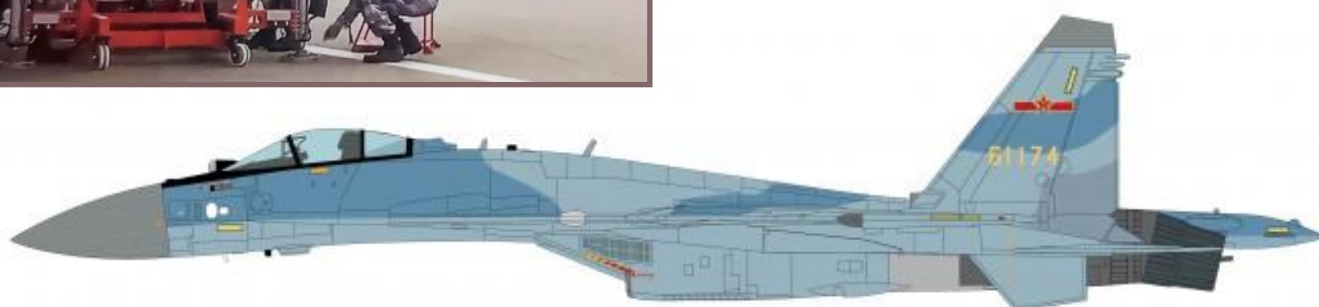
Sukhoi Su-30MCK

This is a recent Su-30MCK assigned to the 54th Air Brigade with the characteristic eagle unit badge. This updated aircraft is fitted with the new antennas and shown equipped for a SEAD mission with a YJ-91 ARM and indigenous KL700A ECM pod.

Sukhoi Su-20MCK characteristics

- Externally similar to the two-seat Su-27UBK but with taller tail fins, larger tail fins and squared-off tail fin caps
- Inflight refuelling probe installed forward of the cockpit, on the left, with the dome offset to the left
- Nose undercarriage has two wheels
- Some upgraded examples feature MAWS sensors behind the cockpit and on the tail fins. A few have also been upgraded with a different IFF blade antenna on the tail and under the radome

Artwork shows a Su-30MCK assigned to the former 18th Air Division's 54th Air Regiment, carrying a Kh-58ME ASM and APK-9 guidance pod. This is one of the few aircraft to have briefly worn a sand/tan desert camouflage and still has the original 'Odd Rods' IFF installed.





# DP Casper - Mil Mi-24 & Mi-35 Export Hinds

This recent decal release is somewhat of a curiosity. I purchased it via a well known online auction site and it *appears* to have been prepared for DP Casper of the Czech Republic, although any reference to that company or any reference numbers have been scored out on the cover sheet. The decals and cover sheet bear all of the other hallmarks of a DP Casper release but this issue does not appear in either their back catalogue or future release programme, which leads me to believe that it may have been from a cancelled order. In any case, it is a pity since there are one or two rather esoteric options on the decal sheet that will be of interest to SIG Members. There are actually no less than nineteen options covering Mi-24/35 Hinds with five for aircraft operated by Asian Air Arms. The first of these is a rather plain looking Indian Air Force example of the Mi-35 sporting an overall light grey colour scheme. Two Indonesian Army Mi-24P Hind-F variants, with their distinctive fixed side-mounted 30mm GSh-30-2K twin-barrel autocannon mounted along the starboard side of the fuselage, are also featured. The first sports an overall medium green colour scheme with a broad yellow fuselage band, high visibility national markings and yellow titles. The second aircraft, assumed to be from a later time period, features another Mi-24P in a wraparound two-tone dark/medium green camouflage scheme with black low visibility national markings and titles. The fourth subject is another Mi-24P and features a rather esoteric machine operated by the Myanmar Air Force and sporting a two-tone light/medium green camouflage scheme with light blue undersurfaces and full colour national markings. Last, but not least is a Sri Lankan Air Force example of the Mi-24P, which has a two-tone wraparound scheme of what appears to be light grey sand and medium green although I would recommend a thorough check of photographic references to be sure. This particular example also features full colour national and unit markings.

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The decals are presented in typical DP Casper style on a very colourful A5 sized decal sheet with a second, supplementary sheet which is necessary given the sheer number of subjects catered for. As usual, the manufacturers research has been quite thorough since they include the variations in the size and colours used for the national markings, serial numbers and titling and quite a few of the special-to-type safety and warning markings. I was particularly pleased to note that most of the 'Danger' (or equivalent language) titling that are a distinctive feature of the type have been printed separately and it is up to the modeler to apply the necessary background colour before applying the titling, which helps to obviate any issues with register. My only reservation with the Asian Air Arm specific decals are the colours used for the fin flash on the Sri Lankan machine. I believe these may be wrong although, once again, modellers would be advised to check their references. I believe the decals are still printed by the BOA Agency so their quality is assured and they do seem to be all in perfect register with excellent colour saturation.



As always, my only reservation with this particular release is the quality of the

Decal Placement Instructions (DPIs). The modeler is left with one A4 sized fold out sheet which, due to the sheer number of subjects, contains some rather small colour side profiles. The DPIs do include what appear to be references to Humbrol paint shades although there are no specific colour charts so the modeler will have to do a fair bit of research to determine the nature of some of the colour schemes and, in particular, the accurate placement of some of the markings. To further complicate matters, and as I have already suggested, some of the subjects are not that extensively covered elsewhere although imagery on the more esoteric subjects is now making an appearance on various websites including our own.

In spite of my misgivings about the DPIs, this is a wonderful decal sheet for fans of the impressive Mil Mi-24 Hind attack helicopter and provides for some very esoteric machines. The main issue will be availability since, as previously stated, they do not appear to have been officially released by DP Casper so far. That said, they are available, in limited numbers, on the internet and also appear to have been produced in 1:72 scale. With a ready supply of suitable kits in both scales, I would still highly recommend it to members of the SIG although I suggest you get them while you can since I suspect production will be limited.

Mark ATTRILL

March 2023



# Xtradecal 1:72 DHC-2 Beaver 'Worldwide Collection'



Hannants, the UK Mail Order specialist that produce a prolific range of decals under their Xtradecal trade name, have been particularly busy in recent months with the release of several decal sheets catering for some of the new kit releases, which will be of interest to Asian Air Arms fans. This decal sheet will be extremely welcome since it coincides with the recently re-released Airfix 1:72 scale kit of the DHC-2 Beaver. The Airfix DHC-2 Beaver is an old kit, originally produced by Airfix in the early 1970's, and now appears in the company's hugely popular 'Vintage Classics' range. The original kit was, without doubt, one of the best from the company's heyday with some nice details and a relatively large parts count for a relatively small aircraft, albeit with raised panel lines and rivets, which did not detract from the rather utilitarian design of the original. I can still remember my late Father's enthusiasm for building this model, since he had flown in British Army Air Corps examples over the jungles of Malaysia during the late 1960s, and I still have the original model stored away safely in our loft as a family memento, together with at least one unbuilt example in my own kit stash. I do not ever recall any aftermarket decal sheets being produced in spite of the prototype's widespread use but Xtradecal have now addressed this shortfall with a very nice decal sheet covering no less than 10 different options although only two are for Asian specimens. The two schemes in question are, however, unusual; the first is for a Republic of China (Taiwan) Air Force example in an overall Black colour scheme with high visibility national markings from 1980, including some elaborate unit markings on the tail surfaces and the customary blue/white rudder stripes that break up the rather drab colour scheme. The second example is for a U-6A (US designation) operated by the South Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) in the late 1960s during the height of the Vietnam War. This aircraft sports a dark green/tan camouflage scheme over light grey undersurfaces, with VNAF national markings applied in the same style as those carried on USAF aircraft, and with large red/yellow fin flashes.

As I have stated previously, Xtradecal have built up a very good reputation for the accuracy and quality of their decal sheets, which are the result of a long partnership with Microscale of the United States. My one reservation is with the rather sparse decal placement instruction sheet. The dedicated modeler will, of course, always conduct further research, and I suspect that Xtradecal work on this basis and could legitimately argue that this is their overall philosophy for keeping unit production costs down to a minimum.

I have little doubt that this recent release will be hugely popular, and I compliment Xtradecal on producing many interesting variations with which to complete more recent and older kit releases. The company remain one of the most proactive and prolific aftermarket decal manufacturers in the world today, and I look forward to seeing more Asian Air Arms subjects appearing on future releases in due course.

Highly recommended.  
**Mark ATTRILL**  
June 2023



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# The DHC-2 (UH-6A) Beaver in VNAF service

De Havilland RU-6 Beaver  
Binh Duc airstrip  
South Vietnam  
1969



Copyright 2013  
Lance V. Nix

The DHC-2 Beaver, a single-engined, high-wing, short take-off and landing (STOL) monoplane, was developed and manufactured by de Havilland Canada in the late 1940s. It was primarily designed as a rugged utility aircraft, envisaged for use in the vast wild regions of Canada and, as such, could be equipped with wheels, skis or floats. The DHC-2 first flew in August 1947 and the first production aircraft was delivered to a Canadian Government Agency in April 1948. Production continued until 1967, by which time over 1600 aircraft had been produced. Despite its all-metal construction, powerful radial engine and impressive STOL performance, initial sales were slow until the US Army commenced its own search for a new utility aircraft. The DHC-2 competed with the Cessna 195, and de Havilland subsequently won a contract which would ultimately see the US Army order 970 aircraft, more than half of the overall production run for the type. A limited number were also supplied to the US Air Force. The US Army aircraft were initially designated as L-20A/B Beavers (L for Liaison), and re-designated as U-6A/Bs (U for Utility) in 1962. The aircraft was initially designed to carry 7 passengers or up to 2000 lbs of general freight.

The L-20A Beaver had seen limited service during the Korean War, where its rugged design and excellent performance in challenging environmental conditions were much appreciated by the US Army. Its ability to operate in and out of short and rudimentary landing strips made the aircraft ideal for use in remote, underdeveloped regions and it was inevitable that the Beaver would also see service in Southeast Asia. As a result, the aircraft type saw extensive use with the Cambodian, Laotian and South Vietnamese Air Forces, as well as with Air America, the aviation arm of the US Central Intelligence Agency; the latter during the so-called 'Secret War' in Laos.

The first recorded deliveries of two U-6As Beavers to the South Vietnamese VNAF took place in 1958. Unlike other aircraft types, overall deliveries were quite modest with another seven aircraft delivered in 1964-65, and a further eight thereafter, with the Air Arm ultimately receiving 17 aircraft in total. The early batch of aircraft were initially operated alongside other aircraft types by the 314<sup>th</sup> Special



Mission Squadron, 33<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Wing at Tan Son Nhut Air Base before the type was identified as a potential platform for a highly specialised role.

In the early 1960s, strategic communications between the Government and the population, and in particular those located in the rural areas of South Vietnam, was very rudimentary. Radio and TV coverage was not extensive and psychological air warfare operations were often the sole swift means of communication between the Government and rural communities regarding military operations and objectives. In late 1963, and as the US authorities sought to build up VNAF combat capability, the 716th Composite Reconnaissance Squadron was also activated as part of the 33<sup>rd</sup> TW, and the new unit received a wide variety of aircraft types to fulfil an equally wide



variety of missions. The Squadron complement included the U-6A Beavers that had been previously operated by the 314<sup>th</sup> SMS, which operated alongside the RT-28 Trojan, EC-47D Skytrain and RF-5A Freedom Fighter. In the Spring of 1964, the VNAF set up a General Political Directorate within its Command structure with Headquarters established at Tan Son Nhut AB. Ten single-engine utility aircraft were delivered to the Unit, comprising 6 x U-6A Beavers and 4 x U-17 Skywagons. These aircraft were modified to carry a tape-recorded Public-Address system with a battery of speakers mounted on the port side of the fuselage. The U-17s, with their limited range, were primarily used in the environs of Saigon and its outlying districts, with the U-6As utilised further afield due to their ability to operate from rudimentary landing strips 'up country' and to loiter overhead for longer periods, particularly in the heavily populated area around the Mekong Delta and in the central highlands. Apart from delivering airborne broadcasts, the aircraft were also employed in psychological warfare leaflet dropping, utilising the aircraft's excellent slow speed handling characteristics, although this was not without risk.





By 1969, the VNAF had received fifteen U-6A Beavers of which 6 were recorded as lost although it is not known if all of these were as a result of enemy shootdowns. The 716<sup>th</sup> CRS ultimately operated all of the de Havilland Canada U-6A Beavers that had been supplied to the VNAF, including the eight known to have been specially equipped for radio-interception or for psychological air warfare operations. It is understood that the Douglas EC-47Ds operated by the 716<sup>th</sup> CRS in the ELINT role were supplemented by

at least two heavily modified RU-6 Beavers that were also used to intercept enemy radio communications and plot their locations. These aircraft almost certainly originated from an earlier US Army project under the auspices of the Electronics Warfare Laboratory which developed airborne radio direction finding (ARDF) electronic equipment in the early 1960s and installed it in three de Havilland U-6A Beavers, re-designating them RU-6As. These aircraft were assigned to the Vietnam Flight Detachment of the 3rd Radio Research Unit in March 1962, providing the US Army with an embryonic reconnaissance capability in Vietnam. Due to the secretive nature of their operation, not much is known about the RU-6As although it would appear that they carried several different types of ARDF equipment. An earlier style ARDF system, utilizing a cabin-installed Collins R-390 radio, was fitted to at least one notable example, U-6A 51-16862 /mM, which was delivered to the US Army on January 1953 as L-20A, re-designated a U-6A in 1962 and subsequently converted to RU-6A and operated by the 716<sup>th</sup> CRS. Another, very low-quality image of a VNAF RU-6A Beaver, reveals a large 'teardrop' fairing on the underside of the aircraft adjacent to the main undercarriage with some large antenna protruding from the rear cabin which suggests that this particular aircraft was equipped with the newer AN/ARD-15 surveillance system that the U.S. used for their RU-6As and U-8D Seminoles in Vietnam. The de Havilland Canada U-6As do not appear to have survived with the VNAF until the very end of the Vietnam War. A drastic reduction in US military aid funding in late 1974, against the backdrop of increased combat activity with the North Vietnamese, forced the VNAF to take drastic measures to conserve their frontline equipment and cut overall operating costs. In late November of the same year, the decision was taken to deactivate 10 VNAF Squadrons and place over 200 aircraft into storage, which at the time included all of the remaining DHC U-6A/RU-6 Beavers. It is not entirely clear if the plan was fully implemented, given the proximity of the decision to the final fall of Saigon. The U-6A/RU-6A Beaver was conspicuous by its absence during the final weeks of VNAF operations and there is no record of any such aircraft that escaped from Vietnam in the last days of March 1975. That said, one aircraft appeared to have been abandoned on Con Son Island, which had served as a regrouping point for South Vietnamese forces planning their escape to the Philippines, and was discovered by Communist forces in early May 1975. Whether this aircraft ever entered service with the Vietnamese Air Force is still open to conjecture.



**VNAF de Havilland Canada U-6A/RU-6 Beaver Units/Identification Codes – 1958-74**

Unit	Variant	Air Base	Tail Code	Notes
314 <sup>th</sup> Special Mission Squadron	U-6A	Tan Son Nhut	C	Operational 1958 – Jan 1964 ?
716 <sup>th</sup> Composite Reconnaissance Squadron	U-6A/RU-6A	Tan Son Nhut	M	Operational Jan 1964 – Nov 1974

**VNAF U-6A/RU-6 Beaver Colours and Markings**

Research indicates that the colour and camouflage schemes worn by DHC-2 (U-6A) Beavers in VNAF Service were anything but standard. Early examples were pressed into service still sporting the overall US Army dark green scheme with orange-yellow wingtips, with the original gloss scheme soon taking on a semi-gloss sheen in the harsh climatic conditions. By the late 1960s, the U-6As, in line with many other VNAF transport and larger utility aircraft, had adopted the standard 'Southeast Asia' camouflage scheme. The camouflage consisted of Dark Green (FS34079), Green Olive Drab (FS34102) and Tan (FS30219) for the upper surfaces with Light Grey (FS36622) for the lower surfaces, although it is understood that some aircraft may have received black lower surfaces for nocturnal air support operations. Some photographic evidence also suggests that at least one aircraft sported a wraparound scheme utilising the three upper surface camouflage colours, which is also plausible given the original overall dark green colour delivery scheme. There was also a wide variation in the camouflage style which would indicate that these were applied locally in a very ad-hoc fashion. Despite the adoption of less conspicuous colour schemes, the aircraft retained the high visibility type-F national insignia, together with full-sized national flag. The earlier U-6As had the aircraft serial number applied in yellow on the fin surfaces with a single code letter, in white, applied to the mid-fuselage. Later on, as the VNAF grew in size, it became necessary to provide aircraft with two-letter Unit/Locator codes and aircraft serial number, in yellow, on the fin. At the same time, it would also appear that most aircraft carried a large rendition of the 33<sup>rd</sup> Tactical Wing insignia on the starboard side of the engine cowling only.

**The de Havilland DHC-2 (U-6A) Beaver in Miniature**

Coverage of the DHC-2 Beaver in kit form has, over the years, been patchy although there are signs of some promising developments in the near future. In the most popular of scales, Airfix have been the predominant force with a first release of their 1:72 scale kit in 1971. The original kit was released at a time when Airfix were producing some state-of-the-art products,





combining overall accuracy with good detail and the kit has stood the test of time with several re-issues, with the latest incarnation (Kit Reference AX3017V) appearing in their Vintage Classic series just over two months ago. Since then, Hobbycraft of Canada have produced a 1:72 scale kit although this was deemed to be rather simple and the only advantage it appeared to have over the earlier Airfix offering was the presence of engraved panel lines rather than the raised lines and rivets that adorn the latter kit. Aside from that the kit is now hard to find. Dora Wings of Ukraine have previously announced the development of a new kit in 1:72 scale (Kit Reference DW72-2022D) which will, no doubt, be eagerly awaited given the reputation this company has garnered with its most recent products.

In the larger 1:48 scale the only readily available kit that has been produced was again from Hobbycraft of Canada (Kit Reference HC1675) which first appeared in 1999. Once again, the kit was quite simple for a 1:48 scale offering but did offer a quite novel approach to dealing with the transparencies by offering a two-piece complete fuselage, including glazing, in clear plastic. While this addressed the issue of flush mounted glazing, clear plastic can be notoriously difficult to work with since it can be quite brittle. The kit did benefit from the inclusion of a very nice, Cartograf-quality silkscreen decal sheet, that included both VNAF and Royal Lao Air Force options. This kit is also hard to source and, in spite of its simplicity, still commands high prices on the pre-owned market. Once again, Dora Wings of Ukraine have promised the release of a brand-new kit (Reference DW48-2022D) in 1:48 scale, and if online CAD images are



anything to go by, this will also be a hugely popular kit. It of course remains to be seen whether either of the Dora Wings kits will come with VNAF options. In the diminutive 1:144 scale, Miniwings can always be relied upon to produce kits of the more esoteric subjects, and such is the case with the Beaver which is released under the L-20A Beaver moniker (Kit Reference MINI360) with VNAF markings. Two aftermarket decal companies have been known to produce sheets for the 1:72 scale kits. Blackbird Models produced a sheet entitled 'Air War Over Vietnam' Part 2 (BMD72-043), which included a VNAF L-20A/U-6A Beaver and, more recently, Xtradecal



have produced a brand new sheet (XD72-345), reviewed elsewhere in this newsletter, that also includes a U-6A Beaver operated by the 716<sup>th</sup> CRS of the VNAF.



**Mark ATTRILL**  
June 2023

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