Rockin' Rhino

1143

US SUPERSONIC FIGHTER 1:48 SCALE PLASTIC KIT

intro by Brad Elward

The McDonnell Douglas F-4J Phantom II (Model 98EV) entered U.S. Navy and U.S. Marine Corps service in late 1966 as the direct replacement for the company's earlier F-4B fighter/interceptor, which had been in service since mid-1961. The F-4J corrected some of the deficiencies of the F-4B, adding better radar, an improved bombing capability, more fuel, and a reduced landing approach speed.

Key features of the F-4J included two J79-GE-10 turbojet engines with afterburning thrust of 17,900 lbs (80kN), the AN/APG-59 pulse-Doppler radar, which added the ability to detect and track aircraft at low altitudes, the AN/AJB-7 bombing system, which provided a significantly improved bombing capability versus the F-4B, and the AN/AWG-10 fire control radar. The larger radar meant an enlarged nose radome which helped distinguish the F-4J from the F-4B, as did the longer afterburner "turkey feathers" associated with the J79-GE-10 engines. Moreover, the aircraft's heavier weight led to an increased sink rate, which resulted in efforts to beef-up the landing gear and incorporation of the larger tires used by U.S. Air Force F-4s. F-4Js also featured radar warning receivers and a countermeasures set to help detect and defeat incoming surface-to-air and air-to-air missiles.

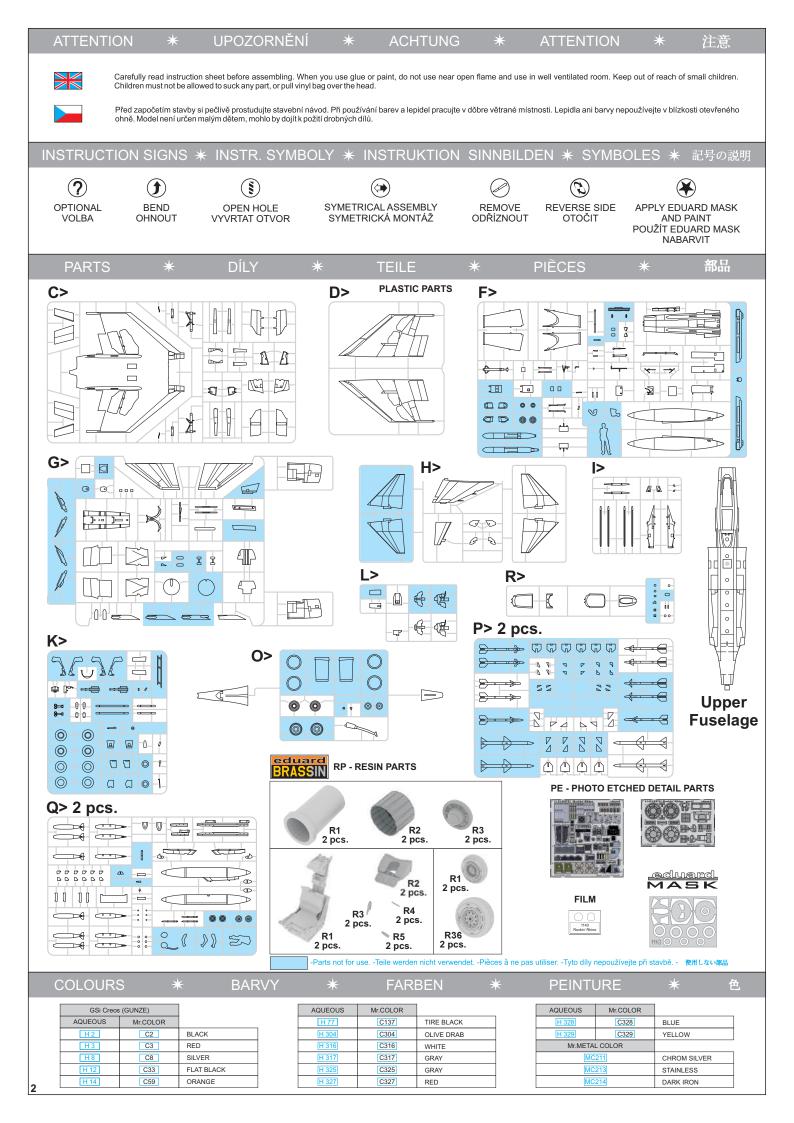
A total of 522 F-4Js were built and deliveries ran from December 1966 through January 1972. The first three YF-4Js were modified from F-4B airframes, the first of which flew of 4 June 1965. The first production F-4J flew on 27 May 1966.

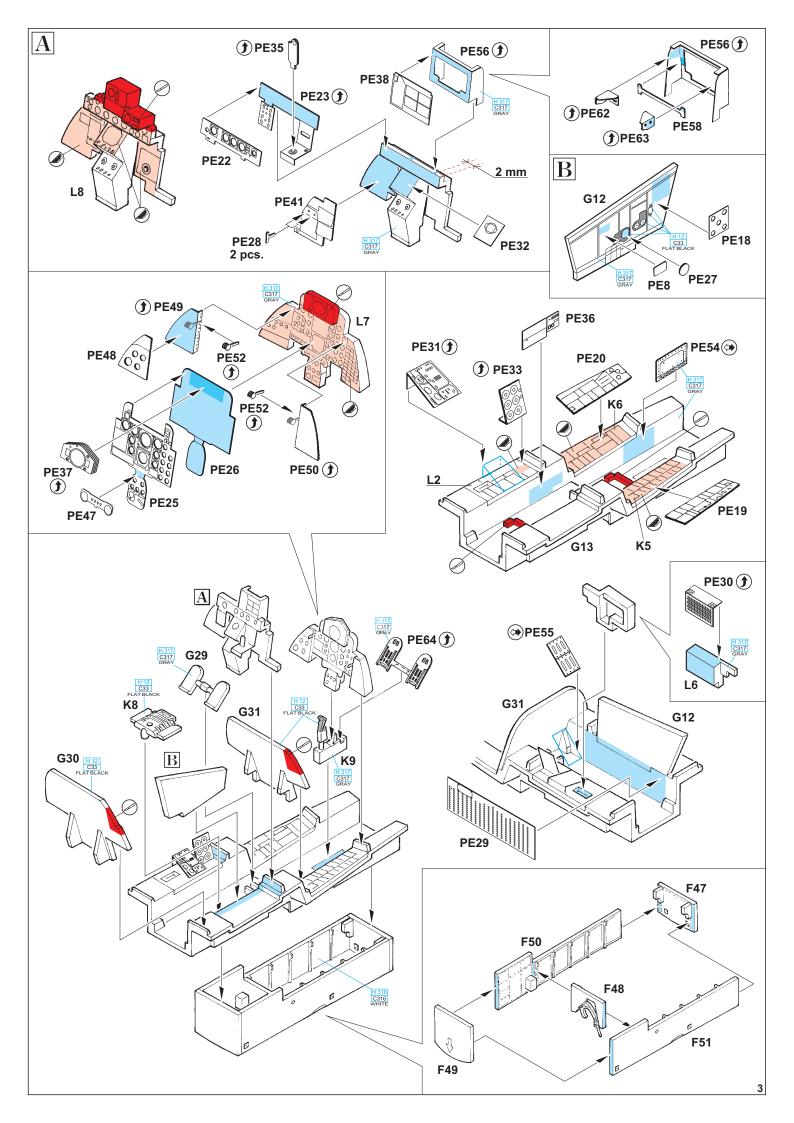
Like their predecessor Phantom IIs, the F-4Js were armed with AIM-9 Sidewinder heat-seeking missiles and AIM-7 radar-homing missiles for air-to-air combat and could carry a variety of air-to-ground ordnance, including MK80 series iron bombs.

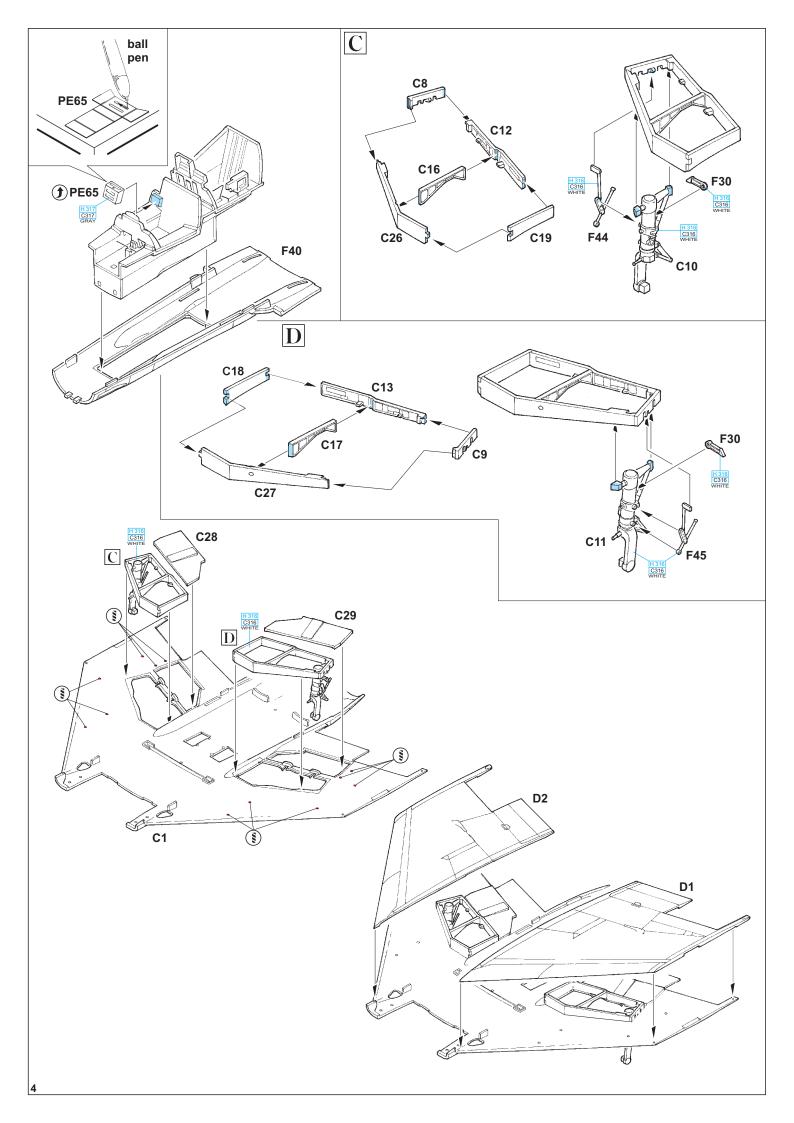
Thirty-two F-4J squadrons deployed to Vietnam with U.S. Navy carrier air wings and by war's end had claimed 17 North Vietnamese MiGs. The first MiG kill came on 7 October 1968 by VF-33 Starfighters near the end of Operation Rolling Thunder, and the last F-4J kill took place on 28 December 1972, as Operation Linebacker II concluded. F-4Js flew a variety of ground-support missions and served as the fleet fighter and fleet interceptor protecting U.S. Navy aircraft carriers from long-range air attack. Marine Corps F-4Js flew mainly close air support (CAS) missions for ground troops located in South Vietnam.

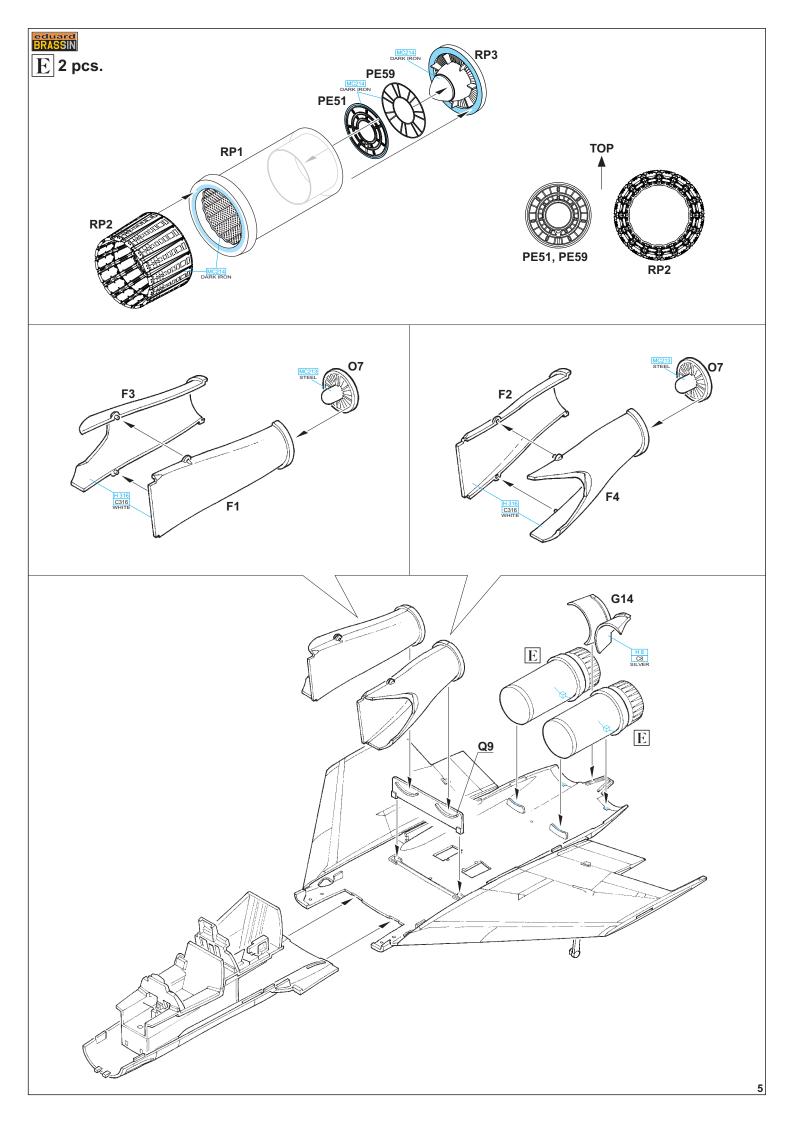
Of the featured aircraft, VF-92 Silver Kings began flying the F-4J in mid-1968, while VF-114 Fighting Aardvarks received their improved Phantom IIs in September 1969. VMFA-235 Death Angels, a Marine Corps Phantom II squadron, transitioned to the F-4J in October 1968 and VMFA-451 Warlords, who deployed for a time with USS Forrestal (CVA 59), received their aircraft in January 1968. VX-4 Evaluators were an evaluation squadron based at NAS Point Mugu, California, and were responsible for developing and enhancing air-to-air tactics, and later operationally testing fighter type aircraft. This aircraft features the squadrons' famous "Black Bunny" paint scheme.

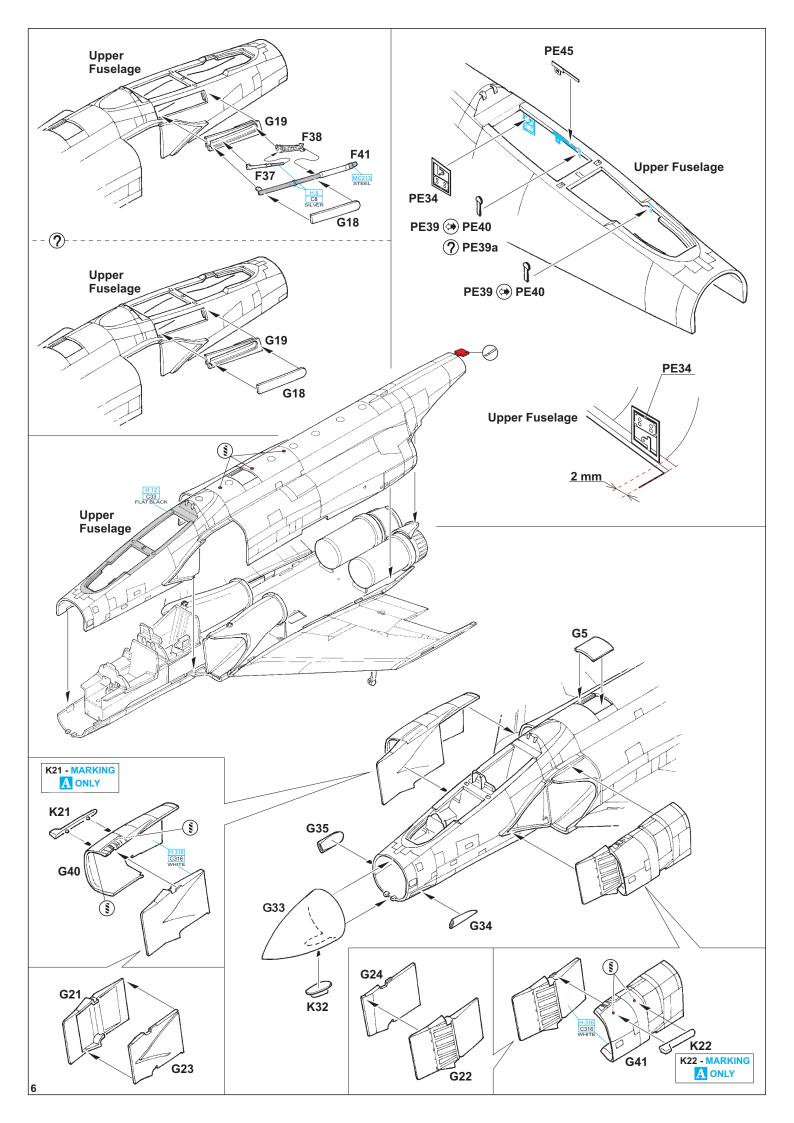
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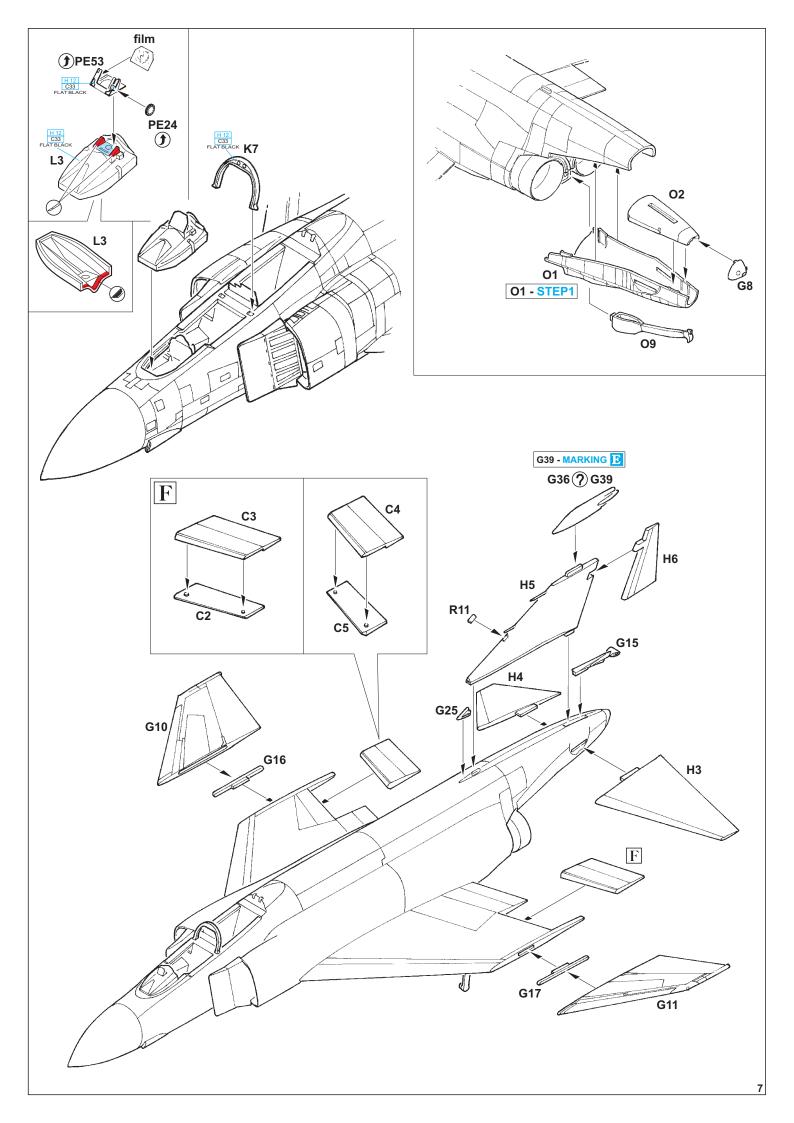


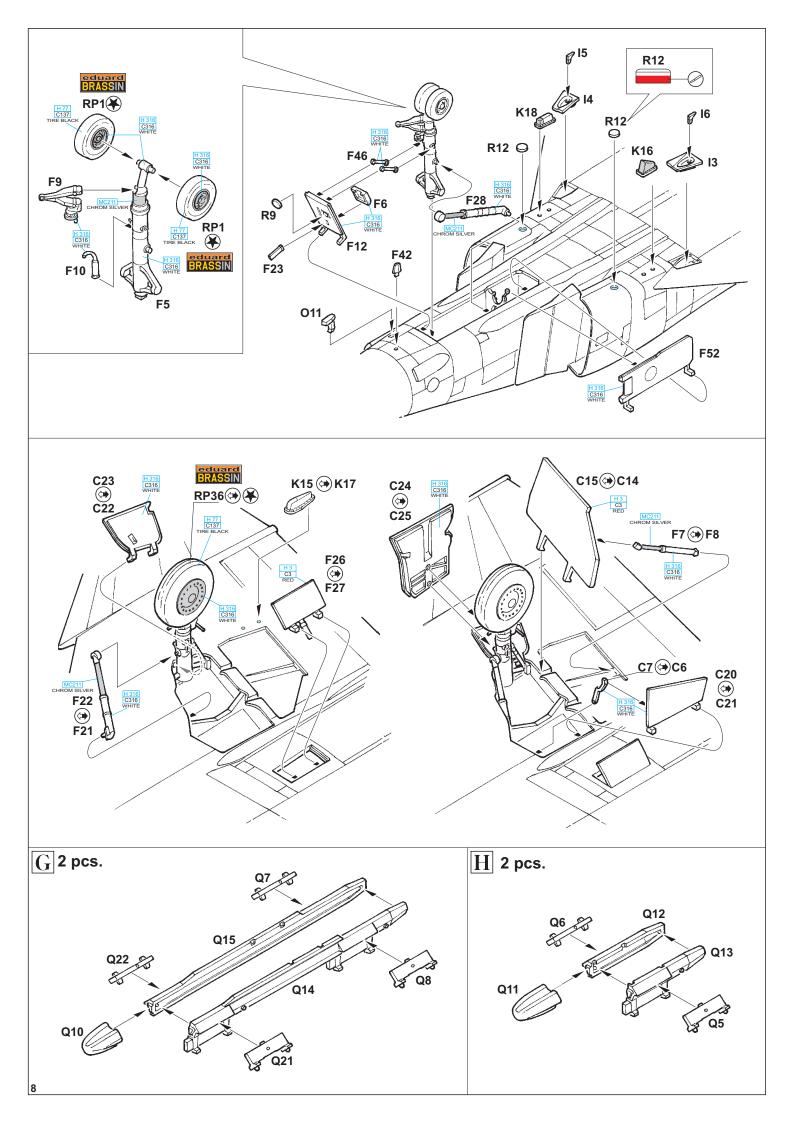


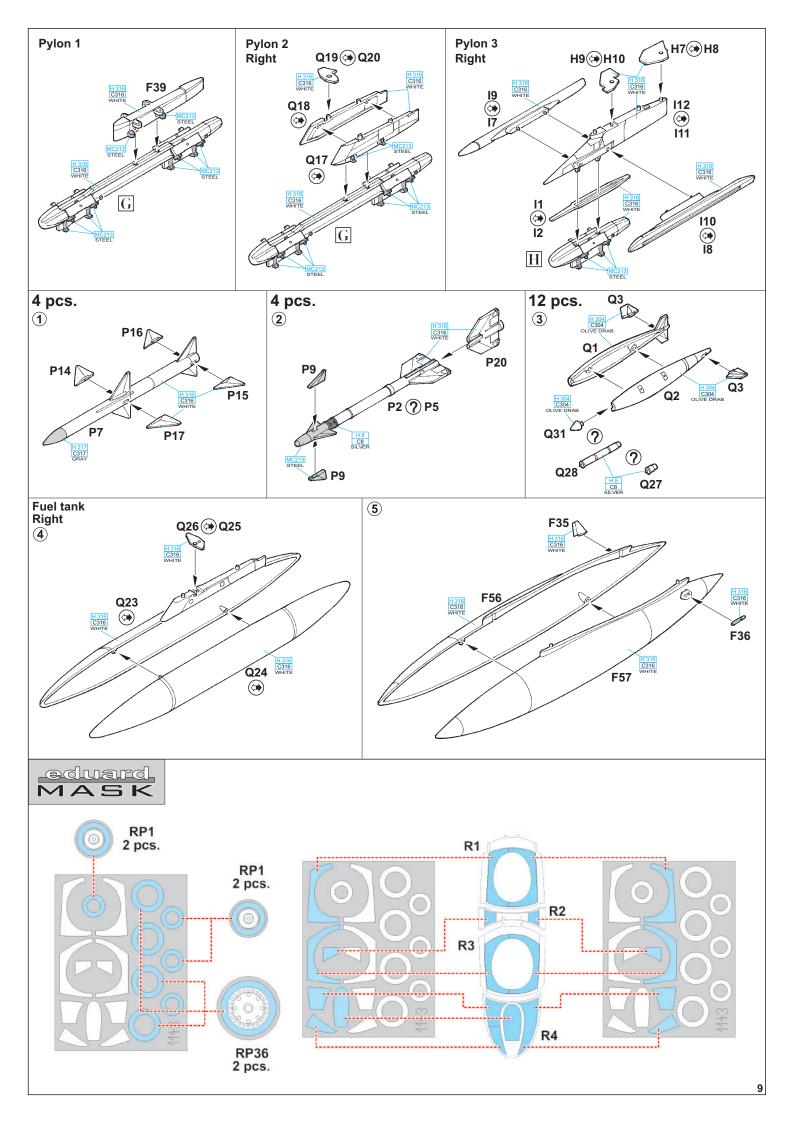


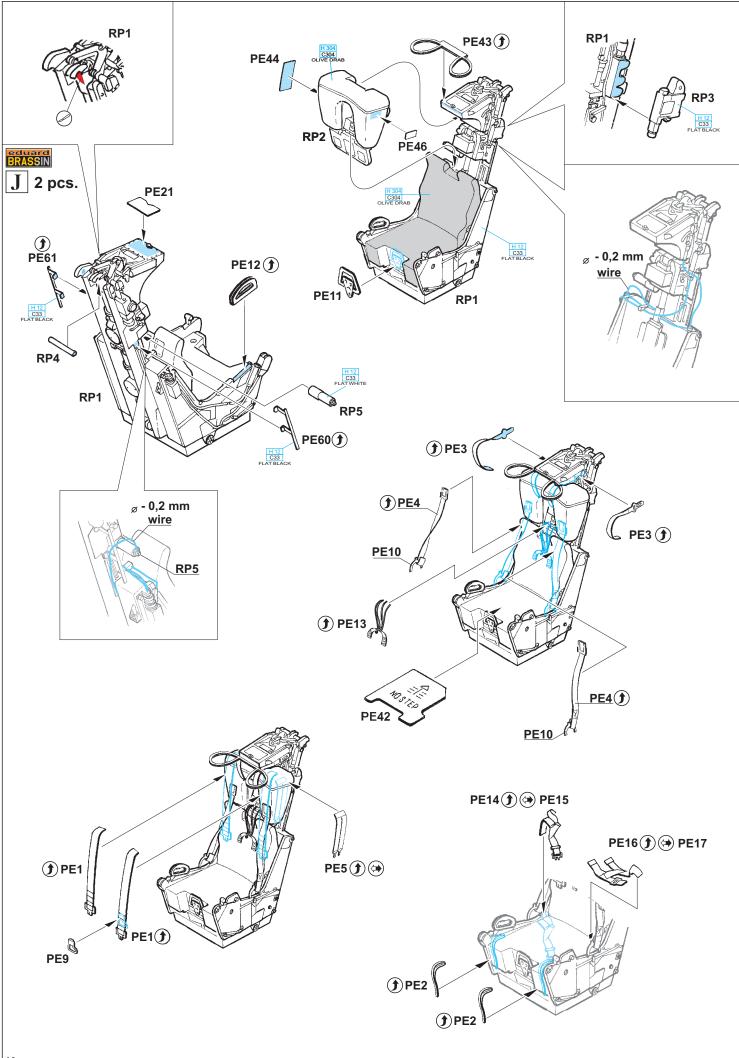


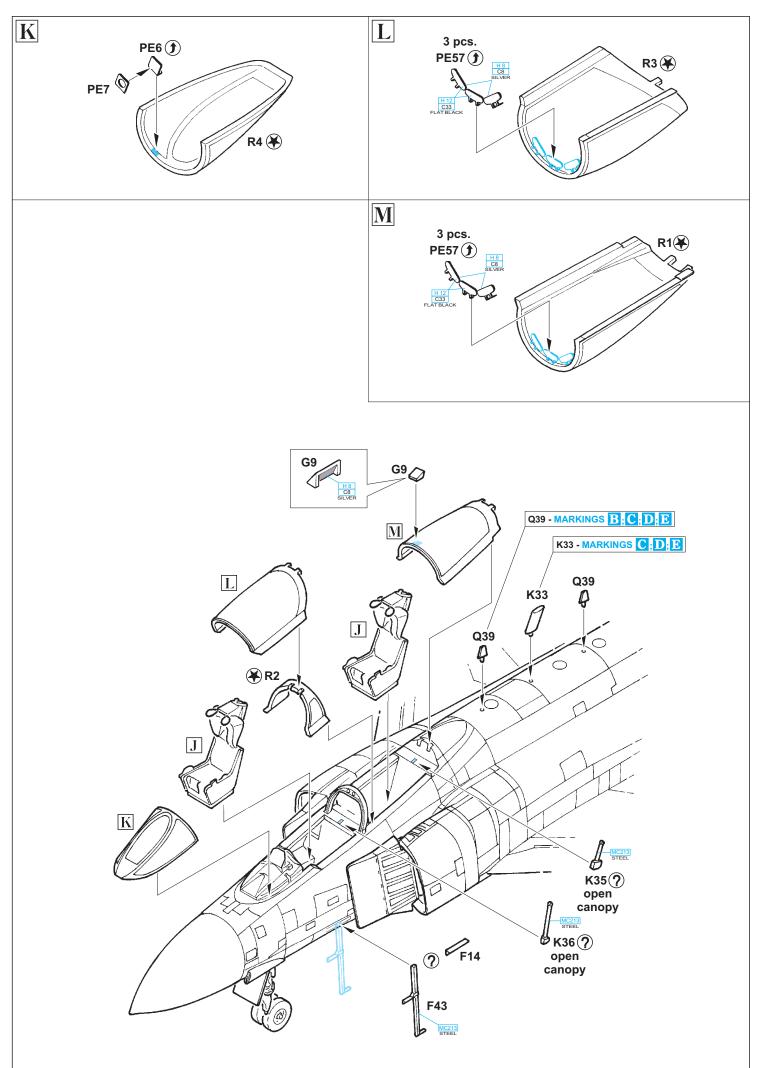


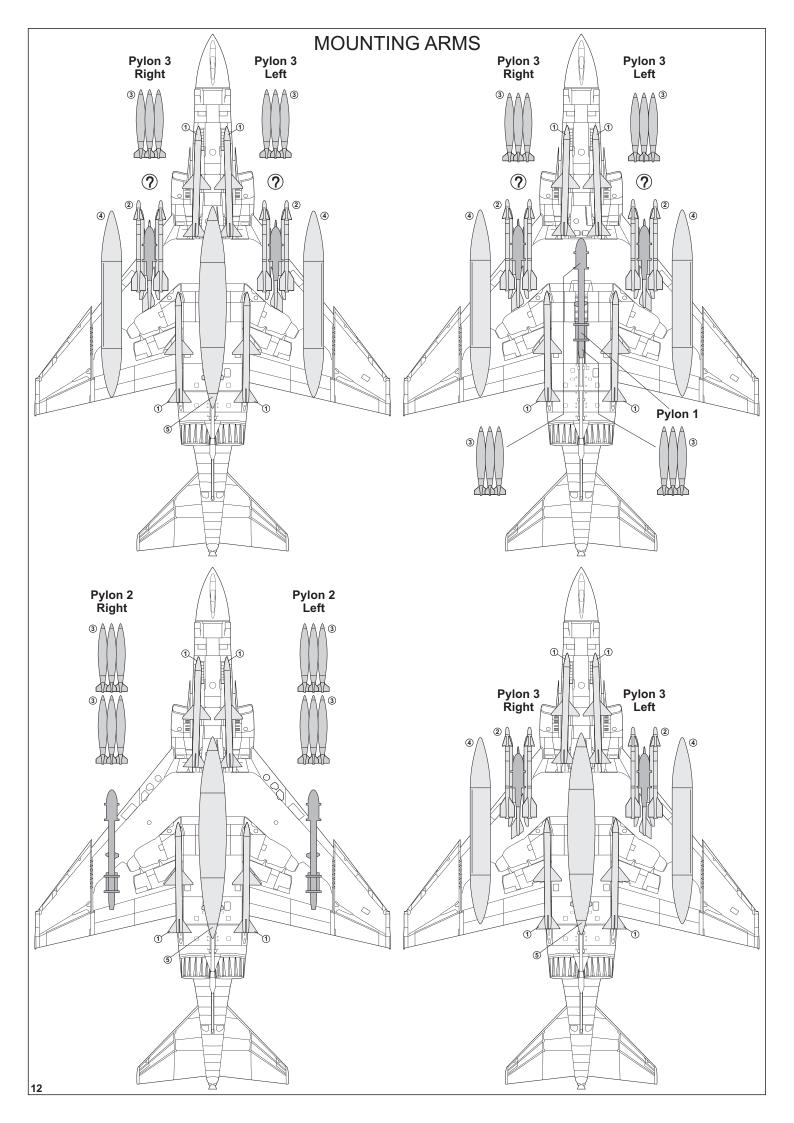






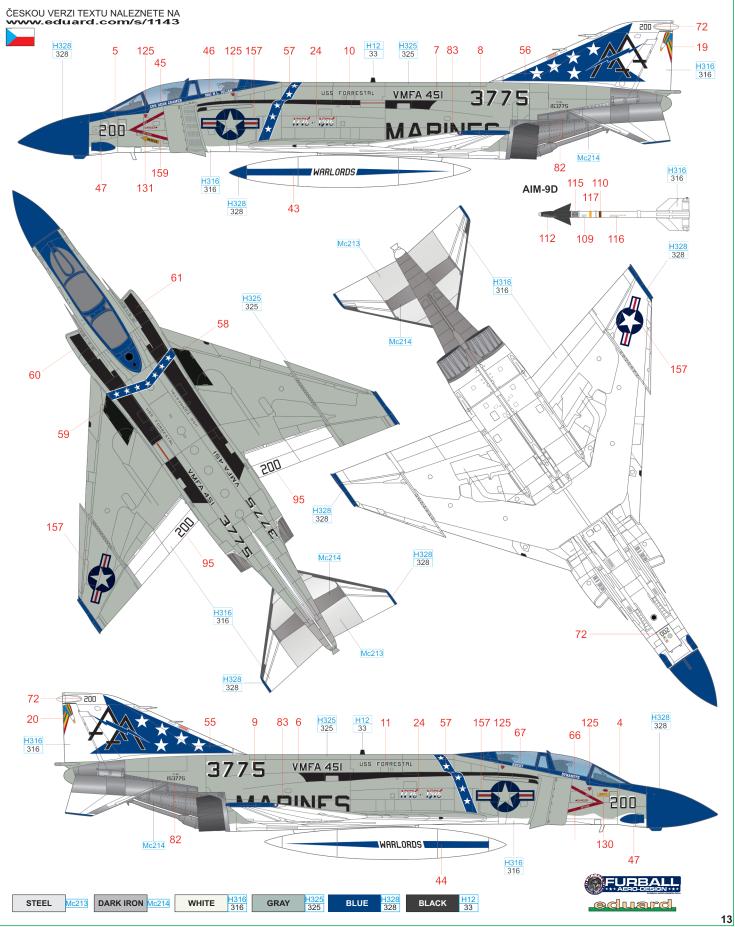






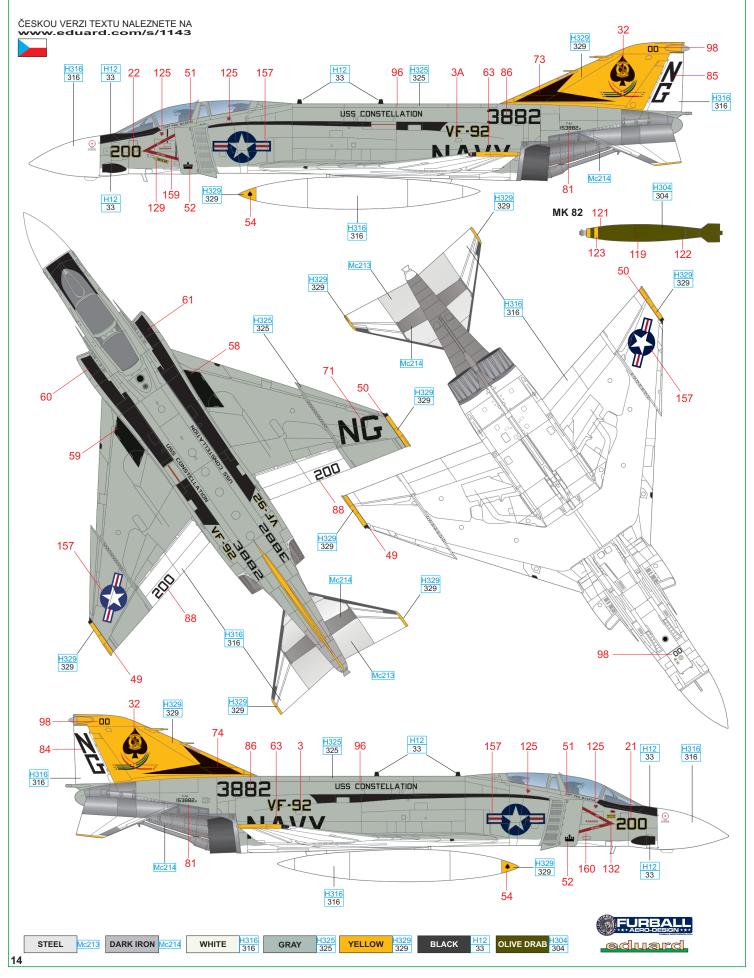
A F-4J 153775, VMFA-451 "Warlords", USS Forrestal, 1976

This colourful aircraft belonged to the commander of Carrier Air Wing 17 (CVW-17), Commander Dean "Rocky" Cramer. The aircraft was marked with a red, white, and blue 1776 – 1976 to commemorate the Bicentennial of the United States. The rudder also wore the multicolored "gull" which is the emblem of CVW-17. This aircraft was lost after it collided with another Phantom while landing at MCAS Yuma in 1977. VMFA-451 flew F-4s from 1968 until 1987. That year the unit traded their venerable Phantoms for F/A-18A Hornets. The squadron would deploy to Bahrain and participate in Operation Desert Storm logging more than 770 combat sorties. After a 57 year history, the squadron deactivated in 1997. In 2010 however, the squadron reactivated as VMFAT-501 and continues to serve as the F-35B Fleet Replacement Squadron for the USMC.



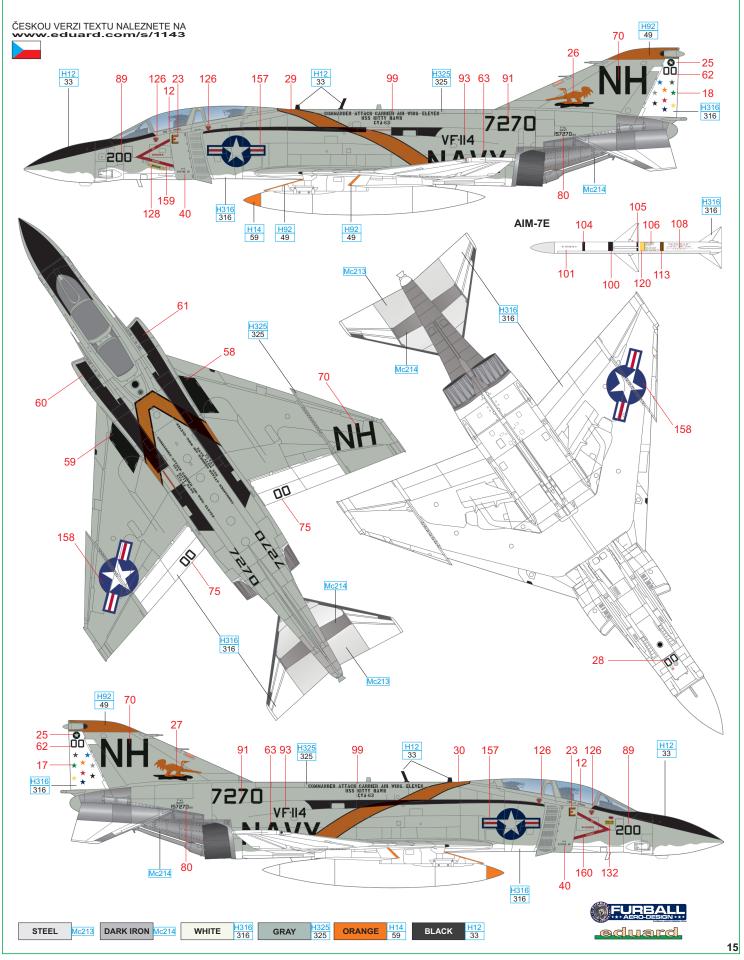
B F-4J 153882, VF-92 "Silver Kings", USS Constellation, 1973

This aircraft served as the CAG aircraft for Carrier Air Wing Nine's (CVW-9) commander Captain Paul McCarthy. The multi-colored bands under the squadron logo on the tail were borrowed from CVW-9's emblem and distinguished this aircraft from other jets in the squadron. The Silver Kings made numerous deployments in support of the war in Vietnam yet would ultimately be deactivated in 1975. 153882 would later be converted to an F-4S and serve out its days with the USMC.



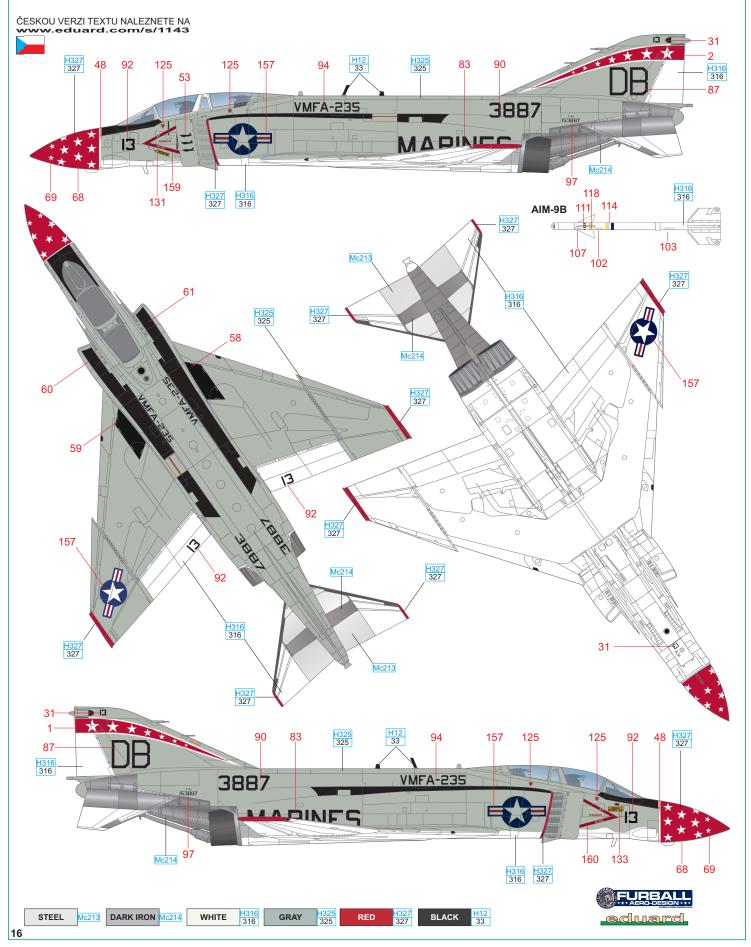
C F-4J 157270, VF-114 "Aardvarks", USS Kittyhawk, 1971

This aircraft served as the personal mount of the commander of Carrier Air Wing Eleven (CVW-11), Commander J. F. O'Hara, during the Airwing's 1970 – 1971 Western Pacific cruise aboard the USS Kittyhawk. Transitioning from the F3H Demon to the F-4B in 1961, and then the F-4J in 1969, VF-114 would make a total of five combat cruises to the Tonkin Gulf in support of the Vietnam War and its aftermath. During this time the squadron downed five enemy aircraft. The "Aardvarks" transitioned to the F-14A Tomcat in 1976, and would fly the type until the unit's disestablishment in 1993.



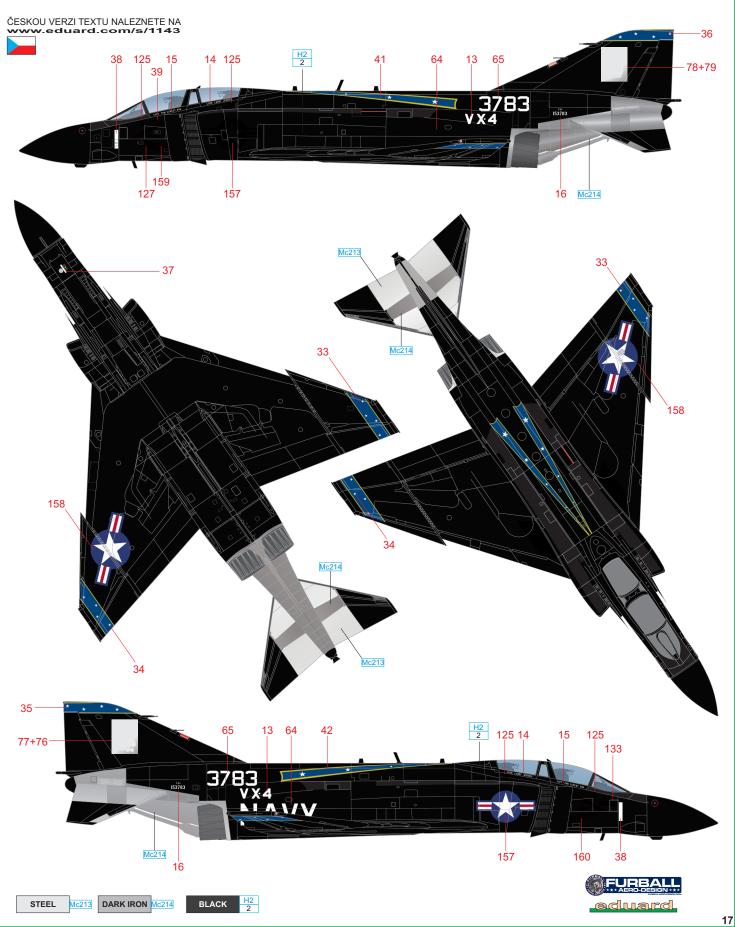
D F-4J 153887, VMFA-235 "Death Angels", MCAS Kaneohe Bay, 1972

Specializing in the close air support mission, this squadron saw heavy action in the early years of the Vietnam War flying F-8E Crusaders. The Death Angels flew over 6,000 combat sorties from 1966 to 1968. The squadron would re-equip with the F-4J in 1968 and be home based at MCAS Kaneohe Bay, Hawai. The squadron would fly Phantom until 1989 when the unit transitioned to the F/A-18A Hornet. In support of Operation Desert Storm, the Death Angels would log 2,800 combat sorties while deployed to Shaikh AB, Bahrain. This aircraft carries three BQM-34 drone "kill" marks on the left intake splitter plate acquired during missile training exercises. 153887 was upgraded to an F-4S and served for many years with VMFA-321. After removal from squadron service, it was converted to a QF-4S drone and destroyed in 2001.



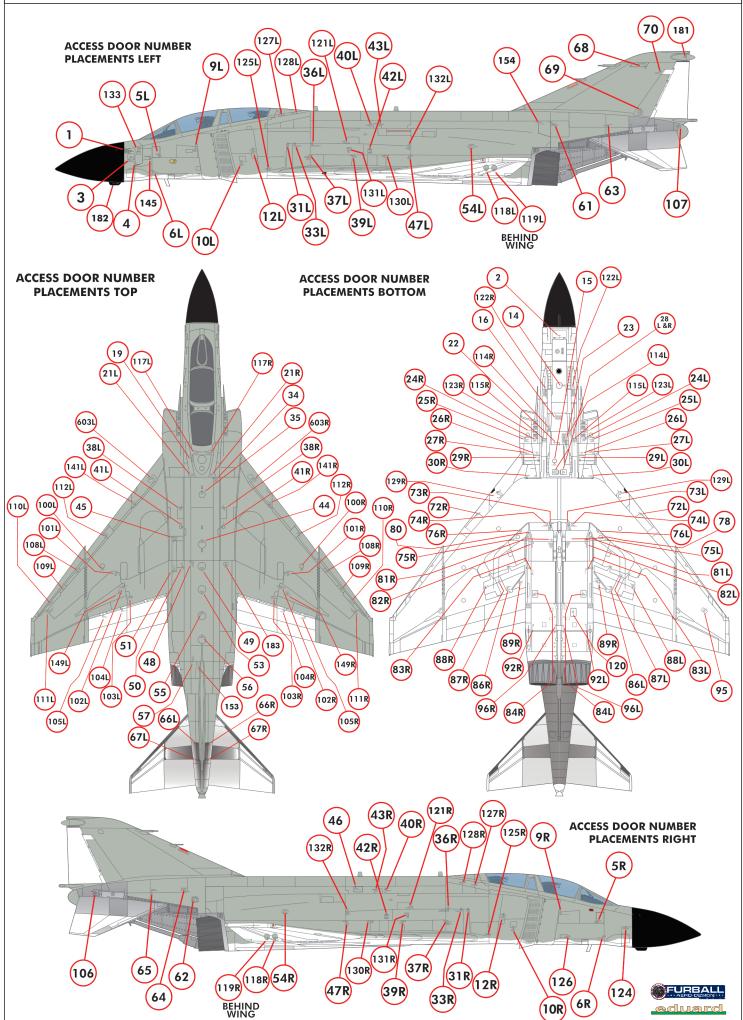
E F-4J 153783, VX-4 "The Evaluators", NAS Point Mugu, 1972

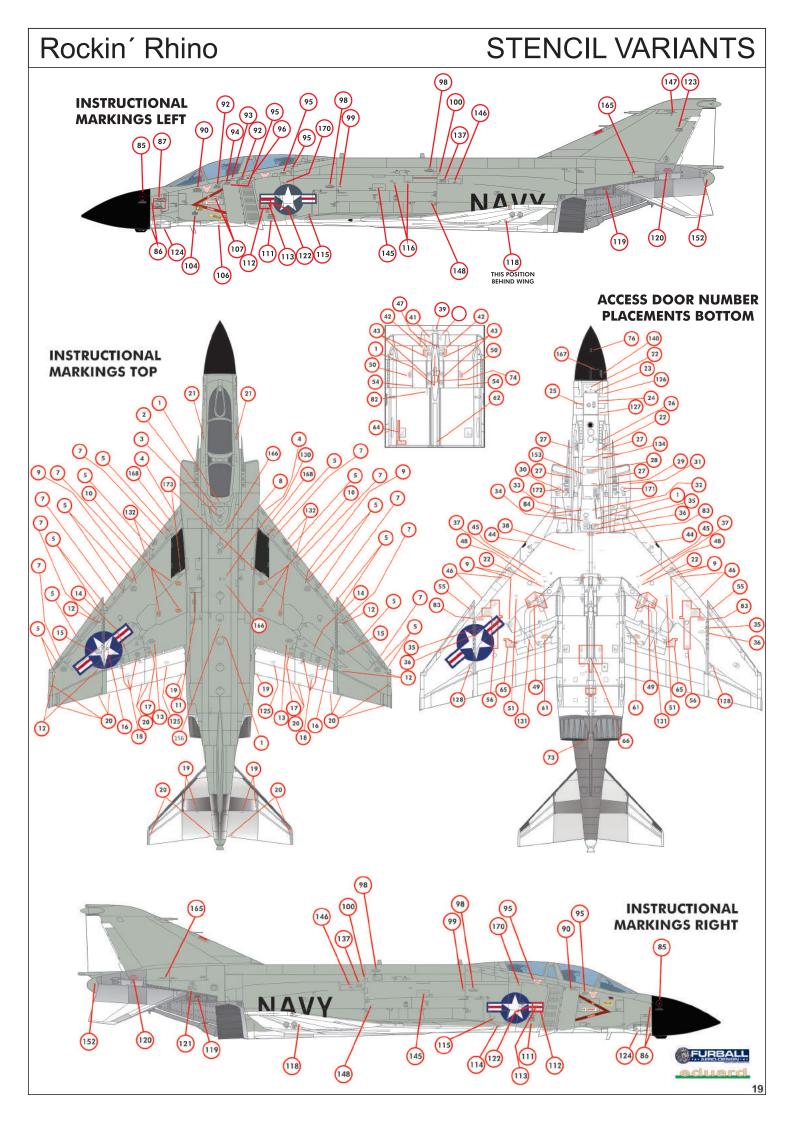
This unit specialized in the testing of weapons systems and facilitating their implementation in the fleet squadrons. According to US Naval lore, 153783 adopted a gloss black paint scheme for night testing. In 1969, the white bunny logo (similar to the logo of the popular men's magazine) was painted on the tail and the jet was given the nickname "Vandy One". The magazine's owner upon hearing of the squadron using a logo similar to his threatened legal action unless they adopted his "official" Playboy Bunny. They of course complied, and the bunny would be worn by numerous test aircraft over the years. The squadron ceased operations in 1993, and merged with VX-9. 153783 would be put into storage in the early 1980's only to be refurbished and sold to the Royal Air Force. Gaining the RAF serial ZE352, the aircraft would serve out its days providing air defense for the British Isles until being withdrawn from service in 1991.

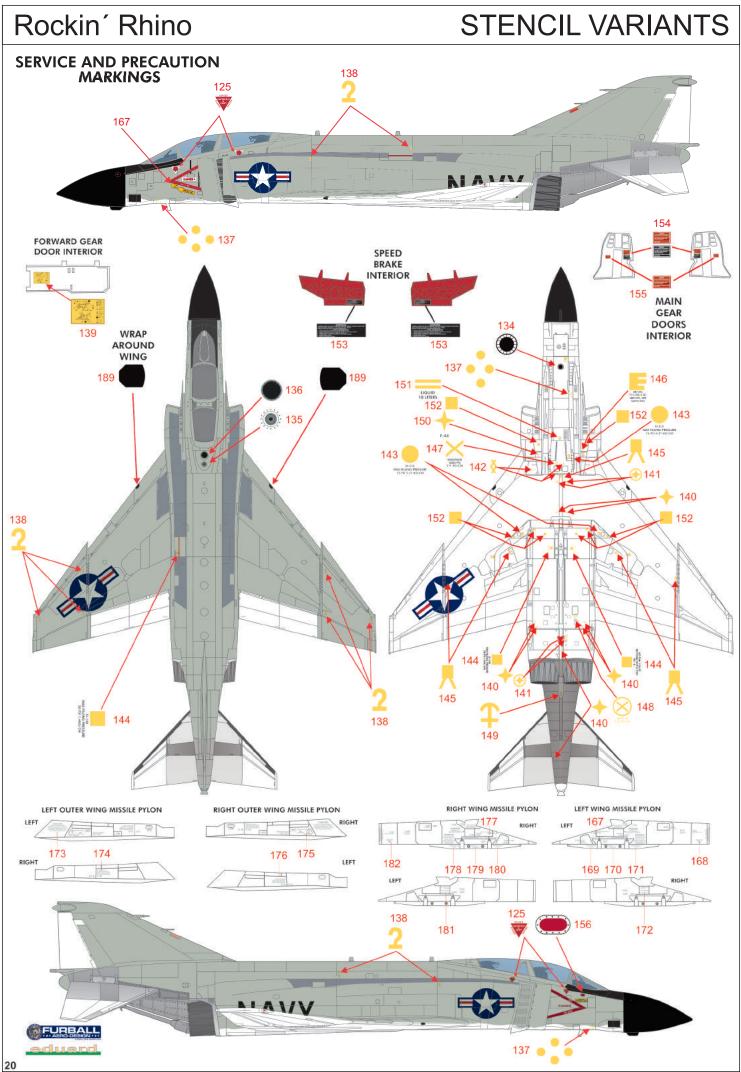


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STENCIL VARIANTS







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