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WILDER CAT



INSTRUCTION SHEET

1/48

11175-NAV1

FM-2 WILDCAT

The "Wilder Wildcat" and the battle off Samar



by THOMAS McKELVEY CLEAVER

FM-2 Wildcat fighter on combat air patrol over USS Santee (CVE-29) during the Leyte Invasion

Photo: NHC

By the fall of 1942, production of the F4F Wildcat, which was seen as a useful aircraft for the composite squadrons operating from escort carriers that would provide anti-submarine cover and close air support for coming invasions, was transferred to General Motors Eastern Aircraft Division. However, Grumman was not completely through with the Wildcat. The possibility of developing a lighter version specifically for operation from escort carriers had been considered before production was taken over by General Motors.

The main difference of the new version of Wildcat was substitution of the 1,200 h.p. R-1830-86 with a 1,350 h.p. Wright R-1820-56 Cyclone that was 230 lbs. lighter. The XF4F-8 had four guns like the FM-1; it was visually distinguished by an enlarged rudder and vertical stabilizer to counteract the increased torque of the more powerful engine. The airplane was 530 lbs. lighter than the F4F-4. Initial climb rate was nearly doubled, service ceiling was boosted to 36,400 ft. All in all, this was a "wilder" Wildcat. It went into production in early 1943; between then and August 1945 4,437 FM-2s were delivered, making it the most numerous Wildcat of all.

In the Pacific, the FM-2 showed up in the new Composite Squadrons (VC) in the fall of 1943. During the invasions of the Marshalls, Carolines, Marianas, and the Philippines, ten more Wildcat pilots became aces.

The U.S. Navy's Finest Hour

The FM-2's most memorable day came on October 25, 1944. Task Group 77.4, composed of three Task Units 77.1, 77.2, and 77.3 known as Taffy One, Two and Three for their radio callsign "Taffy," were operating off the island of Samar to provide air support to the invasion of Leyte; each Task Unit was composed of six

escort carriers, with two or three destroyers and four or five destroyer escorts for support. Each TU had 48 TBM-1C Avengers and around 100 FM-2 Wildcats between the six carriers.

The previous day, October 24, the Wildcats defended the fleet against the many Japanese air attacks. The Wildcats of VC-10 aboard the carrier USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73) - part of "Taffy Three" - were the most successful squadron in the entire Task Group. VC-10's Wildcat pilots, who had first experienced air combat during the Marianas invasion, when pilots shot down three attacking Japanese aircraft during the main battle on June 18, 1944, shot down seven enemy aircraft. Ensign Courtney assisted in breaking up an attack on American transports by more than 15 twin engine bombers. He was credited with assisting in destroying one Ki-21 Sally and the probable destruction of one Ki-48 Lily. Lieutenant R. W. Roby shot down one Lily and assisted in shooting down one Sally and Lieutenant Seitz shot down a Sally. Lieutenant (jg) Phillips probably destroyed two Zekes and Lieutenant(jg) Dugan shot down two Sallys. Lieutenant Joe McGraw and others in a CAP flight intercepted a group of 15-20 twin engine bombers escorted by six to eight Oscars he mistakenly identified as Zekes. McGraw destroyed two Lilys and damaged a third.

The next morning, the men, ships and aircraft of Taffy One, Two, and Three fought the Battle off Samar, which has been called "the Navy's Finest Hour." This was the last surface engagement ever fought by the U.S. Navy against an enemy fleet. In the words of Samuel Eliot Morrison, the Pacific War's official historian: "In no engagement of its entire history has the United States Navy shown more gallantry, guts and gumption than in those two morning hours between 0730 and 0930 off Samar." The Battle off Samar involved ships that should never have been in the same ocean with their opponents, fighting against the greatest surface fleet the Empire of Japan ever sent to sea.

On October 24, the First Mobile Striking Force, commanded by Admiral Takeo Kurita, lost the giant battleship *Musashi*, sunk by American carrier aircraft in the Battle of the Sibuyan Sea. Following *Musashi's* loss, Kurita broke off his advance, which was spotted by American aircraft; Third Fleet commander Admiral William F. Halsey decided the enemy had been defeated and ordered the Fast Carrier Task Force to head north to attack the Japanese carrier fleet that had been found off Cape Engano. However - unknown to the Americans - Kurita was ordered to resume his attack. The Japanese transited San Bernardino Strait that night and emerged into the Philippine Sea at dawn. Kurita, aboard *Yamato* - the world's most powerful battleship - ordered the fleet to head south to attack the American invasion fleet in Leyte Gulf.

Taffy 3, northernmost of the three escort carrier groups, included USS *St. Lo* (CVE-63), *White Plains* (CVE-66), *Kalinin Bay* (CVE-68), *Fanshaw Bay* (CVE-70), *Kitkun Bay* (CVE 71) and *Gambier Bay* (CVE-73), commanded by Rear Admiral Clifton Sprague; the carriers were escorted by three Fletcher-class destroyers USS *Johnston* (DD-557), *Hoel* (DD-533) and *Heerman* (DD-532), and four Butler-class destroyer escorts USS *John C. Butler* (DE-339), *Dennis* (DE-405), *Raymond* (DE-341) and *Samuel B. Roberts* (DE-413).

At 0630 hours, a TBM-1C Avenger flown by Ensign Bill Brooks took off from *St. Lo* on the morning patrol. He spotted smoke on the horizon to the northwest at 0647 hours. It was the First Mobile Striking Force, 17 miles from Taffy-3 and bearing down on the CVEs at 30 knots.

At about the same moment, lookouts on *St. Lo* reported the unmistakable shapes of "pagoda masts," a sure identification of Japanese battleships. At 0700 hours, Avenger pilot Ensign Hans Jensen sighted the fleet; this was soon confirmed by shipboard radar.

Kurita's ships had just changed to a circular anti-aircraft formation when smoke was spotted on the horizon. At 0700 hours, *Yamato* opened fire with her 18-inch main battery. On *Yamato's* bridge, no one could identify the silhouettes of the American carriers in the manuals. Kurita mistakenly assumed he had a task group of the Third Fleet under his guns. He immediately ordered "General Attack."

The Americans Respond

With the CVEs limited to a top speed of 18 knots, Taffy-3 had no hope of outdistancing their pursuers. There was no possibility of out-shooting them; each carrier had only one 5-inch/38-caliber gun on its stern. Admiral Sprague ordered the force to turn south toward the others and ordered the destroyers to make smoke to provide cover while the carriers launched their aircraft.

Gambier Bay managed to launch most of her aircraft while battleship shells rumbled overhead. LCDR Edward J. Huxtable, CO of VC-10, boarded his Avenger and asked his plane captain if he had a bomb load. "He said no, so I told him to

call LCDR Buzz Borries, the air officer, to see if I had time to get a load. We had not turned up engines yet and I could not see going off without some ordnance. I saw Borries talking to Captain Viewig, who made a sweeping motion with his arm - 'Get 'em off!'"

"About this time, I was startled by what seemed like a rifle shot. I looked out and saw it was a salvo of heavy-caliber stuff splashing alongside *White Plains*. Until this moment, I had no idea the enemy was so near. Now I was more than ready to get on that catapult! Three TBMs launched ahead of me. The ceiling was at 1,200 feet. I called up Admiral Sprague and asked what our orders were. 'Attack immediately!'"

Following the catapult launches of the Avengers, the FM-2 Wildcats were hurriedly launched; some were armed with rockets for strikes ashore, but most were armed only with their four .50-caliber machine guns.

Huxtable broke out into better visibility. "I spotted four cruisers nearby and what appeared to be four battleships further back in the gloom. There was no possibility of making a high-altitude attack. I pulled up into the ceiling and started for the cruisers. I had no idea what loads the other planes had, but at least we would give them a good scare."

Huxtable was joined by his Annapolis classmate, LCDR Richard Fowler, who led *Kitkun Bay's* VC-5. They attempted coordinated "hot" and "dry" attacks, with FM-2s strafing the ships ahead of the Avengers, which dropped their 500-pound general purpose bombs. "Our bombs had no effect on the ships, but possibly the explosions scared the crewmen."

The Wildcats and Avengers of Taffy-3 kept an unrelenting string of aircraft over Kurita's fleet, giving the admiral the impression the Americans had far greater resources than they did.

Lt(jg) Norman Johnson of *Fanshaw Bay's* Composite Squadron 68 piloted an Avenger with four 500-pound general-purpose bombs. He later remembered: "Climbing at full throttle, I penetrated the lower cloud cover and leveled off at 11,000 feet. I took a final look at the enemy ships, which were firing on our ships. When I was about five miles away, I nosed down to pick up speed. The Japanese battle force was at that moment occupied in anti-aircraft protection against an air attack. Varied colored bursts mushroomed at several levels. It was quite dense and something I had to penetrate. I kept my bomb doors closed as speed increased. I saw three large battleships with rudders hard over and guns spitting flame. At 7,000 feet, I pushed over into my attack, selecting the lead battleship as my target. My radioman reminded me 'Open the bomb bay doors!' I opened the doors and the immediate drag was apparent as the airplane was really barreling along now. I was intent on adjusting the target in my sight. Suddenly the airplane corkscrewed, and the right-side sliding part of the canopy peeled off. I pressed the bomb release at what seemed the best altitude and concentrated my effort on pulling out. The target was so large the bombs couldn't miss. It was a close call as I leveled off 50 to 100 feet over the water. I pulled up to avoid more AA and then hid in the clouds in case there were any enemy aircraft around."

Over the next 30 minutes, aircraft from the six squadrons made repeated bombing and rocket runs on the enemy ships, strafing their decks as they pulled out. At *Tacloban*, the field became a muddy bog; landing aircraft were damaged as they ground-looped in the mud and slammed into other planes. By mid-day the airfield was covered with wrecked Avengers and Wildcats.

USS *Kitkun Bay* (CVE-71) prepares to launch FM-2 Wildcat fighters during the action.



Photo: NHHC

The Naval "Charge of the Light Brigade"

While the pilots desperately attempted to distract the enemy, Taffy-3's "small boys" moved to defend the carriers after Admiral Sprague ordered the three destroyers to attack despite the hopeless odds.

At 0700 hours USS Johnston made smoke in response to the incoming shell fire that bracketed the carriers. Ten minutes later, Gunnery Officer Robert Hagen opened fire at a range of 18,000 yards and registered several hits on the leading heavy cruisers with his radar-directed gunfire.

After five minutes, Hagen concentrated fire on heavy cruiser Kumano. At maximum range, Johnston scored several hits on her superstructure, which erupted in flame. Kumano then targeted Johnston in turn and she was soon bracketed by colorful shell splashes. Johnston made smoke and zigzagged while she accelerated to flank speed and headed toward the enemy fleet alone, firing over 200 rounds nearly continuously.

Captain Evans brought Johnston to 9,000 yards from the enemy and fired all ten torpedoes. Two hit Kumano at 0724 hours and blew her bow off. The four other torpedoes continued on toward the enemy fleet and battleship Kongô was forced to turn away north to avoid them, which took her out of the fight. Heavy cruiser Suzuya, which had suffered damage from air attacks, stopped her pursuit of the Americans to assist Kumano.

Johnston's audacious attack confused Admiral Kurita, who thought he had been engaged by American cruisers. When the rest of the Japanese ships were forced to turn away to avoid the torpedoes, the carriers gained more precious minutes to launch aircraft.

Evans turned back into his own smoke, but at 0730 hours, the enemy guns found him. Firing at a range of 17,000 yards, Kongô, hit Johnston with three 14-inch

More Avengers and Wildcats from the other task groups appeared out of the cloudy skies and attacked the enemy, while destroyer Hoel headed toward the battleship Kongô and took a salvo of 14-inch shells in her bridge. She closed to 9,000 yards and fired five torpedoes - none hit, but the torpedoes forced Kongô to turn away. Despite having three of her five gun mounts as well as her port engine knocked out, Hoel drew Japanese fire for the next hour as she chased shells and distracted the enemy from the carriers. An 8-inch shell stopped her at 0830 hours. Having taken 40 hits, Hoel went down with 259 of her crew. Only 86 survived, including 19-year old Bob DeSpain, a former lifeguard from San Pedro, California, who over the next hours swam from group to group and gathered the survivors together (this writer was privileged to know Bob over the last six years of his life; he worked as a docent aboard the battleship Iowa in San Pedro).

Samuel B. Roberts closed to 4,000 yards of the cruiser Chôkai, moving at 28 knots after the chief engineer, Lieutenant "Lucky" Trowbridge bypassed all the safety mechanisms in the engines. Her captain, LCDR Robert W. Copeland, USNR, announced over the ship's public address: "This will be a fight against overwhelming odds from which survival cannot be expected. We will do what damage we can." Chôkai could not lower the guns sufficiently to hit the little destroyer escort. Sammy-B launched her three torpedoes. One blew off Chôkai's bow. The little ship then showed why she would be known ever after as "the destroyer escort that fought like a battleship." She battled on for another hour, firing more than 600 5-inch shells from her two guns. Maneuvering at very close range, she mauled Chôkai with her 40mm and 20mm AA guns. At 0851 hours, she was hit twice and lost her after 5-inch gun when a breech explosion killed and wounded several of the crew. She then engaged Chikuma, which was also under

USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73) and two destroyer escorts making smoke at the start of the battle off Samar, October 25, 1944. Japanese ships are faintly visible on the horizon.

Photo: Phi Willard Niet via NHHC



shells which penetrated into her port engine room, where the explosions cut her speed in half and disrupted power to the aft gun mounts. Moments later, three 6-inch shells from Yamato struck Johnston's bridge. Everyone was wounded and Commander Evans' fingers of his left hand were traumatically severed by shrapnel. Johnston was badly mangled with dead and dying sailors strewn across her bloody decks. She found refuge in a rain squall, while the damage control parties restored power to two of the three aft mounts and repair the fire control radar. With repairs completed at 0735 hours, she opened fire on Japanese destroyers while hidden in the smoke.

Johnston then retired to the Task Group. Minutes later, she encountered Heermann and an already-damaged Hoel headed in to attack. Evans could have continued back to the fleet and no one would have faulted him. Instead, he reversed course and made smoke to help obscure the two as they headed toward the onrushing Japanese. Samuel B. Roberts, known to her crew as "Sammy B" followed. The attack was a naval "Charge of the Light Brigade" that actually happened on the 90th anniversary of the event immortalized in Tennyson's poem.

Over the next 40 minutes, Evans engaged in several duels with the enemy. At 0830 hours, Johnston opened fire on the cruiser Chokai, which was firing at the helpless Gambier Bay. She then closed to 6,000 yards and traded fire for ten minutes with the battleship Haguro, scoring numerous hits. At 0840 hours, she intercepted a formation of seven destroyers spotted closing in on the carriers. Evans attempted to pass in front of the enemy, "crossing the T" as gunnery officer Hagen opened fire. Johnston was hit several times by return fire. The lead enemy destroyer turned away to the west and took a dozen hits from Johnston as she did so. Hagen quickly shifted fire to the next in line and scored five hits before it too veered off and the squadron turned west to avoid Johnston. Three destroyers fired their torpedoes at the carriers from 10,500 yards but no hits were scored. The Japanese and American ships were now intertwined in a confused jumble.

fire by Heerman. The American ships ripped Chikuma's superstructure with salvo after salvo: armor-piercing shells, high-explosive shells, anti-aircraft shells, and even star shells which created chemical fires in metal plates hit the cruiser. Firing her remaining 5-inch gun, Sammy-B devastated Chikuma's bridge. Fires spread through the cruiser's superstructure. Sammy-B's last shot put the number three gun turret out of action just as three 14-inch shells from Kongô hit her. The order "Abandon Ship" was given at 0935 hours and Sammy-B sank 30 minutes later, taking 89 of her crew. The 120 survivors clung to three life rafts. It would be 50 hours before 80 were finally rescued from the open sea.

Cruisers Tone and Chikuma, followed by the damaged Chôkai and Kumano, closed in on Taffy-3. As they opened fire, Heermann fired her main 5-inch battery at Chikuma, then launched five torpedoes. Again, they all missed but flagship Yamato was now forced to turn away which put her out of the fight. With one gun mount knocked out, Heermann continued to engage Chikuma. Two Avengers and several Wildcats launched from Taffy-1 and Taffy-2 attacked the cruiser. Just as she turned away, a single shot from Heermann struck in her aviation gasoline stowage. Chikuma blew up and sank.

From Defeat to Victory

Gambier Bay was hit in her starboard engine room at 0847 hours. The second hit set fueled aircraft afire on the hangar deck. Enormous shells passed through her without exploding because her thin steel wasn't enough to stop them. She went dead in the water at 0900 hours as Tone, Chikuma, and the damaged Chôkai closed in. At 0907 hours she capsized, sending 700 survivors into the water. Gambier Bay was the only American aircraft carrier ever sunk in a surface engagement.

Chokai sped past the sinking carrier and took aim at White Plains. The little carrier's 5-inch gun crew manned their weapon on her stern. Opening fire on

Chokai at maximum range, the third shot hit the cruiser in her torpedo stowage and Chokai exploded, sinking in less than two minutes and leaving no survivors. White Plains became the only aircraft carrier in history to sink an enemy warship with surface gunfire.

At 0940 hours, Johnston, which had come under attack from several enemy destroyers, lost all power from the hits and went dead in the water. The enemy surrounded her and continued their fire. Evans was finally forced to order "Abandon Ship" at 0945 hours. At 1005 hours, Johnston sank with 186 of her crew going down with her. Evans managed to get into the water with other crewmen but was never seen again. While he was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor, it was the Japanese themselves who first recognized his courage. Seaman Robert Billie and several other crewmen in a raft watched an enemy destroyer cruise slowly past as her captain stood on his bridge, saluting the sinking Johnston as an honorable opponent.

Aboard Yamato, Admiral Kurita became convinced by the renewed air attacks by the Wildcats and Avengers that his fleet had stumbled into contact with the U.S. Third Fleet. Expecting American battleships to come over the horizon at any moment and realizing that his ships were so dispersed from their evasive maneuvers that it was impossible for them to return to a fighting formation to take on the expected enemy, he signaled to his fleet to break off action and turn back to San Bernardino Strait at 0945 hours.

American sailors struggling in the sea, and those manning their battle stations aboard the ships, were amazed as the gunfire faded away and the enemy soon disappeared over the horizon. Had Admiral Kurita continued on, there was nothing stopping his fleet from sinking all the escort carriers and moving into Leyte Gulf to attack the invasion fleet. The reservists who manned the carriers

and destroyers and aircraft squadrons – most of whom had never seen an ocean before they went aboard the ships in which they fought and died – had saved the invasion of the Philippines.

After the sinking of Gambier Bay, VC-10 Wildcat pilot Ensign McGraw was among the surviving aircrews who landed on Manila Bay. That afternoon, he was launched with other pilots from that ship to intercept a formation Val dive bombers escorted by Zeke fighters attempting to attack the escort carriers. McGraw shot down one Val and one Zeke to become VC-10's only ace.

The Kamikaze enters the battle

A bit more than an hour after the Battle off Samar concluded, the U.S. Navy was introduced to the power of a new and deadly enemy when the Shikishima Unit of the 201st Air Group found the surviving carriers of Taffy-3 at 1047 hours. At 1052 hours, a Zeke believed flown by Lieutenant Seki dived on the escort carrier St. Lo. The airplane hit the center of the flight deck. The 250-kilogram bomb penetrated the flight deck and exploded on the port side of the hangar deck in the midst of several aircraft in the process of being refueled and rearmed. A gasoline fire quickly broke out, followed by six secondary explosions that ended with the detonation of the torpedo and bomb magazine. Engulfed in flame, St. Lo sank 30 minutes later. From an 889-man crew, 113 were killed or missing. Thirty survivors later died of their wounds. The 434 survivors were rescued from the water by Heermann and the destroyer escorts John C. Butler, Raymond, and Dennis. The U.S. Navy's most deadly foe had entered the battle.

Photo: USN via Thomas Cleaver

Japanese battleship Musashi under attack



Photo: USN via Thomas Cleaver

FM-2s of Composite Squadron 10 at Tacloban



Photo: Phi Willard Niet via NHHC

Explosion on USS St. Lo (CVE-63) after she was hit by a Kamikaze off Samar on October 25, 1944.





Carefully read instruction sheet before assembling. When you use glue or paint, do not use near open flame and use in well ventilated room. Keep out of reach of small children. Children must not be allowed to suck any part, or pull vinyl bag over the head.



Před započatím stavby si pečlivě prostudujte stavební návod. Při používání barev a lepidel pracujte v dobře větrané místnosti. Lepidla ani barvy nepoužívejte v blízkosti otevřeného ohně. Model není určen malým dětem, mohlo by dojít k požití drobných dílů.

INSTRUCTION SIGNS * INSTR. SYMBOL * INSTRUKTION SINNBILDEN * SYMBOLES * 記号の説明



OPTIONAL
VOLBA



BEND
OHNOUT



SAND
BROUSIT



OPEN HOLE
VYVRTAT OTVOR



SYMETRICAL ASSEMBLY
SYMETRICKÁ MONTÁŽ



REMOVE
ODŘÍZNOUT



REVERSE SIDE
OTOČIT



APPLY EDUARD MASK
AND PAINT
POUŽÍT EDUARD MASK
NABARVIT

PLEASE CHECK THE LATEST VERSION OF THE INSTRUCTIONS ON www.eduard.com

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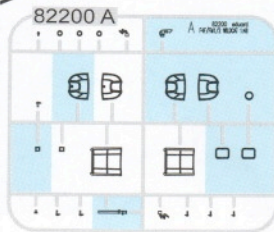
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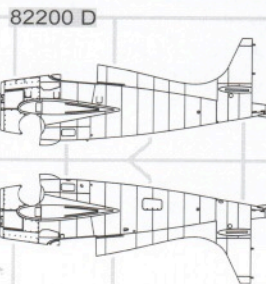
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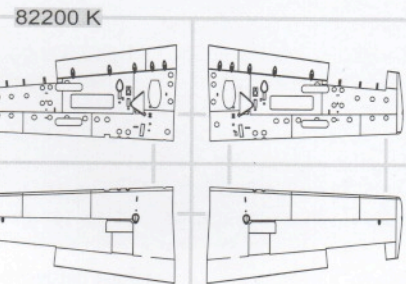


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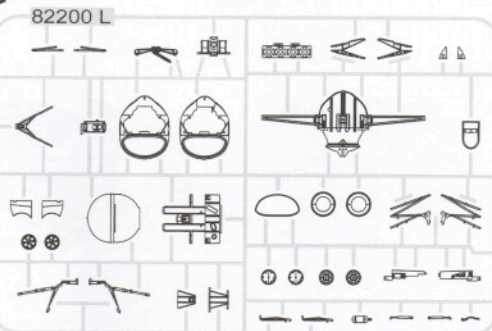


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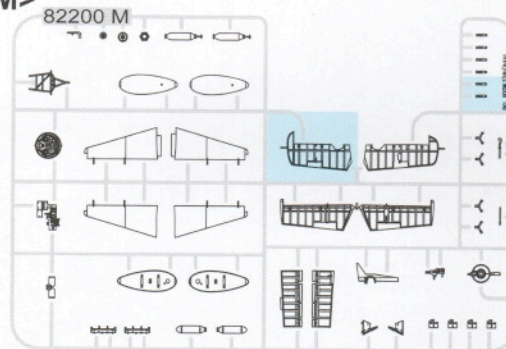
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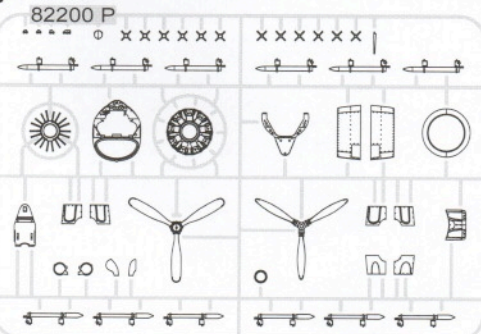
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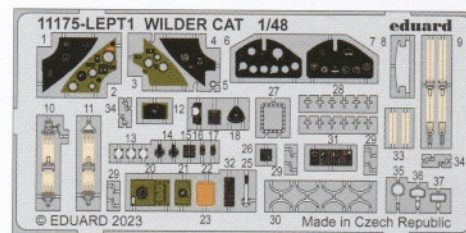
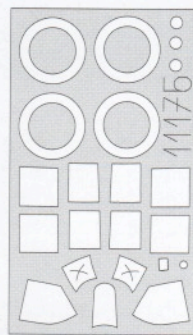
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PE - PHOTO ETCHED DETAIL PARTS

eduard
MASK

-Parts not for use. -Teile werden nicht verwendet. -Pièces à ne pas utiliser. -Tyto díly nepoužívejte při stavbě. - 使用しない部品

COLOURS

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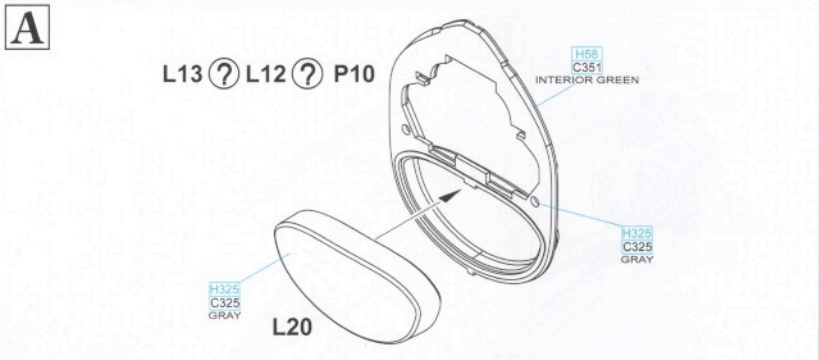
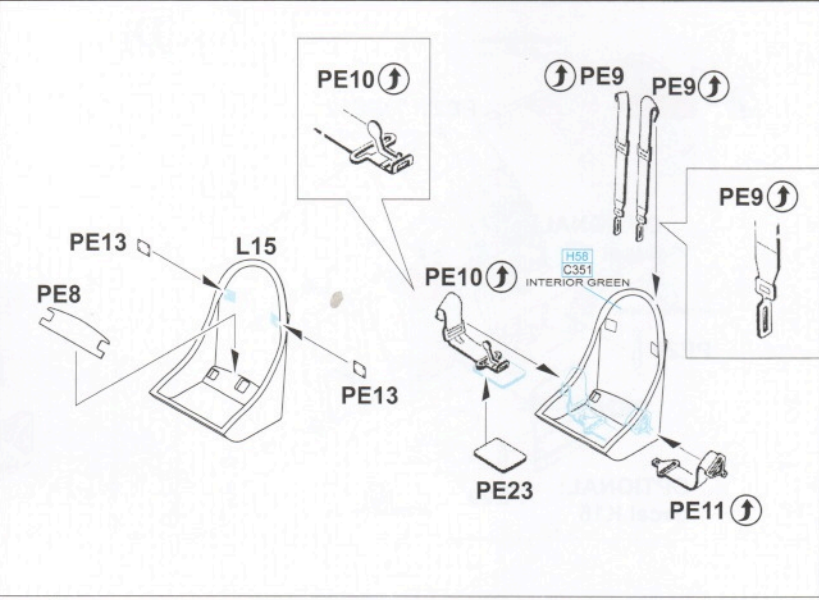
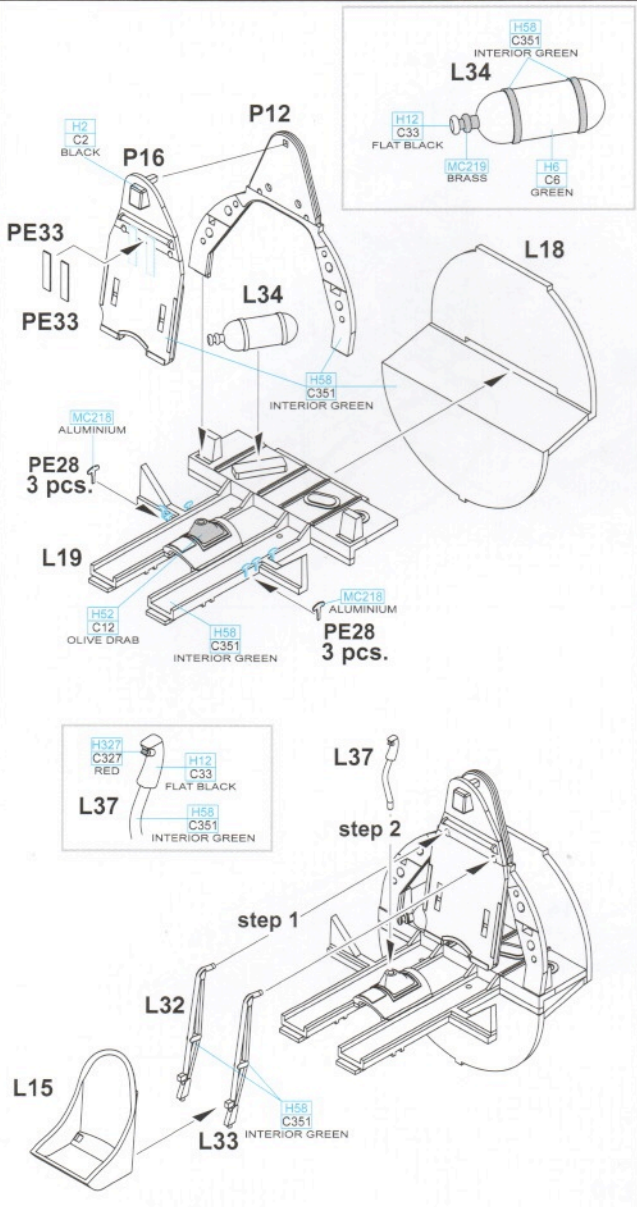
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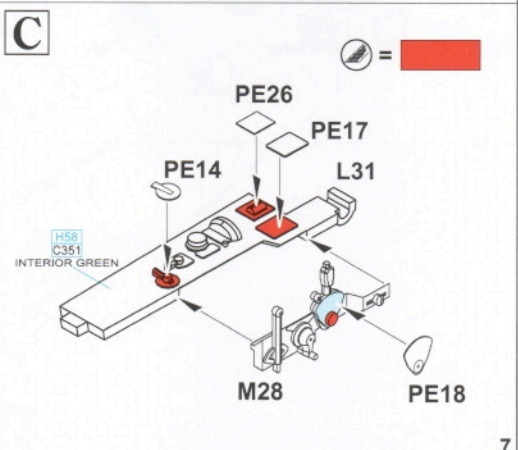
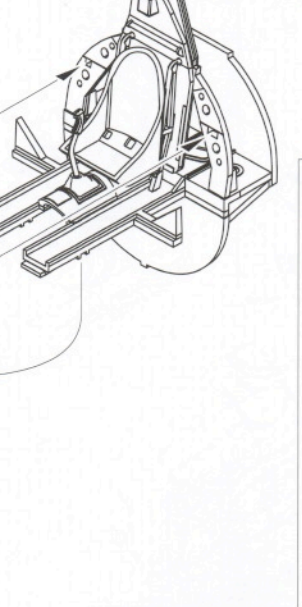
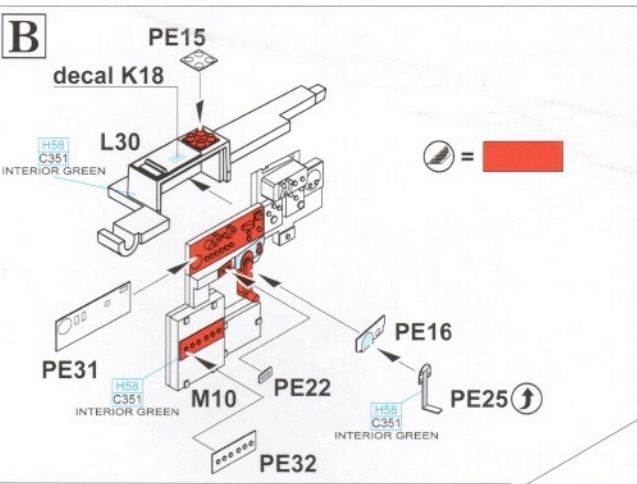
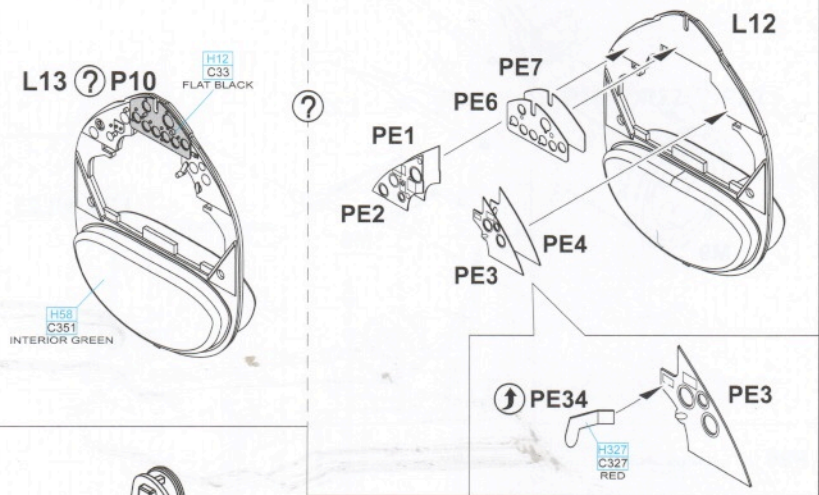
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GSI Creos (GUNZE)		
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	
H1	C1	WHITE
H2	C2	BLACK
H3	C3	RED
H6	C6	GREEN
H12	C33	FLAT BLACK
H47	C41	RED BROWN
H52	C12	OLIVE DRAB
H54	C365	NAVY BLUE
H56	C366	INTERMEDIATE BLUE
H58	C351	INTERIOR GREEN
H74	C368	SKY
H77	C137	TIRE BLACK
H85	C45	SAIL COLOR
H90	C47	CLEAR RED
H92	C49	CLEAR ORANGE

GSI Creos (GUNZE)		
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	
H93	C50	CLEAR BLUE
H94	C138	CLEAR GREEN
H305	C305	GRAY
H306	C306	MEDIUM GRAY
H316	C316	WHITE
H317	C317	GRAY
H325	C325	GRAY
H327	C327	RED
H329	C329	YELLOW
Mr.METAL COLOR		
MC214		DARK IRON
MC218		ALUMINIUM
MC219		BRASS
Mr.COLOR SUPER METALLIC		
SM201		SUPER FINE SILVER



OPTIONAL:
 decals K12, K13, K15





PE21?PE12

OPTIONAL:
decal K7

H58
C351
INTERIOR GREEN

PE29

PE20

OPTIONAL:
decal K16

PE29

H58
C351
INTERIOR GREEN

L4

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L4

H325
C325
GRAY

L5

E

M9

H12
C33
FLAT BLACK

H12
C33
FLAT BLACK

MC218
ALUMINIUM

L23

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

MC214
DARK IRON

L3

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

L14

L11

L10

L22

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

M6

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

L22 → L23

L10

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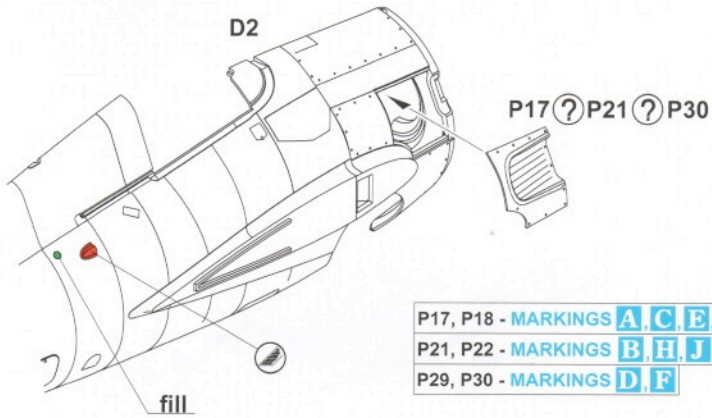
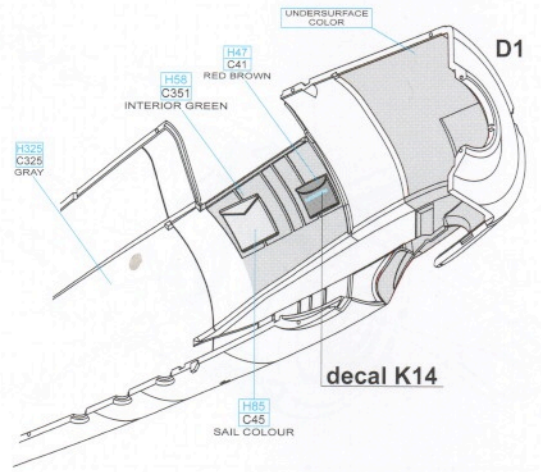
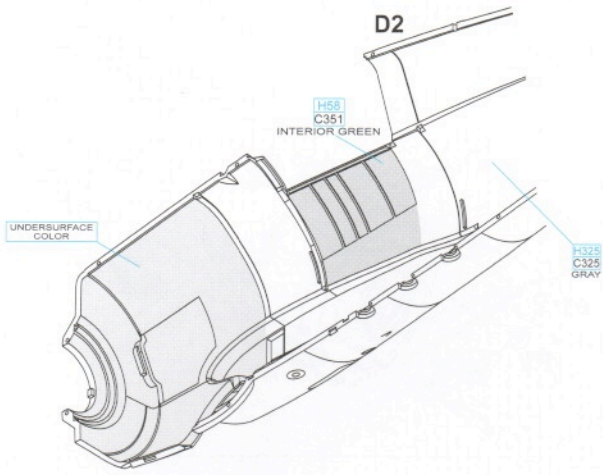
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UNDERSURFACE
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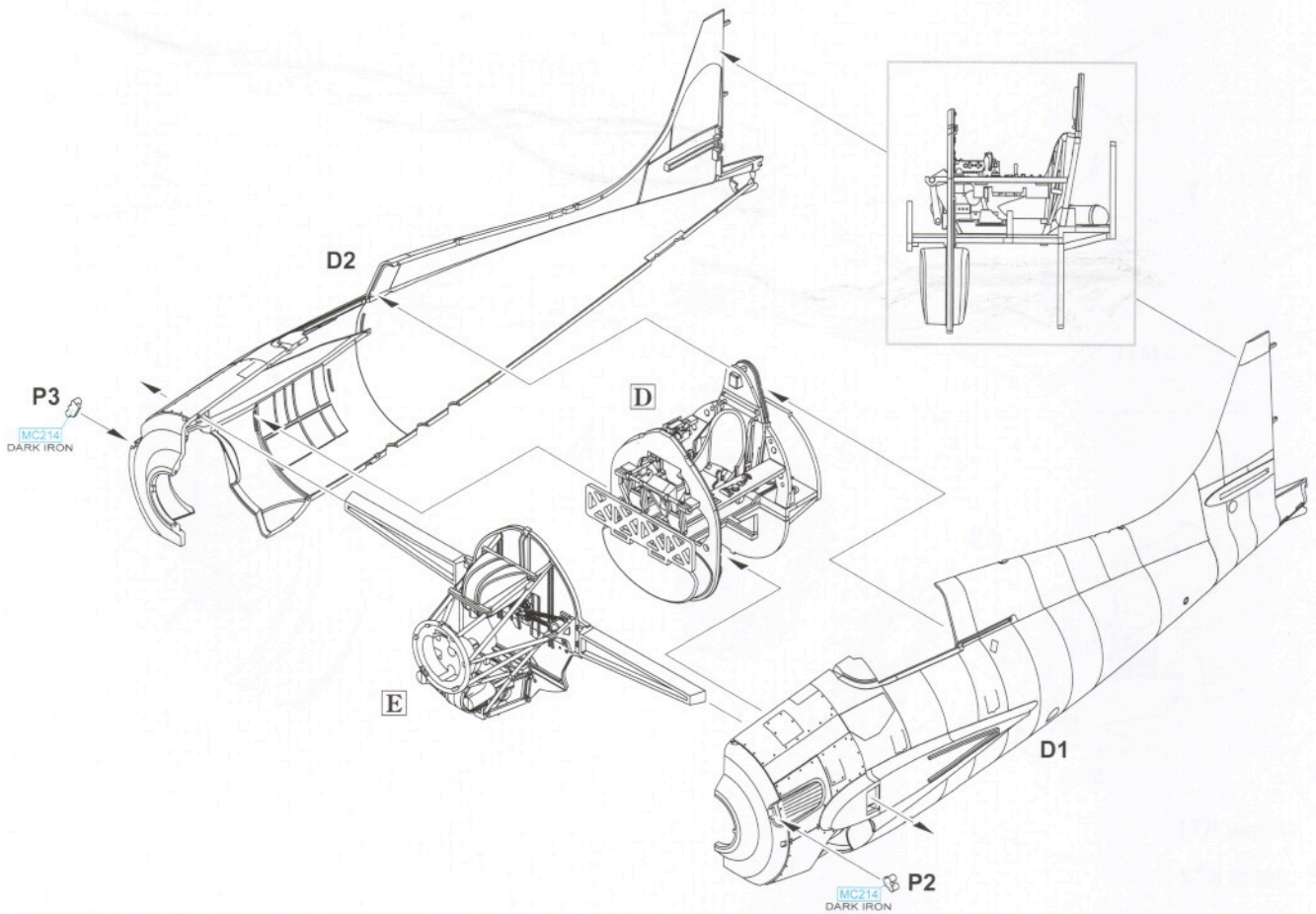
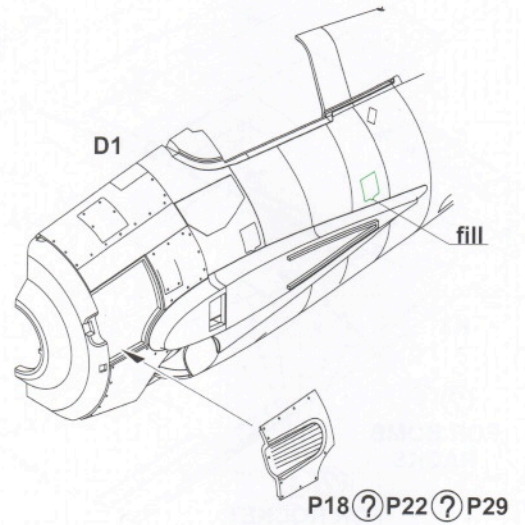
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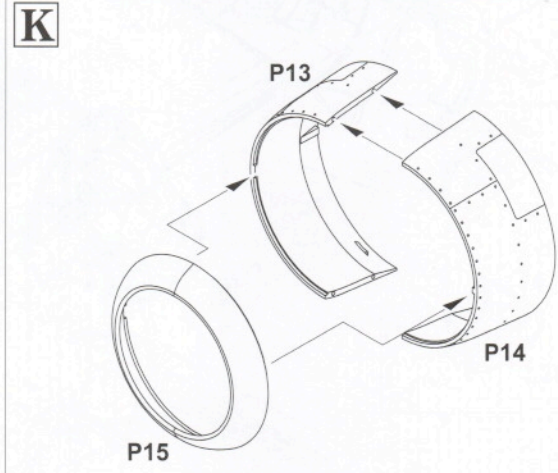
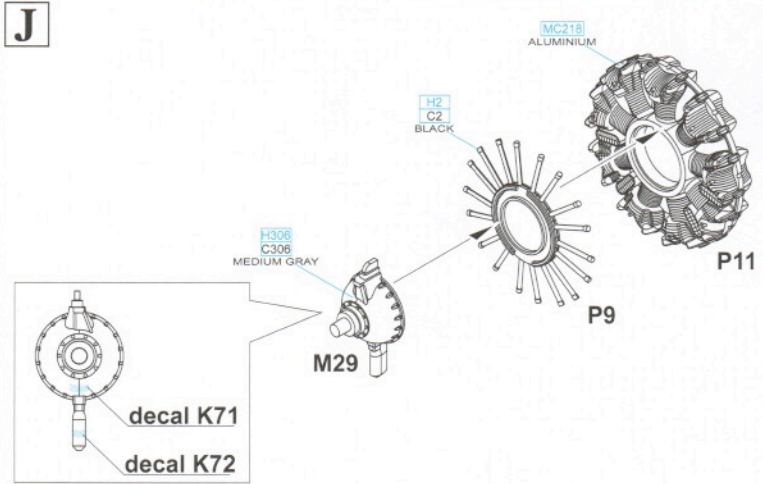
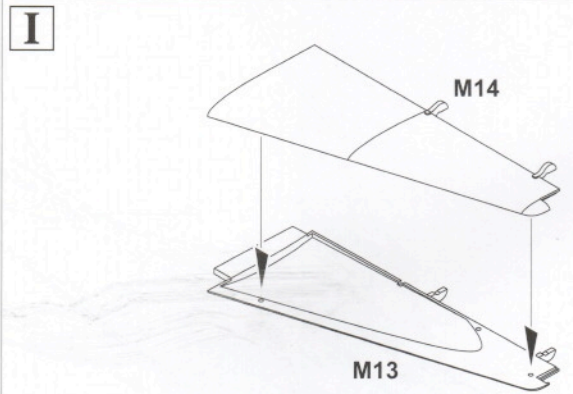
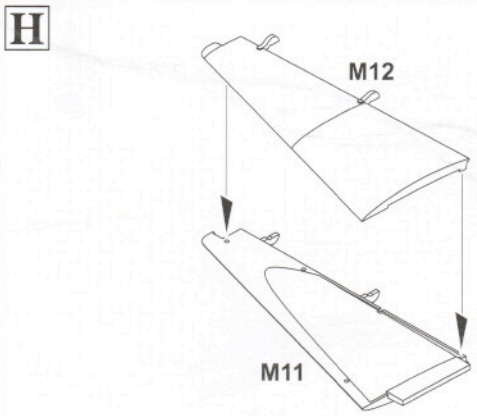
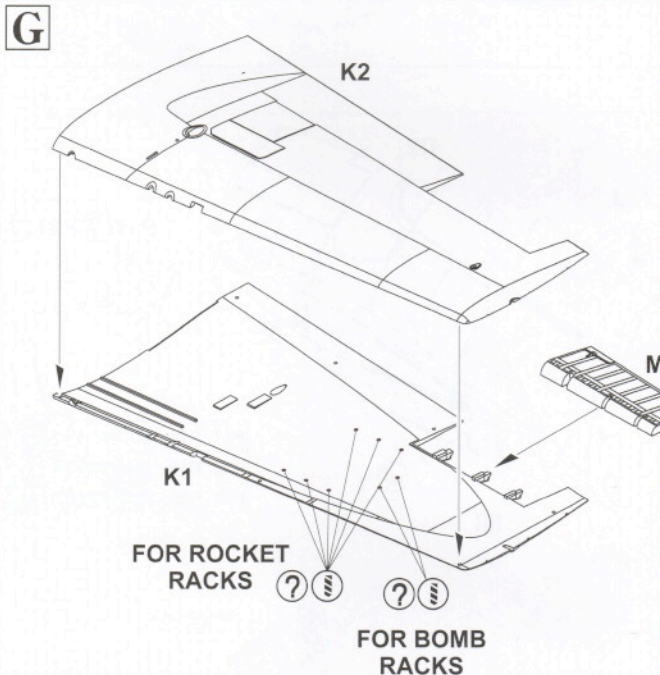
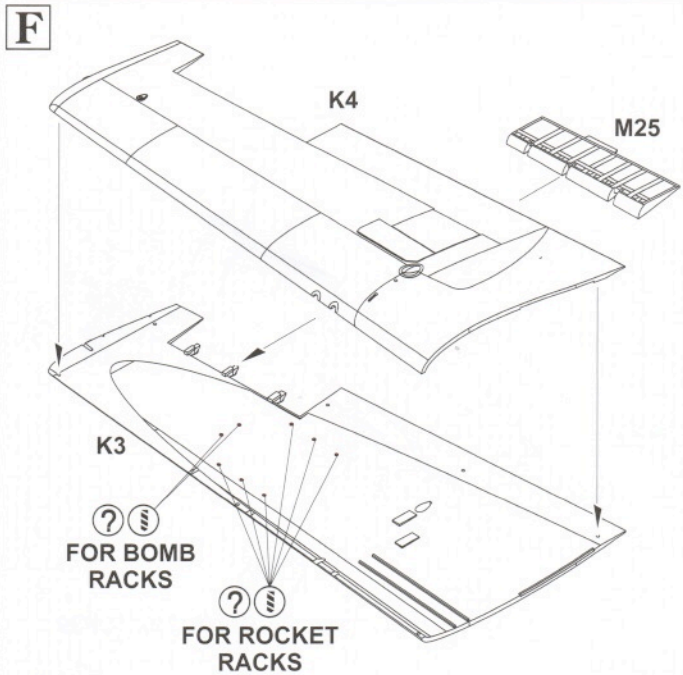
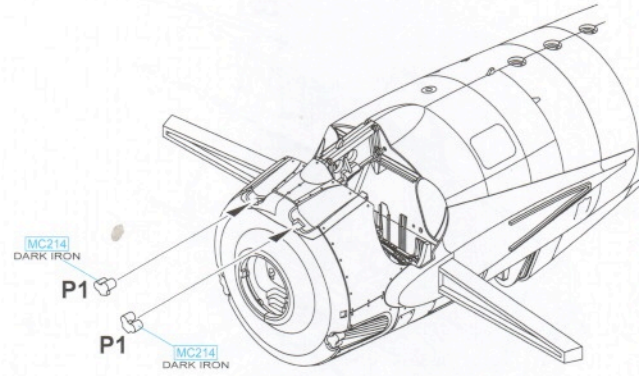
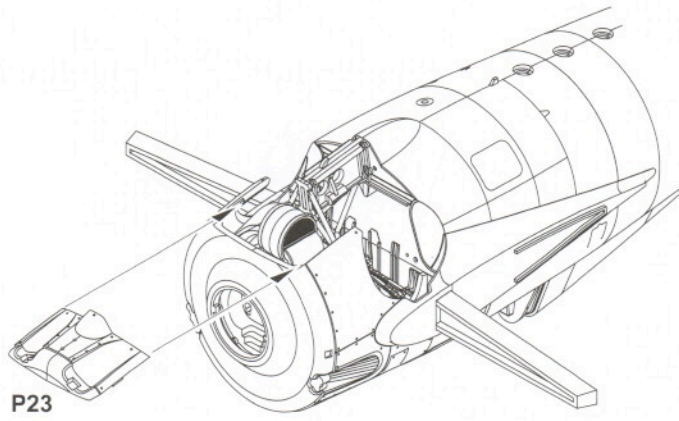
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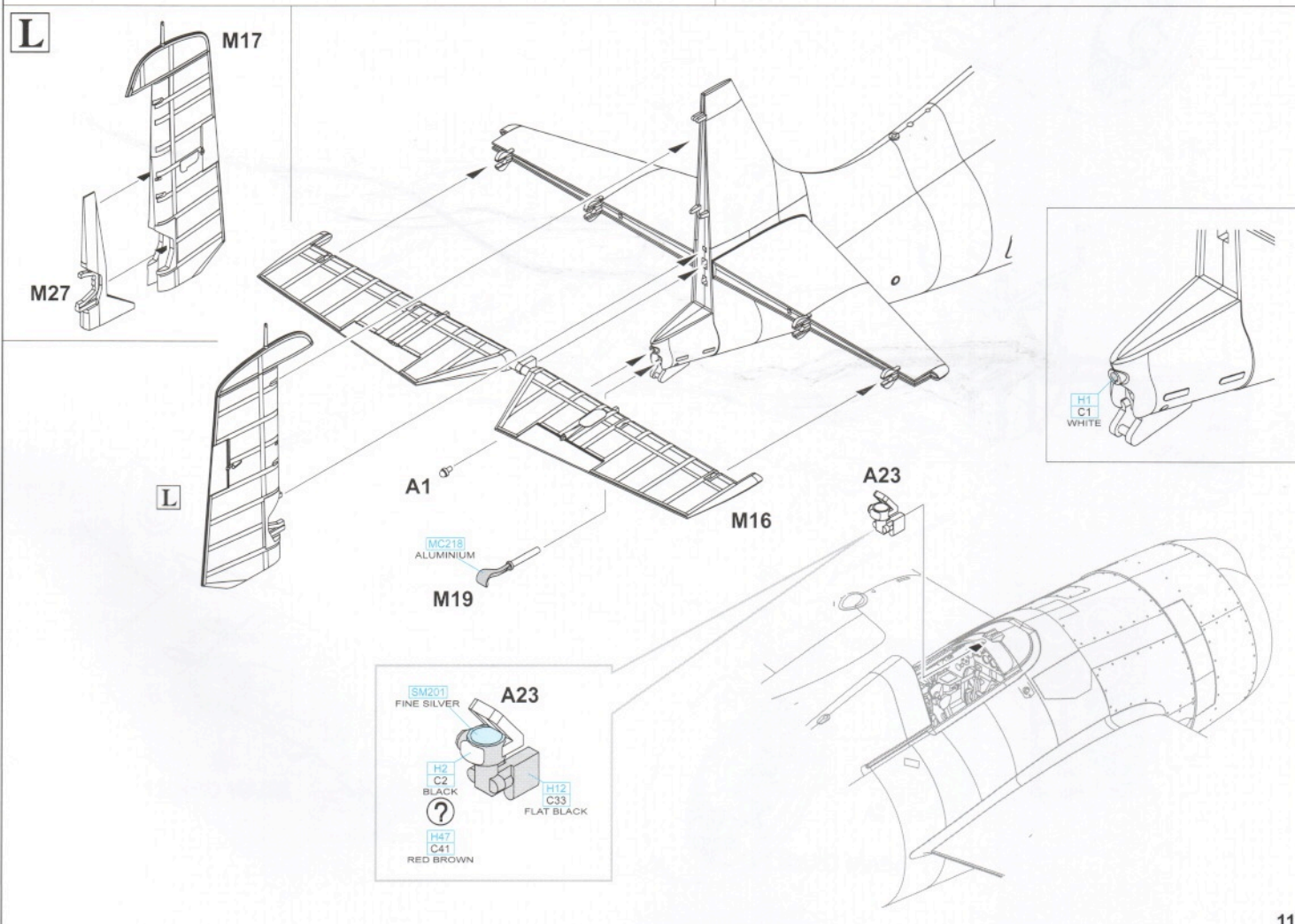
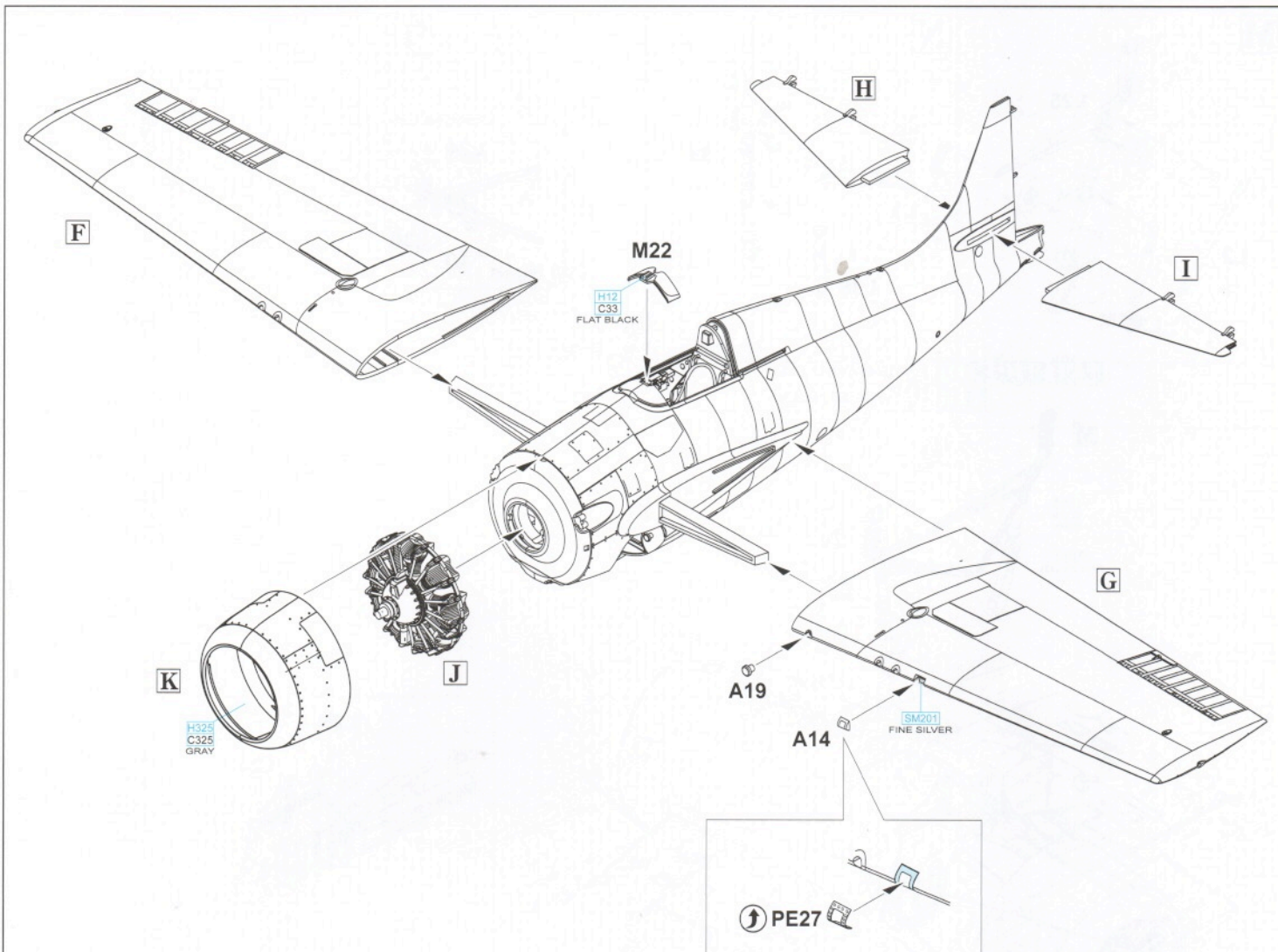
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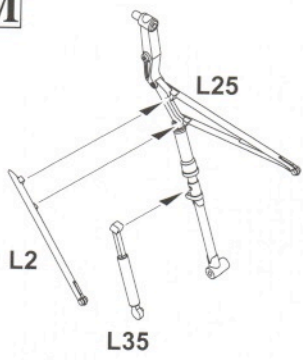
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 P21, P22 - MARKINGS **B, H, J**
 P29, P30 - MARKINGS **D, F**



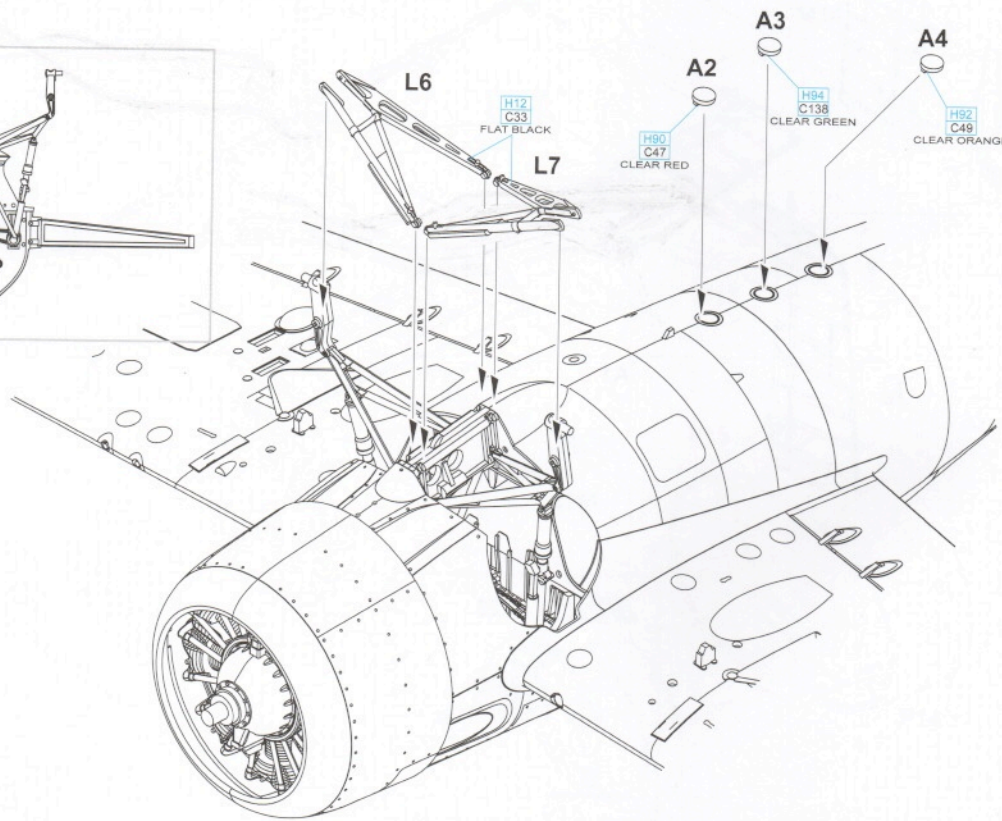
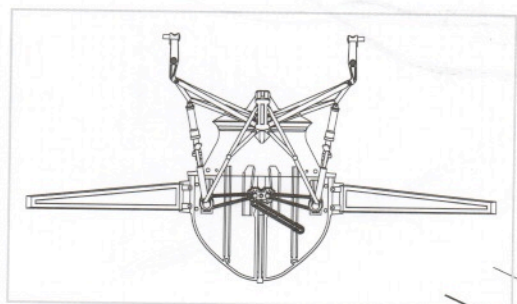
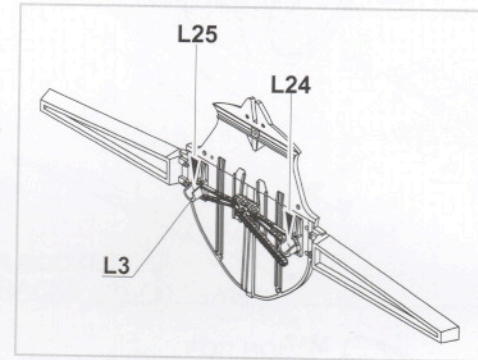
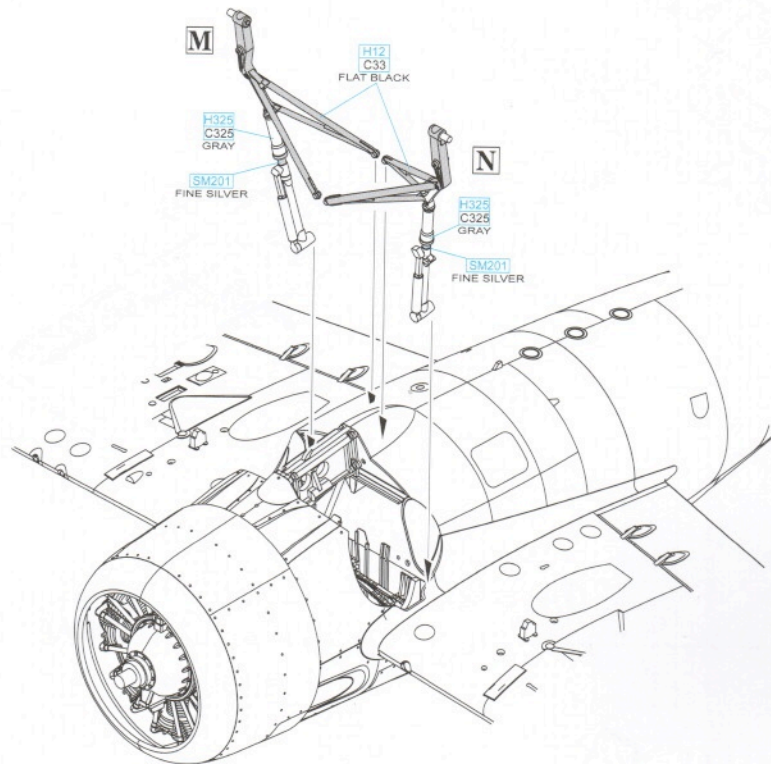
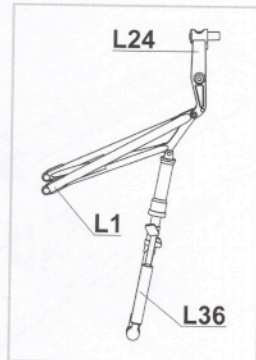
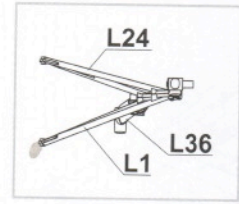
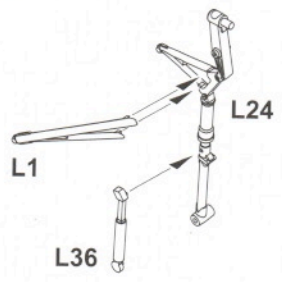




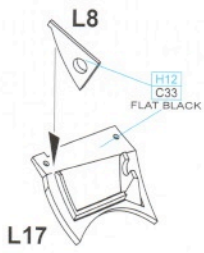
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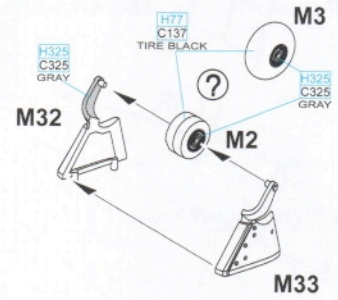
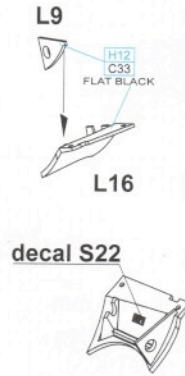
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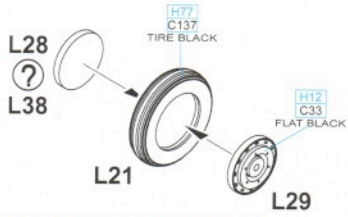


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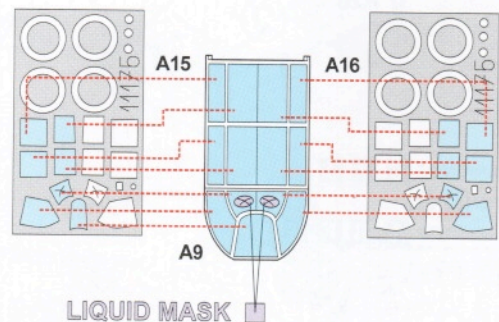
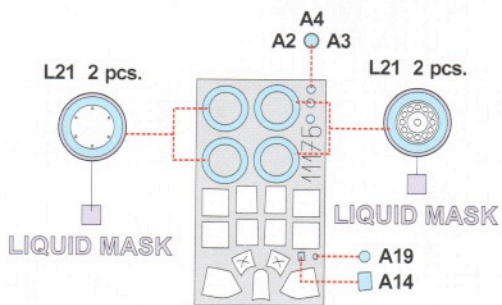
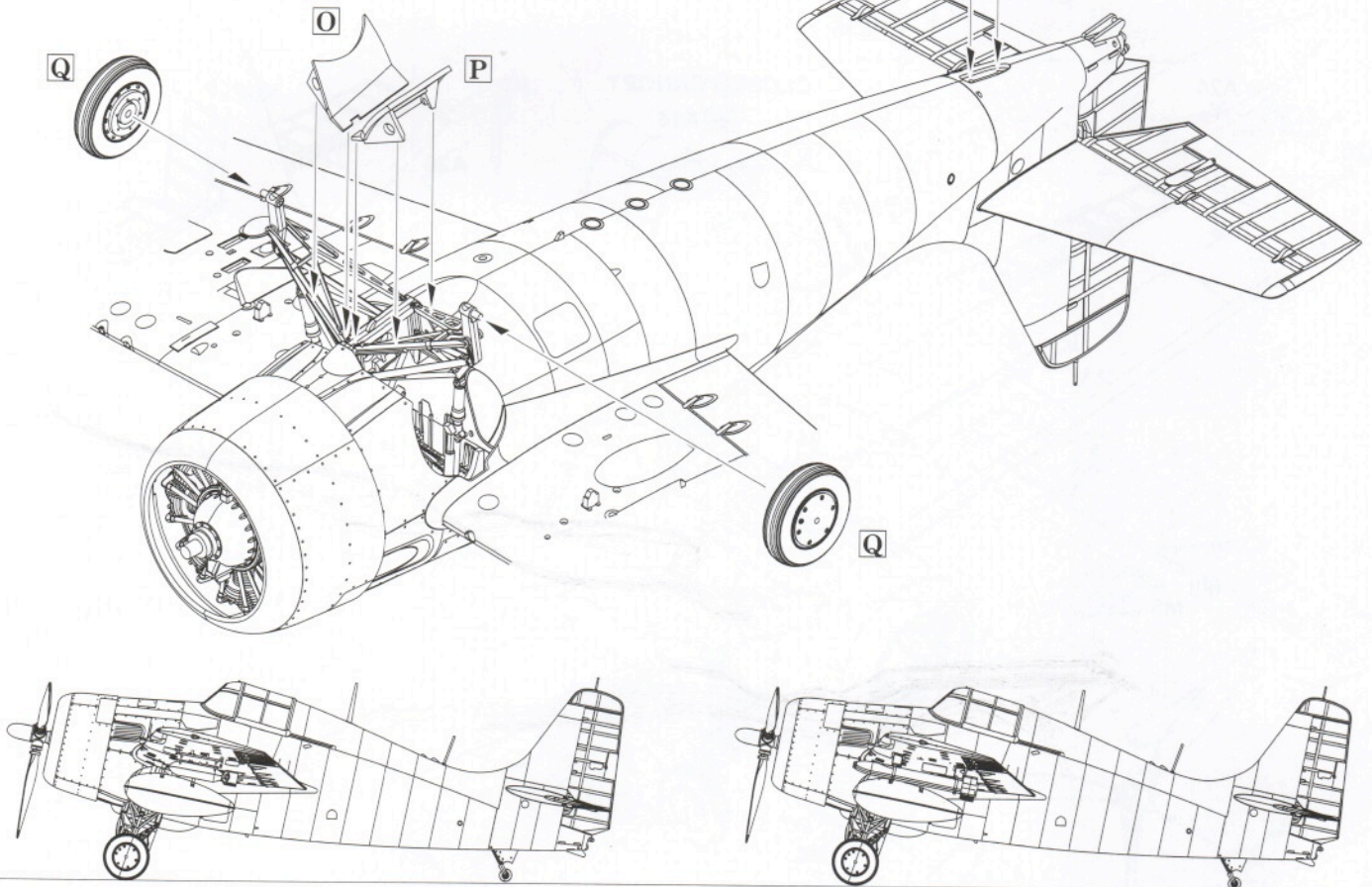


M3 - MARKINGS **A, B, C, D, E, F, I**
 M2 - MARKINGS **G, H, J**

Q 2 pcs.

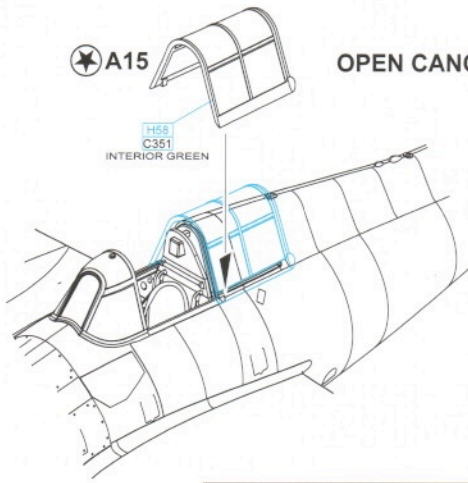


L28 - MARKINGS **A, B, C, D, E, F, I**
 L38 - MARKINGS **G, H, J**

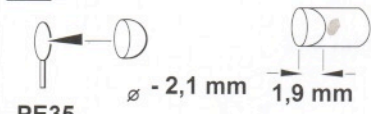


A15

OPEN CANOPY



R PE35 - MARKING J ONLY

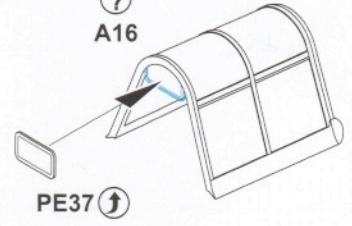


PE35

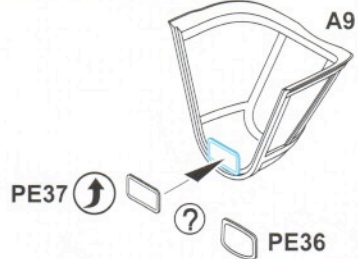
CREATE AN AERODYNAMICAL BACK OF THE REAR-VIEW MIRROR

MARKINGS B, C, F ONLY

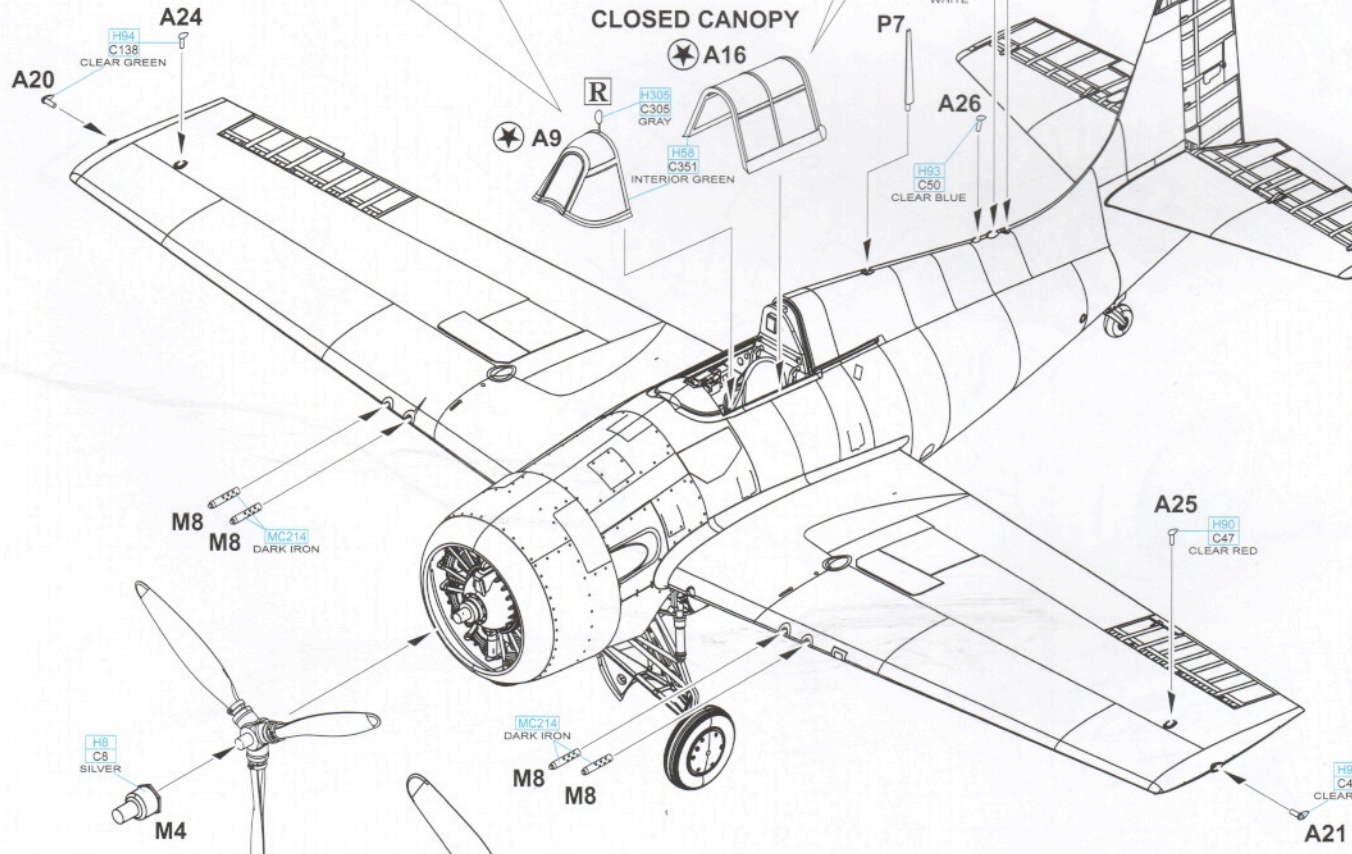
A15
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A16



PE37 - MARKINGS A, D, E, H, I ONLY
PE36 - MARKING G ONLY



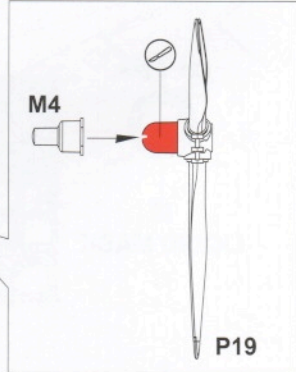
CLOSED CANOPY



P19 + M4 - MARKINGS C, F, J

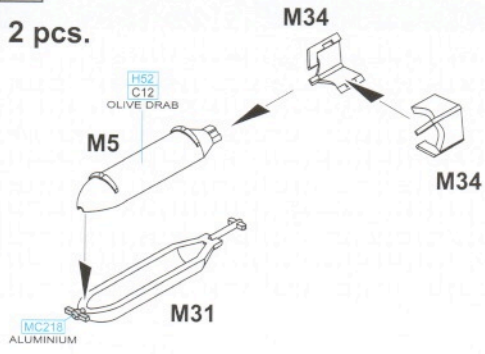
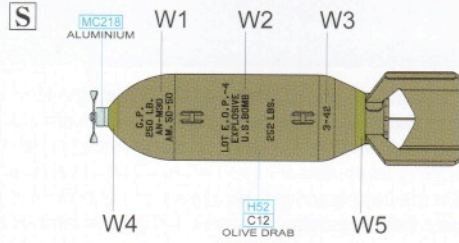
P19 - MARKING D, G

P20 + M4 - MARKINGS A, B, E, H, I

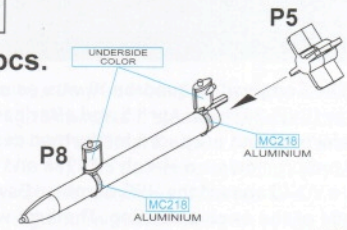
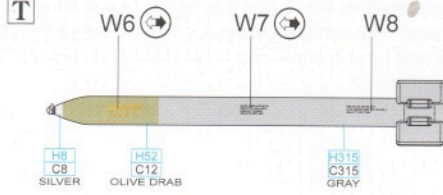


S

2 pcs.

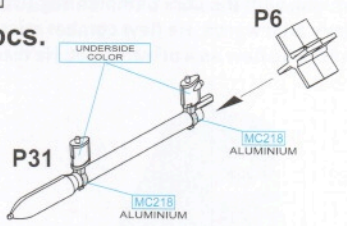
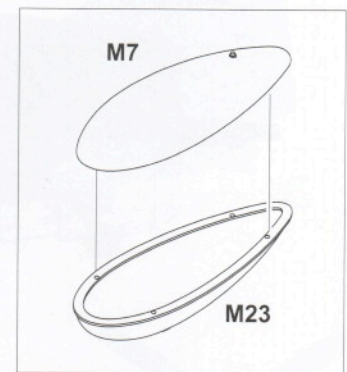
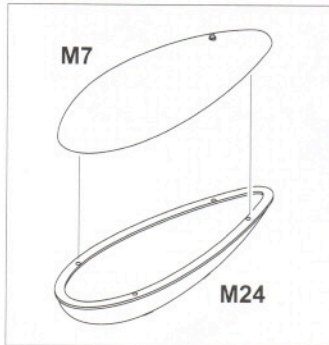
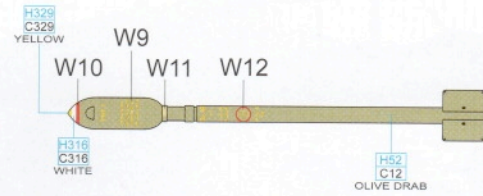
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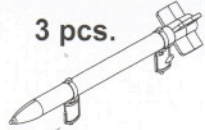
**T****U**

MARKING ONLY

3 pcs.

**U**

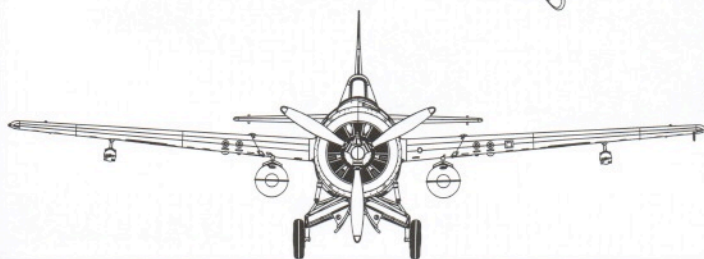
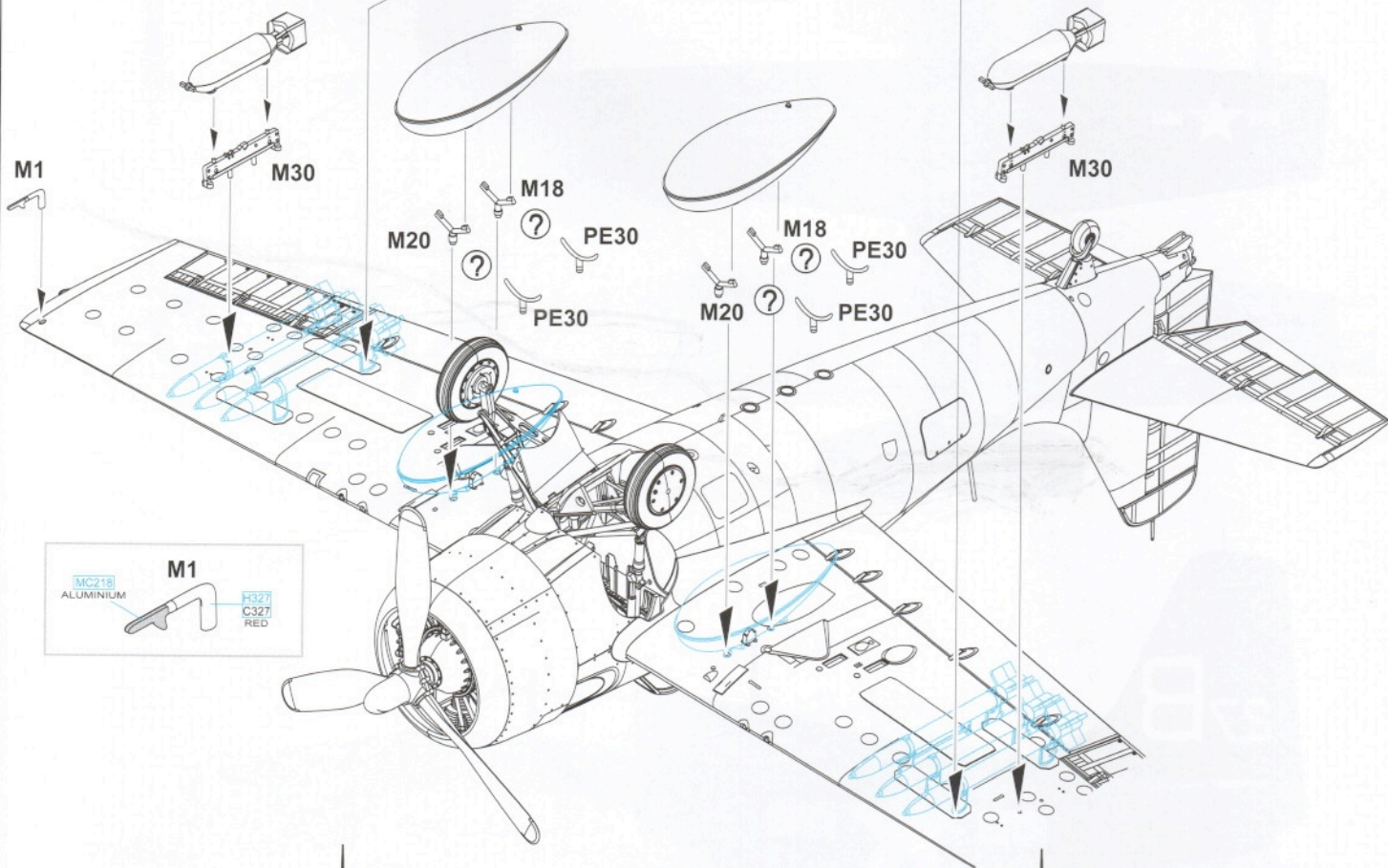
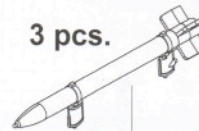
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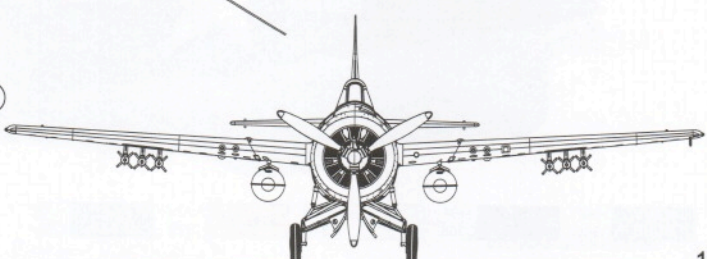
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T?U

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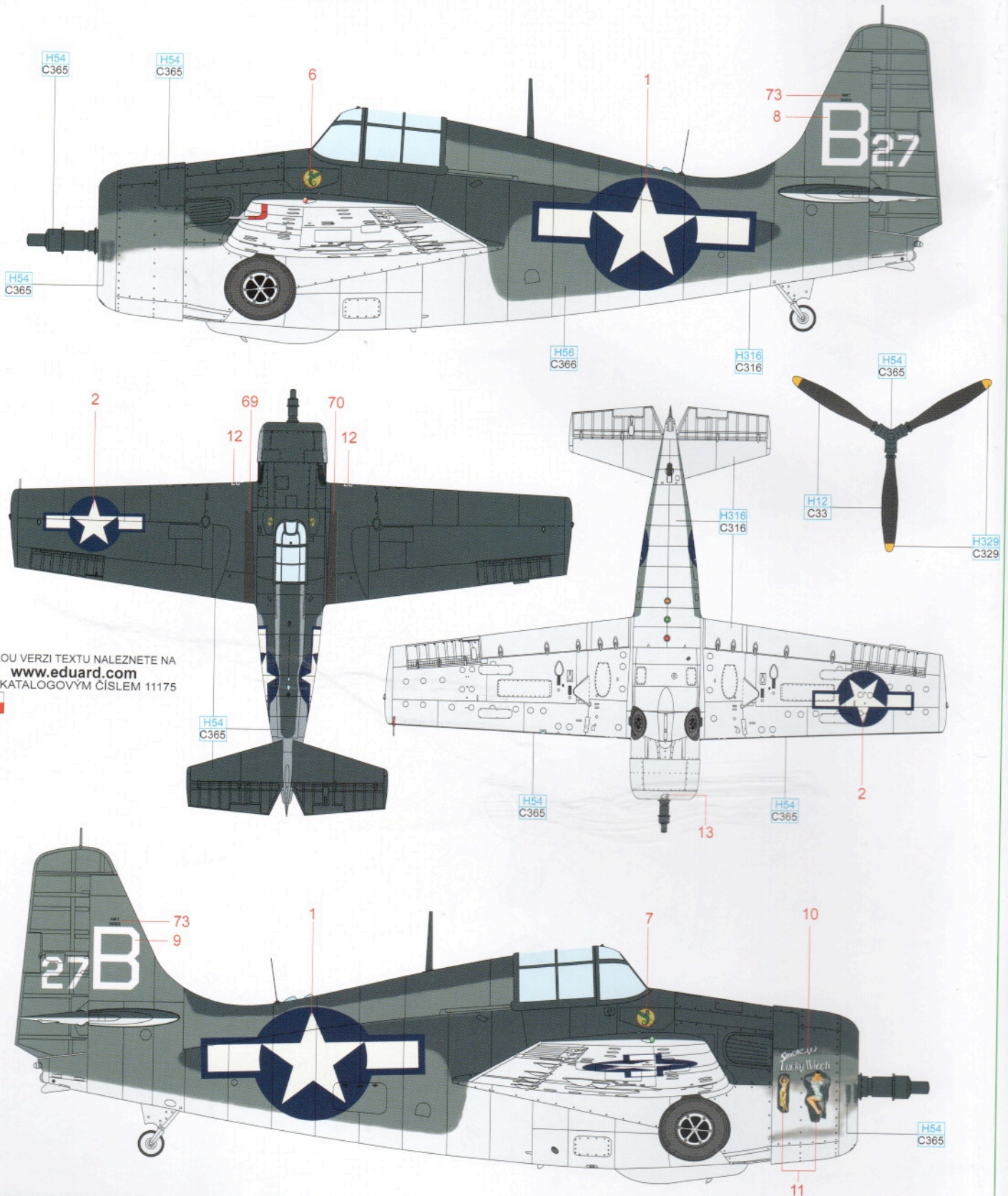


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A Ens. Darrell C. Bennett, VC-10, USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73), August 1944

The Composite Squadron 10 was established on September 23, 1943 and adopted the name Mallards. The unit served on board the carrier USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73) from April 5 and after her sinking in the Battle off Samar on October 25, the unit operated from airfields in Leyte. In January 1945, VC-10 was reformed and prepared for further deployment, but this never happened and it was inactivated at the end of the war. Ens. Darrell Bennett was born in Hamburg, Iowa, on March 30, 1924 and entered the Navy as an air cadet on October 1, 1943. Ten months later he was sent on his first operational tour with the VC-10 aboard the USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73). On the day he arrived, he had his picture taken in front of the FM-2 with a painting of two girls on the port side of the engine cowling. The first was based on a painting called Patriotic Gal by the famous Antonio Vargas. It is not known who had the two girls painted on the aircraft, but the paintings already bore signs of modification and wear. It is possible that Bennett only had "Smokey's" added to the inscription "Lucky Witch", as the "Smokey" was his nickname. He fought heroic battles with VC-10 during the Battle of Leyte Gulf and narrowly escaped sinking with the USS Gambier Bay (CVE-73), which was shot up by Japanese cruisers at the Battle off Samar. Bennett survived the war and stayed in the Navy afterwards. He flew combat missions in Korea and later trained recruits. During his career, he rose to command Fleet Air Miramar. After retirement in 1965 he flew as a private pilot. He died in December 2020.



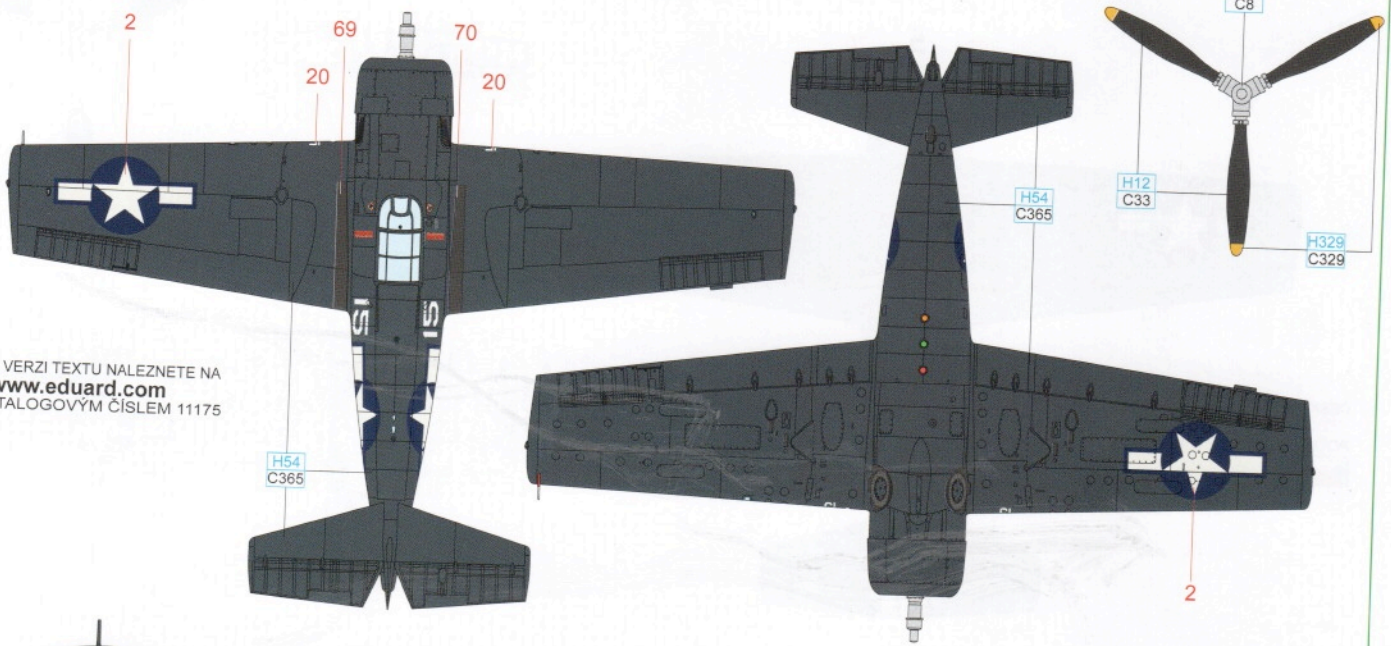
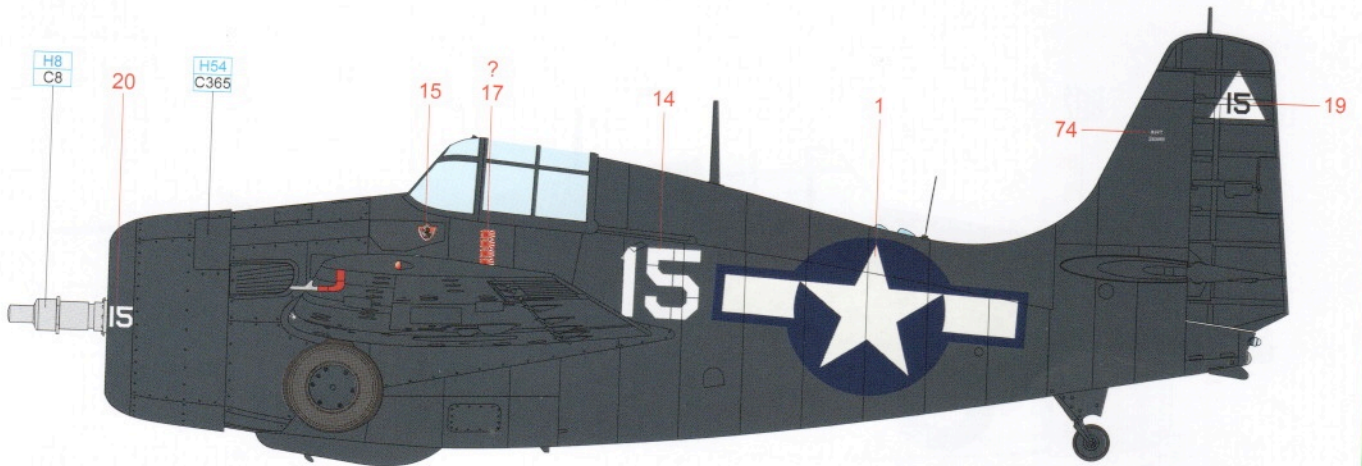
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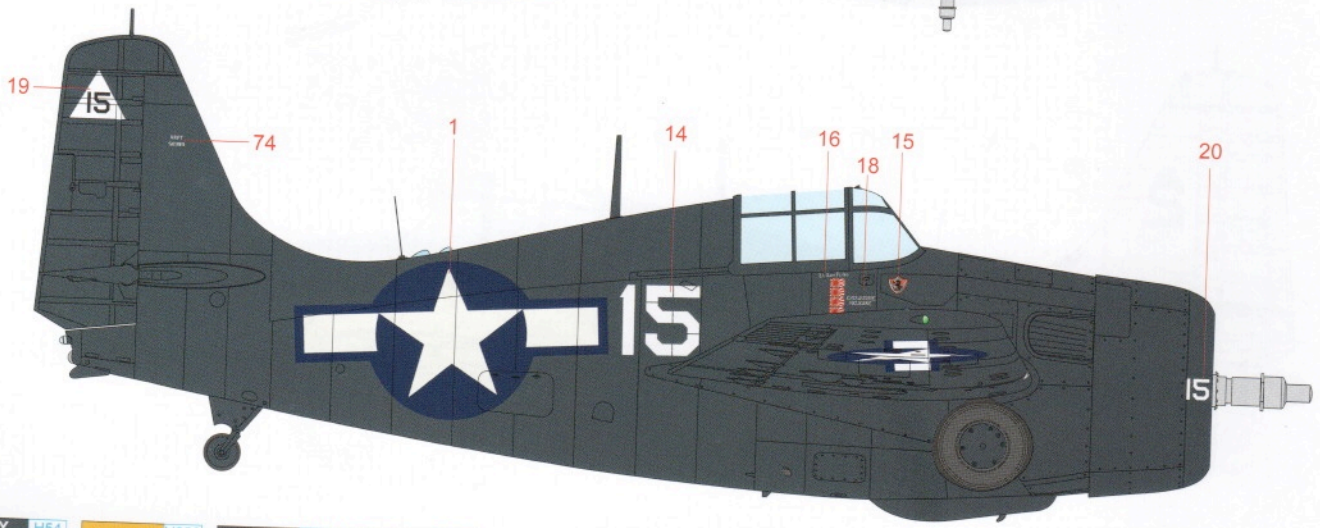
NAVY BLUE	H54 C365	INTERMEDIATE BLUE	H56 C366	WHITE	H316 C316	YELLOW	H329 C329	FLAT BLACK	H12 C33
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B Lt. Leopold M. Ferko, VC-4, USS White Plains (CVE-66), November 1944

Leopold Martin Ferko was born to Slovak parents on January 29, 1915, in Great Falls, Montana. He earned his bachelor's degree from Stanford University, where he was also a star of the American football team there. He then taught math and English at San Francisco High School and also coached the local football team before signing up with the Navy and beginning flight training on February 3. He then continued as an instructor at Corpus Christi, Texas, and 12 TBM Avengers. During the three days of the Battle of Leyte Gulf, he scored all five of his kills, although the first two may have been his last. After shooting down two Oscars he was in fact attacked himself and his FM-2 took one hit after another before the attacking enemy was shot down by the Ensign Pool. Ferko then had to make an emergency landing at Tacloban due to a damaged elevator. There, the aircraft was repaired, and he was able to return in time to score three more kills. Leopold Ferko retired from the Navy with the rank of Lieutenant Commander and died on May 16, 1992, in San Francisco. This FM-2 was the second one he used and the kill symbols were probably only on the right side. However, the decals also offer the option of placing the symbols on the left side (decal No. 17).

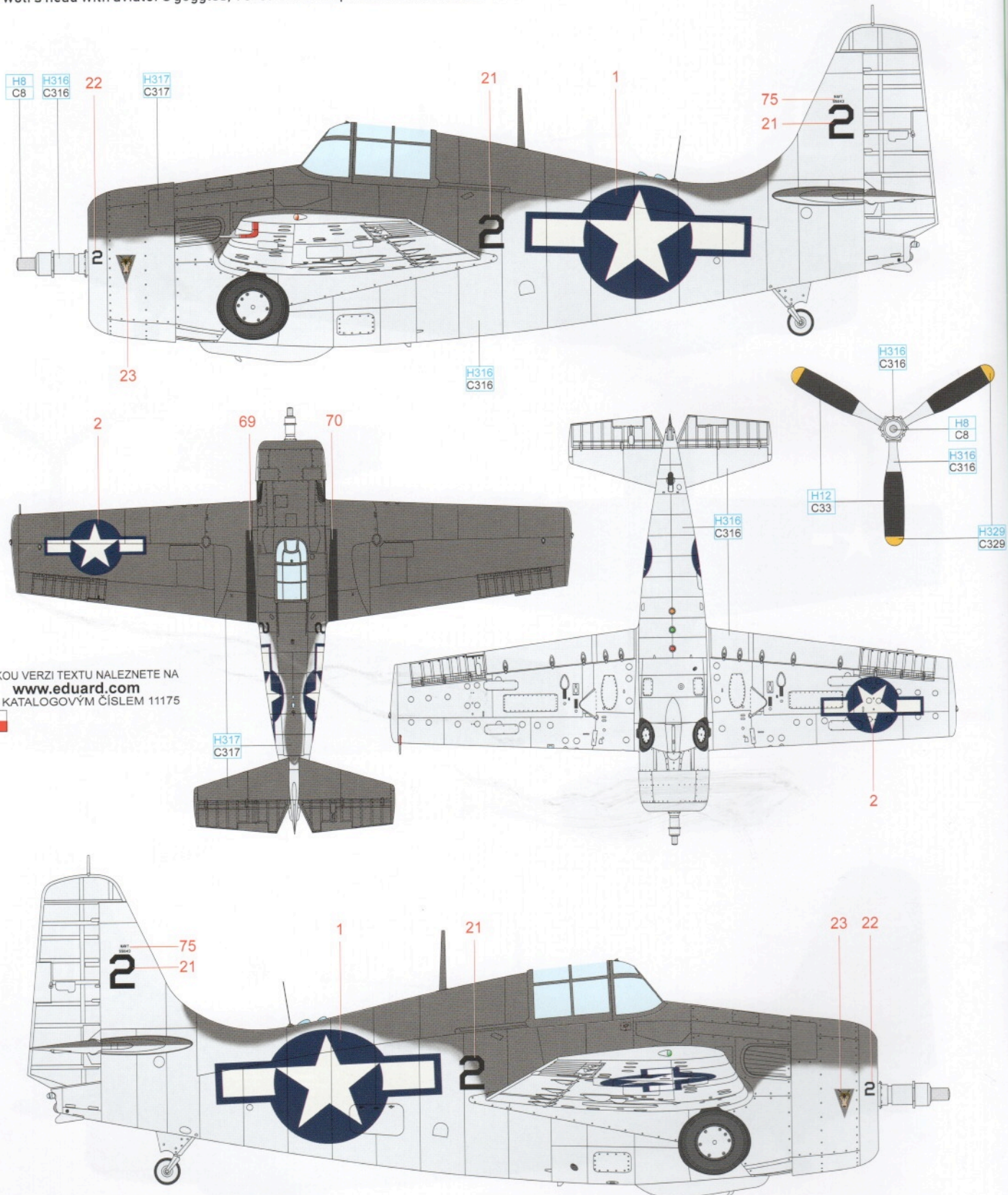


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NAVY BLUE H54 C365 YELLOW H329 C329 FLAT BLACK H12 C33 SILVER H8 C8

FM-2s played a significant role in the Atlantic, where the Composite Squadrons focused on support of anti-submarine missions as the German U-boats were a major threat to supply convoys. The Composite Squadrons operated from small Casablanca or Sangamon class escort carriers and consisted usually of the TBM Avengers and the FM-2 Wildcats. Smaller size of FM-2 suited better to the cramped conditions on board than the massive Hellcats. USS Guadalcanal (CVE-60) was converted from the freighter Astrolabe Bay and entered service in September 1943. During her maiden voyage she destroyed three submarines. As a flagship of the Task Group 22.3 USS Guadalcanal (CVE-60) added two more U-boats to her score on the second tour. More to it, the TG 22.3 managed to capture lightly damaged German submarine. After that tour the VC-8 was replaced by VC-69 in the fall. The unit was activated on July 1, 1943 and first was placed on board of USS Bogue (CVE-9) from May to July 1944. During this cruise, pilots were credited with the destruction of the Japanese submarine I-52, which was on a secret mission to German-occupied Lorient, France. No further similar successes were recorded by this squadron aboard USS Guadalcanal (CVE-60), and the unit was inactivated on June 22, 1945. Her FM-2s bore the later Atlantic livery of Dark Gull Gray and white. The inner part of the propeller blades were painted white to lighten the appearance of the "dark hole" in the nose of the aircraft. The unit's emblem was a wolf's head with aviator's goggles; VC-69 aircraft sported it on both sides of the nose.



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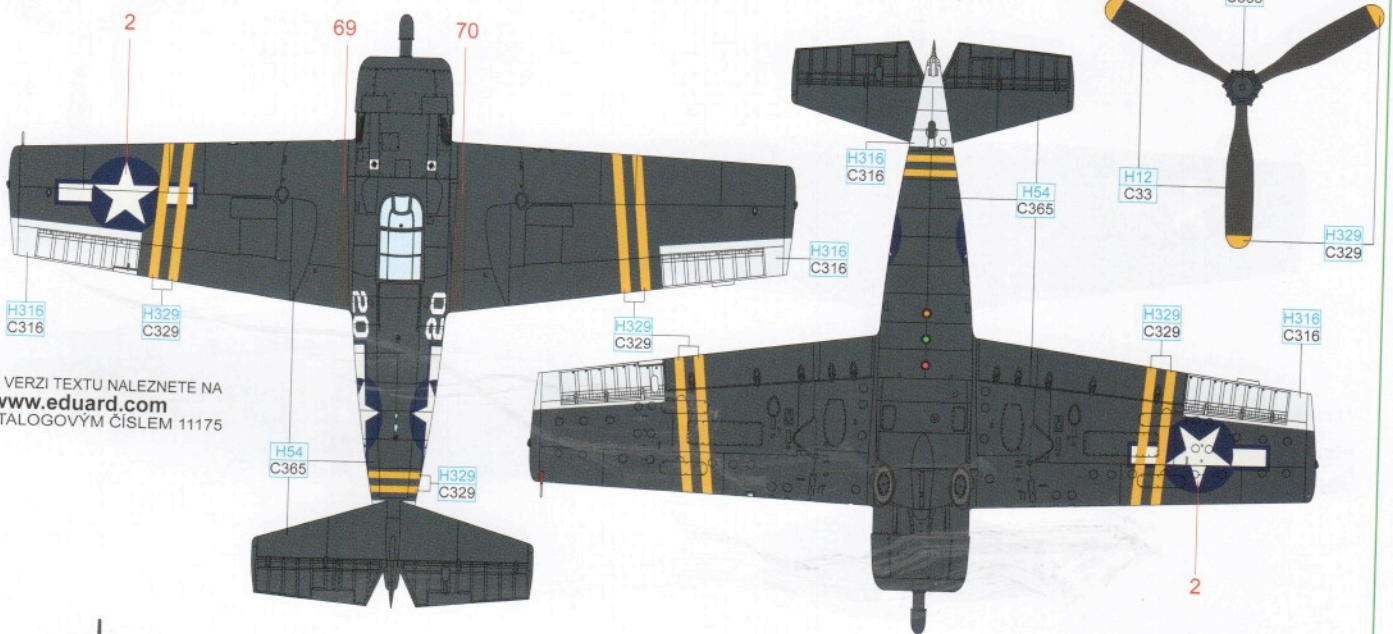
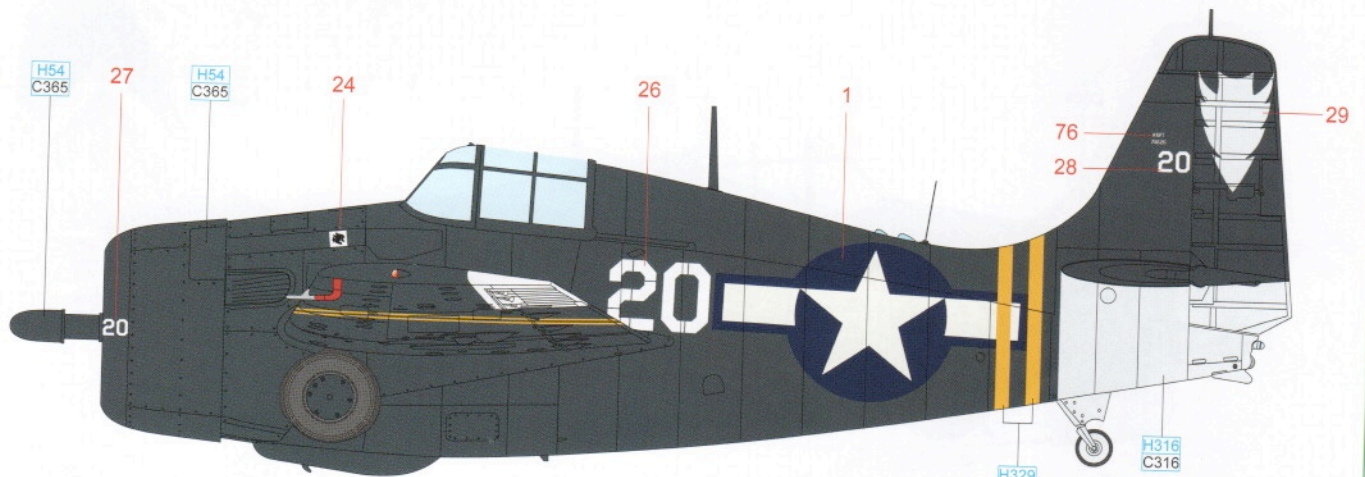


GRAY H317 C317 WHITE H316 C316 YELLOW H329 C329 FLAT BLACK H12 C33 SILVER H8 C8

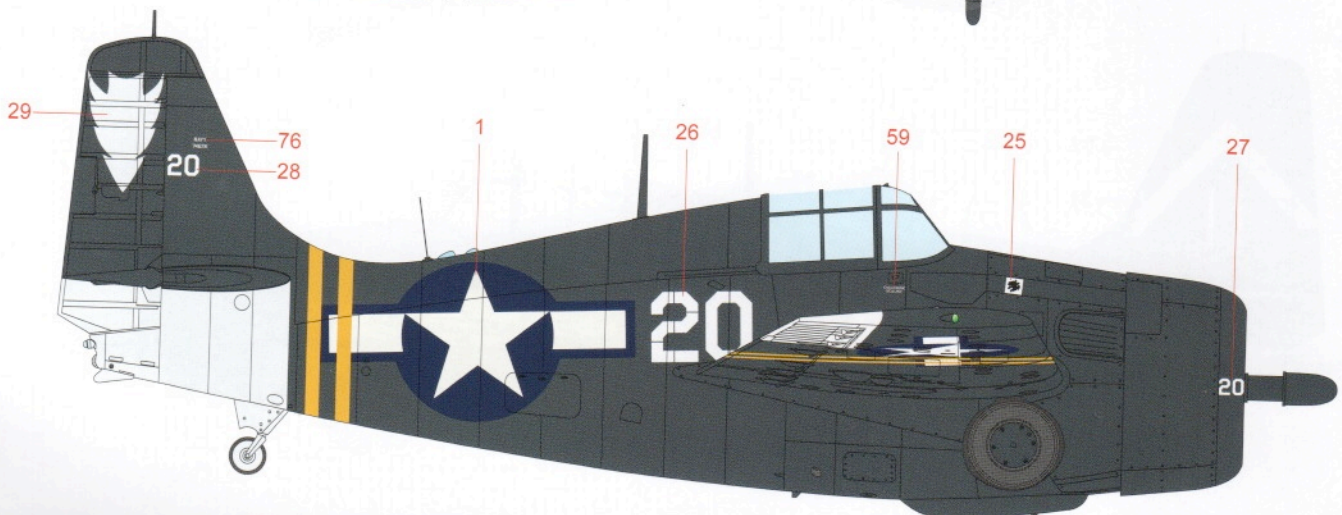
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D BuNo. 74626, Lt(jg) Harry N. O'Connor, VC-8, USS Nehenta Bay (CVE-74), August 1945

Combined Squadron VC-8 operated aboard the aircraft carrier USS Nehenta Bay (CVE-74) from May to September 1945. Prior to that, it had operated from the decks of USS Mission Bay (CVE-59) and USS Guadalcanal (CVE-60). With USS Nehenta Bay (CVE-74), she left the Atlantic theater and moved to the Pacific. USS Nehenta Bay (CVE-74) had been operating in the area since June 1944, when she joined with TF-51 aboard for offensive operations against the Marianas. Subsequently, from August 1944 to January 1945, she escorted and protected, with VC-11 aboard, tankers for refueling at sea, allowing for more efficient use of naval forces. She returned to the U.S. on February 19, 1945, for repairs at San Diego, and on May 9, already with VC-8 aboard, she arrived at Ulithi, where she prepared for attacks on Okinawa as part of Task Unit 52.1. She then protected tankers again from late June until early August, and after the fighting ceased, anchored at Pearl Harbor on September 24. There, VC-8 was inactivated on October 8. This aircraft, with Lt. (jg) O'Connor in the cockpit, crashed on landing on August 5, striking the aircraft on board. Two other FM-2s (BuNos. 75081 and 74508) were destroyed. The aircraft bore the identifying markings of the carrier and Task Unit, i.e., white fields on the ailerons (extending slightly into the wing) white aft under the horizontal tail surfaces, and twin yellow stripes on the wing and fuselage in front of the tail surfaces.



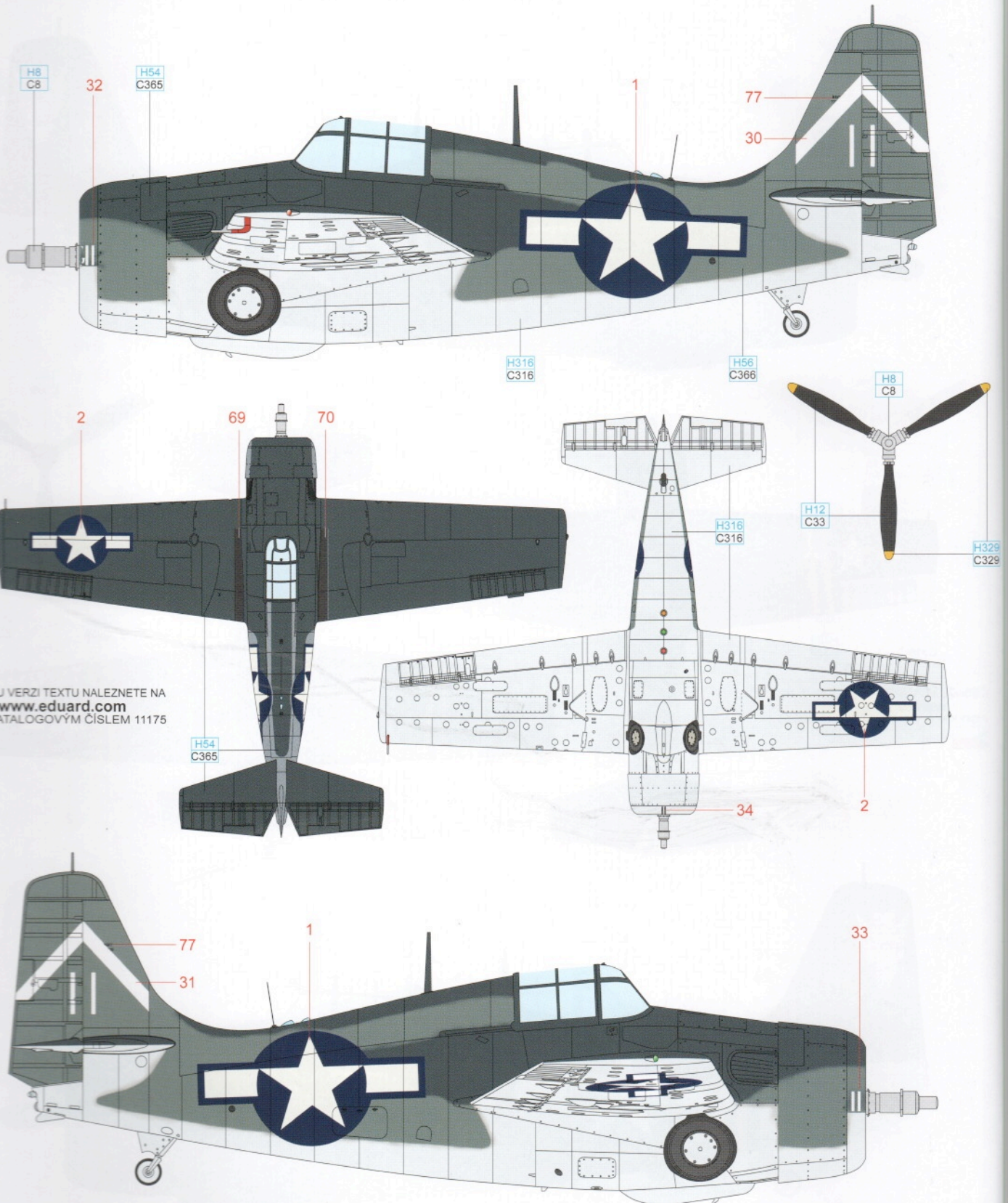
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NAVY BLUE	H54 C365	WHITE	H316 C316	YELLOW	H329 C329	FLAT BLACK	H12 C33
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E VC-80, USS Manila Bay (CVE-61), autumn 1944

Composite Squadron VC-80 was established on December 16, 1943 and, after embarking on USS Manila Bay (CVE-61), participated in the battles of Leyte and Luzon. The ship operated during the Battle of Leyte as part of Task Group TG 77.4.2 (call sign Taffy 2) of Rear Admiral Felix B. Stump and VC-80 contributed significantly to the success of American forces in the largest naval battle in history. Then, during the fighting in Lingayen Gulf, the USS Manila Bay (CVE-61) was hit by a kamikaze attack at 1750 hours on January 5. It damaged her radar and communications equipment, caused a fire, and most importantly, cost the lives of 14 men. The resulting fire was quickly dealt with by firefighters, and some 24 hours later VC-80 aircraft were already beginning limited operations from her deck. The aircraft depicted bore the typical three-color Pacific livery, the markings complementing the symbol assigned to units operating from USS Manila Bay (CVE-61), a white chevron on the vertical tail surfaces.



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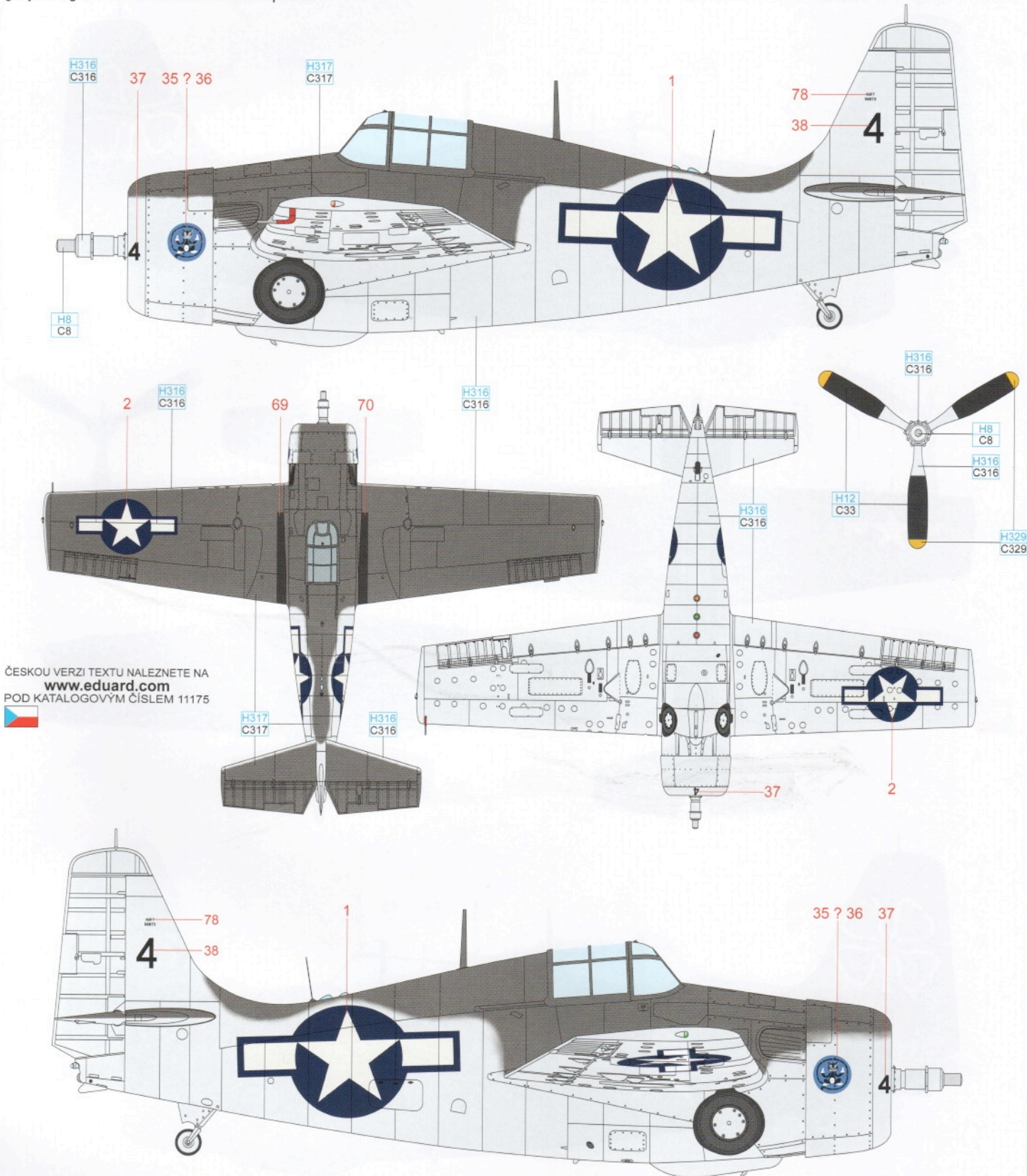


NAVY BLUE H54 C365 INTERMEDIATE BLUE H56 C366 WHITE H316 C316 YELLOW H329 C329 FLAT BLACK H12 C33 SILVER H8 C8

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F Lt. O'Neill, VC-13, USS Tripoli (CVE-64), spring 1944

VC-13 was established on January 3, 1944 and on February 16 of that year embarked on the new escort carrier USS Tripoli (CVE-64). The ship suffered a fire shortly after her maiden cruise when an acetylene torch ignited fuel that was inadvertently dumped into the water on the starboard bow. Two seamen were killed. After repairs, USS Tripoli (CVE-64) departed San Diego on January 31 for her new homeport in Norfolk, Virginia. She arrived there on February 16 and sailed for her first mission on March 15 as the flagship of Task Group 21.15, in which she was accompanied by five destroyers. The group patrolled west of Cape Verde, disrupting the refueling of German submarines. On April 19, an Avenger crew spotted German U-513 awaiting her "Milch Cow" (a refuelling submarine). Subsequent attacks were unsuccessful and the submarine escaped. VC-13 thus returned from the cruise without success and was replaced on board by VC-6 on April 29. New duty station of VC-13 was USS Anzio (CVE-57) (formerly USS Coral Sea), which the squadron embarked on March 22 to engage in support of the invasion of Okinawa. The aircraft depicted here is from the Atlantic mission period. Lt. O'Neill had his photograph taken with this FM-2, but it probably was not his personal aircraft. An interesting feature was the white paint extending over the leading edges to the upper surfaces. On either side of the engine cowling, there was painted the squadron emblem, a black cat with its front paws in an obscene gesture. It had blue or gray background. The decals offer both options.



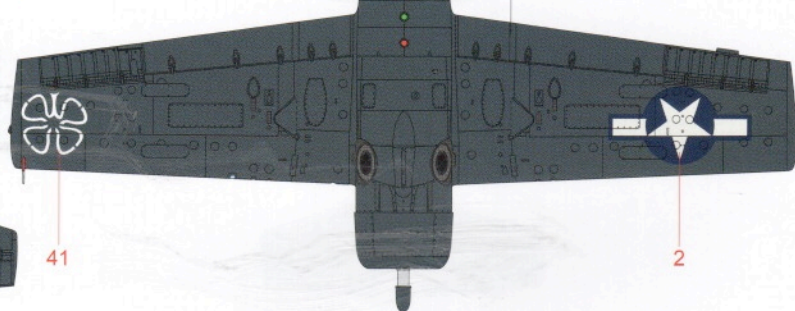
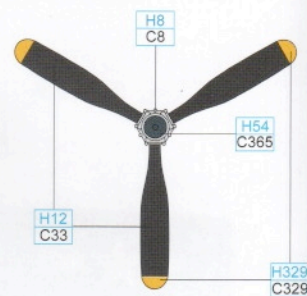
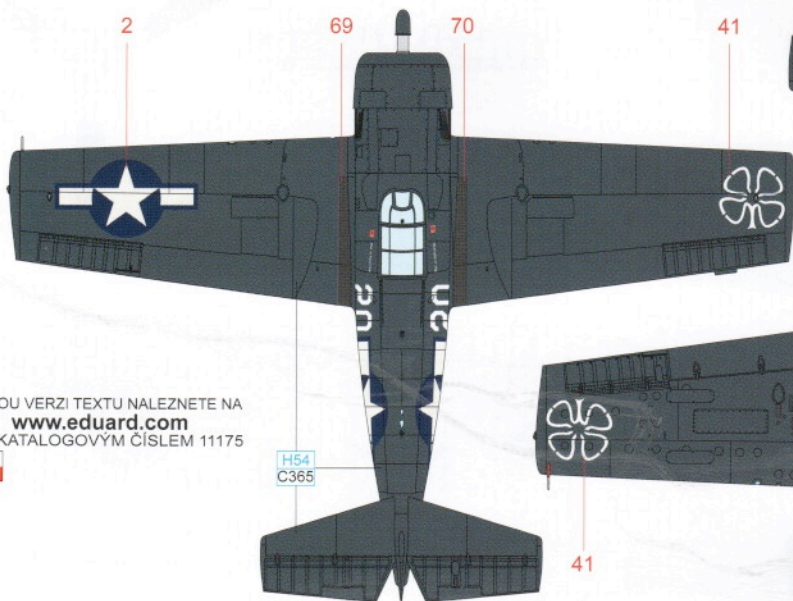
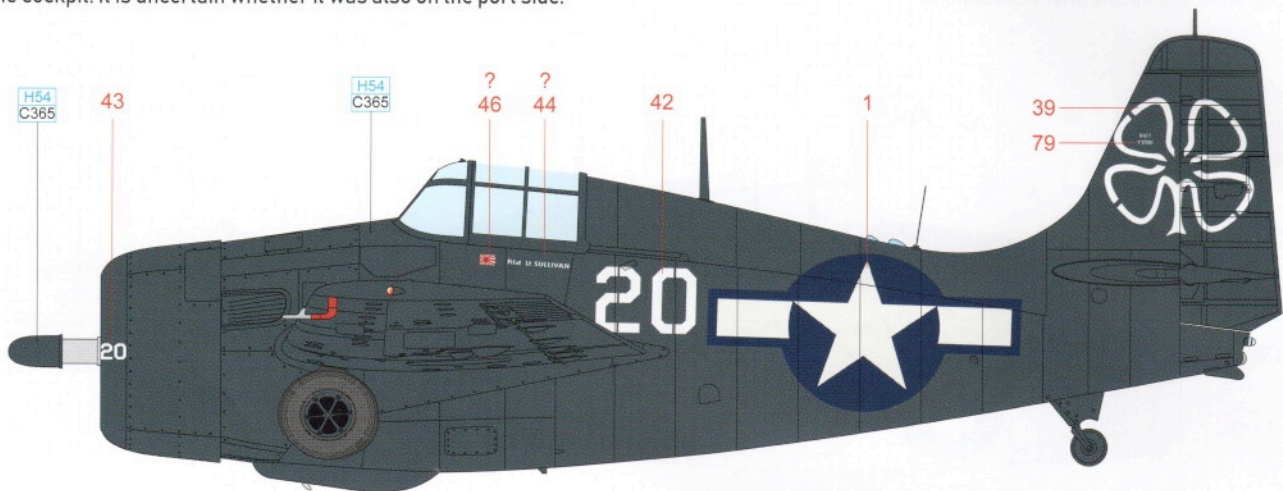
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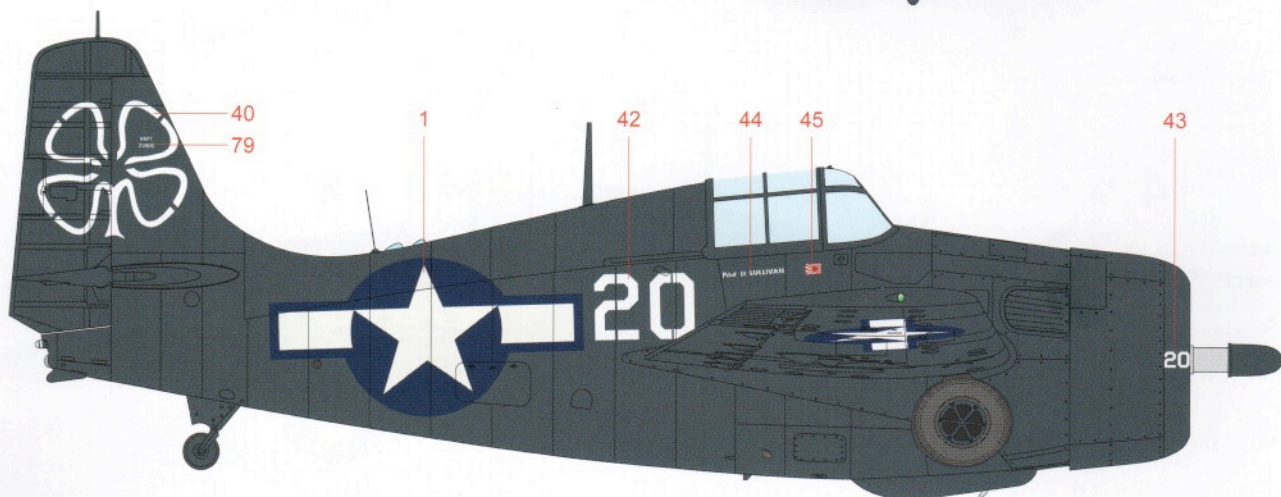
GRAY H317 C317 WHITE H316 C316 YELLOW H329 C329 FLAT BLACK H12 C33 SILVER H8 C8

G Lt.(jg) Robert Sullivan, VC-93, USS Petrof Bay (CVE-80), April–May 1945

VC-93 was established on February 23, 1944 and its personnel was the first to be trained aboard the USS Matanikau (CVE-101) (from October 14, 1944). During its cruises off the Californian coast, this ship trained 1,332 pilots in the following months until June 1945. VC-93 replaced VC-76 aboard USS Petrof Bay (CVE-80) on March 10, 1945 and sailed from Guam on March 21 to prepare for the Battle of Okinawa as part of Task Unit 52.1.2. The VC-93 pilots supported the Marines first in the capture of the Kerama and Keise Shima archipelagos and then in the main operation on Okinawa. Beginning on April 13, the pilots then focused on neutralizing Japanese airfields on the Sakashima Archipelago, from which the Kamikaze pilots were taking off. By the end of their mission on May 26, VC-93 pilots had destroyed many enemy aircraft on the ground and shot down 17. Two of these kills were credited to Lt.(jg) Robert Sullivan. For her next mission, VC-93 sailed aboard USS Steamer Bay (CVE-87) on June 10, 1945 and, as part of the 3rd Fleet, assisted in the neutralization of Japanese airfields in the Sakishima Gunto Archipelago beginning June 14. This was followed by a return to San Diego and the end of the war. VC-93 aircraft operating from aboard USS Petrof Bay (CVE-80) bore the distinguishing symbol of a four-leaf clover on the vertical tail surfaces and on the upper right and bottom left wing halves. The all-blue livery was complemented by a photographically documented symbol of Sullivan's first kill on the right side below the cockpit. It is uncertain whether it was also on the port side.



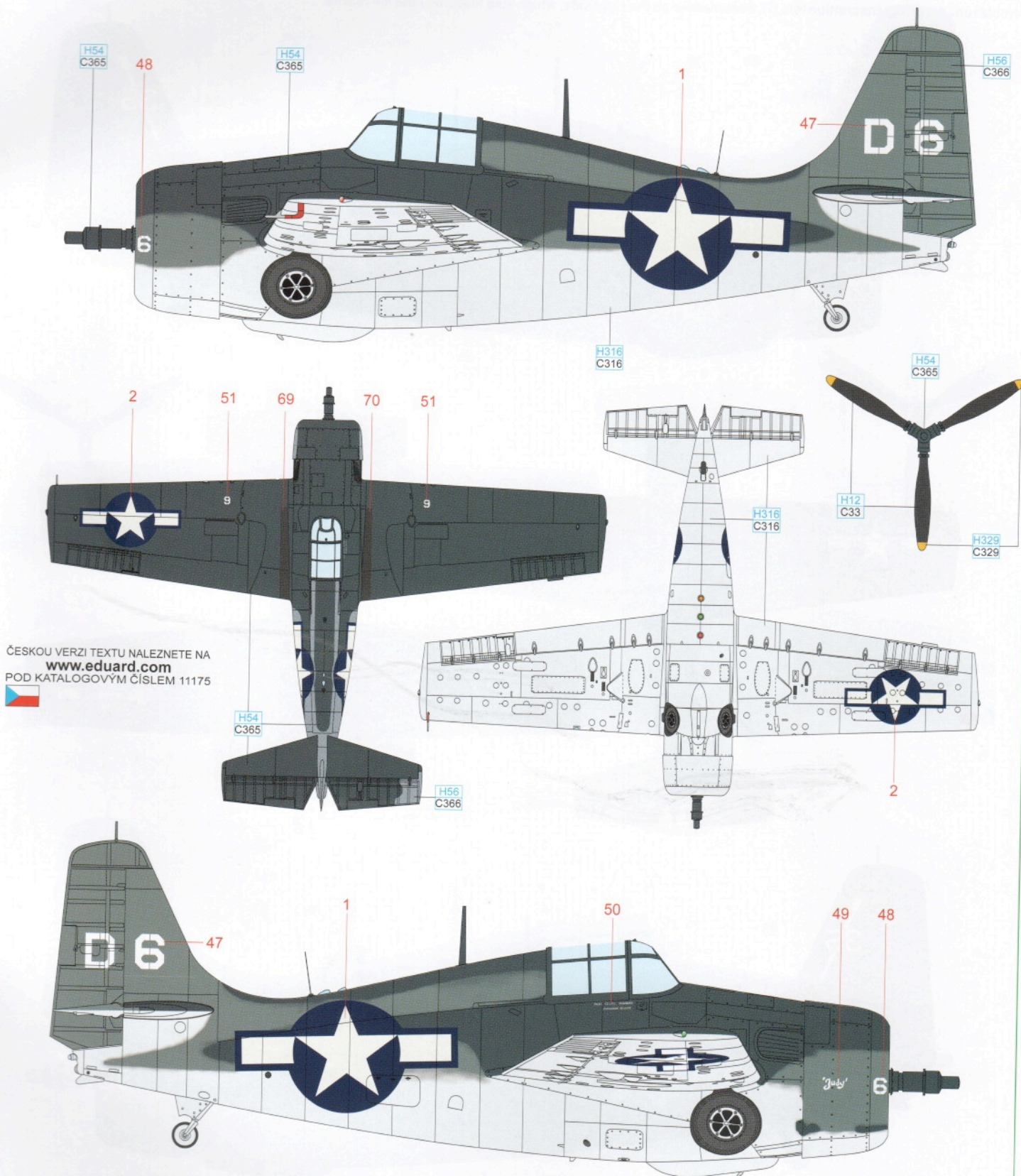
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NAVY BLUE H54 C365 YELLOW H329 C329 FLAT BLACK H12 C33 SILVER H8 C8

H VC-14, USS Hogatt Bay (CVE-75), November 1944

Composite Squadron 14 was established on October 12, 1943 and deactivated on October 1, 1945. Its history is associated solely with the escort carrier USS Hogatt Bay (CVE-75), which was commissioned on January 11, 1944 and, after a necessary test cruise and one transport mission to and from Pearl Harbor, took aboard VC-14's equipment and personnel. Training flight operations followed from March 26, with the first landing aboard USS Hogatt Bay (CVE-75) conducted by Captain William Vincent Saunders. The ship embarked on her first operational tour on May 1, 1944 and was assigned to Task Unit 16.14.6. VC-14 pilots subsequently conducted anti-submarine operations and air cover for destroyers in the Western Pacific area until late November. They were then replaced by VC-88 on board and VC-14 did not see further operational deployment. This Wildcat is shown here in its late service form on the USS Hogatt Bay (CVE-75). Of interest is the Judy inscription on the right side of the engine cowling, as well as the non-standard appearance of the ENCLOSURE RELEASE stencil on the right side below the windshield. The pilot's name is difficult to read in the available photographs, it might be Lt.(jg) Newburn.



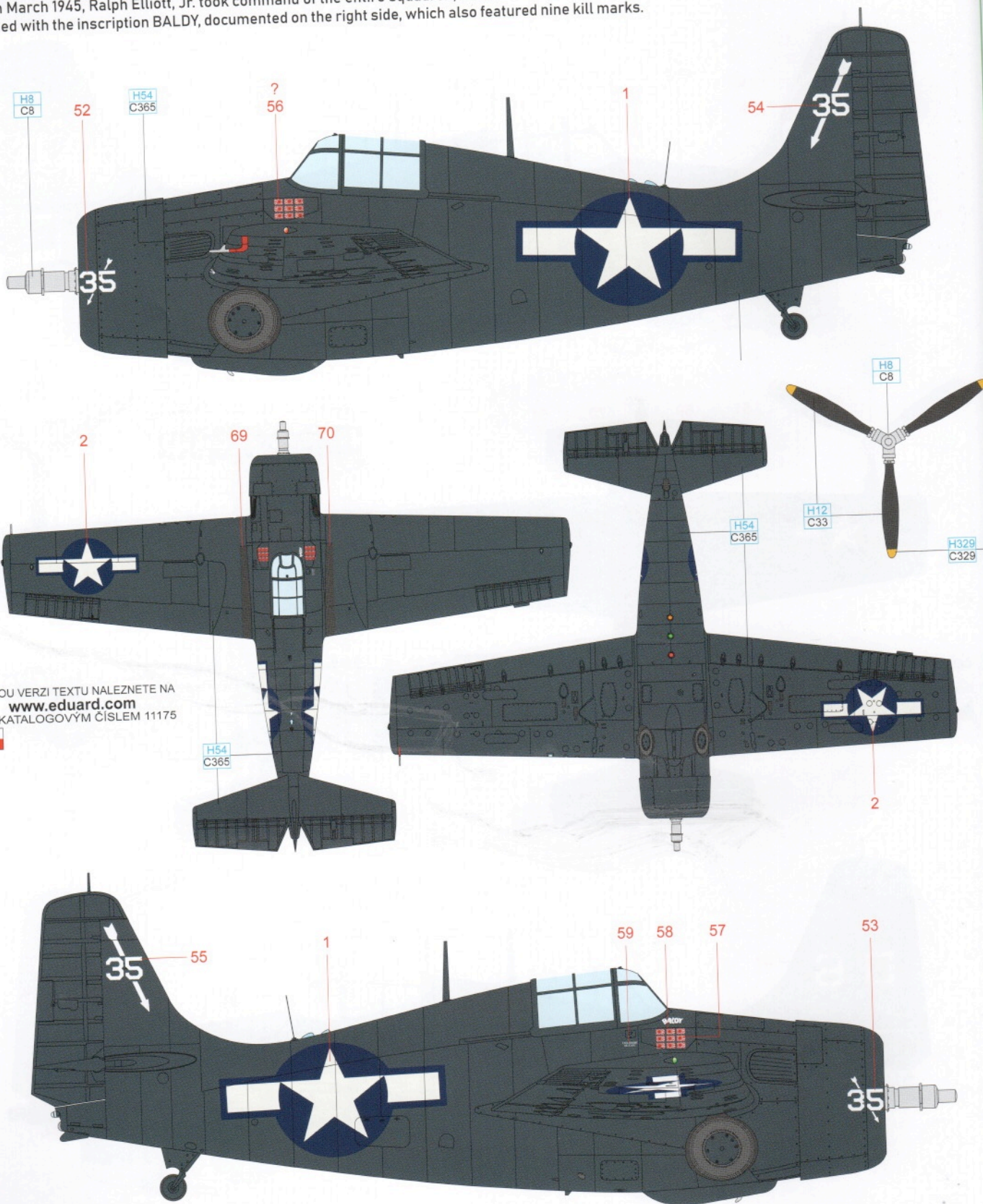
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NAVY BLUE	H54 C365	INTERMEDIATE BLUE	H56 C366	WHITE	H316 C316	YELLOW	H329 C329	FLAT BLACK	H12 C33
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Lt. Ralph Elliot Jr., VC-27, USS Savo Island (CVE-78), January 1945

Although the FM-2 Wildcats were the most powerful and most numerous version of this type, they were less frequently engaged in combat with enemy aircraft than the previous F4F-3s and F4F-4s. Nevertheless, ten pilots managed to achieve fighter ace status flying them, and the most successful squadron with the FM-2 in terms of kills was VC-27, called "The Saints". Its pilots managed to shoot down a total of 61.5 enemy aircraft in aerial combat, making it the second most successful Wildcat squadron regardless of version or period. They were surpassed only by the VF-5 with 79 kills. VC-27 was established in May 1943 and operated from the escort carrier USS Savo Island (CVE-78) from July 1944 to January 1945. During this time, she participated in five major operations, including the epic naval Battle of Samar, where a small task force repelled a much stronger Japanese fleet. Under the command of Lt. Cmdr. Percival Jackson, pilots of VC-27 shot down more than twice as many enemies as any other composite squadron. The commander of the VF-27 fighter division, Lt. Ralph Elliott Jr., was the most successful ace on FM-2 with nine confirmed kills. In addition to its success in aerial combat, VC-27 also sank or destroyed 30 Japanese vessels and destroyed or damaged over 250 objects such as bridges, buildings, fuel or ammunition depots, vehicles, and the like. In March 1945, Ralph Elliott, Jr. took command of the entire squadron, but the war ended before VC-27 could rejoin the fighting. Elliott's FM-2 was emblazoned with the inscription BALDY, documented on the right side, which also featured nine kill marks.



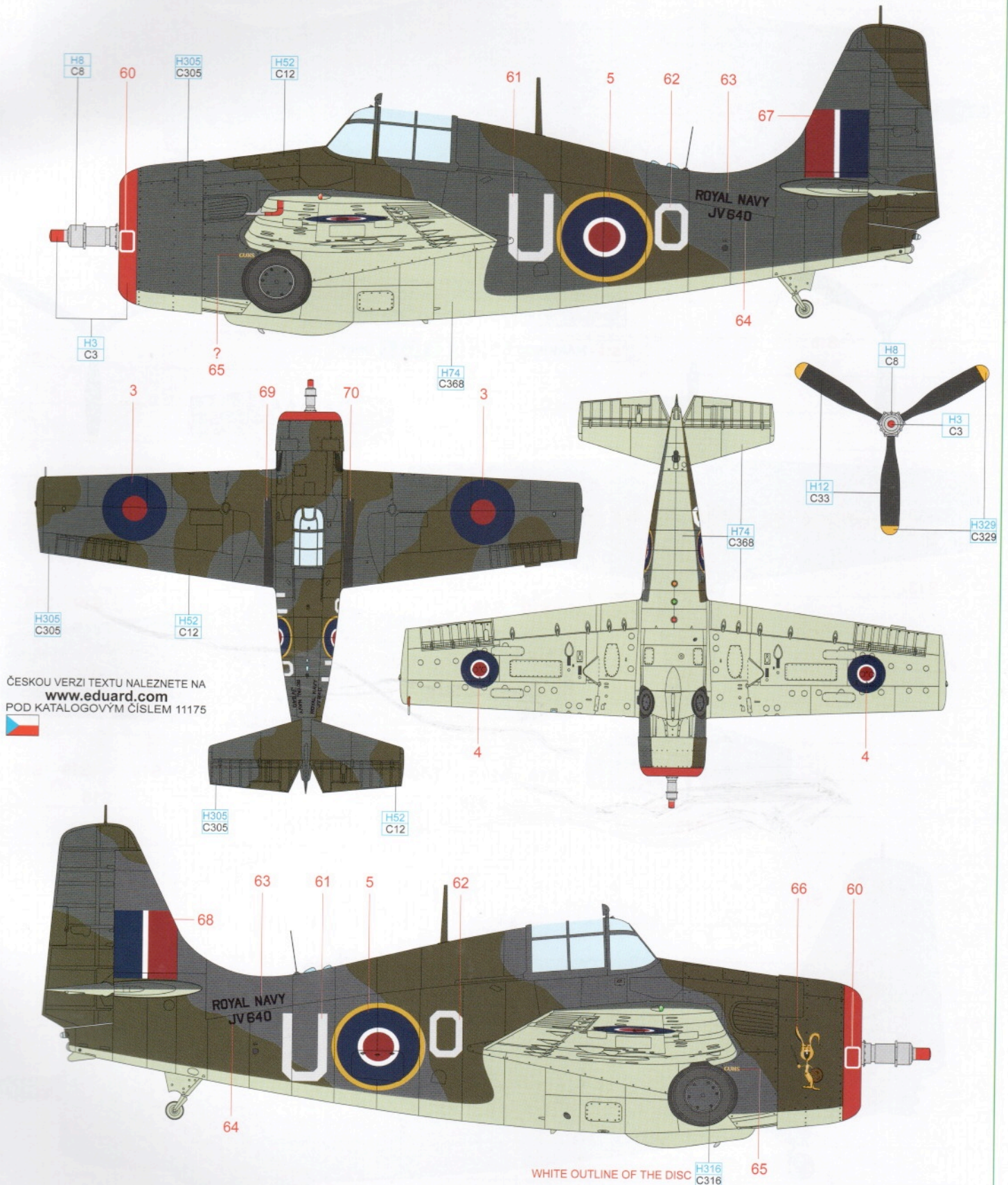
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- NAVY BLUE H54
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- FLAT BLACK H12
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- SILVER H8
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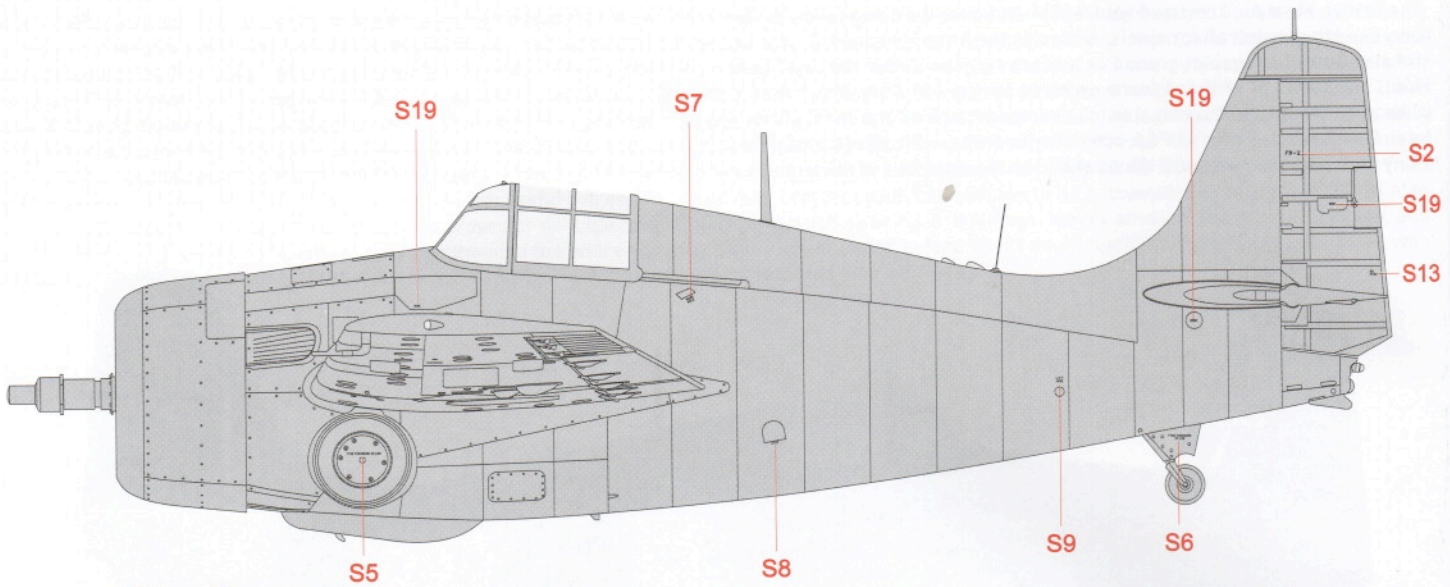
J JV640, Sub-Lt W. Park, No. 881 Squadron FAA, HMS Pursuer, August 1944

The British Fleet Air Arm used Wildcat FM-2s under the designation Wildcat Mk.VI, as the Martlet name was dropped for the last F4F versions. The British Navy used these aircraft for similar duties as the American ones, i.e., for service on escort carriers, from whose decks they provided air cover for convoys and also operated against ground or surface targets. Under the Lend Lease program, 340 FM-2s were delivered to the FAA (220 in 1944 and the rest in 1945), and the first of these were received by No. 881 Sqn, which took part in the invasion of southern France in August 1944 aboard HMS Pursuer (Operation Dragoon). The unit also took part in actions off the coast of Norway before being rearmed with Grumman Hellcat Mk.II aircraft in March 1945. In total, FM-2s served with 22 FAA combat squadrons, with others assigned to non-combat squadrons as trainers. The JV640 aircraft sported a drawing of a tiny hare with a sword and a Viking shield on the right side of the engine cowl and had a non-standard rear-view mirror on the windshield.



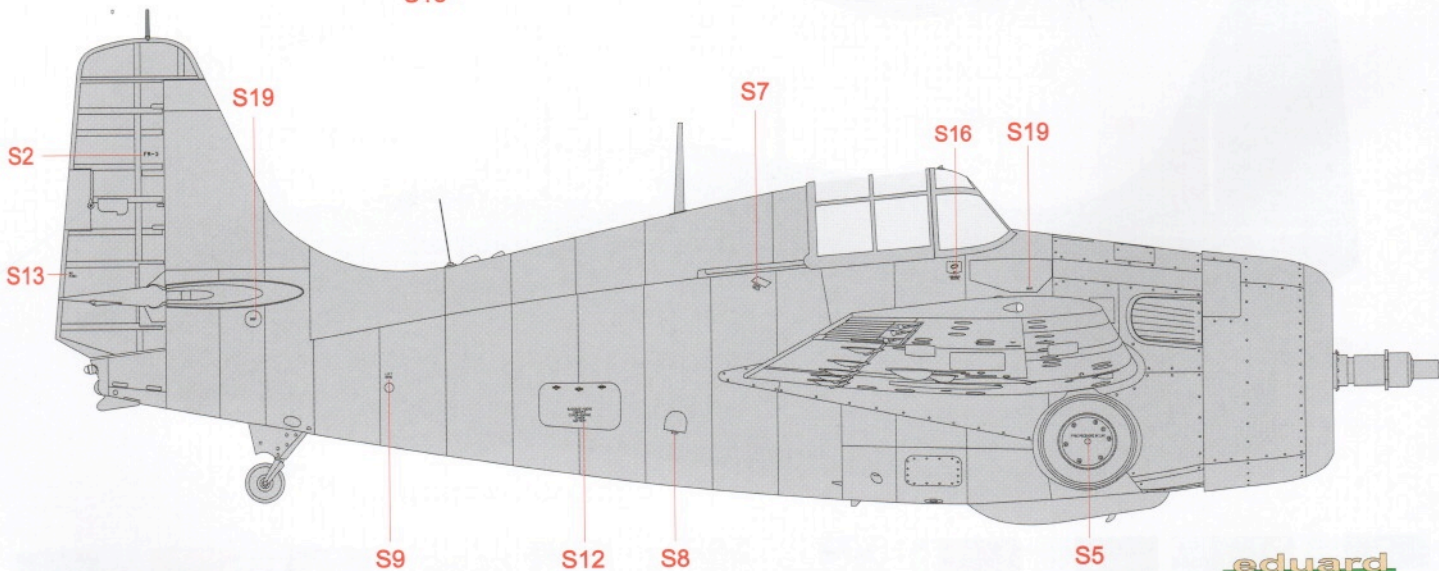
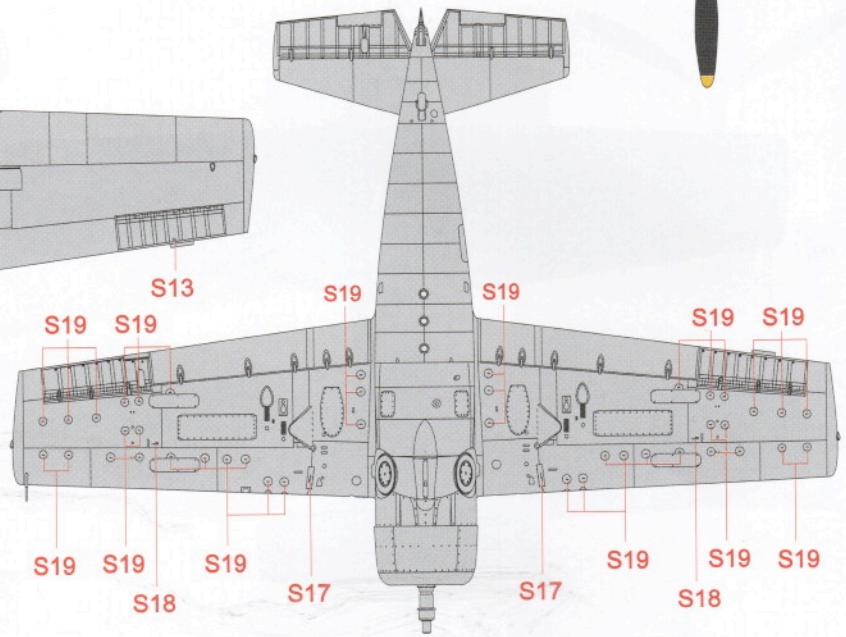
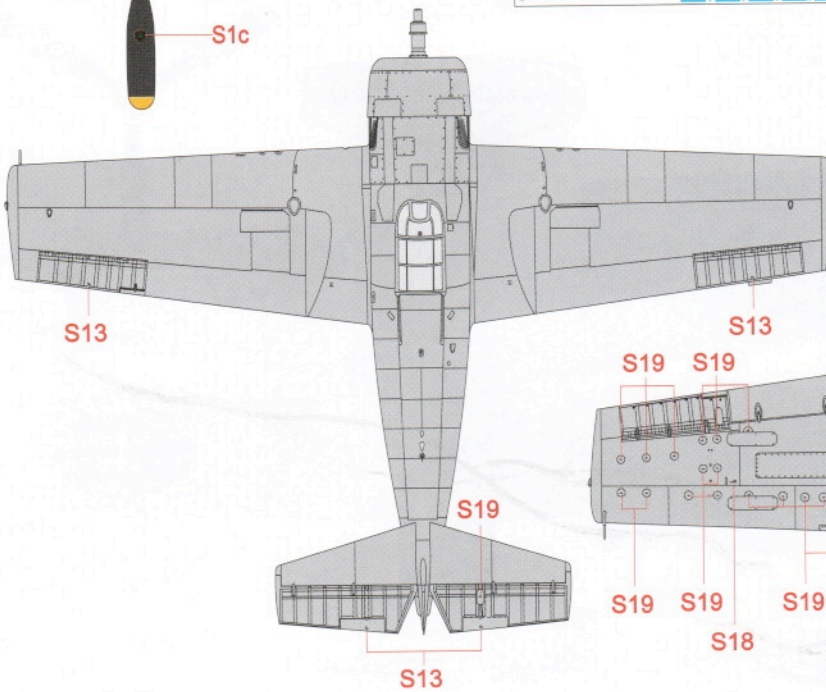
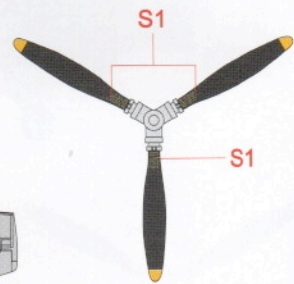
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GRAY	H305 C305	SKY	H74 C368	OLIVE DRAB	H52 C12	RED	H3 C3	SILVER	H8 C8	YELLOW	H329 C329	FLAT BLACK	H12 C33
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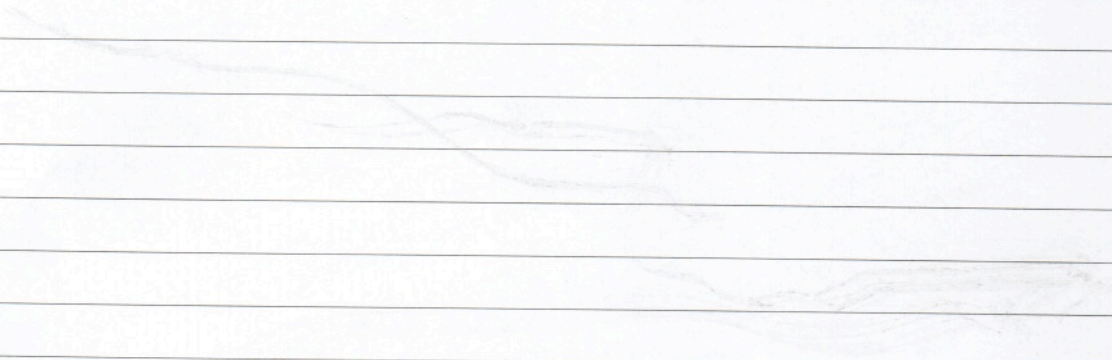


Stenciling of the Wildcats was rather individual. Look at the reference whenever possible.

S16 - MARKINGS **A C E F G J** ONLY



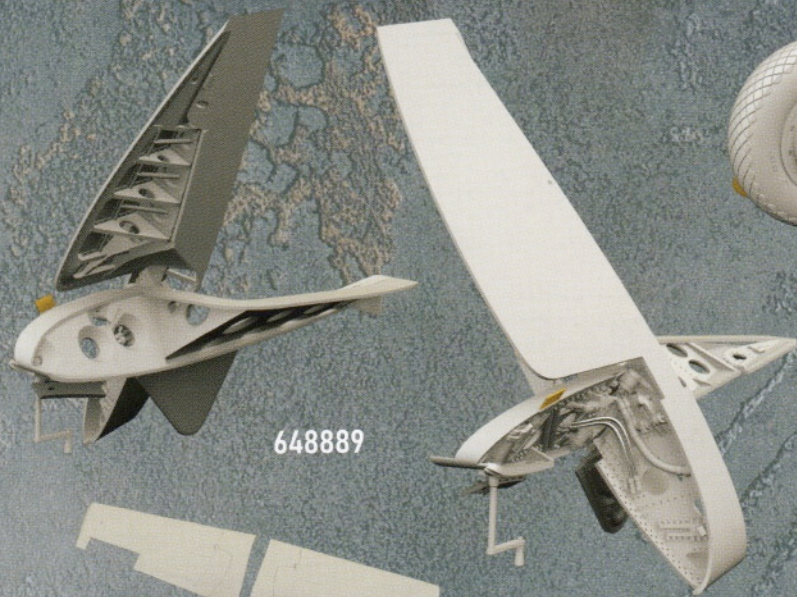
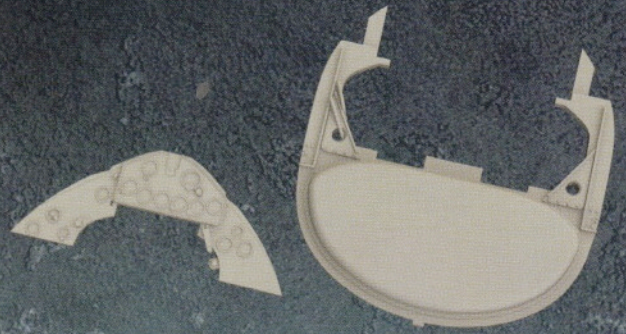
NOTES



RECOMMENDED ACCESSORIES

- 481119 FM-2 landing flaps (PE-Set)
- 644222 FM-2 LööK (Brassin)
- 648061 HVAR rockets (Brassin)
- 648886 FM-2 undercarriage legs BRONZE (Brassin)
- 648887 FM-2 wheels (Brassin)
- 648888 FM-2 seat PRINT (Brassin)
- 648889 FM-2 folding wings PRINT (Brassin)
- 648890 FM-2 gun barrels PRINT (Brassin)
- 648895 FM-2 cockpit PRINT (Brassin)
- 3DL48128 FM-2 SPACE (3D Decal Set)
- EX965 FM-2 TFace (Mask)

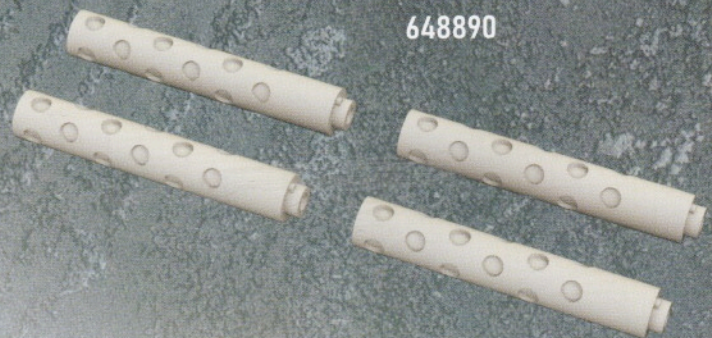
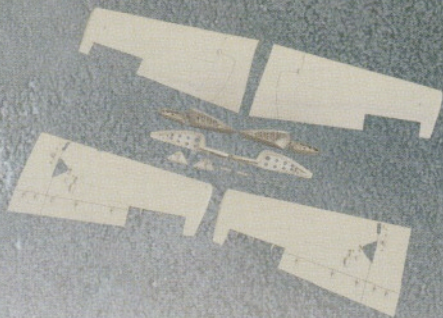
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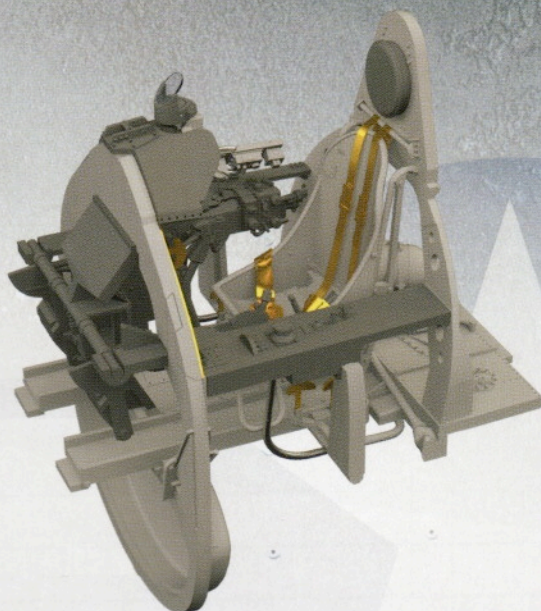
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