



ASIAN AIR ARMS Newsletter 41 August 2024 (3rd Quarter)

ASIAN AIR
ARMS



Serving Asian Air Arm enthusiasts and modellers in 60 countries

Building a



Pakistani 'Fantan'

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Asian Air Arms in the News again

Apologies for the late publication of this latest edition of the Asian Air Arms newsletter. Both Steve and I have been very busy in recent months and have had some continuity issues to deal with in the last few weeks too. That said, I am delighted to say that our illustrious editor has put together another bumper edition of the newsletter, with the help of some of our friends within the SIG, which I hope will be of interest to the readership.

Since it is now early September as I write this, we are just over two months away from THE major event in the Asian Air Arms SIG calendar, which is Scale Model World 2024 !. This huge event will be held, as usual, at the Telford International Centre on 9-10 November and plans are now well underway for our attendance at this 'flagship' annual event. The Asian Air Arms display is undergoing some changes in overall appearance for this year, based on feedback from last year's event and some trials at smaller shows during the early part of this year. For this year, we have decided to go for the 'Less is More' look, with a significant reduction in the number of models on show although we will retain the standard display space. This will mean that the stand will be less crowded and afford our visitors a better view of the models on display. Early indications from our contributors have ensured that the variety of models on display will not be diminished with this reduction in overall numbers; We already have no less than fifteen Asian Air Arms represented and I feel sure that the final tally will increase in the coming weeks as more of our contributors add to the list. The AAA SIG tables will have a new 'feel' to them with most of the models presented on individual display bases and we hope to have a new SIG display banner in place to help visitors locate the stand; one of the key observations from last year's show. We should, once again, be co-located with our friends from the Harrier SIG (several of whom are also members of the AAA SIG, including their enigmatic leader, Nick Greenall). In keeping with our traditions, we will also be hosting our annual competition at the show, with prizes for some of the best models on our own tables, together with prizes for the best Asian Air Arms subject in the main IPMS(UK) Competition and the best model by a non-SIG member on display elsewhere at the show. Since this will be the last newsletter before Telford, I will send out a short e-mail with further details of the show nearer the date.

Speaking of competitions, I have noted an increased interest in our regular on-line version and will continue with this popular feature of the SIG throughout 2025. I have also recently noticed that the enormously popular Britmodeller modelling website is currently running an Asian Air Arms Group Build and I have offered a SIG prize for the best Post-War Asian Air Arms subject, once that Group Build completes later in the year, to generate additional publicity for the SIG. Our membership is still steadily growing, with at least 2-3 new applicants every month, which is also a good indication that we remain relevant and interesting.

On the global stage, and as we continue to focus on the tragic events in Ukraine and Gaza, we have also witnessed plenty of action in Asia, as tensions between the People's Republic of China and Taiwan continue to see numerous incursions into Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone (ADIZ) by elements of the People's Liberation Army Air Force. These events, along with the global impact of Russia's aggression against Ukraine and North Korea's strategic messaging have also drawn other Asian Air Arms into flexing their military might in the region. The Japanese Air Self Defence Force have been particularly proactive in extending their external influence, with active participation in the RAAF-sponsored Exercise PITCH BLACK 2024 which also attracted participation from at least four other Asian Air Arms, including Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand. The Republic of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) have also been busy, conducting a wide range of large-scale training events and air-orientated exercises with their US allies in recent months so there has been plenty for Asian Air Arms fans to savour through the media. While on the subject of the ROKAF, we have also recently witnessed the final retirement of the McDonnell-Douglas F-4E Phantom which completed its last flight with the ROKAF in June 2024. The only Asian Air Arm that continues to fly this iconic aircraft type is the Islamic Republic of Iran Air Force.

In contrast, the order book for the Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) T-50/KA-50 family of advanced supersonic trainer/light attack aircraft has grown with the type now operating or on order with no less than five Asian Air Arms including Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and, of course, South Korea. In addition, Brunei, Pakistan and Vietnam have also expressed interest in acquiring versions of the aircraft in the future.

Finally I would like to thank three of our regular contributors for their sterling work in helping Steve and I to put this latest newsletter together. Khawar Sarfraz has produced a great piece on his award winning 1:72 Nanchang A-5C Fantan conversion, while Graham James continues to provide evidence of his prodigious output with a fine article on his 1:48 scale Yakovlev Yak-130 'Mitten' in the unusual colours and markings sported by examples operated by the Myanmar Air Force. Last but not least to my friend and acknowledged expert on the Pakistan Air Force, Franciszek 'Franek' Grabowski, for his very interesting assessment of the Douglas C-47 Skytrain, one of the first aircraft to serve with the newly created Pakistan Air Force in the late 1940s.

Until next time, happy reading and Stay Safe !

Mark

Greetings, fellow AAA enthusiasts,

Following on from my warning last month regarding my order with Modelmaster Decals, I was contacted while on holiday by the owner, Jim Grindlay, apologizing for the non-arrival of my order. Bearing in mind that my order by this time was almost 4 months overdue, he offered to send out my order with an additional sheet of my choice. This was two weeks ago, and the decals have not yet arrived, but **Watch This Space! Further updates to follow!**

Also during my holiday, I was privileged to be able to visit the [Aviation Megastore](#) near Amsterdam (Schiphol) Airport, and I would simply recommend that, if you ever get the opportunity, **GO!** Quite frankly, it has to be seen to be believed. Their range of models, aftermarket products, books, and other aviation- and modelling-related paraphernalia is second-to-none.

Happy modelling,

Steve



Training Aircraft in South Vietnam – The North American T-6G

Texan, Cessna T-41D Mescalero and T-37 “Tweety Bird” in VNAF Service

The fixed-wing flying training system for the VNAF had a bit of a chequered history, with several changes of ethos and policy that determined whether the activity would be conducted in South Vietnam or the United States, as the principal guarantor of security and supplier of Military Assistance. The first aircraft to support the in-country flying training system transcended the period between the end of French colonial rule over Indo-China and the increasingly influential role that the United States played in the region from the late 1950s. The North American T-6 Texan was a single-engine, low-wing monoplane that had seen widespread service as an advanced training aircraft since its acceptance by the USAAF and US Navy as the AT-6 in 1940. The aircraft

rapidly became the principal training aircraft for the Allies during World War II with thousands more used to fulfil the requirements of the so-called Empire Training Scheme for the Royal Air Force and those of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, Rhodesia and South Africa, where it was known as the Harvard. Post-War, the T-6 Texan/Harvard equipped a large number of established or new Air Arms worldwide, many of which exploited its potential capability as an effective Counter-Insurgency (COIN) aircraft, including the French Armée de l’Air in Indo-



China and the USAF in the Forward Air Control role during the Korean War. A large number of the original AT-6 aircraft were re-manufactured as T-6G Texans during the Post-War period and the US Government supplied fifty-five of these aircraft to the VNAF in 1954 to establish the Air Training Centre at Nha Trang. The big and powerful North American-built aircraft proved to be difficult to handle for South Vietnamese student pilots and after two years the programme was abandoned in favour of delivering advanced flying training in the United States with all of the aircraft withdrawn from use with the VNAF.



Over time, the US-based flying training system proved to be inadequate for VNAF needs, although this was mainly associated with the inability of the flying schools to produce sufficient pilots to operate the growing number of aircraft entering service with the VNAF by the early 1960s. As a result, the USAF procured the Cessna U-17A Skywagon (Cessna 185E) and U-17B (A185E) aircraft for the VNAF under the Military Assistance Programme, and deliveries to the Air Training Centre in South Vietnam began in 1962 with up to 25 airframes allocated to the Flying School. The ATC utilised the Cessna U-17 Skywagon for well over ten years, operating it alongside the Cessna 172E (military designation T-41D Mescalero) and the T-37 “Tweety Bird”, with the aircraft outlasting both of these types in the training role with the VNAF.

The Cessna 172E (T-41D Mescalero) was a single-engine, high-winged monoplane of all-metal construction with a side-by-side seating arrangement, making it ideal as a light primary trainer aircraft. The off-the-shelf military T-41B version was first procured by the USAF for their own preliminary flight screening programme for Air Force candidate pilots in 1964. The US Government arranged to deliver 22 T-41Ds to the Air Training Centre at Nha Trang to supplement, and eventually replace, the Cessna U-17s that had previously been supplied; the latter having been earmarked for further service with the



VNAF in the FAC, Observation and psychological warfare roles. The T-41D variant of the Mescalero was a simplified MAP version of the T-41B with a revised electrical system and simplified equipment fit. During their service with the Air Training Centre, the T-41Ds initially operated from Nha Trang and then from Phan Rang AB, with the vacation of US forces from the latter base. A burgeoning requirement for increased pilot training necessitated a reorganisation of the ATC curriculum in 1972 with undergraduate pilot training commencing on the T-41D and U-17A/Bs of the newly formed 918th Training Squadron although the association with the T-41D was to be short-lived. In mid-1974, and faced with a dwindling operational budget, the VNAF was forced to consolidate its fleet of aircraft in an effort to reduce operating and maintenance costs across a wide range of aircraft types. The surviving fleet of ATC-operated Cessna T-41Ds were grounded and placed in long-term storage despite the continuation of VNAF fixed-wing flying training which necessitated the return of several U-17s to the Air Training environment.

The Cessna T-37 basic jet trainer, known affectionately as the “Tweety Bird” after a contemporary cartoon character, featured side-by-side seating for student and instructor and was the aircraft from which the A-37 Dragonfly COIN and Close Air Support aircraft, also operated by the VNAF, was derived. The USAF had first introduced the T-37 to Service in 1955, to replace the Lockheed T-33 Shooting Star in Air Training Command and the aircraft was then destined to become the first, and only, jet training aircraft to equip the VNAF. Following the so-called ‘Vietnamization’ policy and late in the war, the USAF supplied twenty-four Cessna T-37Cs to the VNAF under the Project Enhance Plus scheme, for use as transitional trainers for VNAF pilots destined to fly the A-37A/B Dragonfly or F-5s. The aircraft operated from Phan Rang after the base was turned over to the

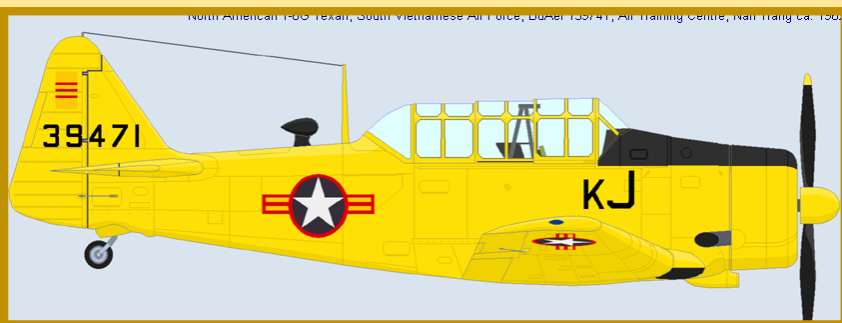


Vietnamese authorities in 1971, forming the 920th Training Squadron in 1972 and operating under the auspices of the Air Training Centre, headquartered at Nha Trang. Once again, the operational life of the T-37C “Tweety Bird” in VNAF Service was short-lived, with the entire fleet grounded and placed in long-term storage by the end of 1974 as the VNAF focussed on devoting its dwindling resources and supporting the ARVN on combat operations.

After the end of hostilities in May 1975, the former VNAF Air Training Centre at Nha Trang became part of the VPAF educational system with its extensive training facilities being put to use by the unified Vietnamese Air Force. The VPAF, at least initially, amalgamated their existing fleet of Nanchang BT-6 and Aero L-29 training aircraft with surviving examples of the VNAF Cessna T-41Ds and operated these relatively simple aircraft for several years. The fate of the VNAF T-37Cs has never been established although it is possible that the VPAF investigated their suitability for regeneration since they had taken on strength a large number of captured A-37A/B Dragonflies.

VNAF North American T-6G Texan, Cessna T-41D Mescalero and T-37 “Tweety Bird” Colours and Markings

Although flying training is an essential element for any successful air force, it is by nature not as eye-catching or glamorous as operational activity, and taking into account that the VNAF spent almost every year of its existence conducting active combat operations, the vast majority of imagery obtained between 1955-1975 focussed on frontline combat aircraft and helicopters. There are very few images of VNAF training aircraft from this same period and, where they are available, they are generally of poor quality. From my extensive research, I have been able to glean the following notes on colours and markings for the three types. The T-6G Texans were delivered in an overall orange-yellow colour scheme with a matt black anti-dazzle panel. The aircraft wore a large rendition of the VNAF ‘Stars and Bars’ insignia in the standard four positions with the aircraft serial number, in black, on the fin surfaces. The VNAF T-6Gs also sported a large two-letter unit identity code on the forward portion of the fuselage under the cockpit which, interestingly, predates the wider application of this locator system in the VNAF. Contemporary photographs of VNAF T-6Gs reveal that most, if not all, of the aircraft were equipped with the prominent DF Loop fairing on the upper fuselage which appears to be matt black in colour.



The Cessna T-41Ds were delivered to the VNAF in an overall light grey colour scheme, possibly ADC Grey (FS16473), with a matt black anti-dazzle panel, although the light grey faded quite quickly in the harsh climatic and environmental conditions, taking on an almost off-white appearance on some aircraft. The aircraft sported a large rendition of the VNAF ‘Stars and Bars’ insignia in the standard four positions although that on the fuselage was located further forward, under the rear cabin windows, to make room for the prominent aircraft serial number, which was understood to be rendered in medium blue. The T-41D also sported a smaller version of the standard VNAF red/yellow fin flash and a large Air Training Centre

unit insignia on the fin surfaces. As previously noted, a number of T-41Ds were retained by the North Vietnamese authorities and these aircraft retained the light grey colour scheme with simplified markings, consisting of a red flash with yellow star on the fin and a three-digit numerical code on the rear fuselage.

Photographs of VNAF T-37Cs are very rare, with only one known publicised source of poor quality. It is, however, reasonable to assume that due to the rapid manner in which the aircraft were supplied to Vietnam, they operated in the standard USAF Air Training Command scheme of the day for T-37s, which was natural metal. The aircraft would almost certainly have had the VNAF version of the ‘Stars and Bars’ national insignia overlaid on the existing USAF insignia. The aircraft also carried the aircraft serial number, in black, on the fin surfaces along with a smaller version of the standard VNAF red/yellow fin flash. There could possibly be faint traces of the prominent black ‘U.S. Air Force’ titles, that were normally applied to the forward fuselage, and had in all probability been crudely removed before shipment to Vietnam.

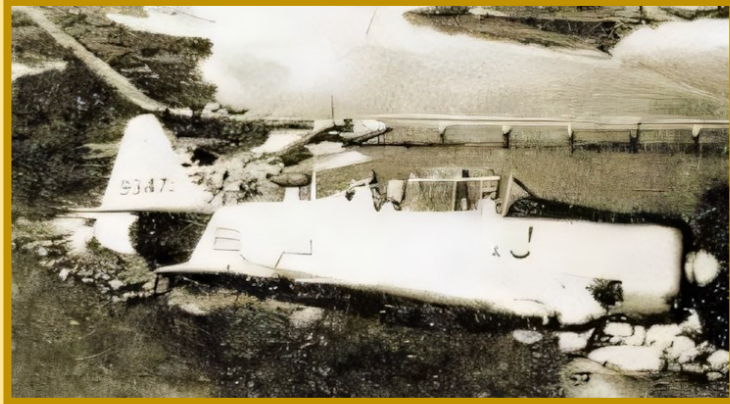
VNAF T-6G Texan, Cessna T-41D Mescalero and T-37 “Tweety Bird” Units/Identification Codes – 1954-75

Unit	Variant	Air Base	Tail Code	Notes
Air Training Centre	T-6G	Nha Trang		Operational 1954-1956
Air Training Centre	T-41D	Nha Trang		Operational 1971-1974
Air Training Centre	T-37A	Nha Trang		Operational 1971-1974
912 th Training Squadron, Air Training Centre	T-6G	Nha Trang		Operational 1954-1956
918 th Training Squadron, Air Training Centre	T-41D	Phan Rang		Operational 1971-1974
920 th Training Squadron, Air Training Centre	T-37A	Phan Rang		Operational 1971-1974



The North American T-6G Texan, Cessna T-41D Mescalero and T-37 "Tweety Bird" in Miniature

The three principal training aircraft of the VNAF, with the exception of the North American T-6G Texan, have not been well represented in miniature, so the modeller can anticipate some challenges ahead. Not surprisingly, given its worldwide service, longevity and popularity, the North American SNJ (T-6) Texan has been well represented in model form although there is still room for a definitive kit of this type in all of the popular scales. Kittyhawk actually launched their 1:32 aircraft range with a nice kit of the T-6G Texan (KH32-001) which is now, unfortunately, hard to source since the demise of this kit manufacturer. In 1:48 scale, Monogram were the first mainstream manufacturer to market the SNJ Texan and this has been reissued several times by both Monogram and Revell. It is a typical kit of its age, with raised panel lines and rivets, but it does have some nice internal detail and makes up into an accurate replica, although some modifications will need to be made to reproduce the T-6G variant, most notably with the canopy framing and the addition of the dorsal DF Loop fairing. In the late 1990s, Occidental, a new and short-lived Portuguese company, released a kit (OCC201) of the later T-6 Texan and this has subsequently been re-released by several other kit manufacturers, including Heller, Italeri and Modelcraft of Canada. This was an impressive first kit for a new manufacturer and it was no surprise that others have sought to purchase the original moulds and re-release the kit several times since. Although some of the detail may be 'heavy' by modern standards, the kit builds up into a nice replica and has some very nice detail throughout, particularly in the cockpit and the dominant Pratt & Whitney engine. Surface detail is restrained and includes some nicely rendered panel lines, and since Occidental produced a common range of sprues, all of the kits include several varieties of the DF Loop fairing including that appropriate to the VNAF version.



Although none of the contemporary kit manufacturers have the kit in their current catalogues, it is still readily available. The Italeri boxings (IT2652 & IT2736) are the most recent releases but it should be noted that some kits are marketed under the Harvard nomenclature although the kit contents are the same. In 1:72 scale, there have been three principal releases of the kit by Academy, Heller and Hobbyboss. The latter kit is the most recent and was released as one of the more simplified 'snap together' kits in the Hobbyboss range. Despite this, it does appear to make up into a decent replica although the panel lines appear to be rather deep and the canopy framing is a little too pronounced. The more traditional and older kits from Academy (AC1662) and Heller have appeared under different labels and manufacturers over time, including Airfix and Revell. Both kits will produce nice replicas of the T-6G Texan although the Academy offering is probably the best. It is noteworthy that both Special Hobby and Wolfpack have chosen the latter kit as the 'donor' kit in their own recent releases of 1:72 scale Texan/Harvard kits, combining the original Academy plastic with some resin and/or photoetched detail parts and new decals (Kit References: SH72447 & WP17207 respectively). It should be noted that none of the 1:72 scale kits, with the exception of the 'Limited-Edition' Wolfpack issue, include the prominent DF Loop fairing, so this will need to be sourced elsewhere for a VNAF example. For those modellers of the diminutive 1:144 scale, both Miniwing and Valom have also previously released scale kits of the T-6G Texan. Despite the plethora of N.A. T-6G Texan kits, and possibly due to the brevity of service with the VNAF, there do not appear to be any decals of Vietnamese examples available, either in the kits or on aftermarket decal sheets, so the modeller will have to source their own.

The Cessna T-41D is a more difficult aircraft to reproduce in model form. Minicraft of the United States and PM Models from Turkey have both marketed kits of the T-41D Mescalero in the past and it is understood that both are still readily available, particularly within the pre-owned market. The two kits are unrelated and are quite basic, although they do feature engraved rather than raised panel lines and some reasonable detail. Omega Models produced a Limited Edition all-resin kit of the Cessna T-41D in 1:72 scale some time ago, but I have never seen this kit and I believe it is long out of production. Aarii of Japan have previously produced a 1:72 scale kit of the Cessna 172 in their popular General Aviation series and I have seen several of these converted to represent the military T-41 variant in the past. In my experience the availability of Aarii kits can be sporadic although I have often seen them available on the internet or via dealers of pre-owned kits.

The Cessna T-37 "Tweety Bird" is the least well-served of the three training aircraft featured in this article. This is somewhat surprising since the T-37C served with no less than twenty different Air Arms including eight in Asia. Aurora produced a 1:43 scale model back in the days when scale mattered less than the requirement to fit a model kit into a particular box size. Since then, Tan Models of Turkey have promised a 1:48 scale kit since 2020, which would make sense since the Turkish Air Force were one of the largest overseas users of the original aircraft. Unfortunately, this has not yet come to fruition, but would be eagerly anticipated taking into account the quality of their first 1:48 scale kit of the Republic RF-84F Thunderflash. In 1:72 scale there is notionally only one kit available of the T-37B/C and this is from Hasegawa. In reality, this is not a true replica of the T-37C since it is based on their original A-37A Dragonfly kit, first released back in 1970. As a result, the kit is quite crude by today's standards with raised panel lines, chunky detail and poor fit of parts. Since an accurate depiction of the T-37C requires considerable work, it may be better to opt for the more recent A-37B/C Dragonfly offering from Academy. In any case, several items need to be removed or added to the kit to depict an accurate T-37C. Several antenna, aerials and fairings need to be modified or removed together with the air intake grids on the bottom of the fuselage. Several items then need to be added, including new wingtips, since the wingtip tanks of the A-37 variant do not feature on the trainer aircraft, together with revised air intake shields, nose mounted landing lights, navigation lights and pitot probe. The wheels and tyres on the T-37 were also of a different design and the kit items will need to be modified or replaced.

Once again, there are no suitable VNAF decals available for either of the Cessna types. This is less of an issue for the T-37C since the markings were relatively simple and generic national markings and serial numbers can be sourced from other kit or aftermarket decal sheets. Reproducing a VNAF T-41D Mescalero will be more problematic since the serial numbers appear to be non-standard in style, size, and colour and the rather complex VNAF Air Training Centre badge will also be difficult to replicate.

Mark ATTRILL, June 2023



A PAF A-5C 'Fantan' in 72nd Scale

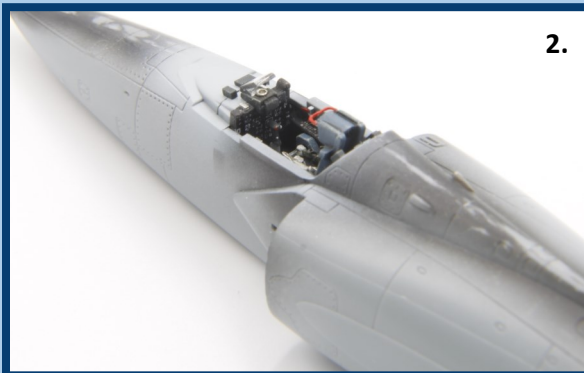
Trumpeter's 1/72 scale kit of the Nanchang Q-5C Fantan is a beautiful and accurate representation of the aircraft. The riveting is exquisite. Parts included in the kit box allow one to build a PLAAF Q-5 aircraft. The version of this aircraft that was exported to Pakistan was known as the A-5C. There were notable external and internal (cockpit) differences between the PAF A-5C and the PLAAF Q-5C. This brief write-up explains how an accurate PAF A-5C can be built using this kit. The model was assembled, detailed, painted, and weathered with the help of 250+ reference images that were collected from different websites. Several books on the Mig-19 'Farmer' were also consulted for this build. It took 3 months to build this model, roughly 250 hours in total.

Key Assembly Steps and Detail

The cockpit was assembled first. The export variant of this aircraft was originally designed with the Chinese JALI HTY-3 ejection seat. The PAF later replaced it with the Martin Baker Mk. 10. The Neomega resin Mk. 10 ejection seat was too tall for the cockpit tub, so I used the kit seat (which is more like a KK-2 ejection seat) and supplemented it with 'Yahu Models' PE seat belts, face screen and a firing handle [1]. A lot of extras were added to the cockpit including a scratch-built JQ-1 Heads-Up Display, oxygen hose, electrical wiring, avionics modules, and side panels [2].



1.



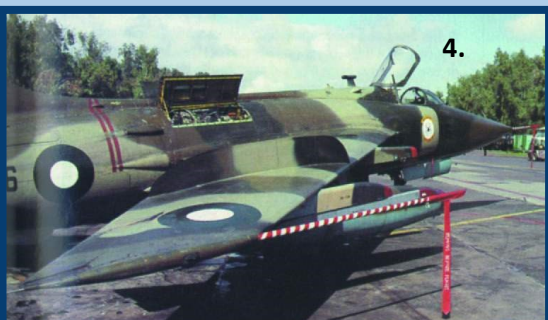
2.

The alignment of the tail, the horizontal stabilizers, and wings was critical. The horizontal stabilizers have a 5° angle below the horizontal while the wings have a 6° angle below the horizontal. Filling (using 'Tamiya' putty thinned with 'Mr. Hobby' lacquer thinner) was required at the fuselage joint and base of the tailfin, as well as where the wings connected to the fuselage. 'Master' static dischargers for MiG jets were used on the aft tips of the wings and horizontal stabilizers. These were fitted before the priming stage to ensure a smooth transition between the wing and the static discharger. The seamless final finish that was achieved because of this step came at the cost

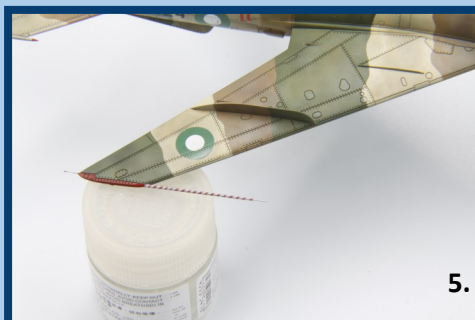
of considerable care that had to be taken during handling of the model throughout the rest of the build. A 'Master' Mig-21 F-13 pitot tube was length-adjusted and used as the main pitot by a drilling a 0.5mm hole in the nose. Only two horizontal vanes were fitted to that pitot. An ultra-thin sprue was passed through the vane hole to prevent the opening from getting clogged during priming [3]. This pitot was also assembled before the priming stage. A 'Master' Shenyang J-6/F-6 pitot tube was used as the longer standby pitot on the starboard wingtip [4]-[6]. A 0.5mm hole was drilled on the edge of the wing to house this pitot. Placing the wing fences was slightly tricky in terms of alignment with the leading edge of the wing. Highly thinned putty was used with a fine brush to fill any gaps at the base of the wing fences.



3.



4.



5.



6.



7.

Again, thinned putty was used to fill the gap between the fuselage and the fixed part of the canopy. The hinged aft part of the canopy was slightly sanded on the edges to achieve a seamless fit with the fixed part as well as the fuselage [7]. Before assembly, both transparent parts were polished with 'Tamiya' polishing and finishing compounds. Later, they were dipped in 'S. C. Johnson' wooden floor polish and left to dry for 24 hours to achieve a glass-like finish.

Since the kit air intakes is not deep and engine detail is not provided in the kit, scratch built plastic FOD covers with handles were prepared to give a more realistic finish to the final model [8]. Gun barrels, moulded together with the top wing parts in the kit, lacked detail and clarity. These were cut out and 1mm holes were drilled in the root of the wings. Sanded-down 'Master' Shenyang J-6/F-6 gun barrels were used instead, which really stood out on the completed model. Note that the Shenyang F-6 has two 30mm cannons, whereas the Nanchang A-5C carries two 23mm Norinco type-23-2 short-barrel cannons.



8.

Although the detachable wing pylons that are located ahead of the drop tank hardpoints are provided in the kit, I decided to leave them out to permit focus on the 760-liter drop tanks and to minimize under-wing clutter. Photo-etched (PE) fuel ports, taken from a Chinese Gunpla PE fret, were added on the underside of the drop tanks to enhance realism. Two hard points were installed on the belly. The PAF A-5C typically carried Matra Durandals on these stations. Since I could not locate aftermarket parts for these bombs, I left those stations empty.

The nose gear strut comprises 2 parts. Assembling the two parts together left a



9.

noticeable gap, which required filling. But if the two parts were assembled first, it would become impossible to position the nose wheel between them. The gap was therefore very carefully filled, sanded, and painted after a painted and weathered wheel had been positioned between partially-painted nose gear parts [9 & 10].



10.



11.

A scratch-built landing light was included and nose gear hydraulic/electrical wiring (made from 0.05mm rigging cable and 0.5mm brass wire) was put in place. Additional detail on the nose and main gear struts was added by including painted electrical resistors of 0201 and 0402 package size. An interesting feature of this aircraft is the asymmetric assembly of nose gear doors, which was accurately replicated with correct angles on the model. Additionally, hydraulic lines, electrical wiring, and oxygen bottles, like those found on the Mig-19 were included in the main and nose wheel



12.

wells [11 & 12].

A PE fret was used to scratch-build the UHF antenna (closest to nose pitot [10 & 12]). A similar approach was used to prepare the radio altimeter (installed between the UHF antenna and the nose wheel bay [10 & 12]).

Most kit parts, PE parts, and putty-filled areas were sanded starting from an 800-grit sandpaper and going up to a 5000-grit sandpaper to achieve seamless fit and level with the model surface.



Painting, Weathering, and Decals

13.



The entire model surface and all sub-assemblies were primed with 'Alclad' black primer and microfiller [7]. The surface was then lightly sanded using 'Infini Model' sponge sandpapers to achieve an ultra-smooth surface finish. A mottling layer was airbrushed using a combination of white, grey, light blue, light brown, light green, and light yellow. Masking tape was used to realize the 3-color camouflage scheme on the top surface and a light blue finish on the underside using colours specified on the kit painting manual. The drop tank

hardpoints were also painted in camouflage scheme. The areas just surrounding the panel lines on drop tanks were painted a highly diluted darker shade of the colour to exaggerate the dirt and grime effect [13]. Fuel ports on the drop tanks were painted black. The static probes, located just ahead of the cockpit, were painted titanium silver, while the old Chinese radio antenna located to the right of the rear end of the canopy was painted flat white [13].

The cockpit interior was painted medium grey. The main and side instrument panels and cockpit floor were painted black. The seat was painted blue grey, the cushion was painted olive drab, and the face screen and firing handle were painted red. The seat was then dry brushed with light grey. Belts were airbrushed linen with silver buckles. Scratches on the control stick and cockpit floor were made with chrome dry brushing [1 & 2].

The static dischargers were painted titanium silver with dark aluminium at the rear end. The nose pitot and standby pitot tubes [6 & 8] were first painted white and then sealed with 'Tamiya' gloss coat. Very thin strips of masking tape (with reduced adhesion) were then cut out to paint the red to realize the barber's pole design. The tips were painted titanium silver. The gun barrels were painted steel and dry brushed with aircraft aluminium [8].

Landing gear struts, doors, and wheel bays were painted blue grey and weathered with 'AMMO Mig' deep brown panel line colour. Oleos were realized using carefully cut aluminium foil and diluted white glue. Oxygen bottles in wheel wells were painted light blue, hydraulic lines were painted rusty silver, and electrical wiring was painted black. The wheel discs were painted medium green and finished with 'AMMO Mig' deep brown panel liner [10 & 12].



14.

The wingtips, FOD covers, forward tips of horizontal stabilizers, and tips of fuel tanks were painted red. Wingtip lights were painted with a base coat of silver followed by clear red and green. The exhaust region was painted burnt iron [14]. Paint chipping was not very common on PAF A-5 aircraft. However, grime and dirt were abundant [15]. It is important to state that none of the parts on the entire model was hand-painted. Every single part,

no matter how small, was masked and airbrushed.



15.

16.



The flag and roundels on the kit decal sheet [16] are designed with a shade of green which is totally inaccurate. Furthermore, the shape of the crescent and the position of the star on the flag are also incorrect. An aftermarket 'Print Scale' decal sheet for the PAF Mig-19 was used for the limited stencil detail, roundels, and tailfin flag [17]. The remaining decals came from the kit decal sheet.



Before the application of decals, the entire model was airbrushed with a gloss coat mixed 1-part acrylic thinner to 1-part 'Tamiya' gloss clear coat. Decals were sealed in



place using 'Mr. Hobby' decal setting and softening solutions. After a second diluted gloss coat, 'AMMO Mig' deep brown panel liner was used on the top surface while dark sea blue panel liner was used on the bottom surface. Ochre, black, white, and green 'Winsor & Newton' oil colours were used to depict streaks, grime effects, and oil leaks on the top and bottom surfaces of the model. The model was then airbrushed with a 1-part acrylic thinner to 1-part 'Tamiya' matt coat. Finally, a highly diluted acrylic black was randomly airbrushed on the exterior surface of the model (top side only) [18] to match the weathered look that is so obvious on numerous reference pictures.

18.



By Khawar SARFRAZ (www.khawarsscalemodels.com)





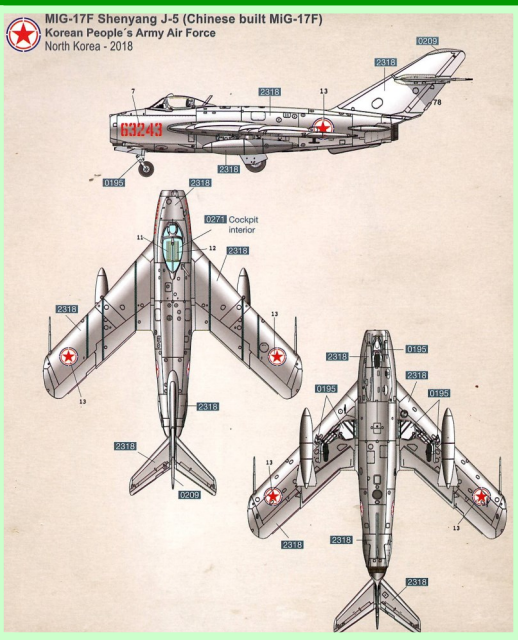
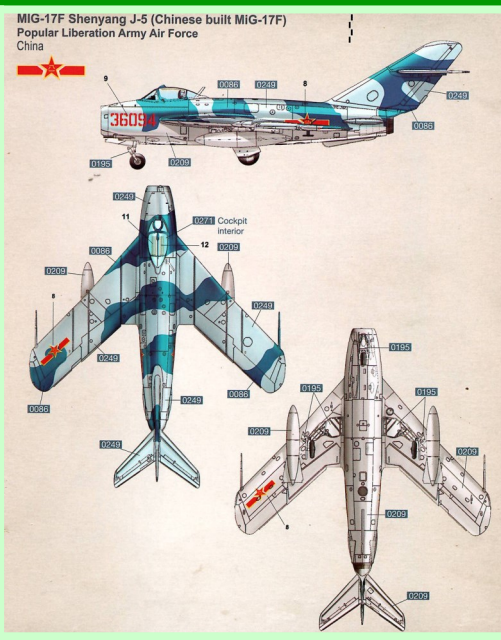
AMMO MiG - 1:48 Scale Mikoyan MiG-17F (Shenyang J-5) Fresco-C 'Asian Air Arms' (Reference MIG-8510/8514¹)



The Mikoyan series of Post-War Soviet jet fighter aircraft remain popular subjects with modellers, given their widespread operation by a multitude of Air Arms. The Mig-17, derived from the highly successful MiG-15 of Korean war fame, has been of particular interest to modellers, since it was widely used in a number of conflicts throughout the 1960/70s, including the African 'Bush wars', the Middle East and, of course, the Vietnam war. China licence-built the aircraft, known as the Shenyang J-5, and both types have served with no less than eight Asian Air Arms over an incredible six decades; the Korean People's Army Air Force are the last known operator of the type in Asia in 2024! The type has been reasonably well served in model form over the years. Until now, the most recent 1:48 offering was the Hobby Boss kit, first released in 2008, and judged to be a reasonable replica of the type, although several aftermarket companies subsequently issued correction parts to deal with one or two minor inaccuracies. The kit also suffered from a degree of over-engineering, providing a full replica of the Klimov VK-1F engine with an option to display the mid-fuselage break and an open avionic bay. These options inevitably led to some issues with the overall fit although there was little doubt that a nice replica could be produced;

fellow SIG member Ian Gaskell is testament to this, having produced several very nice models for our stand at the Scale Model World event in recent years.

All this changed in 2023 when the world-renowned Spanish paint- and finishing-product manufacturer, AMMO MiG, announced its intention to release the first in a series of Mikoyan MiG-17F/Shenyang J-5 'Fresco C' kits. To date, three of the four planned releases, centred around geographical operators of the type, have arrived on the shelves of model retailers; the most recent could be described as tailor-made for this SIG since it includes decal markings for no less than five aircraft operated by China, North Korean and North Vietnam. It should also be noted that there are two versions of each kit too. The standard version is for the basic kit, which comes with a photo-etched frame, decals and full-colour assembly instructions and painting/markings guide. The 'Premium Special Edition' version of the kit (MIG-8514) also provides a set of resin 3D printed parts which includes a KK-1 ejection seat, wheels, UB-16 rocket pods and pylons, and a cockpit access ladder, together with Red Fox 3D printed instrument panel/consols and a set of Ginger Cat canopy masks. It is understood that AMMO MiG produced this kit, the first of their own, in close coordination with Kinetic, the Hong Kong-based manufacturer, and the plastic parts certainly look similar to those found in the more recent Kinetic products, such as the F-104 Starfighter and F-16 Fighting Falcon.





Inside, the modeller is greeted by three sprues containing 89 finely moulded light grey and 4 clear parts which is a relatively modest parts count for a 1:48 Post-War jet subject. The simplicity of this kit, when compared with the previous Hobby Boss offering, is immediately apparent, although AMMO MiG still manage to provide a fully detailed undercarriage and afterburner section together with separate flying control surfaces and air brakes. The small photo-etched frame contains 11 additional parts, which include certain cockpit details and the prominent wing fences. The kit includes the aforementioned decal sheet with markings for no less than five Asian aircraft as outlined below:

Option	Variant/Air Arm	Scheme
1	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Red 3020', 932 nd Fighter Regiment, Vietnamese Peoples Air Force, 1969	Two-tone green camouflage with natural metal wing undersurfaces
2	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Red 2011', 923rd Fighter Regiment, Vietnamese Peoples Air Force, 1967	Overall natural metal with dark green disruptive camouflage pattern
3	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Red 83065', Peoples' Liberation Army Air Force, China, 1962	Overall natural metal
4	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Red 36094', Peoples' Liberation Army Air Force, China	Two-Tone blue camouflage over natural metal undersurfaces
5	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Red 63243', Korean Peoples' Army Air Force, 2018	Overall natural metal
6	MiG-17F Shenyang J-5 'Yellow 1905', Vietnamese Peoples' Air Force ²	3-Colour upper camouflage over light blue undersurfaces

A full set of comprehensive and clear assembly instructions, which also include full colour camouflage and marking diagrams complete a nice package. Not surprisingly, AMMO MiG have sought to promote their own products so paint references are limited to those found in their own range, together with some of their finishing products, with two pages of the instruction booklet dedicated to painting, the application of decals, and weathering which is a nice touch.



Assembly is rather conventional and starts with a nicely detailed 21-part cockpit tub and the afterburner section, which are then sandwiched between the two fuselage halves. The next section deals with the fitting of the air intake fairing and panels to the forward fuselage, where the simpler design of this model should ensure a better fit than that encountered with the Hobby Boss kit. The main wings are next and these contain superb internal detail for both main undercarriage bays and the flaps, both of which will benefit from the application of a suitable wash. At this stage care must be taken to open up the appropriate holes to accommodate the wing mounted drop tanks and/or UB-16 rocket pods, should you wish to equip your model with these extra parts. The assembly of the main airframe follows on very quickly before attention turns to the undercarriage. The positioning of the main flaps and air brakes is next with some careful surgery necessary for those preferring to show these items in the closed position; the kit appears to have been designed to show them in the deployed position. The final section deals with the remainder of the airframe parts and the cockpit canopy. This includes fitting the six photo-etched wing fences although I personally would prefer to deal with these earlier in the assembly sequence. All that is then left to complete the model is the assembly and fit of the wing mounted drop tanks. It should be noted that the assembly instructions for the basic kit do also include the appropriate call-outs for the additional

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detail parts (ejection seat, wheels etc.) since these are also available separately from AMMO Mig (Item Reference: MIG-8955)

I am not an expert on the Mikoyan MiG-17 Fresco C but the general consensus of opinion seems to indicate that this new AMMO MIG release is now the most accurate rendition of the type in this scale. AMMO MiG's marketing strategy, to offer both a standard and 'Premium' Edition of the kit, together with the 'pick'n'mix' of aftermarket items, such as the separate resin 3D detail set etc, is also to be welcomed since this gives the modeller a choice based on their preferences and budget. Highly recommended to those modellers interested in post-war Soviet jet fighters, Asian Air Arms and/or the Vietnam war.

Mark Attrill, August 2024

¹ MIG-8514 refers to the 'Premium Edition' of this kit

² It should be noted that the interpretation of this colour scheme is open to conjecture. It has been applied to a preserved example in the US Museum in Pima, Arizona and may not accurately reflect any known camouflage scheme applied to VPAF aircraft.



Building a Yakovlev Yak-130 in 1/48th scale

As a newcomer to the SIG I only had a couple of models that I could use to contribute to the Scale Model World displays and none were built before I joined. Mark's plan to have an example covering every Air Arm in the SIG meant I could match my stash with options available and even make a specific purchase. In reviewing the list, I had one I could cover immediately – the Yakovlev Yak-130 of the Myanmar Air Force.

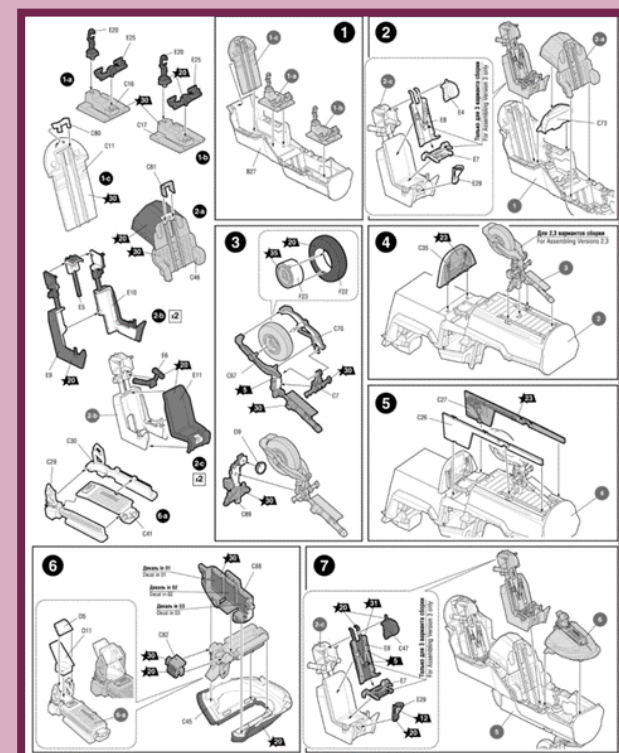
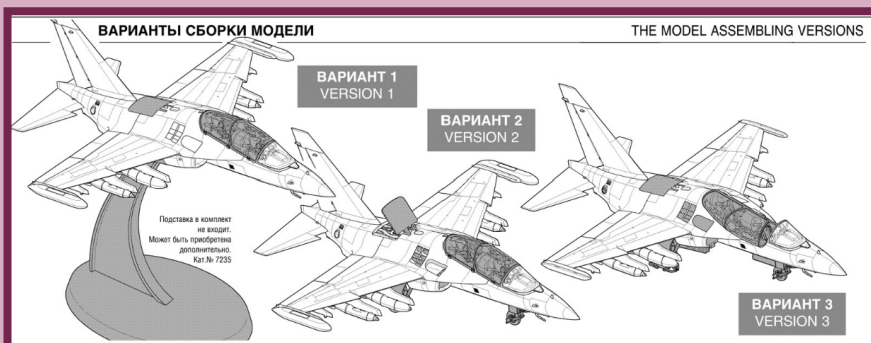
I'm sure some of you will be familiar with the aircraft, but for those of you who are not, here's a brief history. In looking to replace its L-39 trainers, the Russian Air Force selected two projects for advancement: the Yak-UTS and the MiG-AT (Advanced Trainer). The collapse of the Soviet Union shortly afterwards led Yakovlev to look for foreign partners (and money), and they teamed up with Aermacchi who were also looking at a follow-on trainer to the MB.339. The first joint prototype was unveiled in June 1995 and made its first flight on 25 April 1996. Within 5 years, the partnership had dissolved and the two companies went their separate ways with the Yak-130 and the M-346 Master. An agreement was made that sales and marketing of their respective aircraft would not overlap. It was not until February 2010 that the Russian Air Force received its first production aircraft with at least 100 known to be in service. Further deliveries are expected. It is operated by the 209th UAB at Armavir and the 200th UAB at Borisoglebsk.



The aircraft has also seen some success in the export market with orders from Algeria, Bangladesh, Belarus, Laos, Myanmar, and Vietnam. Like Leonardo, Yakovlev are looking to develop Light Fighter / Attack capabilities and variants to further enhance the appeal to small air forces who are traditional buyers of Russian military equipment. That's the real world, now what about the modelling one?

On opening the box you are looking down at 11 sprues, an instruction book, a decal sheet and a coloured chart for the paint schemes and decal placements. By comparison, the Kinetic kit for the M-346 has 6 sprues, together with the upper and lower fuselage halves. You have the choice of decals for Armavir- and Borisoglebsk-based Russian Air Force jets and single options for jets from Algeria, Belarus and Myanmar.

Pretty early on you need to decide what "mode" you will have the aircraft in – instructions refer to Versions 1, 2 and 3. I chose 1 – the "in-flight" assembly mode.



Okay, no prizes for guessing where the instructions start on the airframe – the cockpit. No issues with this, but I did struggle to understand the way they had done the layout of the instructions. Stage 1 shows the addition of the control column/rudder pedal and rear bulkhead into the cockpit tub, supported by three sub-assemblies 1a, 1b and 1c shown to the left. The same approach is taken for the ejection seats. Sub-assembly 6a (front seat HUD) is also included, even though you do sections 3, 4 and 5 on the front undercarriage first! Section 7 also deals with the cockpit. This is a bit odd in my view and a precursor to the complexities of the build.

As I was going to build my aircraft in-flight, I dragged two pilots out of the spares box. I don't suppose they are very representative of Myanmar Air Force pilots, not least in their physical size, being somewhat bigger and better fed! The pilots also required surgery on lower limbs and arms to fit, as do most pilots in kits. Although I was building the aircraft in-flight, I did build the undercarriage bays as they seem to be an integral part of the kit

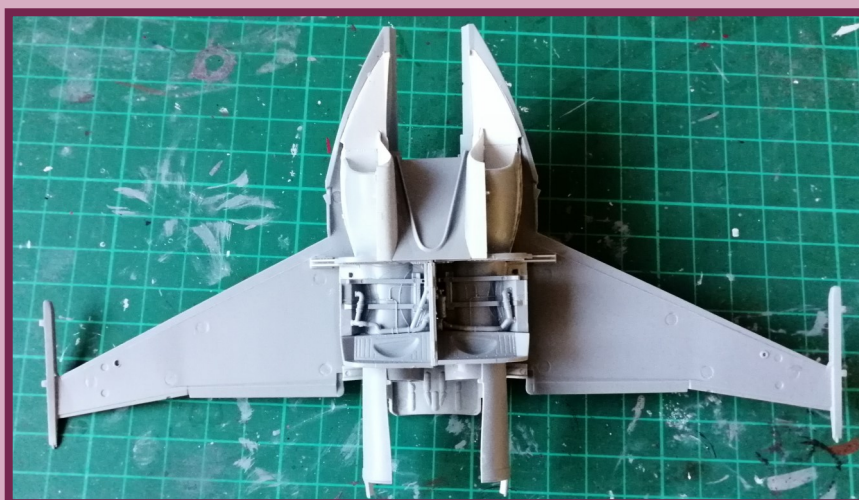


structure and I couldn't be bothered to determine if they were okay to omit. Never any harm to practise construction techniques and no painting required. The instructions have you adding the front undercarriage which not everyone is happy to do at this stage due to masking and painting. I think you can probably add it later, but best that you check this for yourself.

Construction continues with adding the sidewalls of the cockpits into the two front fuselage halves and wrapping them around the cockpit tub. Sections 9 to 13 cover the main undercarriage bays situated underneath the internal engine intakes. It required a bit of pressure to join the intake halves together. There's no real guideline at this stage as to how far apart the bottom edges are.

Sections 14, 14a and 14b deal with the intake FOD doors which have to be "snapped" into place so they can be movable. Personally I didn't bother about this as they were going to be in the up position and more attention needs to be made on ensuring they do not drop relative to the upper fuselage (part B29). Section 15 is a major construction step that brings together the intakes, the upper fuselage and the airbrake bay. Test fitting is essential as it's not intuitive as to how these things fit with the remainder of the fuselage yet to be added – at least it wasn't to me! When done, you

should see something like this. Care also needs to be taken with the undersides of the LERX to ensure a smooth fit.



Next up, sections 16 through 18 would have been the main undercarriage build so I went straight to sections 19 and 20 where you add the front and rear fuselage sections and the exhaust nozzles. Test fitting is a must, if nothing else to work out which areas you will need to add glue. It's also where you find any errors in previous alignments coming back to bite you. Here's a dry fit shot.



All of this complexity may well make sense, but I just found it annoying and regard it as unnecessary. Kit designers and more knowledgeable folks may well disagree, but I hold up the Kientic kit for comparison. This complexity also means if you made an error earlier it would be difficult to go back and fix it. I may have made a mistake as I had a few gaps to fill and some bits to sand. Then again, I may not have, it's hard to tell.

Section 21 involves fitting the auxiliary intake doors on the top of the fuselage – again care needs to be taken on fitting, and section 22 adds the upper wing to the fuselage. Another piece of amusement is to flex the heat shields to fit them behind the nozzles before adding the wing undersides and nozzle covers.

Sections 23 through 26 now deal with the flaps and leading edge slats – the setting of these will depend on your assembly option and 27 deals with undercarriage doors and, curiously, some stores options.



Sections 28 and 29 have you adding pylons and stores before sections 30 through 33 return us to the cockpit and add the airbrake, boarding ladder and FOD guards if required. Phew! You've made it to the end. Award yourself a pat on the back, especially if you used a lot less filler than I had to apply!

The paint instructions for the Myanmar Air Force scheme suggest Tamiya XF8 and X14 for the dark and light blue colours. I do

not use their paints and rarely trust the "equivalence" charts that you can find, even assuming the Tamiya paints are close to the real colours in the first place. I therefore decided to use my own interpretation of AMMO Mig's Dark Grey Blue for the darker pattern blue and a mixture of Vallejo FS36495, Hataka Oxford Blue and Vallejo Pastel Green for the lighter blue. A bodge, but it looks about right in my opinion – judge for yourself later. The scheme is brush painted.

The decals are very sticky and it helps to get their position right as much as possible to avoid excess movement afterwards. There are quite a few to apply, but they are mainly stencils. I brushed on a coat of Vallejo matt varnish to finish. Stores were added to match this photograph.



For the display stand I used an acrylic block, 5mm diameter acrylic rod and a couple of magnets, one buried in the fuselage of the aircraft. To add a bit of stability to the mount, I used a Kinetic Harrier nozzle ring around the magnet to add a bit of width to the mount.

In summary, this was a complex build probably not suitable for beginners, but the end result makes for a nice rendition of this trainer.



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For comparison here are a couple of images, showing a Leonardo (Alenia / Aermacchi) M-346 Master in the colours of the Republic of Singapore Air Force colours and a special scheme to celebrate 20 years of

operation at Cazaux in France, alongside my rendition using the Kinetic kit and home-made decals for the special scheme.



Graham James, 2023





Lockheed C-130J-30 'Super' Hercules



This kit was released as a precursor to the recent news that Academy have purchased all of the moulds for the Minicraft range of 1:144 airliners and military transport and special mission aircraft. This is good news for those of us that do not reside in the United States since these kits were previously quite expensive to buy overseas. In the meantime, Academy seem to have applied a far more realistic price point to the majority of these kits, and this will undoubtedly boost sales as many of the range are either not available from any other manufacturer or are the best kit of the type available in the scale. One cannot help but wonder if the previously high prices charged for these kits under the Minicraft brand signalled the bigger issues that lay ahead. Since I have had a previous background with the

C-130 Hercules, it does not take much to tempt me with a new kit or re-release of this hugely popular US-manufactured aircraft, that has seen widespread military and civilian service around the world. An added bonus for me with this release (apart from the price!) was the inclusion of decal markings for a South Korean example of the 'stretched' C-130J-30 variant.

The kit comes in Academy's standard top opening box with an eye-catching illustration of a Japan-based USAF C-130 banking sharply while deploying an impressive load of flares from its Defensive Aids Suite (DAS). Inside the box are nine medium grey sprues containing 93 parts with a further clear sprue of five parts, although it should be noted that not all parts are used on this model. The decal sheet includes markings for no less than six aircraft, including examples used by the Royal Australian Air Force, Royal Air Force and United States Air Force.

The instruction sheet is well laid out and easy to follow since the number of parts used in the actual construction of the C-130J-30 variant number just 73, including the clear parts. The inclusion of full-colour 4-view drawings to denote the various camouflage schemes and markings is a nice feature, as is the comprehensive list of paint references for no less than seven of the mainstream paint manufacturers, including AK Interactive, GSI Creos, Testors and Vallejo.

Minicraft kits are known for their rather basic but accurate kits featuring nicely rendered surface detail, and this kit is typical of their products. Assembly begins with the interior which is very basic by modern standards. There is no cockpit area, just a basic floor to blank off the area, together with a forward bulkhead and cargo floor. It could be argued that, with relatively small cockpit windows, the lack of any cockpit detail could be excused, although I suspect the more fastidious modellers will want to scratch-build a basic interior. The basic airframe comes together very quickly. The most complex part of assembly will be the four engine nacelles; the kit has been designed to cater for both early and late model C-130s so the majority of spare parts relate to those engines fitted to the C-130A-H variants. While on that subject, care needs to be taken with the list of 'parts not used' since there has been some corruption with the part numbering. Fortunately the kit assembly instructions are clearer so it should be easy to avoid mistakes. The main and nose undercarriage are nicely rendered and although the parts are primarily designed to be used in the deployed position, I believe it is relatively easy to pose the model in 'flying mode'. The rear loading ramp can be posed in the open or closed position with suitable parts for both, although I would suggest the former would require the application of some suitable detail to the cargo interior, even in this small scale. Care should also be taken with the selection of the wing-mounted auxiliary tanks since several styles are included in the kit.

The decals are nicely rendered and include the aforementioned markings for a ROKAF C-130J-30 operated by the 251st Airlift Squadron, 5th Air Mobility Wing based at Gimhae Air Base. Serial numbers for no less than four ROKAF aircraft are included, together with the appropriate stencilling; it should be noted that the cabin windows are also presented in decal form.

In spite of some basic detailing, the 1:144 Scale Academy/Minicraft kit of the C-130 Hercules remains the best in this small scale and this most recent edition of the kit benefits greatly from a nice selection of markings and a great price. It should also be noted that Monochrome of Japan also market the shorter and earlier C-130H variant of the same basic kit, with a selection of markings for JASDF examples.

Highly Recommended

Mark Attrill – August 2024

Fine Molds – 1:72 Scale McDonnell-Douglas F-15DJ Eagle

‘Japan Air Self Defence Force’

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ARMS



Following the release of their ‘2nd Generation’ 1:72 scale kit of the F-15 Eagle way back in 1988, Hasegawa dominated the market for well over 25 years and, to a certain extent, continue to do so; They have re-issued the kit well over 100 times since with new parts or markings, which must make the original kit one of their best investments over time. In fact, I can still remember buying my first example of this kit, shortly after release, in Hong Kong in 1988 and being very impressed with the detail and finesse on offer. Not surprisingly, given their domestic market, many of the re-issued kits feature parts and markings for both the single-seat F-15J and twin-seat F-15DJ variants operated by the JASDF, with a huge number of the releases featuring the special schemes applied to JASDF examples in the interim. In the last ten years several other Far Eastern manufacturers have

joined the fray, providing some serious competition. Platz were the first, releasing their first kit of the F-15J Eagle in 2015 and this was followed soon after by the Chinese manufacturer Great Wall Hobby, who released their first kit of the F-15 in 2017. Both kits have received excellent reviews and, not surprisingly, provide superior detail and fit when compared with the original Hasegawa kit. It was, therefore, a bit of a surprise when Fine Molds of Japan announced their intention to release a family of McDonnell-Douglas F-15 Eagle kits in 2023. To date, they have released no less than eight different boxings, including five covering the F-15J/DJ variants in service with the JASDF.

This kit is the first of their twin-seat F-15DJ Eagles and features standard unit markings, which I will not use since I plan to reproduce one of the attractive special camouflage schemes applied to aircraft operated by the JASDF’s specialist ‘Aggressor’ Squadron, utilising aftermarket decals from DXM – interestingly, a subsequent re-release of this kit does features markings for another of the Aggressor aircraft.

So, what’s in the box?. Upon opening, the modeller is presented with no less than sixteen medium grey and two clear sprues holding a total of approximately 185 parts. The sprue count may appear high for a 1:72 scale kit but, given the modular approach to this kit and the desire to extract as many variants and options as possible from the moulds, many of the sprues contain only one part; the radome, air brake and main canopy, for example, are all housed on individual sprues. The kit includes a 20-page assembly guide although, unlike those from Hasegawa and Zoukei-Mura, most of the instructions are only given in Japanese. The booklet includes a comprehensive paint chart and excellent painting instructions throughout the assembly sequence although the modeller will be left to decipher a fair amount of the information. Fine Molds also provide a very nice decal sheet which offers a huge amount of stencilling and markings for two JASDF F-15DJs in the standard two-tone Air Defence Grey colour scheme (FS36320/FS36375).



Option	Type/Serial Number	Unit/Location
1	McDD F-15DJ 82-8063/063	23 rd Fighter Training Squadron, Nyutabaru Air Base, Miyazaki, 2015
2	McDD F-15DJ 92-8068/068	304 th Tactical Fighter Squadron, Tsuiki Air Base, Fukuoka, 2015

No fewer than six pages of Decal Placement Instructions will ensure that all of the decal markings will be correctly located! All of the parts are finely moulded (to be expected given the manufacturers name!) and construction, unsurprisingly, begins with the nose undercarriage bay and cockpit tub, minus the ejection seats. The instrument panels and side consoles all feature fine, raised detail which will really ‘pop’ with some careful painting and use of washes. Decals are also provided for those who prefer an easy alternative. The next stage covers the assembly of the air intakes and main undercarriage bays and this is one of the highlights of this particular kit, since Fine Molds provide full length air intake/exhaust tunnels with integrally moulded bays. As a result, and in no time at all, the main airframe then takes shape with this assembly presented to the lower and upper fuselage parts. The upper fuselage section and wings are moulded as one part which also helps to avoid the ‘ghost’ seams that often



appear on models where the wings are offered separately. The assembly of the lower wing and fuselage is dealt with in section 6, and while this initially appears to be more complicated than that found on similar 1:72 scale F-15 kits, the excellent fit of the parts presents few problems. Sections 8-11 provide alternative parts for the air intake ramps and ailerons, which can be posed in the 'parked' or 'engines running' mode, which is a nice touch. Fine Mold use a unique method for fitting the twin fins, which really helps with their alignment and offers a very secure fit; something of a weakness on other kits.

Assembly then moves to the completion of the rather complex but nicely detailed exhaust nozzles, before moving on to the undercarriage, all of which feature some nicely rendered detail, much of which is on par with that offered in larger scale models of the F-15 Eagle. Section 23 of the instructions returns to the cockpit, with the assembly of the ACES II Ejection seats, instrument coaming and the windscreen and main canopy. The latter can be posed in the closed or open position and features some very intricate detail on the main canopy frame. Final assembly of the airframe is completed with the rather prominent air brake that can also be fitted in the open or closed position. Sections 30-33 then focus on the assembly and fitting of the stores pylons and drop tanks. On the positive side, the arrangement of the sprues provides for no less than four of the large 600 Gallon drop tanks so your model can be fitted with three but, as with all Fine Molds kits, there is absolutely no provision for any other weapons, so these must be sourced from elsewhere (Fine Molds do offer several weapons sets for this and other models in the F-4 Phantom/F-15 Eagle family).

Many will, no doubt, ponder whether we really needed another high quality 1:72 scale kit of the F-15 Eagle after two recent, and highly acclaimed, examples from Platz and Great Wall Hobby, both of which have reproduced JASDF examples in their respective ranges. That said, I believe the answer may be 'Yes', and for several reasons. First and foremost, neither of the aforementioned companies has to date offered the twin-seat F-15DJ operational trainer in their range. I suspect that for many JASDF fans (myself included), this variant is actually the more attractive one since it forms the backbone of the JASDF's Aggressor Squadron with all of those highly evocative and unique camouflage schemes that have been applied over the years. The surface detail on the Platz kit appears to be a little heavier than that found on the Fine Molds kit and the overall assembly sequence for the fuselage and wings is more complex too. Surface detail on the Great Wall Hobby kit is on a par with that on the Fine Molds kit and the assembly sequence appears easier, but the kit does not provide for full air intake/exhaust tunnels and the connection of the fins to the fuselage is a potential weak spot. A quick comparison of these two kits also indicates that the detail on the undercarriage and exhaust nozzles for the Fine Molds kit is slightly more refined than that found on the Chinese kit. The only slight disappointment with the Fine Molds is related to their marketing strategy, offering 'detail up' sets, such as seat belts, the distinctive formation 'slime' lights and any weapons as items that need to be purchased separately. In this respect the JASDF F-15J from Great Wall Hobby has the advantage since it offers a full suite of AIM-7 and the indigenous AAM-003 missiles as standard.

All that said, and on balance, I believe the Fine Molds kit to be the best of the most recent bunch, especially if you are looking to build one of the Aggressor jets using the excellent DXM decal sheet. In fact, Fine Molds have just announced another set of boxings that cover these particular jets so I suspect that I will have more than one in my own collection before long.

Highly Recommended

Mark Attrill – August 2024





DP Casper - "Mikoyan MiG-15UTI" 1/48 Decal Sheet



This is another timely release from DP Casper of the Czech Republic, taking into account the forthcoming release of a brand-new Eduard 1:48 scale kit of the legendary Mikoyan MiG-15, which will no doubt include the twin-seat MiG-15 UTI variant at some point. DP Casper have obviously decided to get ahead of the competition although these decals could apply equally to the Trumpeter kit.

This release covers no less than twelve aircraft in worldwide service, and this includes four operated by Asian Air Arms. Furthermore, all of the Asian themed markings are for more esoteric

subjects, with the possible exception of the Vietnamese Peoples' Army Air Force option, which is an added bonus. Taking the aircraft in alphabetical order, the first is for the single MiG-15UTI (Serial No. 2832) operated by the Intervention Group of the *Aviation Royal Khmère* (AVRK) (Royal Cambodian Air Force) in 1970, which sports an unusual overall light grey scheme with orange trim. The three other Asian subjects feature the more standard overall natural metal scheme. The first of these is an Indonesian Air Force (Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Udara (TNI-AU), often shortened to Angkatan Udara Republic Indonesia (AURI)) example (J-767) which was operated from Jakarta-Kemajoran Air Base in 1962. This aircraft featured full colour national insignia with the earlier AURI titles below the wings. Another unusual example is the Mongolian Air Force aircraft (Red 337), which was operated between 1970-80 and features the Red Star insignia on the wings, not often observed on aircraft from this diminutive Air Arm. The third natural metal example is for the North Vietnamese aircraft (Red 2618), which was operated from Kep Air Base from circa 1967.

The very colourful A5 sized decal sheet is literally crammed with decals and, as one would expect, includes all of the national markings, serial numbers and titling required for each aircraft. Individual stencils and maintenance markings will need to be sourced from the kit decal sheet. I believe the decals are printed by the BOA Agency so their quality is assured, with perfect registration and excellent colour saturation. As always, my only reservation with this particular release is the quality of the Decal Placement Instructions (DPIs). The modeller is left with one A4-sized fold out sheet which, due to the sheer number of subjects, contains some rather small colour side profiles and on the internal 'centrefold' a nice selection of photographs. The DPIs do include references to Humbrol 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. 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.

In spite of my misgivings about the DPIs, this is a great decal sheet for fans of this first-generation jet training aircraft. The lack of detailed DPIs does take a little bit of a shine off the release, given that it is not the cheapest of decal sheets but, on balance, I would still highly recommend it to members of the SIG. 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

August 2024



Dakotas of the Royal Pakistan Air Force

It is hardly surprising that the Dakota became the first transport aircraft of the Royal Pakistan Air Force. Available in quantities post war, Dakotas formed the backbone of many air forces around the globe. Unfortunately, little is known about the Dakota's service in the RPAF. Even worse from the modellers' point of view, there are not too many photos that allow identification of particular airframes to recreate their colours and markings.



After WWII the aircraft handed over by the RAF became the standard transport aircraft of the Royal Indian Air Force. When partition was about to come into effect, the Air Force Sub-Committee of the Armed Forces Reconstitution Committee was established to divide the assets of the Royal Indian Air Force between the two emerging states.

According to the agreement, Pakistan was allocated No 6 Squadron of the RIAF along with a total of 32 Dakotas. Out of those, only 4 were available for immediate use. It was decided that Pakistan should receive overhauled aircraft, as it lacked appropriate [maintenance] facilities. The overhaul centre for Dakotas in the CBI Theatre was located at Hindustan Aviation Limited at Bangalore, India. Thus most of the allocated aircraft were actually ex-RIAF.

Prior to Partition, personnel of No 6 Sqn, (based at Mauripur at the time), were asked to opt between India and Pakistan. This turned out to be a bit disappointing, as only 3 officers and 17 airmen decided to continue with Pakistan, while 16 officers and 102 airmen opted for India. Worse, there were no training facilities present, the already existing ones being on the Indian side of the border. According to conflicting information, the unit initially had only one or two Dakotas in serviceable condition.

On 15 August 1947, Pakistan became formally an independent member of the Commonwealth. On the same day, the RPAF and its first units were established, but it was not until 25 September that the Air Force was activated after receiving the first aircraft.

The first weeks following Partition were an organisational challenge, with a lot of shifting of units to available stations, as well as taking over control of assets to protect them. The Squadron was, therefore, moved to RPAF Peshawar due to lack of premises at Mauripur, which was still operated by the RAF as a staging post. Peshawar became the nest of the RPAF, with AHQ and other squadrons also being moved there.

Those early days were particularly difficult because of shortages of virtually everything, and required a lot of flexibility on the part of AHQ to get the required number of aircrew. The initial plan was to increase the strength of the Squadron to five aircraft by the end of March 1948. In fact, the strength reached seven serviceable aircraft, with two kept in reserve. Presumably all those aircraft were the Mk III variant.



At this stage, No 6 Sqn was involved in Operation Curzon, in which the withdrawal of troops from the Tribal Territories (in the then NWFP) took place in December 1947. Other operational requirements included flights to Kashmir, to supply Pakistani troops which had been fighting Indian forces since October 1947. This turned out to be demanding, given the small resources available. Initially, one aircraft was detached to nearby Risalpur for the purpose. The reason for this movement is not known, but presumably it was a cover up, to have the aircraft masquerading as a flying classroom, since military aircraft were not allowed into Kashmir. In any case, there was a need for Risalpur to have a Dakota to train navigators and such aircraft were provided by No 6 Sqn on regular basis.

Meanwhile, AHQ made plans to have a transport squadron of 20 aircraft and a communication squadron of 3 aircraft within a year. This was to be followed by another plan of reducing the transport squadron to 10 aircraft and increasing the size of the communication squadron to 10 aircraft in the following few years.

On 1 June 1948 Air Headquarters moved to Mauripur, to premises vacated by RAF. This allowed the RPAF Command to be much closer to the political circles of the country. The transfer required establishing a new transport unit, known as AHQ Communication Squadron. It was formed specifically to fulfil VIP transport duties for the RPAF staff and high ranking officers. A single Dakota III was therefore attached to AHQ Communication Flight to allow AHQ personnel to commute across vast areas of Pakistan, especially to Karachi, where maintenance facilities were available. This was followed by three Dakota IVs as they became available. At the same time, following the arrival of a Vickers Viking, a separate Governor-General's Communication Flight was established for carrying the Governor-General and government officials, as well as notable visitors. The Flight was subordinated to the Squadron, and both units were based at RPAF Mauripur.



In mid-1948 the first Dakota IVs started to be delivered to operational units. Some of those were directly handed over by the RAF, including a few aircraft of RAF Communication Flight Mauripur (like KN280, later re-serialised as H707). Interestingly, it seems they initially wore original RIAF or even RAF serial numbers, and not RPAF ones applied since December 1947. Eight such aircraft could be identified by serial numbers. It must be noted here, that some of those aircraft were initially listed in log books as Mk III, only to reappear in 1949 as Mk IVs. It might be assumed that they were de-rated, due to reliability issues and no necessity of high altitude flying, thus C-47Bs or Dakota IVs were effectively downgraded to C-47A or Mk III. Presumably at some point in late 1948 they were retrofitted to full Mk IV status.

No events of any particular importance were recorded, until on 4 November 1948, when a Dakota of No 6 Sqn was attacked by two Tempests of 7 Sqn RIAF during a flight to Gilgit. Flg Off Mukhtar Ahmad Dogar (Pak/2353) skilfully evaded the attackers, and was awarded Sitara-e-Jurat (Star of Courage) for the feat. Unfortunately, it is not known which Dakota he was flying on this historic flight, though it is suggested it may have been VP909 (later H909/H709). Two days later AVM Subroto Mukerjee sent a signal stating that: "he regretted that he had to order all RIAF fighters to destroy without warning any unidentified aircraft operating over Jammu and Kashmir." AVM Perry-Keene, clear on intentions, was forced to call off day operations. Ultimately, defenceless Dakotas had to switch to night operations only, during moonlight nights, which put crew at the highest risk. Despite that, during November 1948 alone, the Squadron, operating from Risalpur and Peshawar, dropped some 88,000 lbs of supplies.

Deliveries of overhauled aircraft continued and the count finally reached six in No 6 Sqn and four in the Comms Sqn in December 1948. At the time two other serviceable Dakotas were held in immediate reserve, and a further 8+11 unserviceable aircraft were kept in a large airship hangar at Drigh Road, Karachi. The total was 31 aircraft, one short of the original 32 – possibly H710, sold or leased to Pakistan Air and registered AP-ACD, was not included. The total of Dakotas delivered up to date presumably was seven Mk IIIs and eight Mk IVs, making a total of 15, so three aircraft must have been re-categorised as unserviceable. Likely candidates are C404 and C405, and possibly H707 which suffered minor damage at the end of November 1948, and could have not been repaired at the time of the census.

A cease-fire, which came into effect on 5 January 1949, brought to a stop the risky flights to Gilgit. The Squadron, reinforced by a contingent of contracted Polish airmen, could concentrate on increasing serviceability and training of aircrew. With the improving situation, a detachment of No 6 Sqn at Chaklala was also established.

In March 1949 new C-in-C AVM Atcherley took over the RPAF. His aim was to increase proficiency at the expense of size. He also confirmed the decision to replace Dakotas with Bristol Freighters. There were several reasons for this. Worn-out Dakotas caused frequent mechanical problems, a shortage of ground personnel prevented proper maintenance and there were limited overhaul capabilities resulting in overhauls being contracted out abroad. Freighters, despite their somewhat antiquated look, offered much better performance in almost every respect, their large cargo compartment allowed easy transport of vehicles or other large sized loads, and last but not least they required fewer ground crew. Additionally, they were factory fresh, thus a better ratio of serviceability was to be expected. The first batch of aircraft was delivered at the end of 1949.

No 6 Squadron (Transport) was, meanwhile, to be reduced to four "in use" and two "immediate reserve" Dakotas with a crew of 16 pilots, 8 navigators and 8 signallers. The Squadron had to provide 300 hours flying per month including 200 hours Army supply and 100 hours training. Once the situation improved, the Squadron was to be expanded to 8 aircraft under establishment, with 32 pilots, 16 navigators and 16 signallers, and flight time increased to 480 hours per month. The squadron also moved from Peshawar to Lahore as a permanent base in about May 1949. It was expected that the Squadron would have 8 Freighters under establishment plus 4 in reserve by the end of 1949. The Communications Squadron and subordinated Governor-General's Communication Flight had to operate one Viking, one Wayfarer, two Freighters, plus two in reserve.

Those decisions finally allowed the withdrawal of the most worn-out Dakota IIIs which were put into storage at No 102 Maintenance Unit, pending disposal. Thus, at the end of March 1949, the RPAF had on its strength one VIP Dakota III (C406), six withdrawn in storage, seven serviceable Dakota IVs and a further ten unserviceable in storage, with two of them to be written off. During 1948 eight Dakota IVs were made serviceable as confirmed by documents. Two were confirmed as slightly damaged at the end of 1948 but were to be repaired within the Units operating them. During 1949, a further twelve Mk IVs were made serviceable. This made 13 Dakota IVs serviceable at the end of March 1949, and a total of 20 available in stock at the time of the census. Possibly only the aircraft allocated to the units were considered serviceable, while those during periodical maintenance were not. Perhaps some of the aircraft considered write offs or even already struck off were restored to flying status anyway. It is noticeable that the total of 24 Dakotas listed in the census was much less than the original 32, less so comparing to the verified strength of 27. It is not possible to establish what had happened to five aircraft, however. Analysis of the Pakistan Civil Register suggests that they may have been sold to commercial aviation.



BACK HOME FROM A GOODWILL MISSION TO CEYLON
 -Wg. Cdr. Said-Ud-Din ; Air Cdre. D. L. Amlot ; A. V. M. R. L. R. Atcherley,
 Wg. Cdr. S. A. Aziz ; Gp. Capt. Asghar Khan ; Sqn. Ldr. A. K. S. Ahmad



In June, Dakota H700 of No 6 Sqn was damaged in a forced landing and allocated to ground instructional duties at Risalpur. This is the only recorded loss of a Dakota in the RPAF, although it seems that ultimately the aircraft was repaired and sold to Orient Airways via Pakistan Aviation Ltd in 1952.



Around this time, No 6 Sqn moved from Peshawar to Lahore as its new permanent base. This freed some precious space for a fighter-bomber wing, and offered better use of available premises.

Finally at the end of 1949 and the beginning of 1950 the first ten Freighters were delivered. This allowed commencement of conversion of No 6 Sqn. Within a few months all Dakotas had left the squadron. Apart from two aircraft sold or leased to Arabian American Airlines, they were either put into storage or handed over to the Communication Sqn, where they remained in service for passenger carrying duties including VIPs. The reason for this, apart from a shortage of Freighters, was probably the better comfort offered by the Dakotas compared to Freighters, which were known for high vibrations. The rest of the Freighters arrived in batches, the last one in mid-1953. This allowed disposal of some of the aircraft, and at the end of 1953 eight Dakotas were sold to the UK.

The last unit to operate Dakotas was No 12 Composite Squadron, reformed in September 1953 from No 12 Squadron. In the new establishment, the Squadron had three flights: AHQ Communication Flight operating Dakotas and a single Viking; a target-towing flight with Tempests, and later Furies; and a heavy bomber flight flying Halifaxes. Both Dakotas and Halifaxes were also used for target-towing

for heavy anti-aircraft artillery, a task for which Tempests and Furies could not be used due to the size of the drogue. It is not known when Dakotas were withdrawn from use, though usually a date of 1955 is given. Four aircraft were sold in 1955 and 1956 but the lot included Dakota III C400 stored for a few years in Quetta. The last aircraft, H718 was sold to PIA on 23 September 1957 but it is not known if it was still operational or in storage. Thus ended the service of the type with the PAF, which, when Pakistan became a republic in January 1957, had dropped the Royal prefix.

Apart from that, a number of Dakotas were operated by Pakistan commercial aviation, also for military transport to Kashmir, but that is another story.

Colours and markings

The RPAF operated seven Dakota IIIs serialled C400-C406. Serials out of the range, C407 or C409 do appear in documents, but it is possible these are errors.

Little is known about their colours, but it might be presumed that those flown by No 6 Sqn wore the standard Service Transport Scheme promulgated in 1943 as the official scheme for transport aircraft flying outside of the UK. It consisted of a disruptive pattern on the upper surfaces of Extra Dark Sea Grey and Dark Slate Grey with Azure Blue undersides. A prominent No 6 Squadron badge was painted on both sides of the nose. Presumably individual code letters were applied but there is no photographic evidence. The noted exception was VIP-configured C406 which was operated in a VIP livery of natural metal. This scheme seemingly did not change during the whole period of service, despite being operated by both No 6 Sqn and Comms Sqn. The only identified aircraft operated by Comms Sqn, Dakota C400, when recovered in 1956 from Quetta, was in natural metal finish. The code letter A was relatively small and possibly painted in red, this seems on par with other aircraft identified as operated by Comm Sqn. Thus it was likely the service scheme, even if the finish looks surprisingly fresh on an aircraft purportedly stored outdoors. It is not known when the paint was stripped from the aircraft.



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RPAF operated 21 Dakota IVs confirmed by their serial numbers in the H700-H720 block. There is a record of an aircraft with the serial H725, but this might be an error. An oddity was H706 identified by its US serial number as a C-47A. A number of aircraft were initially flown with original various RAF or 'RIAF' VP9XX serials (the exact purpose of the serial change to the VP-range is not known – the RIAF/IAF assigned the HJ prefix for the type). Seemingly, the VP prefix was exchanged to H allocated to Dakota IVs at some point before January 1949. Presumably around March 1949 the first digit of the serial, 9 was replaced with 7 allocated to the type.

Identified aircraft initially wore standard US Olive Drab/Neutral

Grey camouflage, with No 6 Sqn aircraft adorned with the Squadron emblem and black individual code letters. There is no evidence of the Service Transport Scheme applied to any of those aircraft, but it cannot be definitely excluded. A notable exception was H704 which wore a non-standard camouflage, with a pattern similar to the one seen on a few RIAF aircraft. It is not known if any was stripped of paint during service with the unit. Aircraft operated by Comms Sqn and No 12 Sqn were natural metal, sometimes with the Royal Pakistan Air Force title above the windows, but it seems there was no pattern. At least one aircraft of No 12 Sqn used for target towing had yellow painted under-surfaces with diagonal black stripes and a yellow tail band.

Franciszek Grabowski

Editor's Note: Apologies for the poor quality of the accompanying images, good quality images of RPAF Dakotas appear to be non-existent, possibly because they are not as glamorous as the Tempests, Sabres and Starfighters. Sincere thanks to Franciszek for curating the few images available.

Valom – 1:48 Scale Britten-Norman BN-2T/2B Islander – Indian Naval Air Service

ASIAN AIR
ARMS



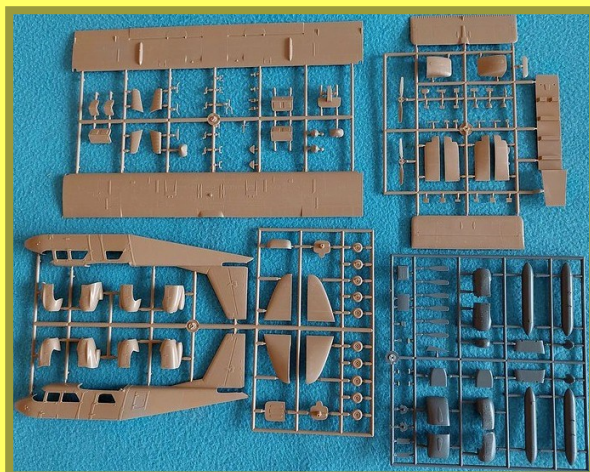
The Valom 1:48 scale kit of the hugely popular Britten-Norman BN-2 Islander commuter/feeder airliner is not new – the kit was first released in 2018 – but this is the first time that the kit has been released with decal markings for aircraft operated by an Asian military Air Arm, although a previous copy did feature markings for a brace of BN-2Bs operated by the Philippines Coast Guard. A quick check of Internet references underlines the popularity of this aircraft type with no less than ten Asian nations operating the Islander, or the Defender military derivative, in the past or present.

The initial kit release focused on the earlier BN-2A/B twin piston-engined variant which featured Lycoming O-540 engines driving two-bladed propellers. Some of their subsequent releases provided the additional parts necessary to reproduce the later BN-2T Turbo Islander that featured two Allison 250 turboprop engines with three-bladed propellers. The company recently took the initiative to combine all of the parts for both kits in one box, which in this case charts the Islander's history of Service with Indian Naval Air Squadron 550 'Flying Fish'. INAS 550 is the oldest Naval Air Squadron, having been first established at the Fleet Requirements Unit in 1953 before re-commissioning as INAS 550 in June 1959. The current day Squadron is still based at Cochin and is primarily responsible for training crews for the INAS Maritime Patrol and Sea Surveillance Squadron. It received its first BN-2B Islanders in 1976 and some of these airframes were subsequently upgraded to BN-2T Turbo Islanders in the 1990s.



The kit comes in a traditional top opening box with an attractive image of an Indian Naval Air Service BN-2T Turbo Islander aircraft operating in its natural maritime environment. Inside the box are 150 parts spread over three tan, one dark grey and one clear sprue, together with two clear vac-formed cabin windows, two small photo-etched frets, a film to replicate the main instrument panel and a set of decals providing markings for two similarly schemed aircraft operated by INAS 550. A twenty-page instruction booklet, with what appear to be easy-to-follow assembly instructions (but please see below), paint callouts and full colour 4-view profiles for the colour and marking schemes, complete the package. The paint references, of which there are many throughout the construction and finishing sequence, include Humbrol, Gunze Sangyo and Model Master but, very helpfully, also include the relevant numbers from Federal Standard F.S.595b for those modellers who may not have access to the recommended ranges of paint.

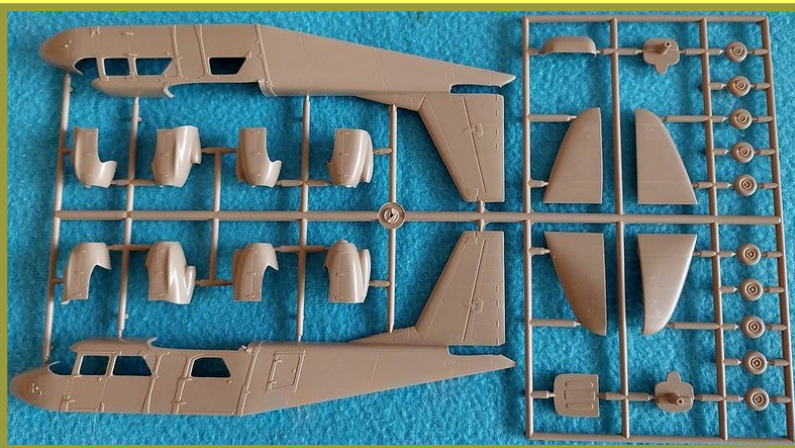
For those who may not be familiar with Valom kits, they rest firmly in the limited run category of kits so one should not expect Eduard or Tamiya quality out of the box. That said, the quality of the plastic parts is excellent with some nicely rendered surface detail although I did notice a number of plastic 'stubs', associated with the moulding process, that will need more sanding and neatening than you would encounter with a 'mainstream' kit. The definition of the panel lines on the main airframe components is also very good. The clear parts are also nice and clear and include the vacuform parts to recreate the pair of 'bubble' windows which are a feature of this military variant. The two photoetched frets provide many of the detail parts associated with the cockpit and cabin, including the main instrument panel, throttle quadrant and seat belts, together with the plethora of panels and reinforcement strips which are a key feature of the fuselage undersurfaces; the second fret provides the wing fences and aerial and antenna arrangements associated with the upgraded BN-2T variant.



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The assembly sequence differs slightly from that found in other kits in that only the cockpit area is dealt with in stage 1. The kit has been designed for modular assembly with stage 2 covering the nose and main undercarriage before a decision must be made on which variant to complete, since stages 3&4 focus on the different engine nacelle types fitted to the piston- or turbo-engined aircraft. Stage 5 concentrates on the provision of a fully furnished cabin interior. Next in the assembly sequence is the fit of the cabin windows before the main fuselage is joined together with the pre-assembled interior. Care needs to be taken at Stage 6 since it is not clear whether the cabin windows need to be fitted prior to final assembly of the fuselage or can be added from the outside. Stage 7 concentrates once again on the BN-2T variant and



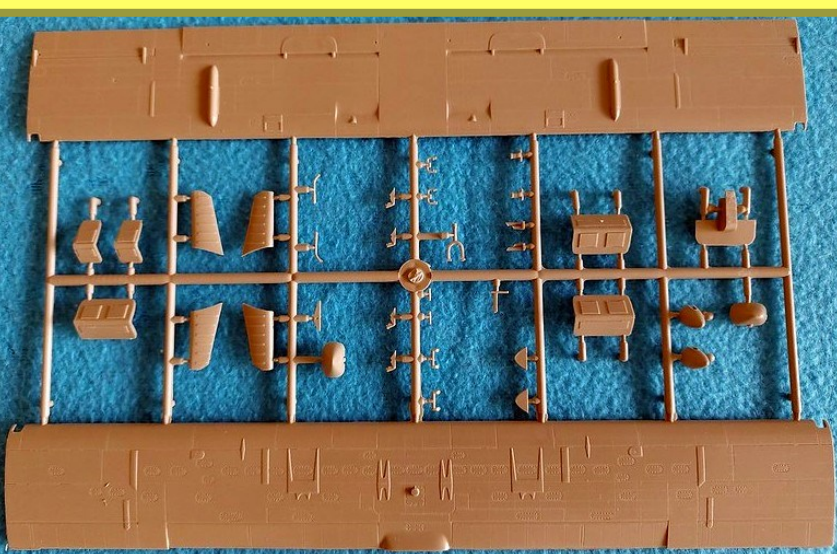
indicates that some minor surgery is required to the main wing to accommodate the slight revised engine nacelles associated with the Turbo Islander. It should also be noted that the Turbo Islander has shorter outer wing sections. I also noticed that an error has crept in to the instructions, which indicate that the standard nose cone (Part #48 on the tan-coloured sprues) should be fitted when in fact both aircraft featured the elongated 'thimble nosed' radome (Part #12 on the dark grey sprue). The error is repeated at stage 8, which deals with the BN-2B variant and its longer wing sections. Care will also need to be taken with stages 9 and 10, which deal with the fitment of the undercarriage and various other airframe parts including the rear sections of the distinctive engine nacelles. There is

potential for some further confusion here too, since the fitting of the main undercarriage fairings is not clear and the two drawings at stages 9 and 10 only depict the 'short-winged' BN-2T variant. The final stages of assembly, in relation to the plastic parts, deal with the variation in airframe details, with the very last stages (#13-15), covering the aforementioned photo-etched parts with a very clear delineation between those that relate to each variant.

As previously stated, there are two decal options which appear to be for near identical aircraft that feature a highly attractive dark blue and white colour scheme. On closer examination it is clear that the transition from the BN-2B to the BN-2T variant included some revisions to the original scheme. As a result, the earlier scheme (BN-2B serial # IN139) utilises a slightly lighter shade of blue on the fuselage and engine nacelles, described as Oxford Blue (FS35056). This aircraft also features three-letter base codes and the unit insignia on the tail surfaces, with prominent serials on the lower wing surfaces. The scheme applied to the later BN-2T Turbo Islander (BN-2T serial # IN127) is simpler in nature and utilises a darker shade of blue (FS33538). The engine nacelles are white, in keeping with the rest of the mainplane and the aircraft is without any form of underwing serial number or fin markings although it does sport white 'lightning' flashes on the forward fuselage. Errors have also crept in to the four-view drawings with both aircraft featuring the long wing sections associated with the earlier BN-2B variant. The decals are nicely printed, with excellent colour saturation and registration, and even include a full set of propeller logos. That said, I have some minor reservations regarding the colours used for the national insignia, with both the Saffron and Green shades appearing to be a little dark. It is, of course, a personal choice but it may be a case of using alternatives, such as those found on the generic Bright Spark range of Indian Roundels.



There is much to like about this kit although some previous experience will be necessary to deal with the 'limited run' nature of the parts. The need to carefully remove and sand some parts will test the patience of some modellers but I suspect the reward would be an attractive model in an equally attractive and unusual colour scheme. Care will need to be taken with the assembly and painting instructions since some errors have crept in and they are somewhat difficult to navigate at times. All of that said, this particular aircraft lends itself to reproduction in the larger scale, and Valom are to be congratulated on taking on yet another esoteric subject and delivering a classky kit.



Highly Recommended
Mark Attrill – August 2024

Clear Prop Models - 1:72 Scale

ASIAN AIR
ARMS



Mikoyan MiG-23ML/MLA 'Flogger-G'

MIG-23ML/MLA FLOGGER-G

1:72
CP72032

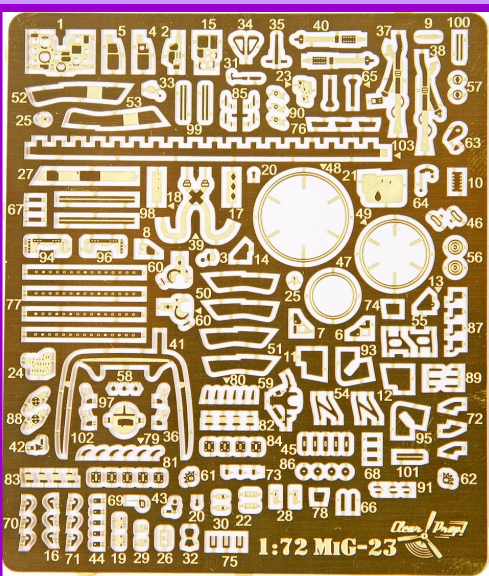
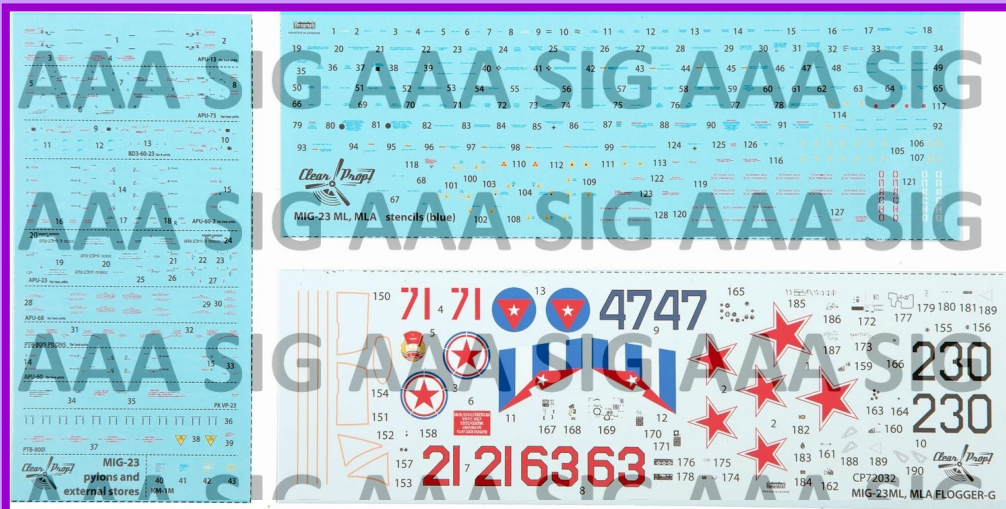
ADVANCED



Clear Prop Models is a relatively new Ukrainian manufacturer that first produced a kit some four years ago. I had previously shown little interest in their products since most appeared to be for rather esoteric US and Japanese aircraft types in 1:72 scale although I did read some of the reviews that indicated an upwards trend in the overall quality of their products. My rather aloof attitude towards the company changed when they announced the future release of a family of MiG-23 'Floggers', including the ML/MLA 'Flogger-G' variant which would include decal markings for an aircraft operated by the Korean People's Army Air Force (KPAAF – North Korea). Clear Prop appear to market most of their kits at three levels (Starter/Advanced/Expert) to cater for the individual modeller's needs; the Expert versions of the MiG-23 family feature different markings, 2 x photo-etched frames and more decal options. This particular kit is the 'Advanced' boxing, which indicates that it comes with a large number of pieces and includes a comprehensive photo-etched frame, and will prove to be more than enough for my needs. The box features a very nice image of two KPAAF aircraft travelling at

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speed with full afterburner, presumably intercepting a stray aircraft that may have wandered into North Korean territory. Apart from the nice box art, I was immediately struck by how heavy the relatively small box was until I opened it up. Inside there are no less than 173 Medium Grey and Clear parts spread across nine plastic sprues with the photo-etched frame featuring another 193 parts!. The kit also includes a three-part decal sheet with markings for a total of 3 aircraft including the KPAAF example, and one of the most comprehensive sets of aircraft maintenance markings I have ever seen. The package is rounded off with a very comprehensive, 36-Page full-colour set of assembly and finishing instructions. This booklet contains a parts map, clear assembly instructions, full-colour four-view decal placement instructions and includes pages dedicated to the placement of all the aircraft maintenance markings. The colour chart provides paint references for only two ranges, AMMO-MiG and Mr Color, but there are excellent colour call-outs throughout the assembly instructions.



Considering the variable-geometry design of the MiG-23 Flogger, Clear Prop offer a couple of choices with this kit, which includes fully swept or deployed wings, together with open or closed airbrakes and canopy. The latter is well justified since, as the assembly sequence confirms, this model must have one of the most comprehensive cockpits ever reproduced in 1:72 scale, with almost 60 parts making up the main cockpit tub and KM-1 ejection seat! The kit has been designed to be assembled in modules, so the completed cockpit tub and air intakes are assembled with the forward fuselage section. Attention then turns to the highly detailed fuselage undertray, to which an equally comprehensive forward undercarriage bay is attached. Multi-part main undercarriage bays and the afterburner section are then assembled, in some cases utilizing more photo-etched parts before the central and rear fuselage are brought together with the pre-assembled forward fuselage. The very impressive main wings are moulded as one part, which does ease assembly but also means that there is no option for posing the flying control surfaces separately. Once the wings have been sandwiched together with the fuselage, utilizing some very cleverly moulded wing gloves, the airframe has largely taken shape with only the tailplane and stabilators to be added; the tailplane does provide for a separate rudder so this could be posed at an angle to add further interest.



Attention then turns to the rather complicated undercarriage which was a distinctive design feature of the MiG-23, with these components also utilizing a large number of the photo-etched parts during their assembly. In a slight departure from a normal assembly sequence, Clear Prop then suggests that the cockpit canopy should be affixed next. If the closed option is chosen, I do not see this as a problem but if one opts for the open canopy, I recommend leaving this part of construction until much later in the build where the risk of damage would be minimal. Towards the end of the assembly sequence, attention turns to the various stores pylons and drop tanks supplied with the kit. This was the one area where I found the kit a little disappointing, in that Clear Prop only provides for the centerline and wing mounted drop tanks with the kit being totally devoid of any offensive armament, apart from the centreline mounted GSh-23 gun pod. I can only assume that Clear Prop are looking to market a separate set of Russian bombs and missiles in the future (**Editor's note: see the last image below for confirmation that this is indeed the case**) or wish to steer modellers towards the wealth of aftermarket items produced by the likes of Eduard or ResKit, to name but two companies. Rather unusually, final assembly concludes with the assembly of the prominent air brakes on the upper and lower rear fuselage, which can be posed open or fitted in the closed position.

Once assembly is complete, the modeller can then choose which of the three colour schemes will be used to complete the model. This is where some confusion has crept in since the Clear Prop website indicates that this Advanced model should include five decal options and there are, indeed, five options on the decal sheet. The issue is that there are only Colour Side Profiles for three aircraft and no hints on where the spare decal options can be used, since they are not alternatives to the main schemes.

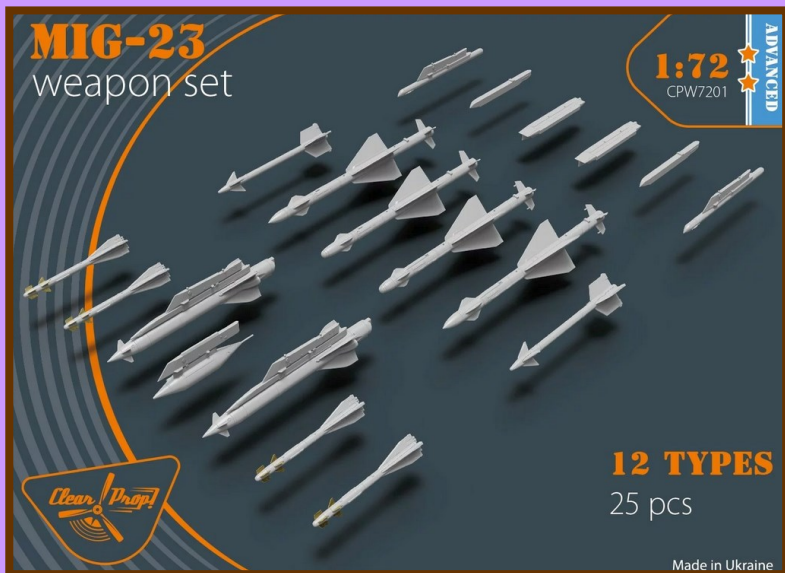
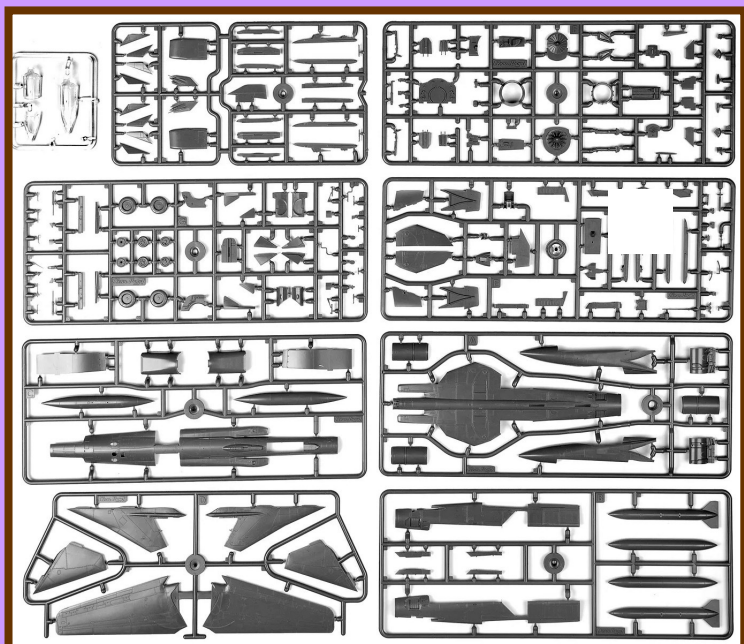
The kit instructions provide details for three aircraft as outlined below:

Option	Variant/Air Arm	Scheme
1	MiG-23ML 'Red 71', 58 th Air Regiment, 1 st Air Combat Division, Korean People's Army Air Force, circa 2019	Two-tone Grey camouflage with Light Blue undersurfaces
2	MiG-23ML 'Blue 47', 979 th IAP, VVS, Soviet Air Force, Shchunchin Air Base, early 1980s	Overall Light Grey with Natural Metal paneling on undersurfaces
3	MiG-23MLA 'Black 230', 2 Brigada "Playa Giron", Defense Antarea y Fuerza Aerea Revolucionaria Cuba, San Antonia de los Banos Air Base, 1990s	Four-colour Green & Brown camouflage over Light Blue undersurfaces



I am not an expert on the Mikoyan MiG-23 Flogger family of aircraft but the general consensus of opinion seems to indicate that this new Clear Prop release is now the most accurate rendition of the type in 1:72 scale. Clear Prop's current marketing strategy, to offer the majority of their kits at three levels, with Starter, Advanced and Expert edition available, provides the modeller with a wealth of choice based upon their skills and budget. Personally, I would have opted for one of the starter kits (although these do not offer the KPAAF decals) and perhaps source a resin cockpit detailing set, since I am not too keen on photo-etched although I know that many do like this medium for completing their kit. What is clear, however, is that modellers of Asian Air Arms now have a high quality kit available to model those

aircraft operated by Afghanistan, North Korea and Sri Lanka among others. Highly recommended to those modellers interested in Post-War Soviet jet fighters operated by Asian Air Arms today or in the past.



Mark Attrill, August 2024

Arma Hobby – 1:48 Scale Hawker Hurricane Mk.IIc, Part 2



As you will recall, I provided a review of the Arma Hawker Hurricane IIc kit in the last newsletter, on the premise that the type had been used by two Asian Air Arms in the post-WWII period that our Special Interest Group covers. I recently decided to produce a second part to this build review since I have managed to complete the project and would like to share my final thoughts with you. In the same review I also mentioned that the Imperial Iranian Air Force was one of the two Air Arms connected with the aircraft, having operated 18 Hawker Hurricane Mk.IIcs with their Flying Training School at Doshan Teppah AB. Further research in the intervening period has turned up an aftermarket decal sheet that offers markings for one of aircraft, which will allow me to start another model in the near future.

During the first part of this review, I left off just as I was entering the main painting stage, having prepared the main airframe with a coat of primer. I will not labour too much on the Night fighter scheme applied to the model since it is not applicable to any those aircraft operated by the Indian or

Iranian Air Forces except to say that the application of overall black colour schemes to aircraft is notoriously difficult if you want to avoid the finished model looking more like a toy. I used several mixes of black to break up the pattern



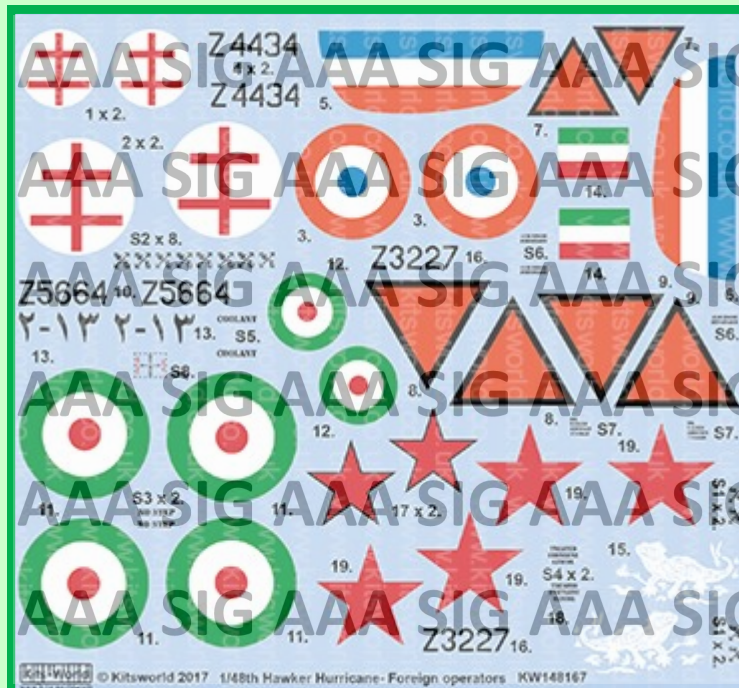
on the main airframe, to differentiate the fabric covered rear fuselage from the all-metal wing, for example. The other effect that I needed to replicate was the modification made to the size of the fuselage roundels. When the original Hurricane airframes, sporting the day fighter camouflage scheme were re-painted in Night Black, they reduced the size of the fuselage roundel with the black paint leaving a faint outline, which needed to be recreated. Happy with the overall Black finish, I set about applying the decals, the majority of which went on very well with a generous application of decal setting solutions.

Once the main colour scheme and markings had been applied and allowed to thoroughly dry out, the rest of the build proceeded without any drama. I must admit that I was a little concerned about the rigidity of the main undercarriage, but Arma have designed it in such a way that there is a very positive seat for both the main leg and the actuator,

after which the outer cover is added for more security of fit. The two -part main wheels will benefit from some careful sanding and feature some nice 'weighted' flat spots. This particular aircraft was fitted with auxiliary tanks to extend its range for long nocturnal sorties and these items simply needed to be push fitted into place, such was their tolerance. This first release of the Arma Hurricane kit did not include any resin parts but during my recent visit to the company HQ, I was given some of their resin 20mm Cannon barrels which I duly used on this model; apart from the aftermarket seatbelts mentioned in Part 1 of this review, these cannons were the only other aftermarket items employed on this build.



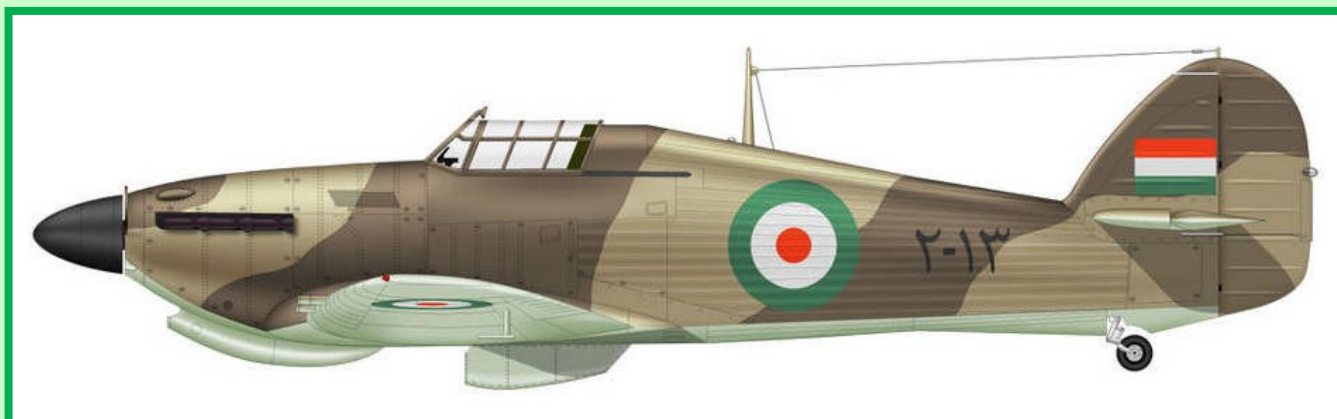
I have now mounted the model on a suitably painted display base, to which I also added a pilot figure to represent an RAF fighter pilot of the period. As I mentioned in Part 1 of this build article, I have been very impressed with this kit. The quality of plastic parts is simply amazing and the whole build experience was pure pleasure from start to finish. The assembly instructions are very clear and if followed carefully and logically, they will guarantee the completion of a superb replica of this enigmatic British fighter from World War II, which saw limited service in the tears immediately after the conflict.



As I previously mentioned, I managed to obtain a set of decals from Kits World Decals (Item Reference: KW148167), which focuses on the Hawker Hurricane in Foreign Service. One set of markings is for a Hawker Hurricane IIc (Trop) of the Imperial Iranian Air Force, which equipped their Flying Training School at Doshan Teppeh AB with the type in the late 1940s. The aircraft in question (Serial No 2-13) sports the almost standard RAF Middle East Air Force colour scheme of the mid-war years with Dark Earth/Middle Stone upper surfaces and Azure Blue undersurfaces and a Red propeller spinner. The markings on these aircraft were quite simple with the IIAF roundels in six positions and fin flashes. The aircraft serial number was applied in Farsi and the aircraft also appeared to sport a minimal amount of stencilling. The rather simple decals are well printed with good colour density and in register, so I do not anticipate any issues with their application and use. It should be noted, since it is not too clear in the decal illustrations, that the Iranian Hurricanes were fitted with rounded exhausts and retained the cannon fairings but had the 20mm cannons removed.

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Mark Attrill – August 2024



And maybe an idea for a future project? - Ed.



Competition Page



Dear Asian Air Arms Fans,

Welcome to the Asian Air Arms Competition No.8. This time around, we have a couple of items related to the smaller Asian Air Arms, including a KovoZavody Prostějov 1:48 SIAI SF-260TP COIN Aircraft kit and a 1:72 Kits World decal sheet for the Rockwell/North-American OV-10A Bronco, which includes a couple of examples operated by Asian Air Arms.

As before, the two prizes will be made available to the first correct respondent 'out of the bag' in each case following the closing date of the competition.

The first prize I have available this month is the excellent little 1:48 scale kit of the SIAI SF-260TP basic training and light attack aircraft from Czech Firm, KovoZavody Prostějov, which has been purchased from SIG Funds. This kit includes decal options for three aircraft including examples operated by the Philippine and Sri Lankan Air Force. To enter the competition for this kit I would like answers to the following questions:

1. The Italian Company SIAI-Marchetti produced several variants of the SF-260 for Asian Air Arms. How many Asian Air Arms have previously been equipped with versions of the SF-260 and which one is the sole remaining operator of the type ?.
2. Variants of SIAI SF-260 and the Rockwell/North-American OV-10A Bronco are optimised for the COIN Role. What does 'COIN' stand for ?

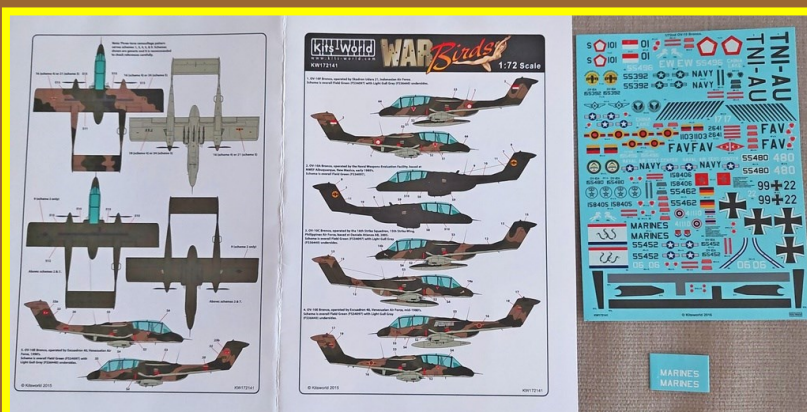
The second prize I have to give away is a Kits World 1:72 scale decal sheet for the esoteric Rockwell/North-American OV-10A Bronco. This particular decal sheet (Ref No. KW172141), covers the OV-10A in Worldwide Service and includes decal markings for examples operated by three Asian Air Arms, perfect for the brand new ICM kit or the older Airfix or Academy kits. To win this superb new decal sheet, I am again looking for the correct answers to the following questions:

1. The Philippine Air Force is the last operator of the North-American OV-10 Bronco in Asia. The Air Arm is planning to replace the type in the very near future with what new type of aircraft ?.
2. In recent years the Philippine Air Force has operated the OV-10M+ variant with the M designation indicating a Modified airframe. List three of the modifications introduced on the OV-10M+ variant.

The closing date for the competition will be **Friday 1 November 2024**. Answers should be forwarded, **via e-mail only**, to me at this address (aaasig2021@gmail.com). Immediately after the closing date, all correct entries will be placed in a 'lucky bag' and the winners for each competition will be drawn out individually. **Please do not forget to include your current mailing address with your entry so we can ensure the prizes are received.** The prize winners will be notified, via e-mail, and announced here or in the next available AAA SIG Newsletter.

Please note that neither the undersigned or the Editor will enter into any additional correspondence with regard to this competition, which is open to ALL members of the AAA SIG.

Good Luck!
Mark Attrill, Leader.



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1:72 Scale

AIR GRAPHIC MODELS
RESIN ACCESSORIES SET

BLU-107 Durrandal Rocket Set



1:72 Scale

AIR GRAPHIC MODELS
RESIN ACCESSORIES SET


GBU-24 Paveway III Laser Guided Bombs



1:72 Scale

AIR GRAPHIC MODELS
RESIN ACCESSORIES SET

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1:72 Scale

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MER Rails & Mk 82 Snakeye Bombs



1:72 Scale

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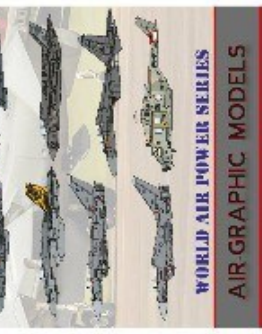
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