



# Northrop P-61 A/B Black Widow

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## Northrop P-61 A/B Black Widow

Die Nachtangriffe der deutschen Luftwaffe während der „Battle of Britain“ führten bei einem Beobachter-Team der USAAF unter Leitung von General A.Spaatz bereits 1940 zu der Überzeugung, ein speziell als Nachtjäger konzipiertes Flugzeug zu benötigen. Die 1938 gegründete Northrop Aircraft Inc. in Hawthorne, California, begann Ende 1940 mit der Entwicklung ihres Entwurfs, den Jack Northrop bereits am 7. Dezember dem Army Air Corps vorlegte. Ende Januar 1941 erhielt er den Vertrag zum Bau der beiden Prototypen XP-61, bald gefolgt von einem Auftrag über 13 Vorserien-Maschinen YP-61, vorgesehen für die Truppenerprobung und Schulung. Mit den Vorbereitungen für die Serienproduktion begann das Werk im September 1941. Die erste Bestellung betraf 150 Maschinen P-61A. Der Erstflug der XP-61 fand am 26. Mai 1942 statt. Die Auslieferung der YP-61 begann nach Abschluss der Flugerprobung und vielen Detailänderungen im August 1943. Ab Oktober lief die Produktion von insgesamt 200 P-61A an, mit denen erstmals Anfang Mai 1944 Einsätze der 6th Night Fighter Squadron gegen die japanische Luftwaffe geflogen wurden. Kurze Zeit später begann die P-61-Umrüstung der 422nd NFS in England. Die Reichweite des Radars SCR-720 reichte von 0,9 bis 7,6 km. Mit dem Produktionsbeginn der Serienausführung P-61A-11-NO führte man die vollständige Lackierung mit glänzend schwarzer Farbe ein. Bis dahin waren die werkneuen Maschinen im Standardanstrich Olive Drab mit grauer Unterseite ausgeliefert worden. Der anfänglich streng geheim gehaltene Nachtjäger Black Widow, benannt nach einer Spinnenart, wurde der amerikanischen Öffentlichkeit Anfang Januar 1944 bekannt gemacht. Eine im März 1944 zu Testzwecken an die RAF gelieferte P-61A wurde von den Briten als wenig geeignet eingestuft und fand kein Interesse. Im Juli 1944 begann bei Northrop die Serienproduktion über insgesamt 450 P-61B mit anfangs zwei, später vier Flügelstationen für Bomben und Zusatztanks, einem leistungsstärkeren Radar im dafür um 20 Zentimeter verlängerten Bug sowie einem Radar-Warngerät im Heck. Der Pilot konnte bei Bedarf eine neuartige, seitlich wegklappbare Nachtsvisier-Optik für die Zielerfolgung in Sichtweite zum Einsatz bringen. 250 Flugzeuge wurde mit dem 750 kg schweren Drehturm von General Electric ausgerüstet. Neben dem Schützen konnte auch der im Heck sitzende Radarbeobachter diese Anlage nach hinten steuern und feuern. Bei Maschinen ohne Turm wurde die Radarausrüstung an dessen Stelle eingebaut. Der Beobachter übernahm dann den Platz des Schützen hinter dem Piloten. Zum ersten Abschuss mit einer P-61 kam es am 20. Juni 1944. Bis Kriegsende wurden über dem Pazifik 65, über Europa und dem Mittelmeer 58, sowie bei den Einsätzen über China, Burma und Indien weitere 5 Luftsiege mit der P-61 offiziell anerkannt. Innerhalb von vier Jahren entwickelte und lieferte Northrop 706 Maschinen in 13 Varianten zuzüglich 20 Exemplare für Sonderaufgaben. Der Stückpreis lag bei USD 170.000 bis 190.000. Heute sind drei Maschinen in Museen erhalten. Eine vierte restaurierte P-61B soll wieder flugfähig gemacht werden.

### Technische Daten P-61B:

Besatzung: Pilot, Radarbeobachter, Schütze  
 Länge: 15,11 m  
 Höhe: 4,47 m  
 Spannweite: 20,12 m  
 Flügelfläche: 61,5 qm  
 Antrieb: zwei 18-Zyl.-Doppelstern-Motore Pratt & Whitney R-2800-65W  
 Hubraum: 45,9 Liter  
 Startleistung: 1.677 kW (2.250 PS) und 1.491 kW (2.000 PS) Dauerleistung  
 Höchstgeschwindigkeit: 589 km/h in 6 km Höhe,  
 Reisegeschwindigkeit: 368 km/h  
 Leermasse: 10,6 t  
 Startmasse max.: 16,42 t  
 Reichweite max.: 2.172 km bei Reisegeschwindigkeit  
 Dienstgipfelhöhe: 10,1 km  
 Bewaffnung: vier 20-mm-MK Hispano mit je 200 Schuss,  
 vier 12,7-mm-MG Browning im Drehturm mit je 560 Schuss,  
 Bombenlast max.: 2,9 t oder Raketen

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As early as 1940 night raids by the German Luftwaffe during the „Battle of Britain“ lead an observer team from the USAAF under the leadership of General A.Spaatz to the conclusion that a specially designed night fighter aircraft was required. In late 1940 Northrop Aircraft Incorporated - founded in 1938 in Hawthorne, California began developing their design which Jack Northrop already submitted to the Army Air Corps on 7 December that year. At the end of January 1941 he was awarded a contract for the construction of two prototype XP-61's. This was soon followed by an order for 13 pre-production aircraft, the YP-61 designed for aircrew training and testing. In September 1941 the works began preparing for mass production. The first order accounted for 150 P-61A's. The XP-61 undertook its maiden flight on 26 May 1942. After the completion of flight testing and many modifications, delivery of the YP-61 began in August 1943. Production of a total 200 P-61A's was launched in the October and the 6th Night Fighter Squadron flew its first sorties against the Japanese Air Force at the beginning of May 1944. A short time later the 422nd NFS began conversion onto the P-61 in England. The SCR-720 radar had a range of between 0.9 km (0.5 mile) to 7.6 km (4.75 miles). A complete paint finish in glossy black was introduced with the start of production of the P-61A-11-NO model. Until then, new aircraft straight out of the factory had been delivered in the standard olive drab paint with a grey bottom. Initially kept top-secret the „Black Widow“ night-fighter - named after a spider, was announced to the American public early in January 1944. A P-61A delivered to the RAF in March 1944 for testing purposes was designated unsuitable by the British and found no interest. In July 1944, Northrop began mass production of a total of 450 P-61B's initially with two, later four wing pylons for bombs and external fuel tanks. A more powerful radar was installed in the 20 centimetres longer elongated nose and a radar warning device in the rear. When required the pilot was able to bring a new type of side fold-away optical night sight for visual target tracking into use. 250 aircraft were fitted with the 750 kg (1650 lb) turret from General Electric. In addition to the gunner the radar operator seated in the rear could also control this turret and fire to the rear. Radar equipment was installed in place of the turret in aircraft without one. The observer then took the gunners place behind the pilot. The first kill with a P-61 came on 20 June 1944. By the end of the war the P-61 was officially accredited with 65 victories over the Pacific, 58 over Europe and the Mediterranean as well as a further 5 over China, Burma and India. within four years Northrop developed and delivered 706 aircraft in 13 variants plus a further 20 aircraft for specialist tasks. The unit price lay by US\$170,000-190,000. Today, three aircraft are preserved in museums. It is hoped that a fourth restored P-61B can be made airworthy again.

### Technical Data P-61B:

Crew: Pilot, Radar operator, Gunner  
 Length: 15.11 m (49 ft 6 ins)  
 Height: 4.47 m (14 ft 7 ins)  
 Wingspan: 20.12 m (39 ft 9 ins)  
 Wing area: 61.5 qm (662 sq. ft)  
 Engines: Two 18 cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-2800-65W twin radials  
 Displacement: 45.9 litres  
 Take-off power: 1.677 kW (2.250 bhp) and 1.491 kW (2.000 bhp) continuous  
 Maximum speed: 589 km/h (366 mph) at 6000 m (19680 ft) altitude,  
 Cruising speed: 368 km/h (228 mph)  
 Empty weight: 10.6 t  
 Maximum take-off weight: 16.42 t  
 Maximum range: 2172 km (1350 miles) at cruising speed  
 Service ceiling: 10,100 m (33,128 ft)  
 Armament: four Hispano 20mm cannon each with 200 rounds,  
 four Browning 12.7 mm MG in a rotating turret each with 560 rounds,  
 Maximum bomb-load: 2.9 tons or rockets

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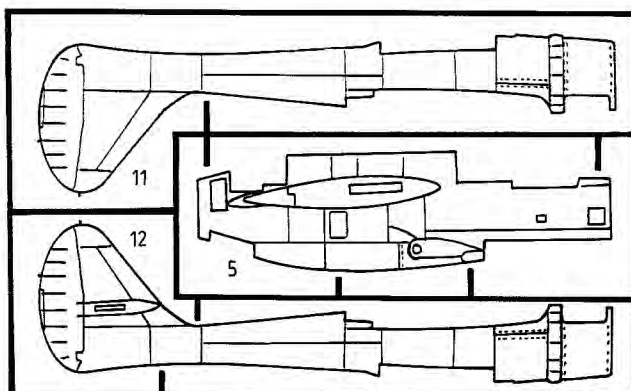
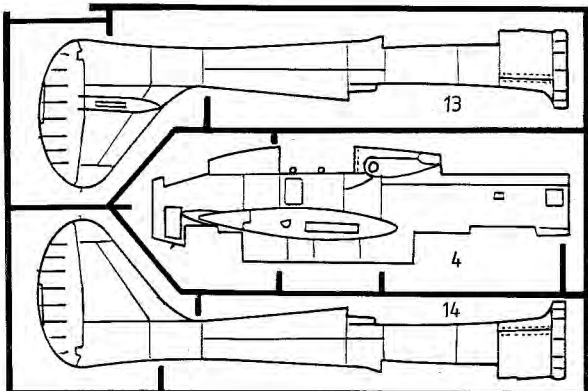
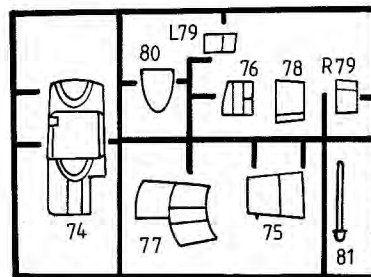
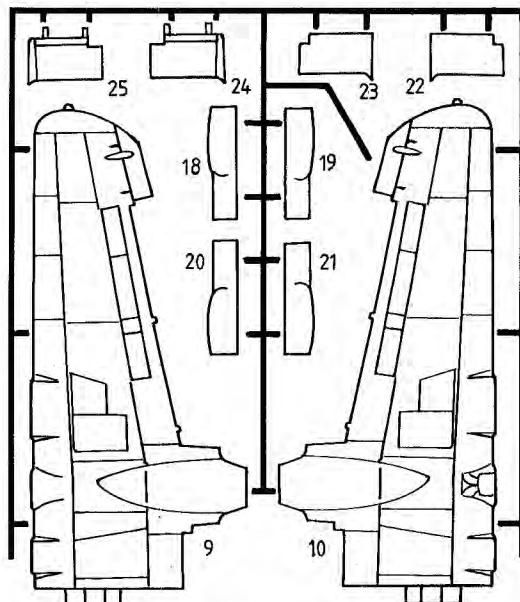
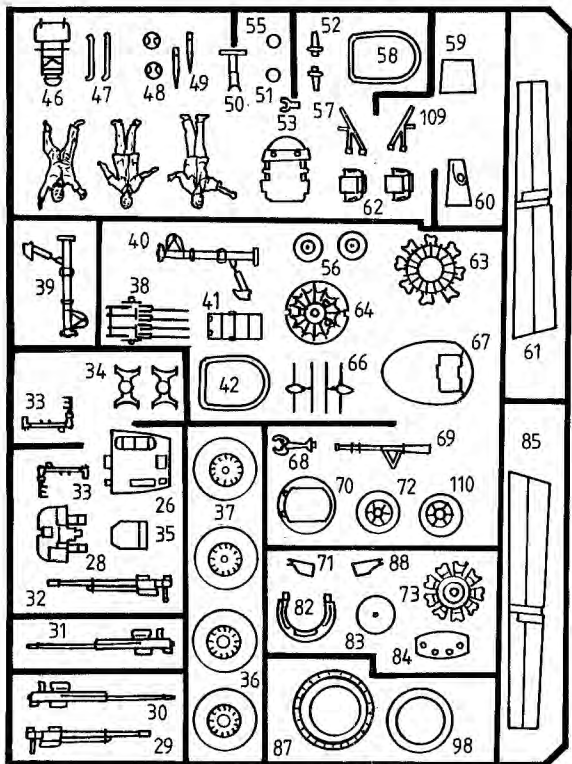
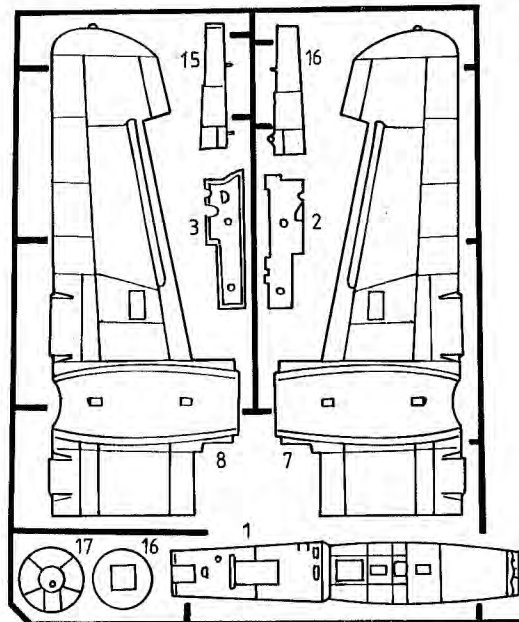
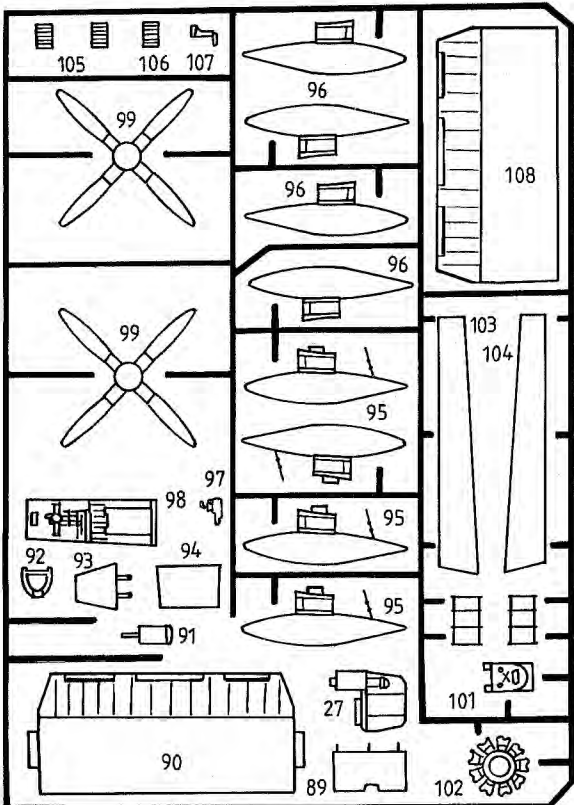
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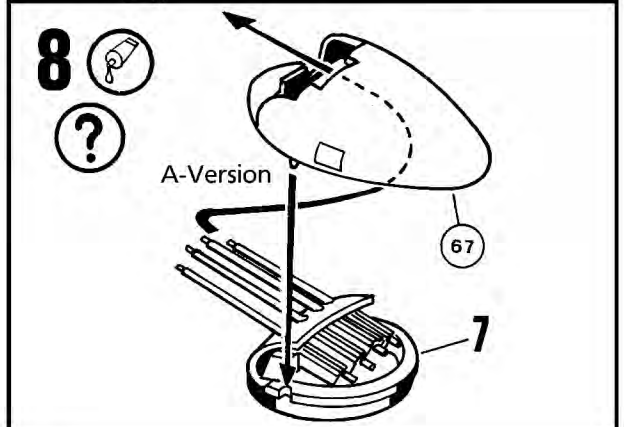
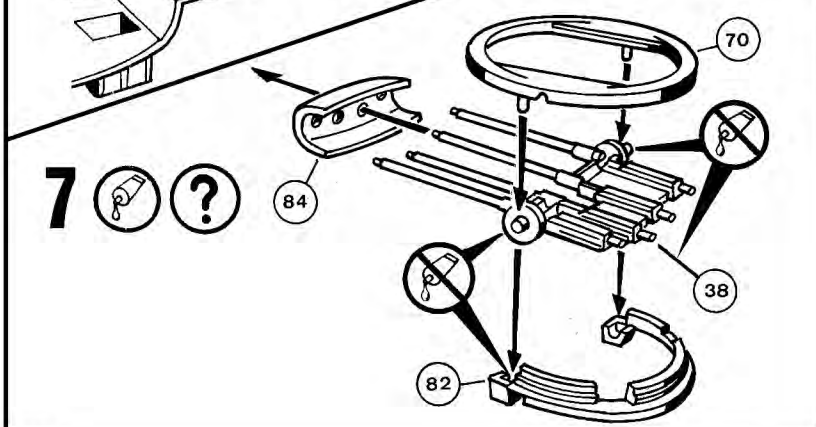
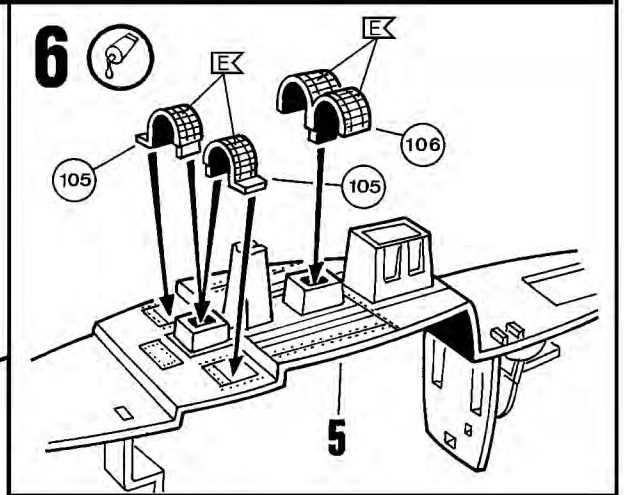
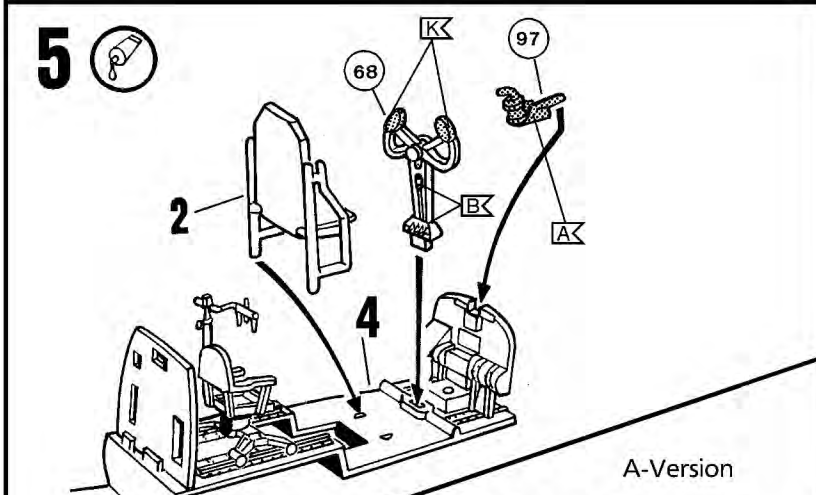
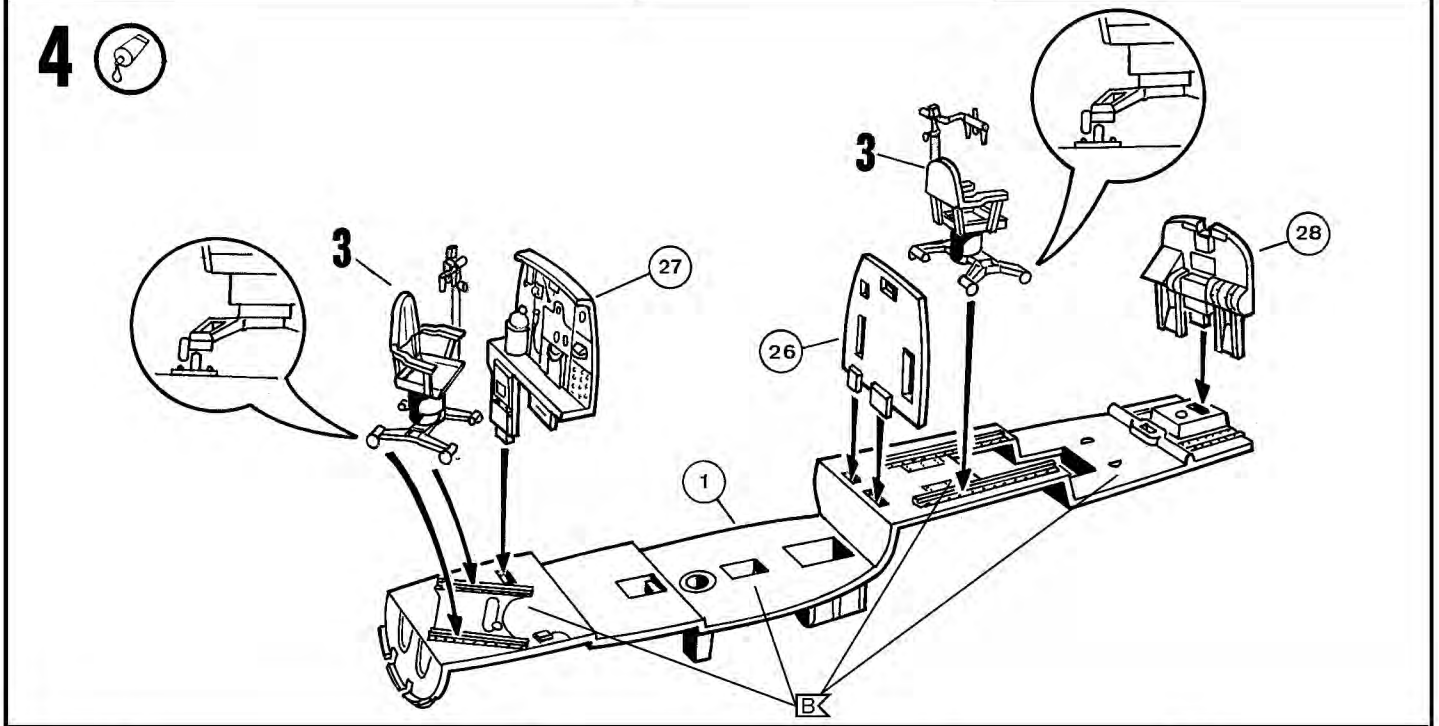
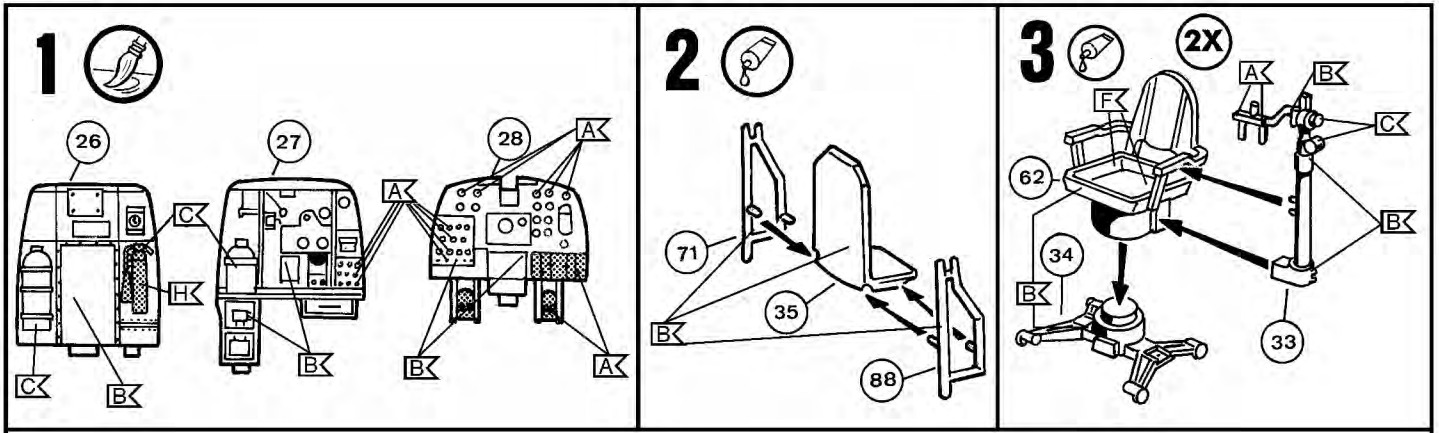
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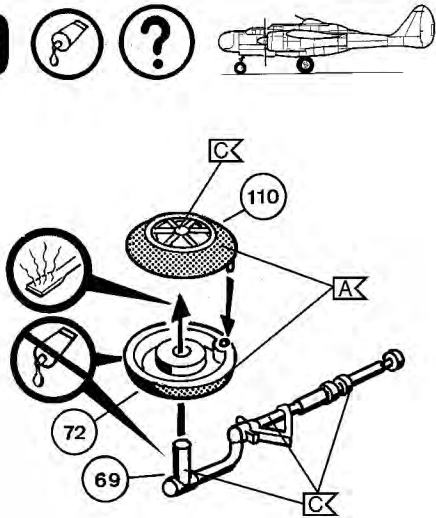




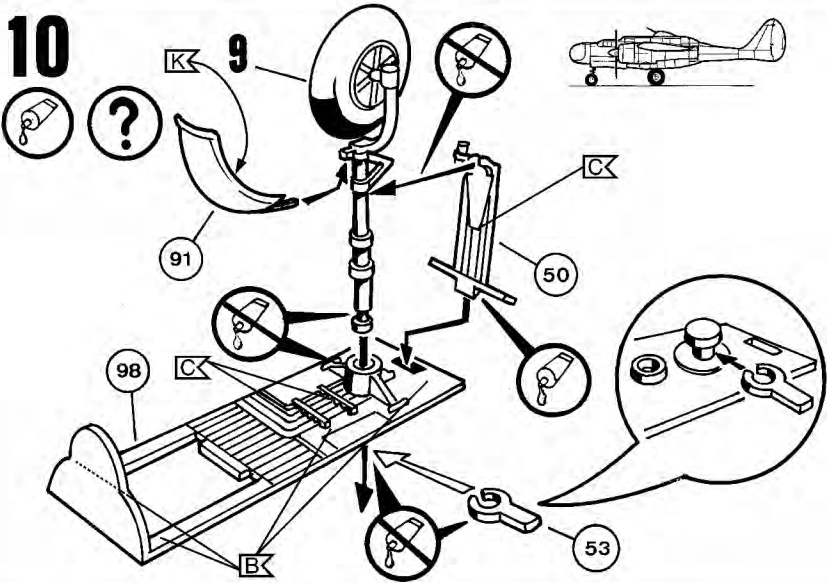




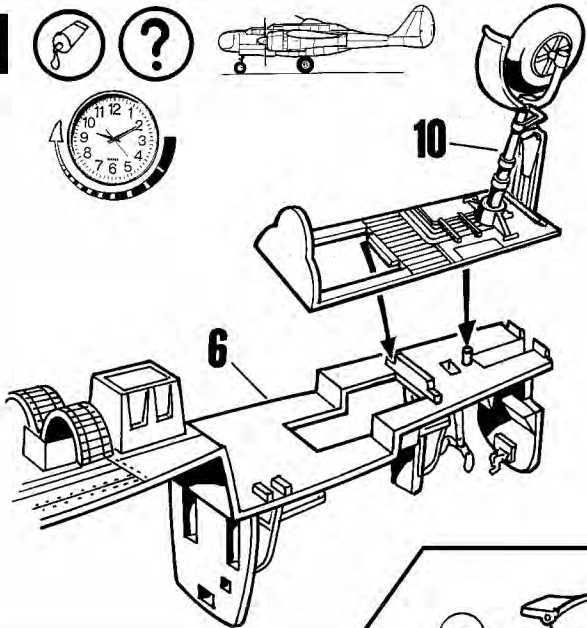
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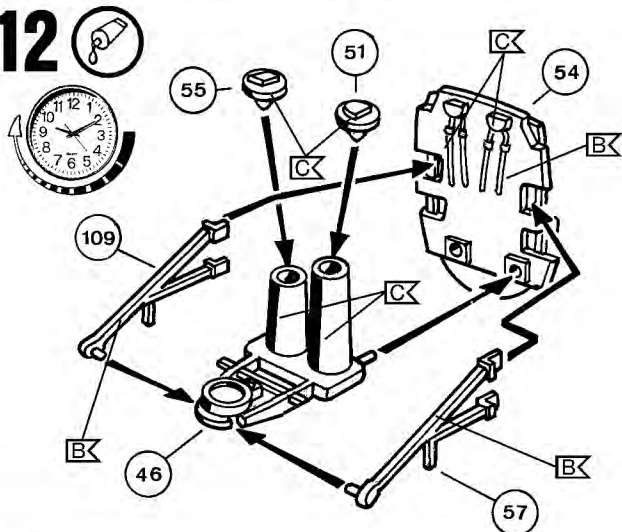
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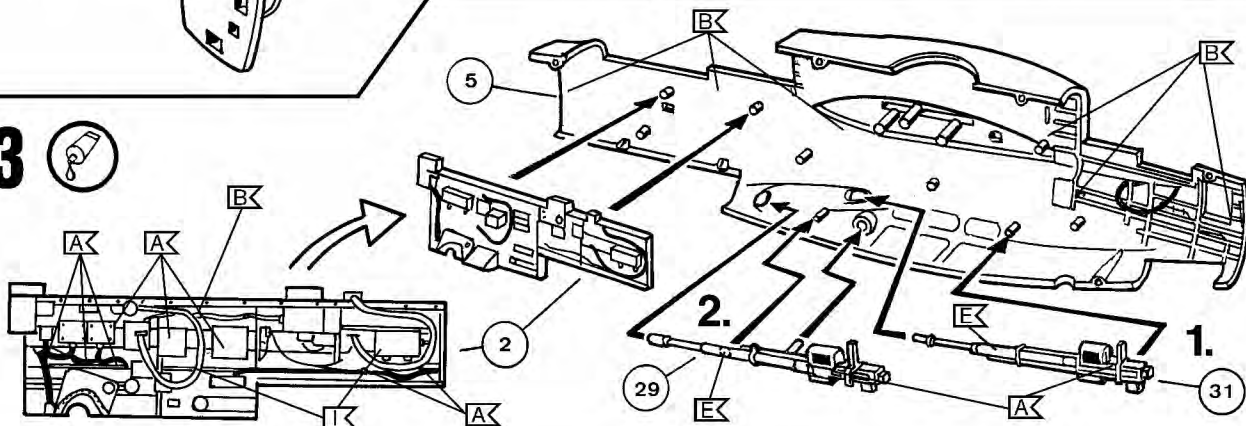
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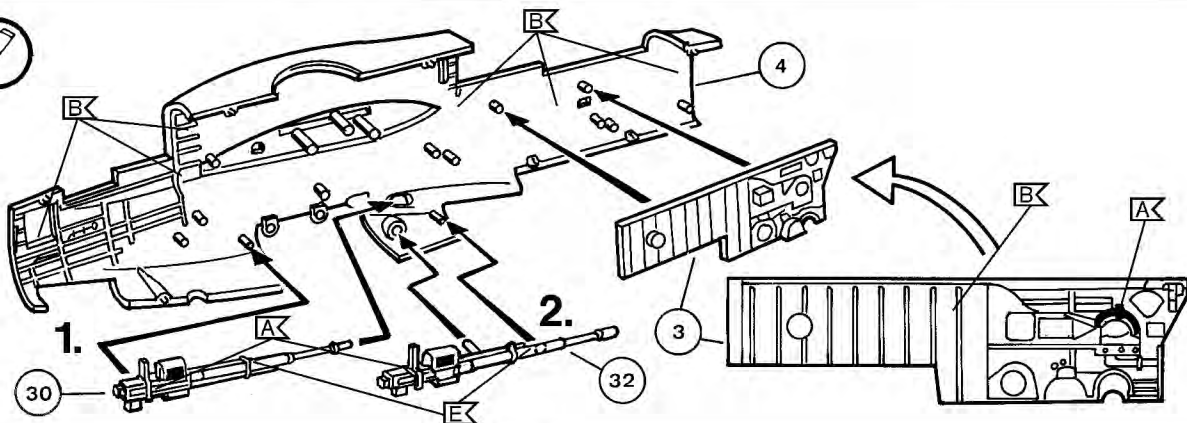
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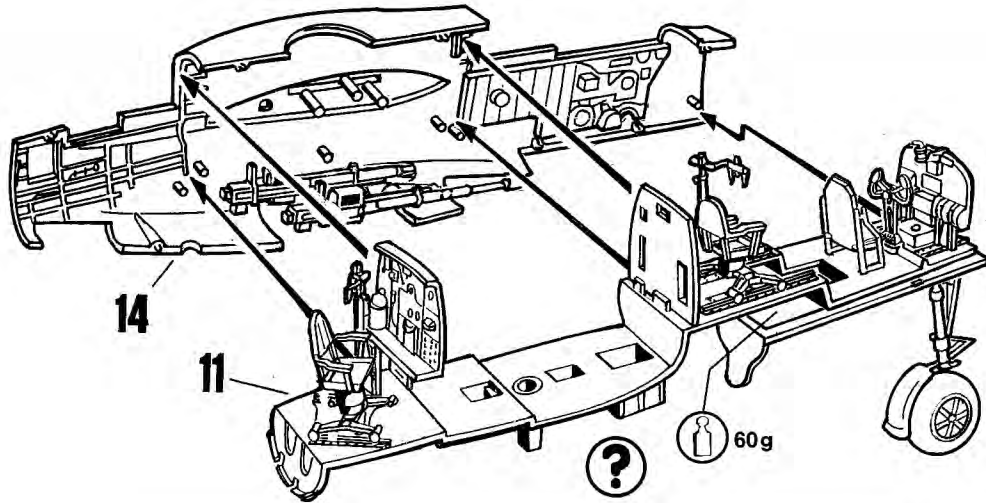
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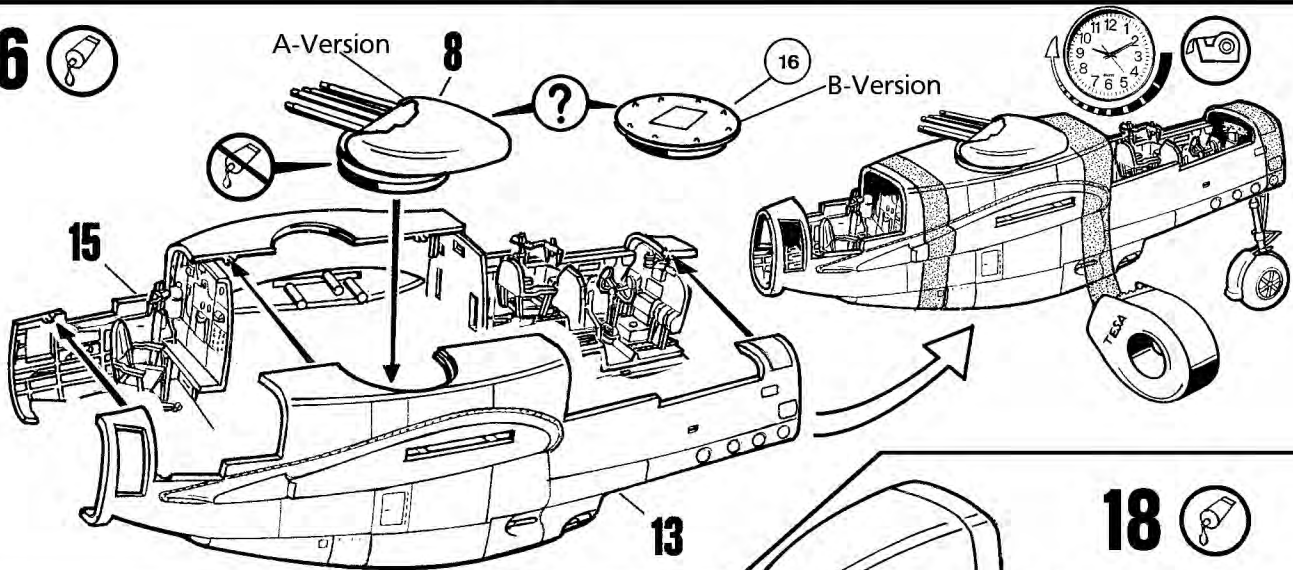
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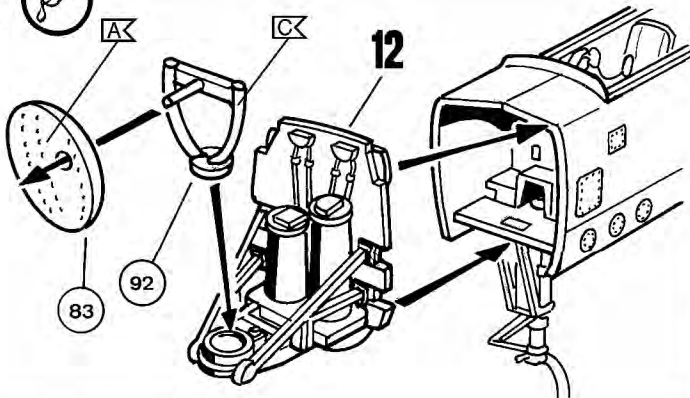
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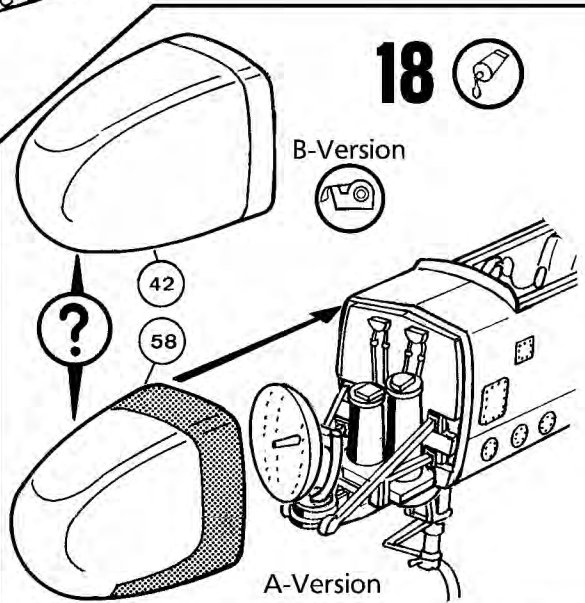
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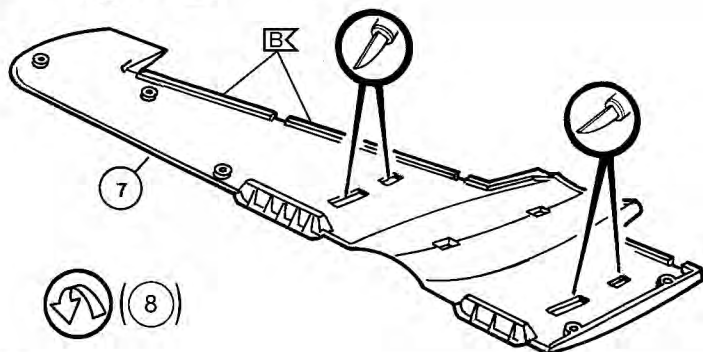
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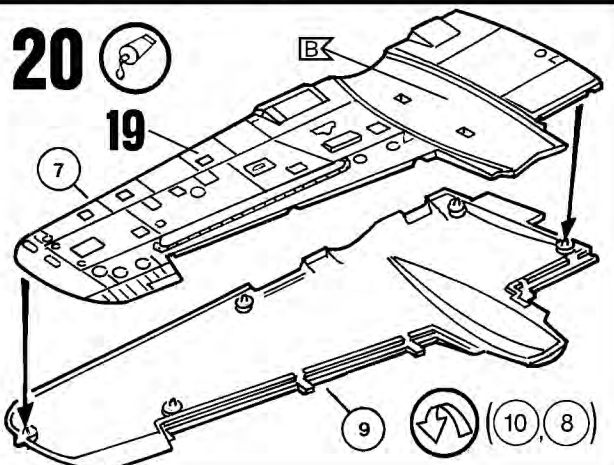
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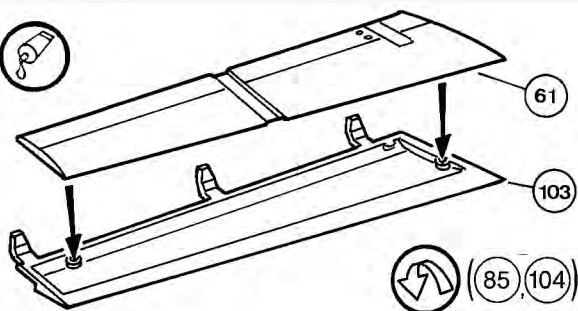


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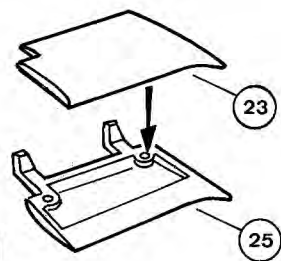




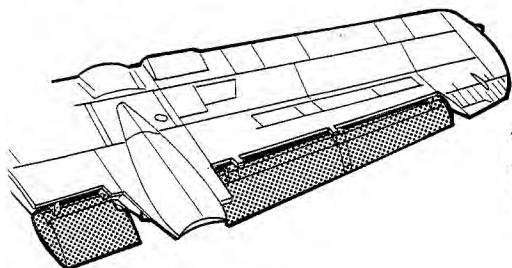
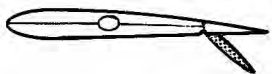
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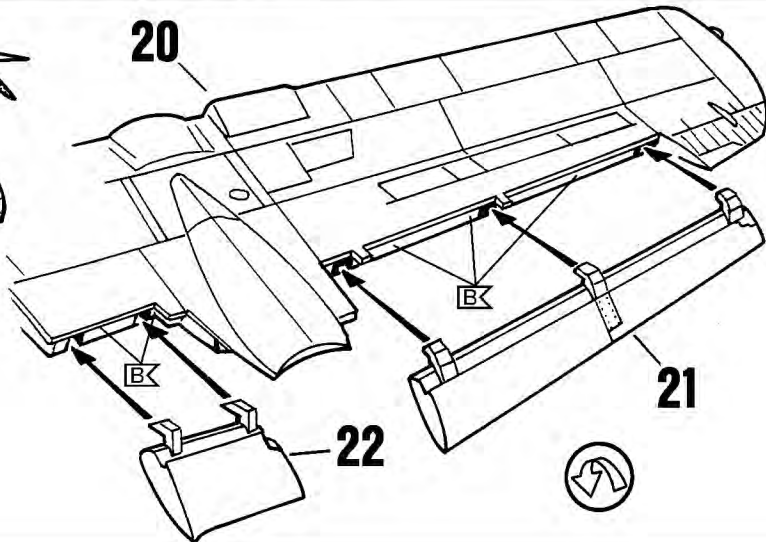
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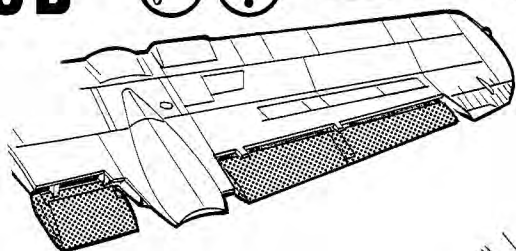
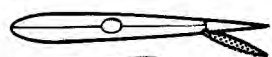
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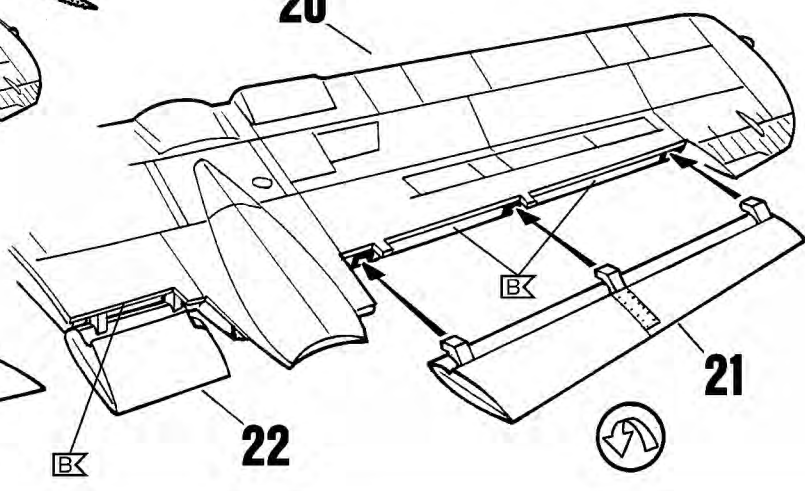
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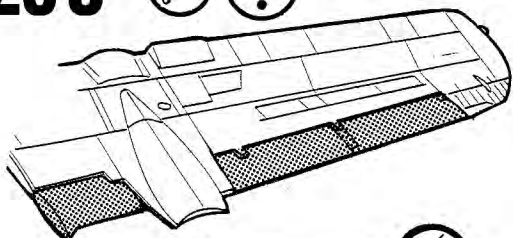
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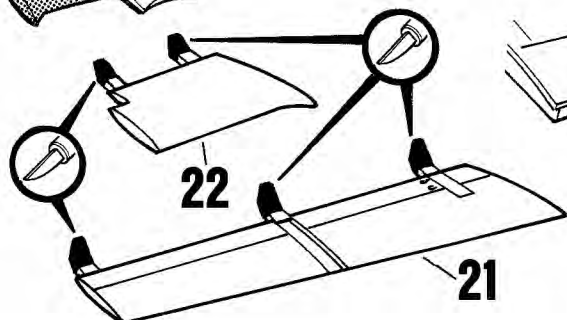
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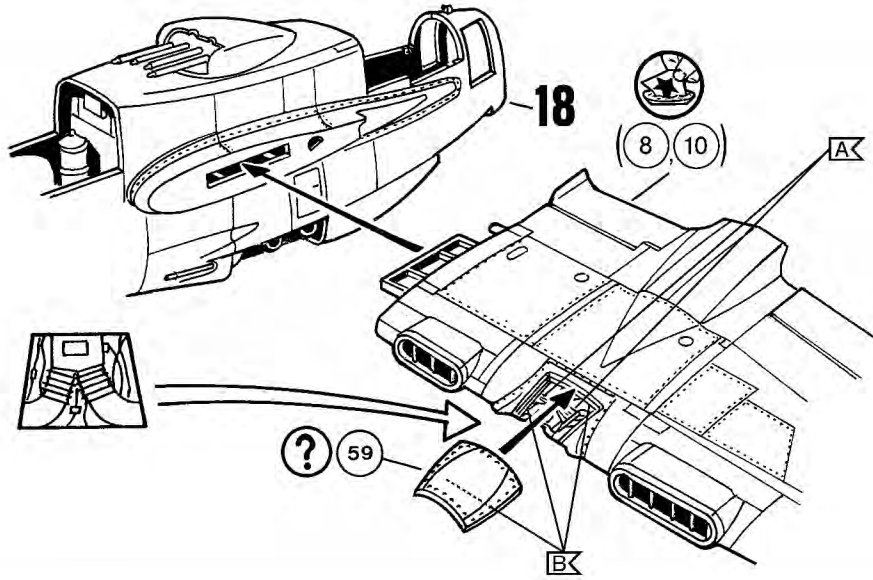
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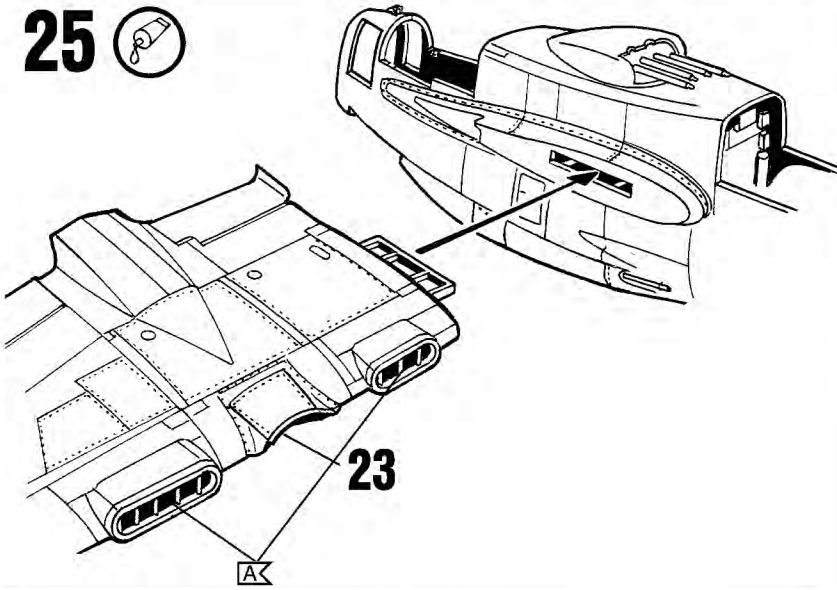
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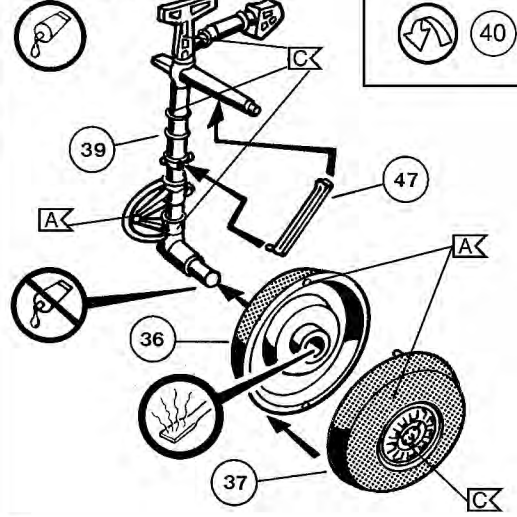
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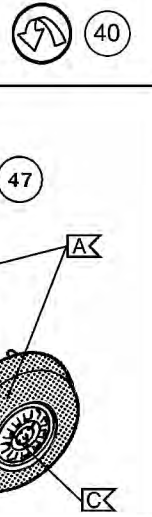
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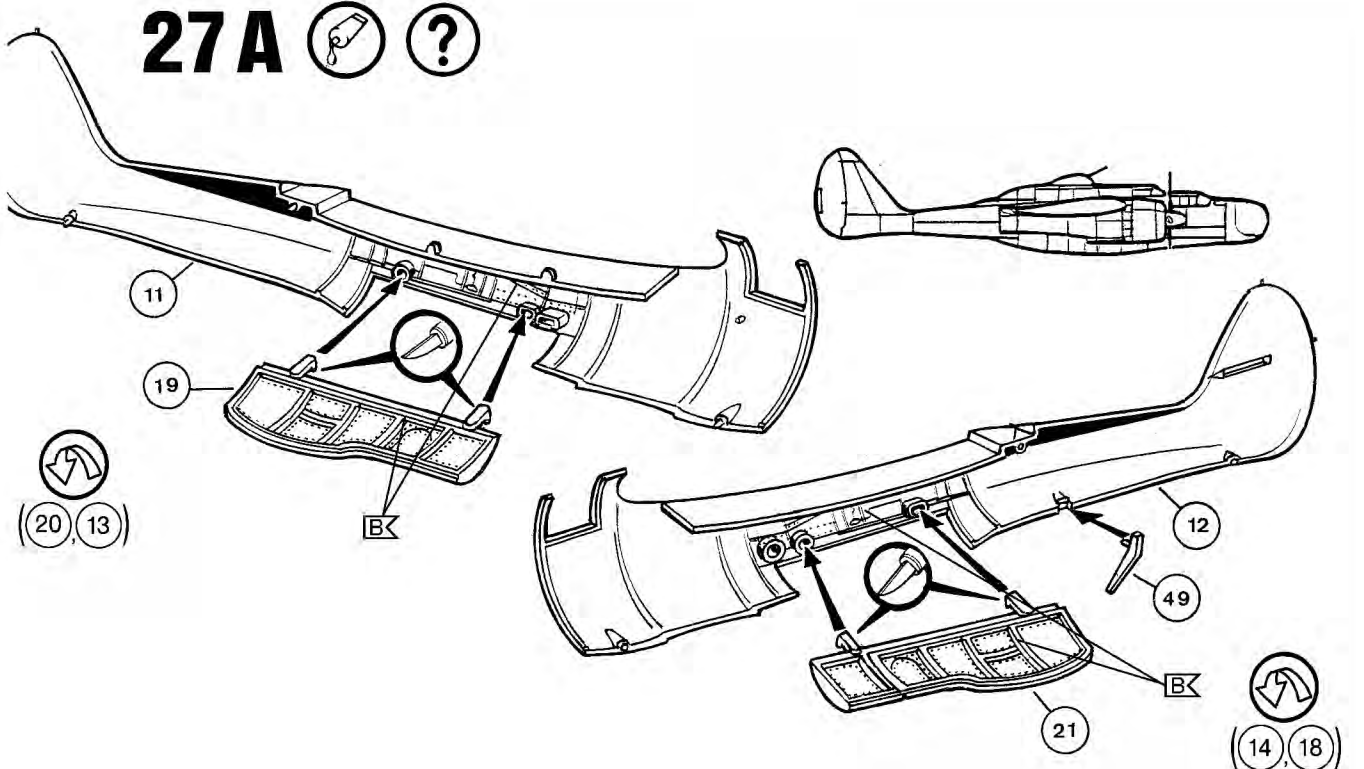
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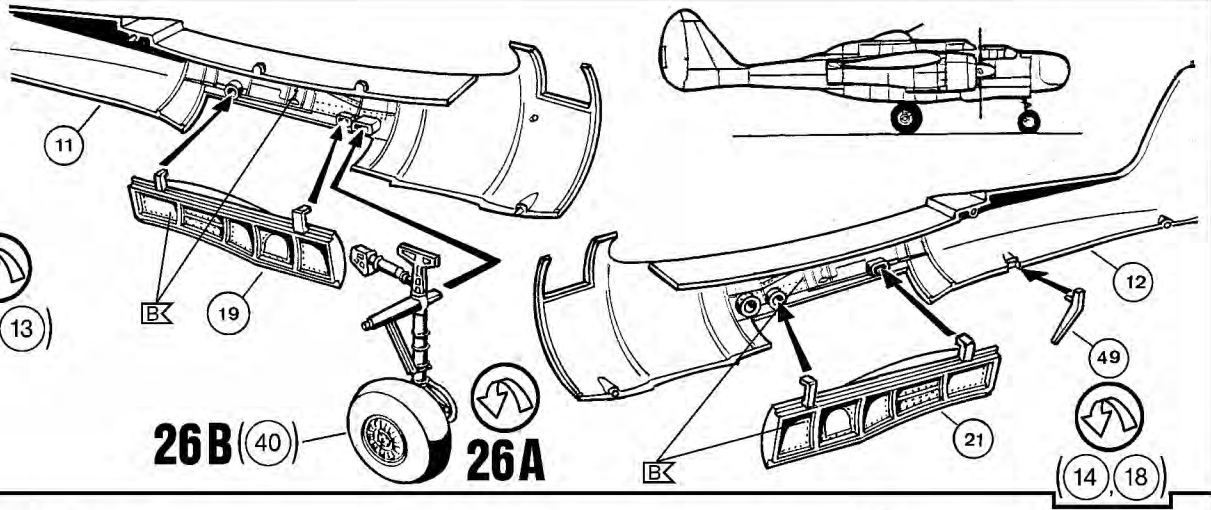
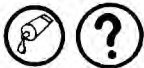
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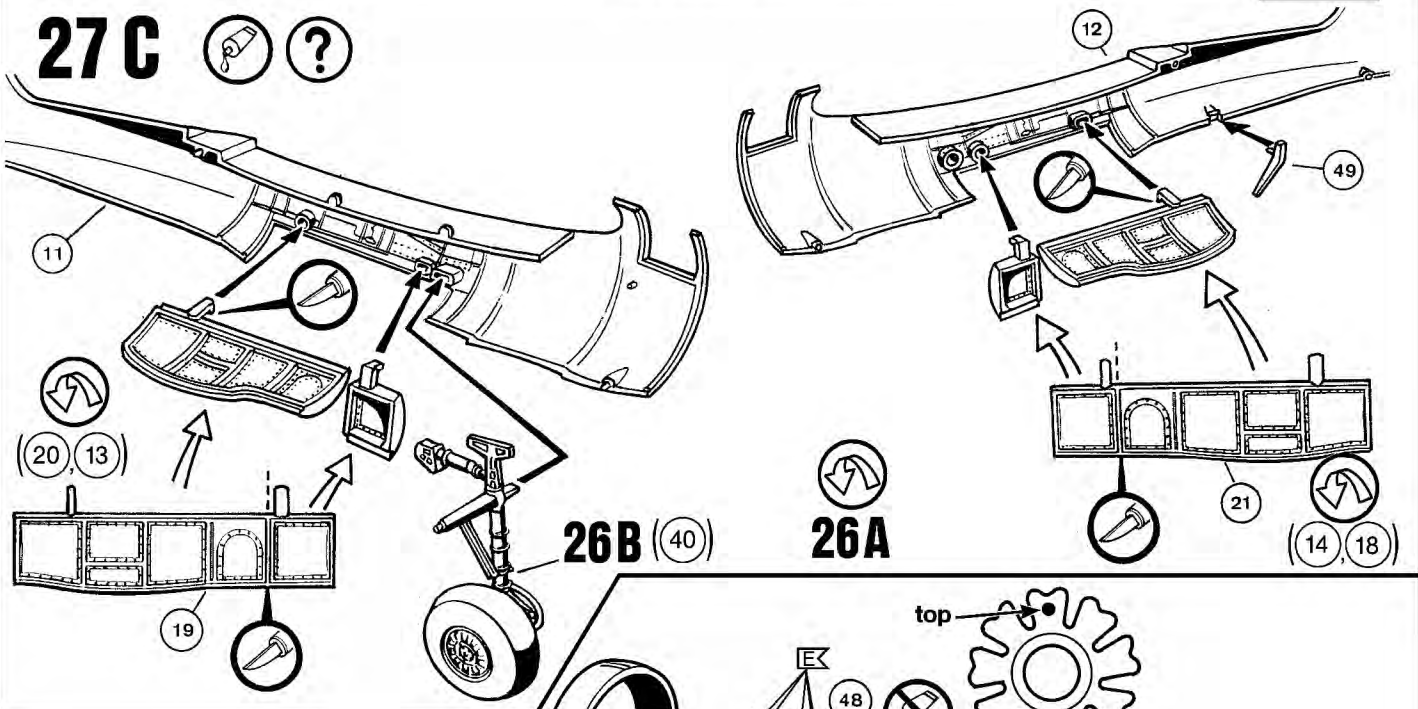
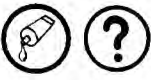
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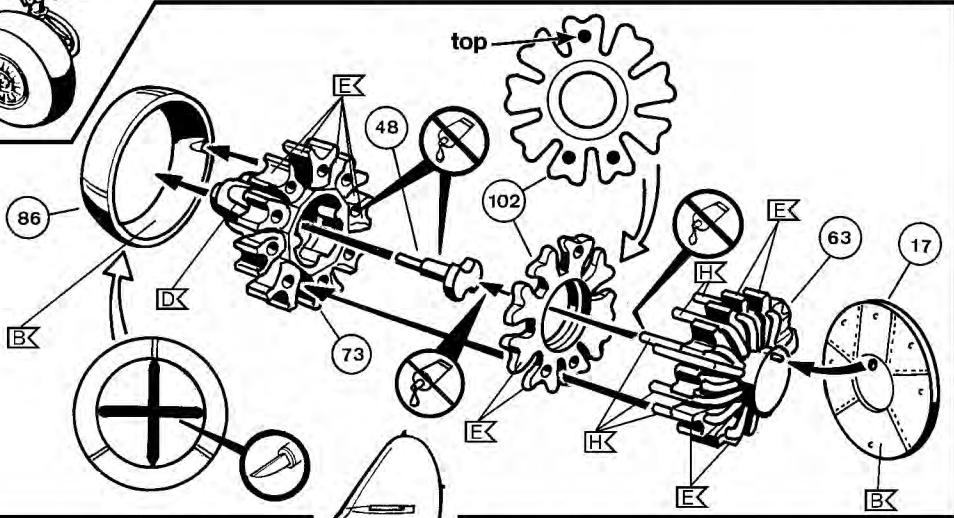
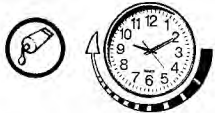
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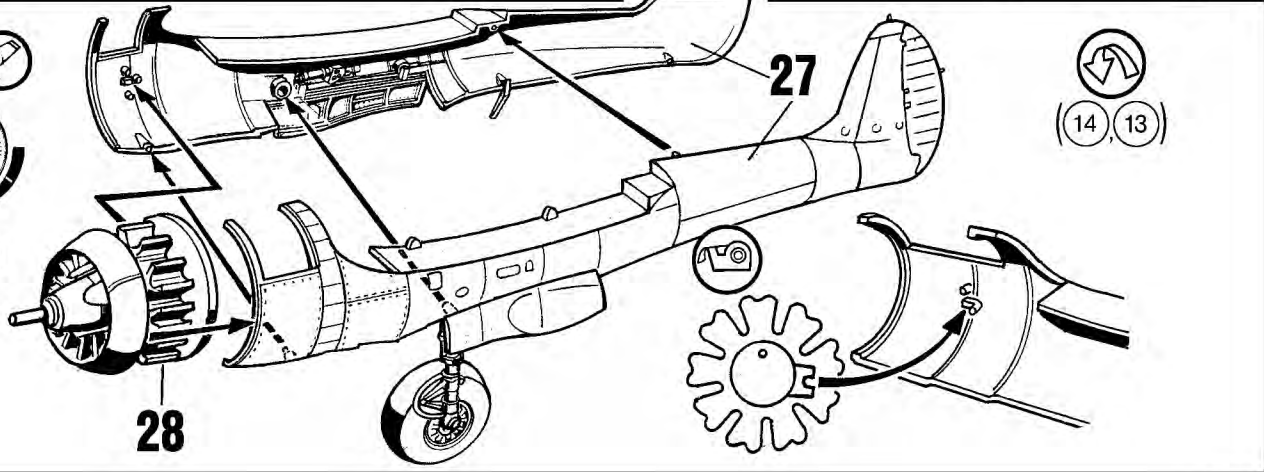
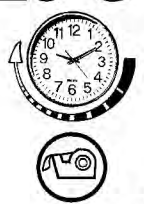
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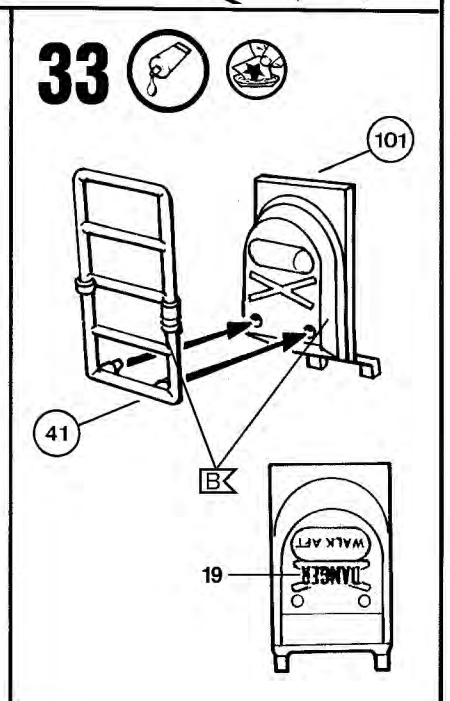
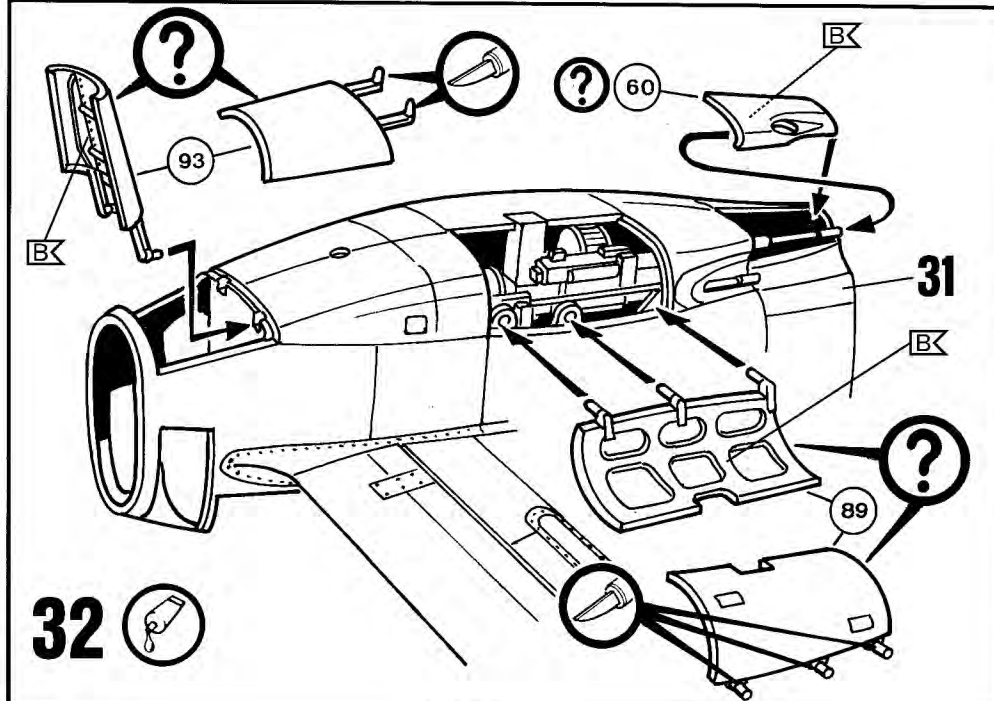
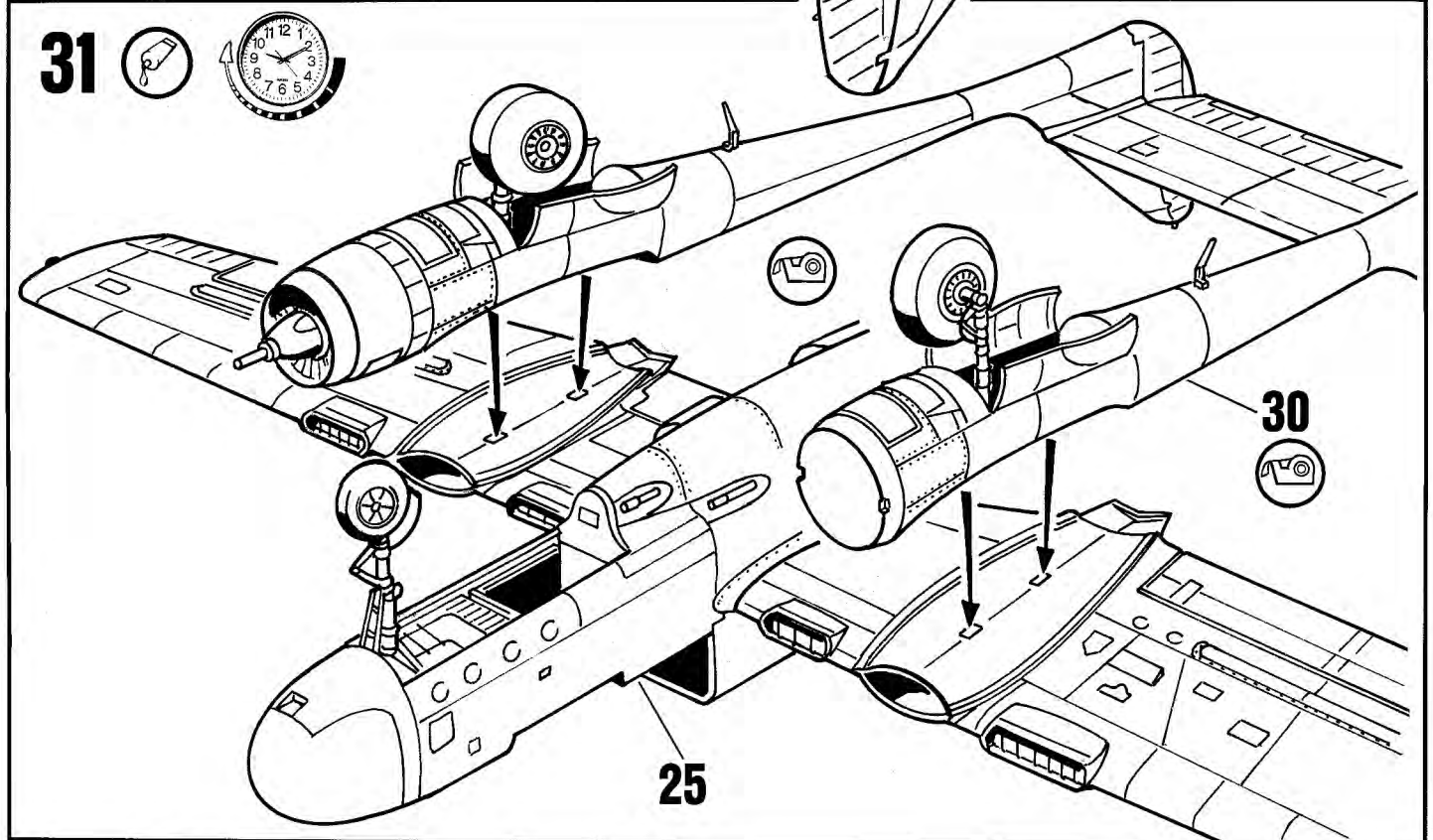
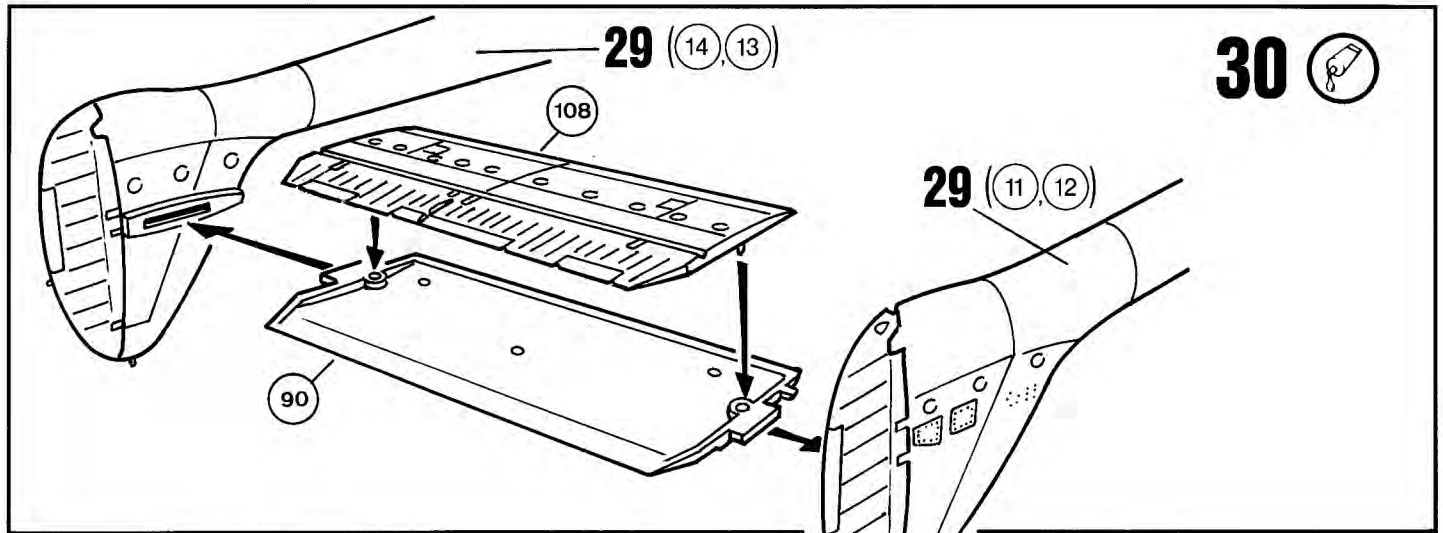


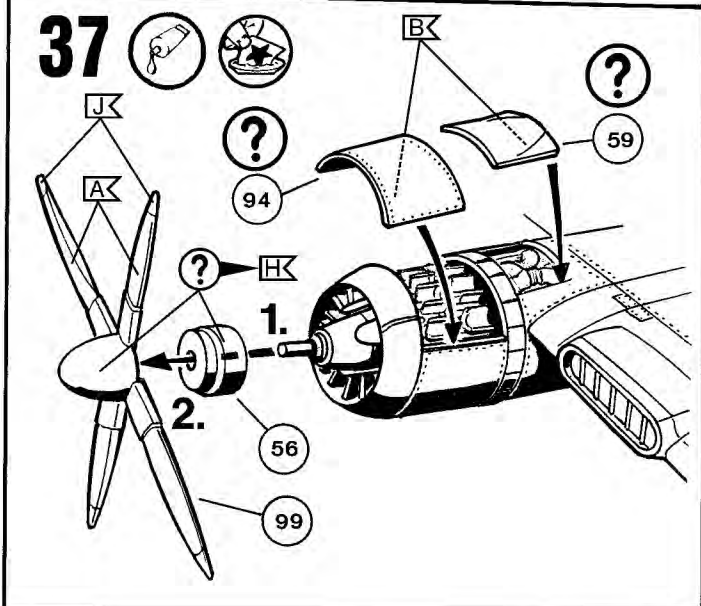
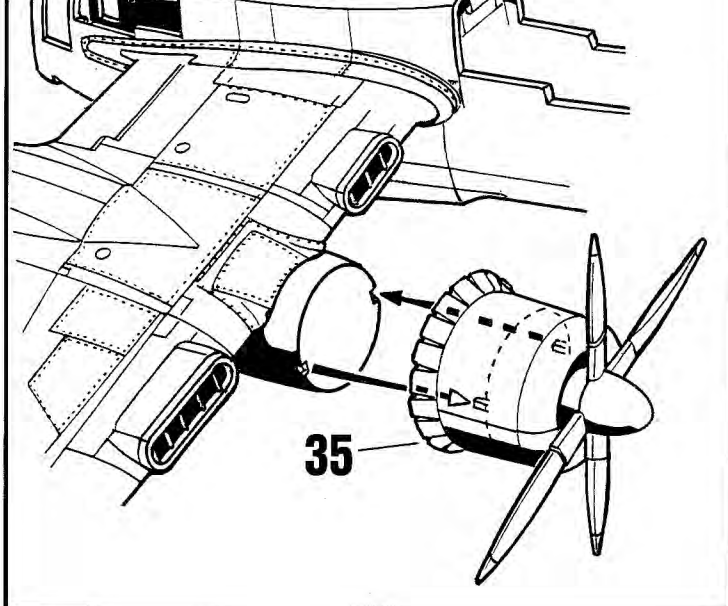
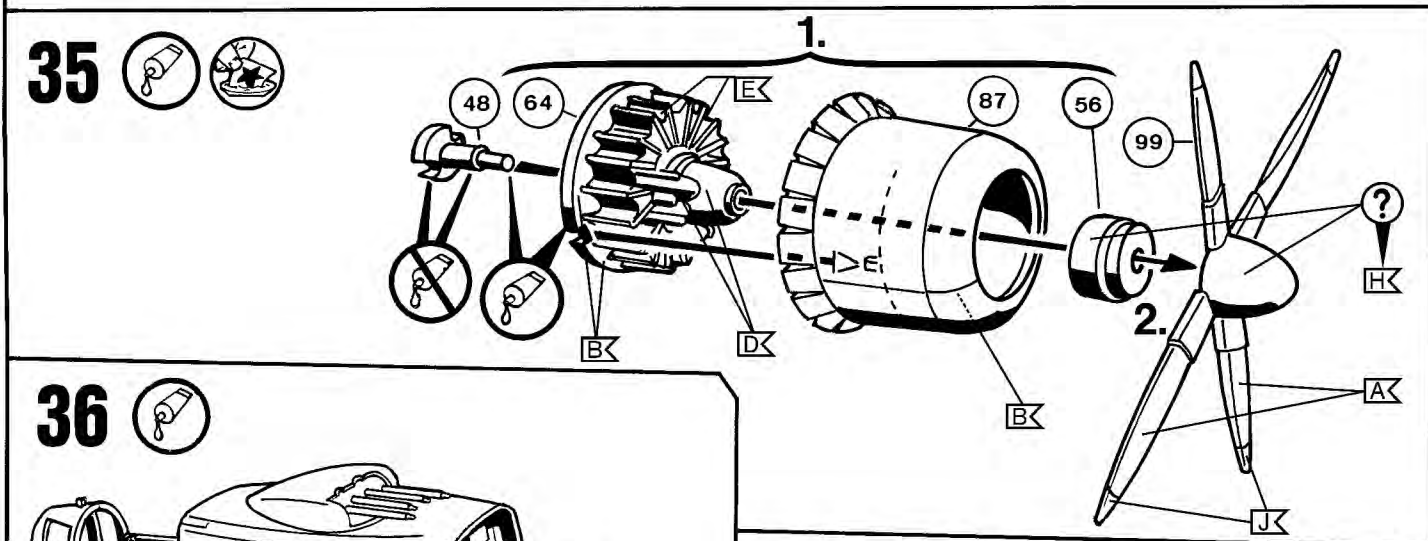
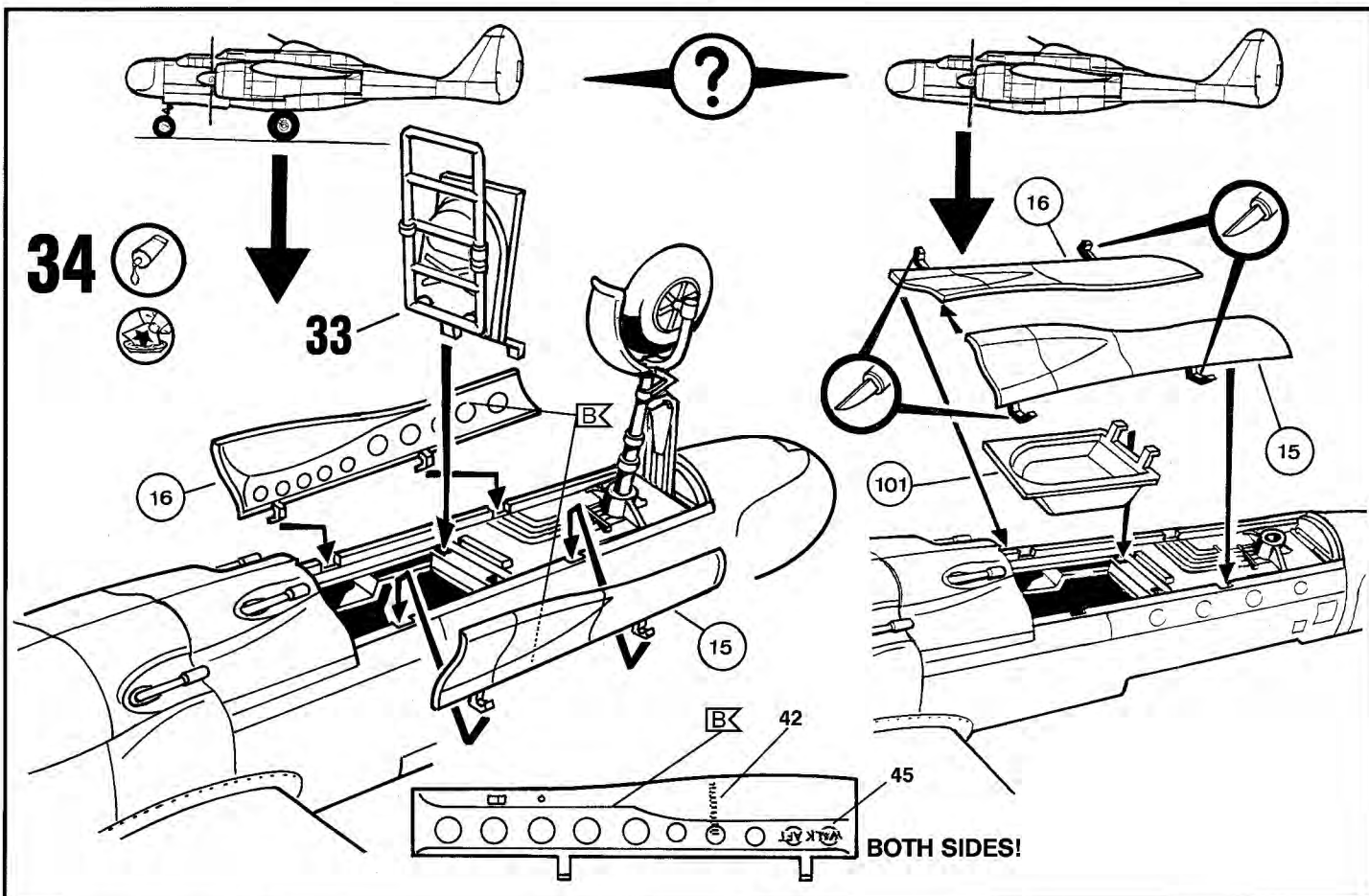
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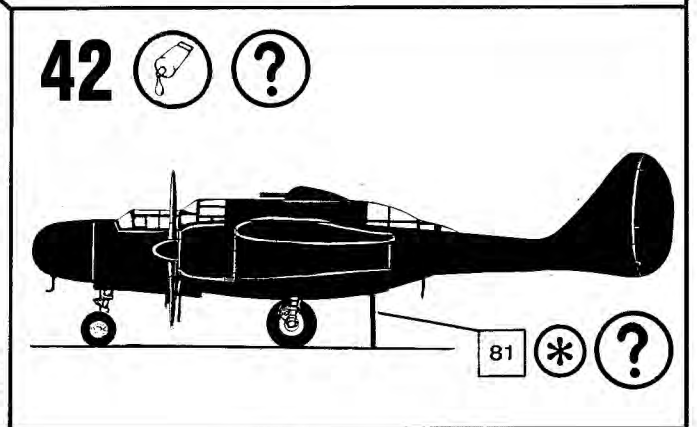
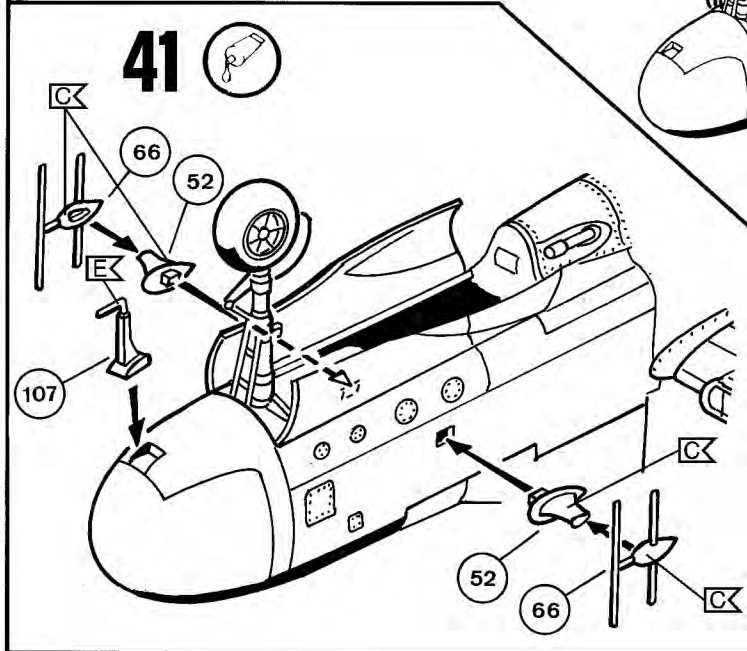
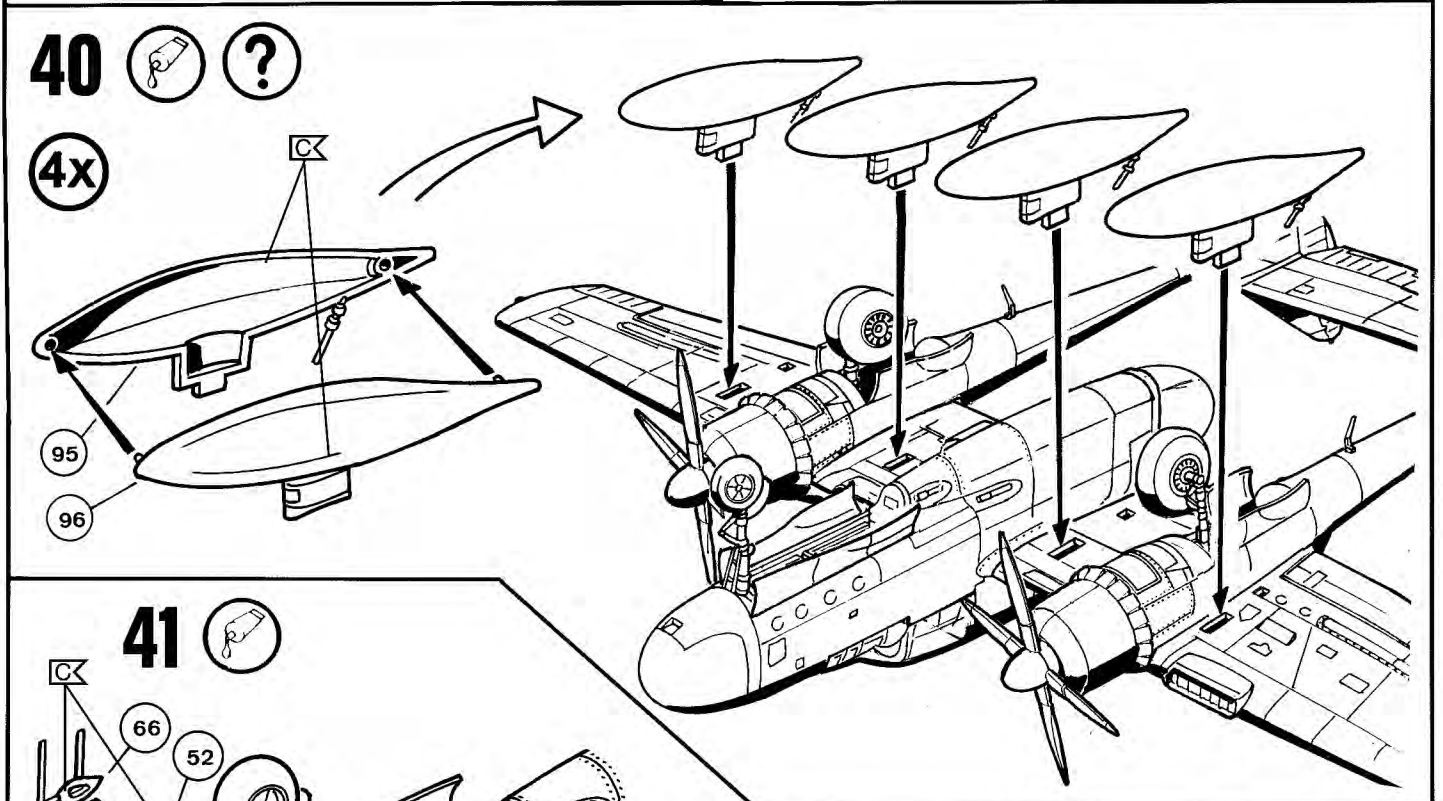
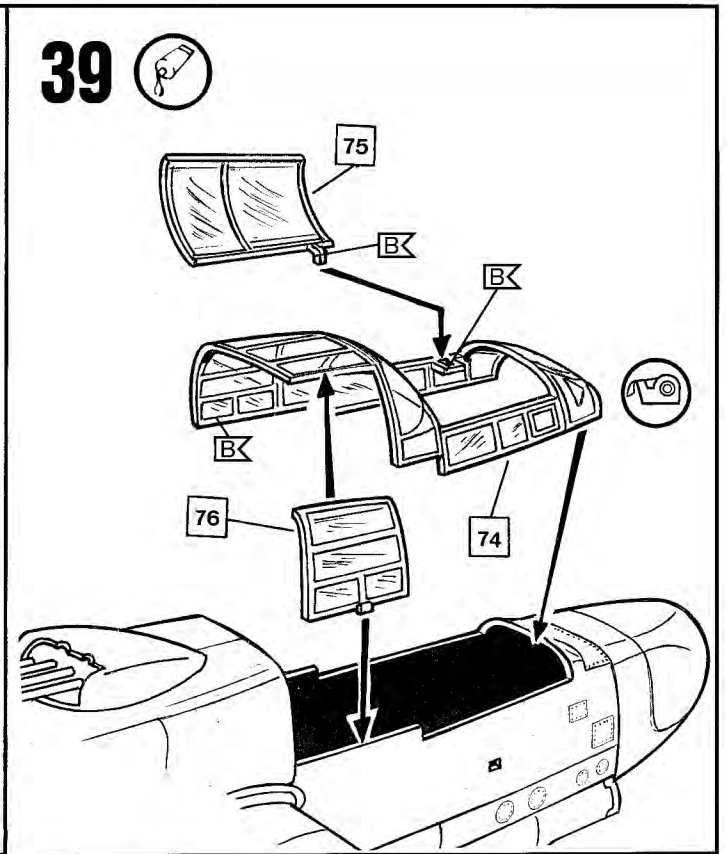
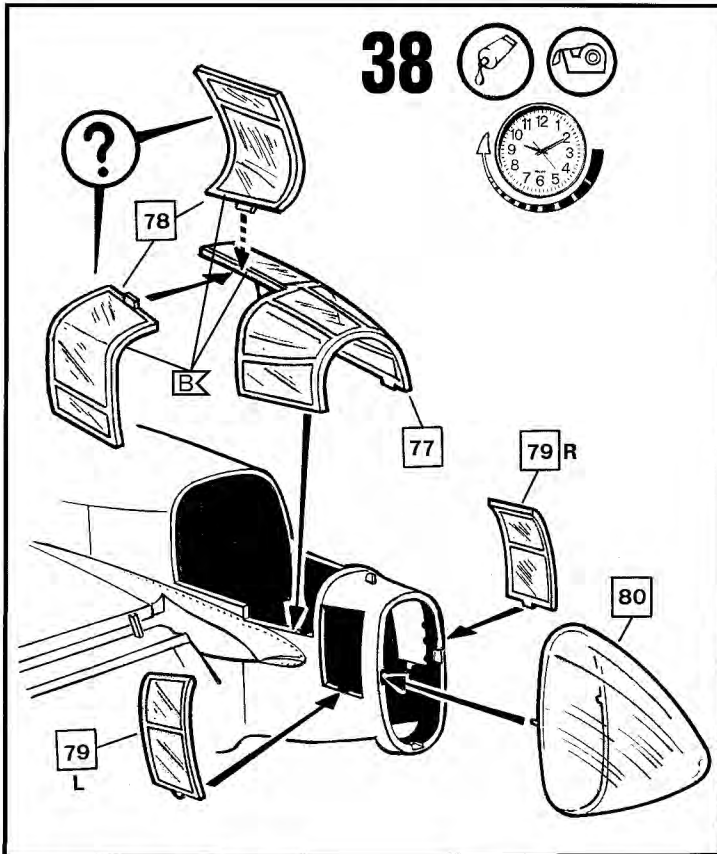


# 29





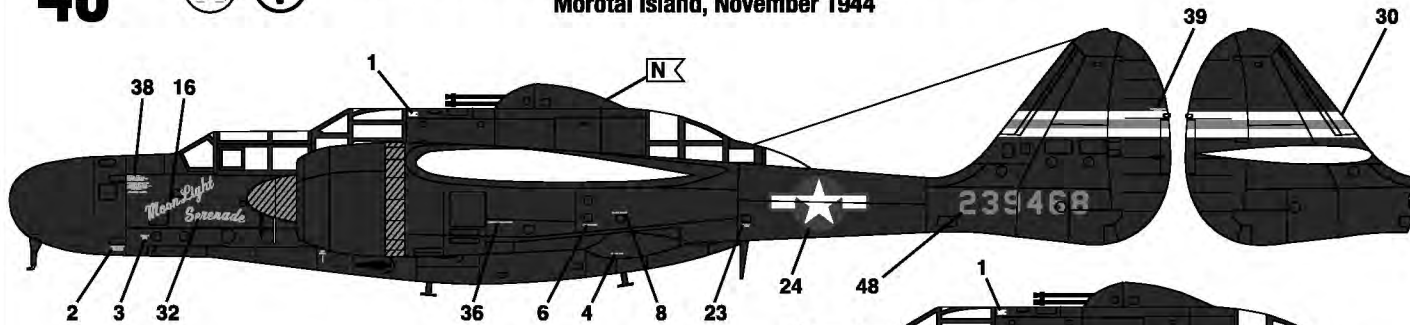











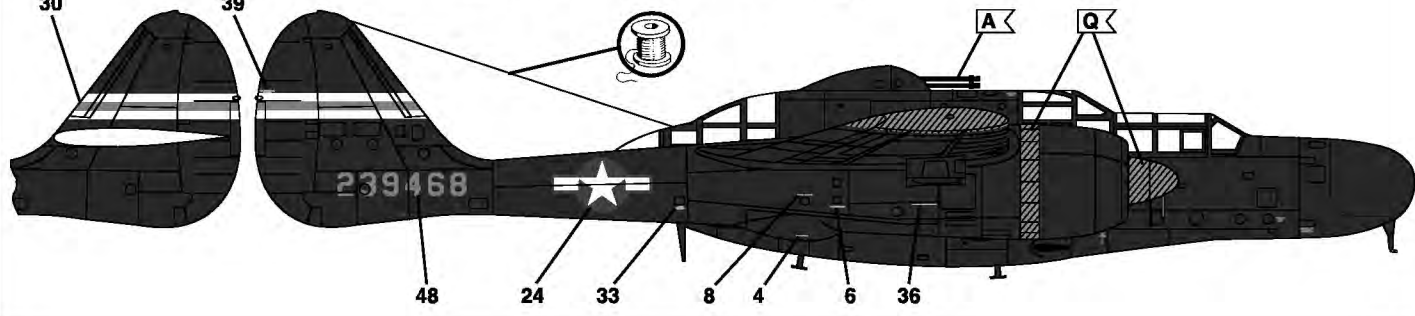
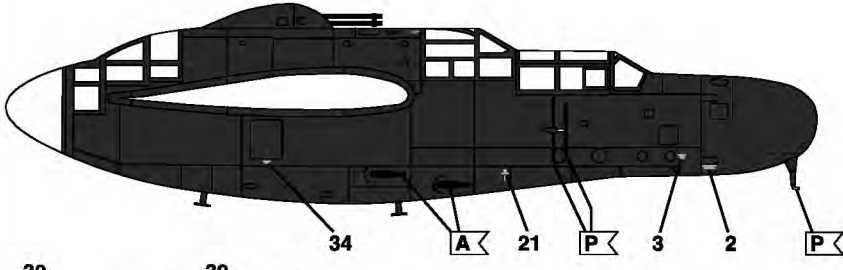
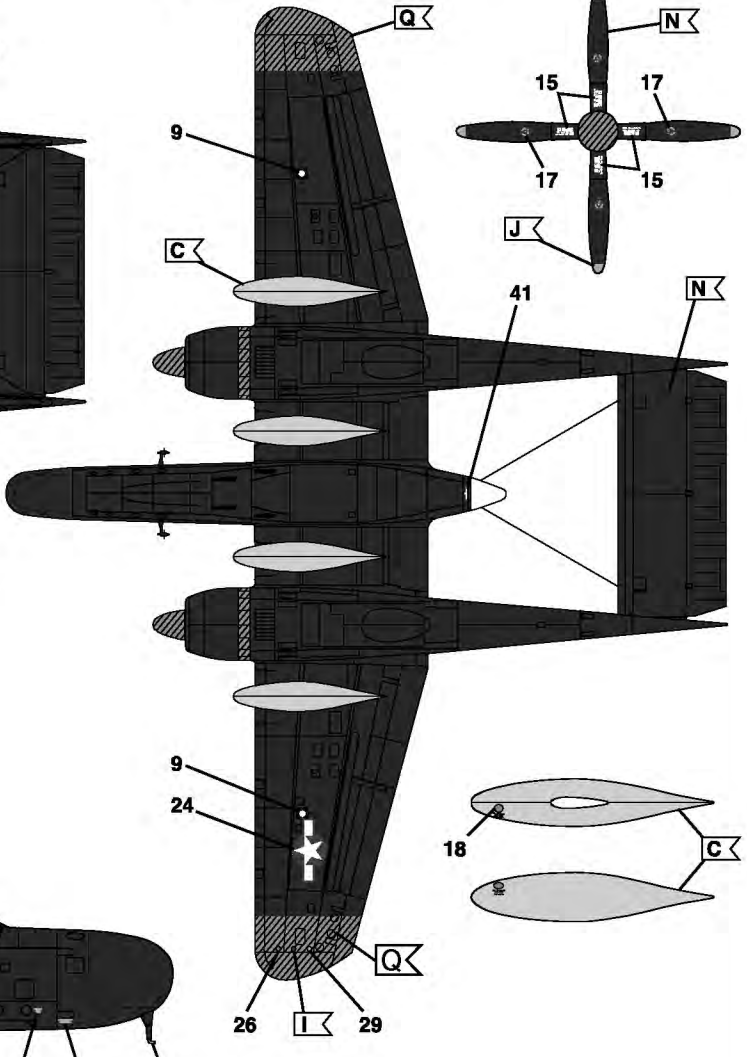
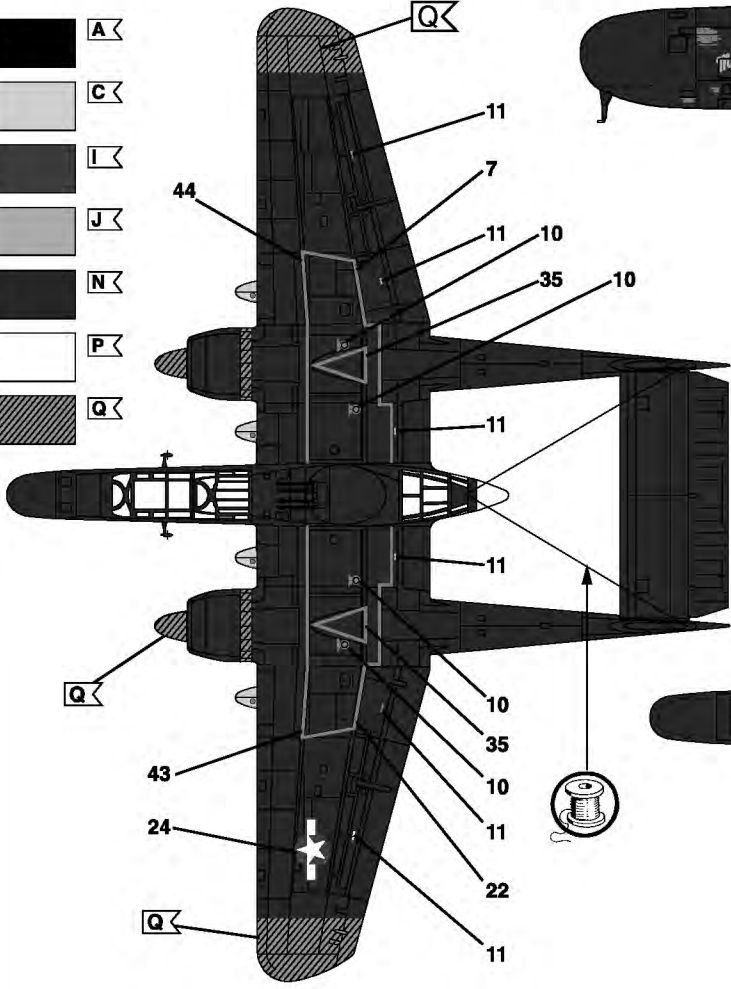
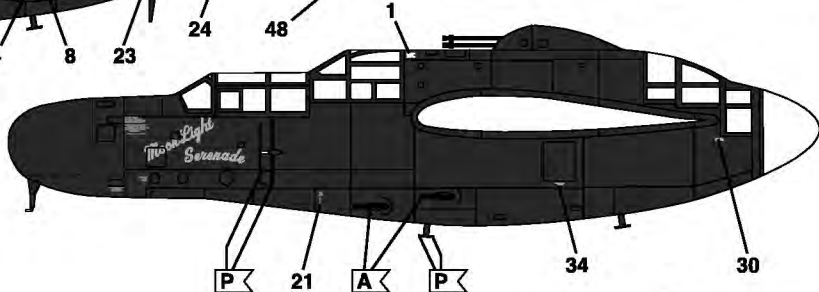
43



P-61B-1-NO, 42-39468, "Moonlight Serenade", 13th AF, 550th NFS, Morotai Island, November 1944



-  A
-  C
-  I
-  J
-  N
-  P
-  Q



# 44



## P-61A-1, 42-5524, "Midnight Mickey", 7th AF, 6th NFS, Saipan, December 1944

