Bicentennial Phantoms

1190

US SUPERSONIC FIGHTER 1:48 SCALE PLASTIC KIT



intro by Brad Elward

The year 1976 saw a number of innovative and patriotic paint schemes applied to United States military aircraft. The patriotic enthusiasm was driven by the country's Bicentennial celebration, which marked the 200th anniversary of the American Revolution. The celebration itself began in April 1975 and culminated on 4 July 1976, marking the adoption of the Declaration of Independence from Britain.

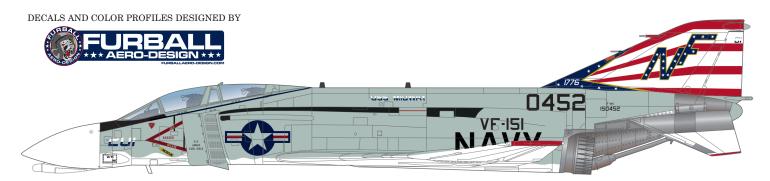
As a display of patriotism, many squadrons adorn paint schemes incorporating red, white, and blue markings into the traditional squadron paint schemes. Some squadrons, such as VX-4 Evaluators, were extremely creative and bold. VX-4's F-4B (BuNo. 153088) sported a dark blue fuselage, red and white striped wing surfaces, and an eagle's head on the nose section. Other squadrons incorporated a "76" emblem or added red, white and blue tri-colors to aircraft numbering, while other squadrons, such as VF-151 and VF-161 aboard USS Midway (CV 41), added the national colors to their tailfins. Frequently seen scripted on many aircraft were American or Revolutionary flags, liberty bells, stars and stripes, Minutemen, and groupings of 13 stars, which signified the original 13 colonies.

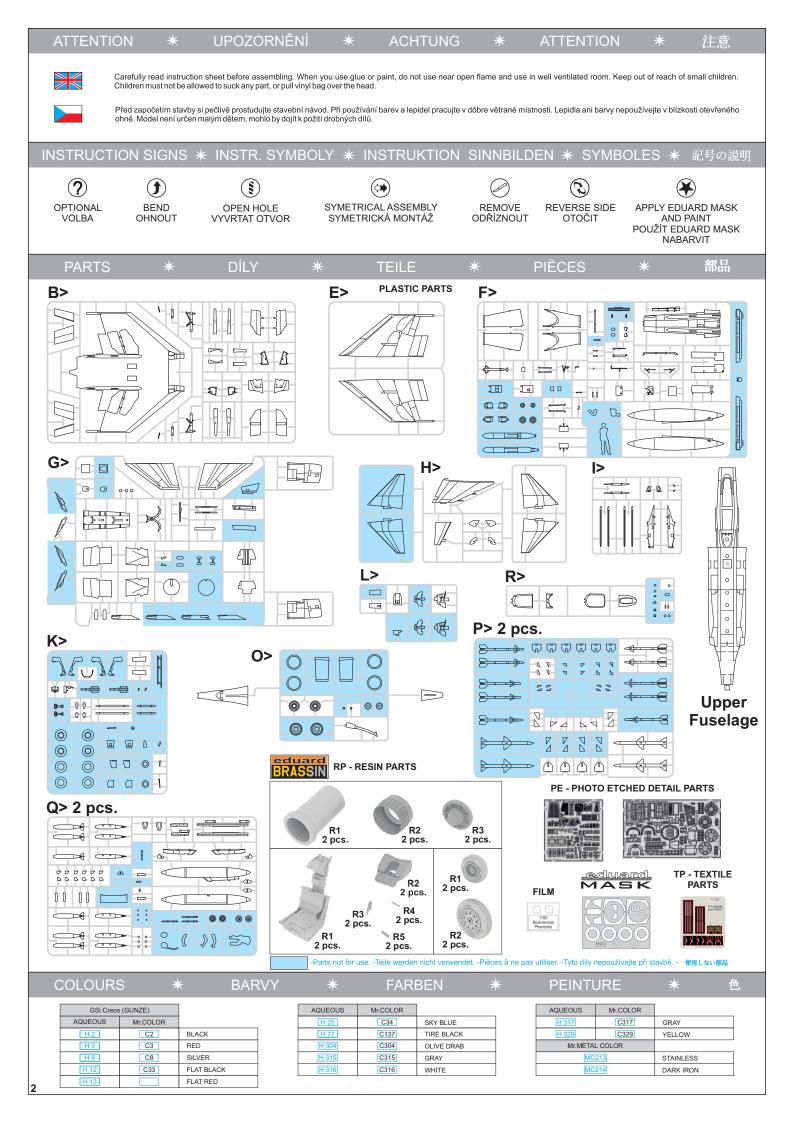
The celebration was not limited to the U.S. Navy F-4 community, although due to the sheer number of Phantom IIs in service there were more F-4s bearing Bicentennial markings than any other aircraft type. All aviation communities adopted vivid paint schemes in their unique effort to capture the moment, which was a welcomed sight following the more subdued markings of the Vietnam War years. Each of the Navy Fleet Replacement Squadrons (FRS) painted at least one aircraft in commemorative colors – examples included VS-41 Shamrocks (the west coast S-3A FRS located at NAS North Island, California), VF-101 Grim Reapers (the east coast F-14A FRS located at NAS Oceana, Virginia Beach) and VF-124 Gunslingers (the west coast F-14A FRS located at NAS Miramar, California). Air Force and Marine Corps squadrons, as well as many National Guard units, also featured colorfully-painted aircraft.

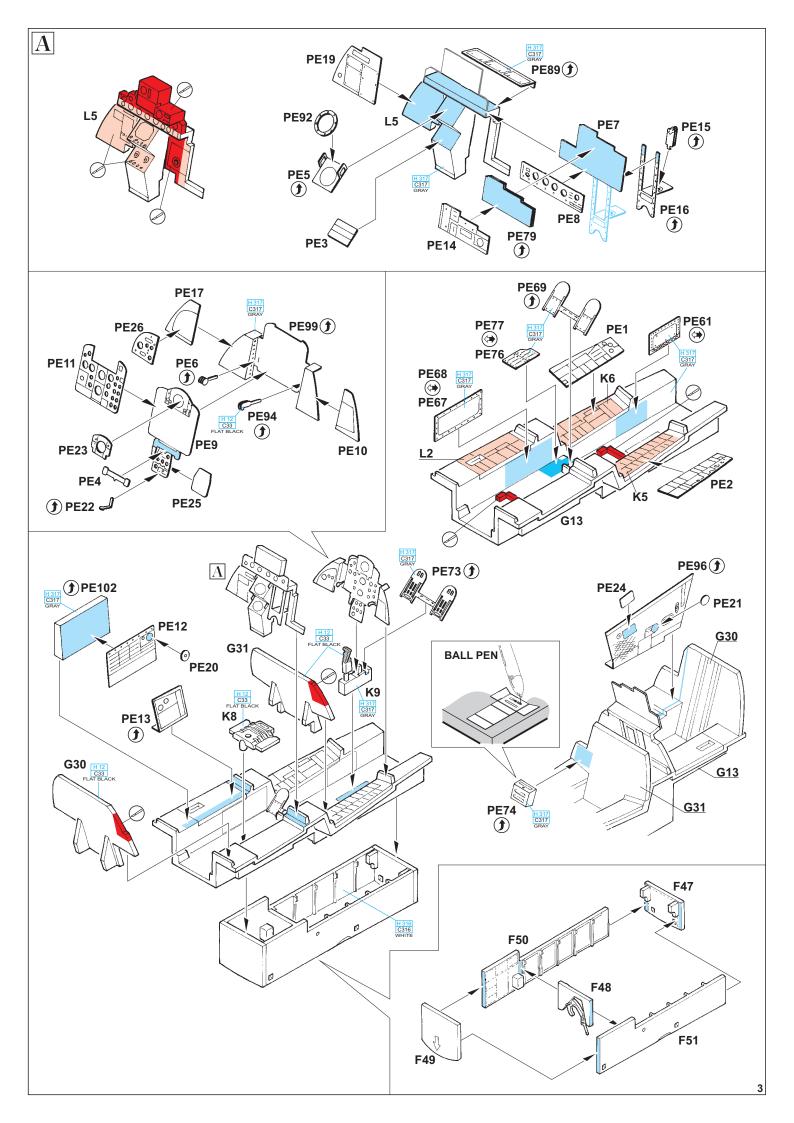
The decals provided with this kit feature the Bicentennial paint schemes worn by four U.S. Navy fleet and one reserve F-4 Phantom II aircraft during 1976. VF-51 Screaming Eagles and VF-111 Sundowners were sister squadrons in Carrier Air Wing (CVW) 15 aboard USS Coral Sea (CV 43) until late spring 1976 when the two squadron's transferred to Carrier Air Wing 19 aboard USS Franklin D. Roosevelt (CV 42). The decals for VF-51 are from the Coral Sea deployment with CVW-15. VF-111's decals are from its time aboard Roosevelt in late 1976 after the squadron, along with VF-51, was reassigned to CVW-19 for the carrier's final deployment.

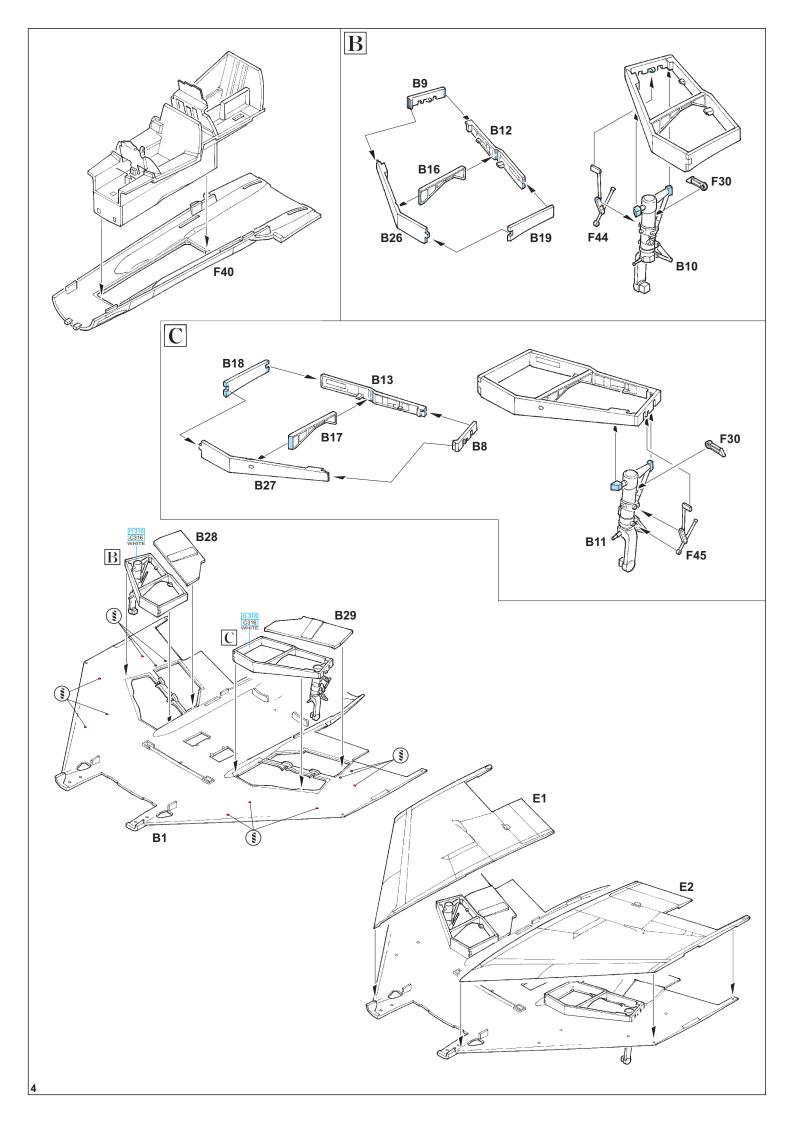
VF-151 Vigilantes and VF-161 Chargers were sister squadrons in CVW-5 aboard USS Midway (CV 41) stationed in Japan. VF-302 Stallions were a reserve fighter squadron based at NAS Miramar.

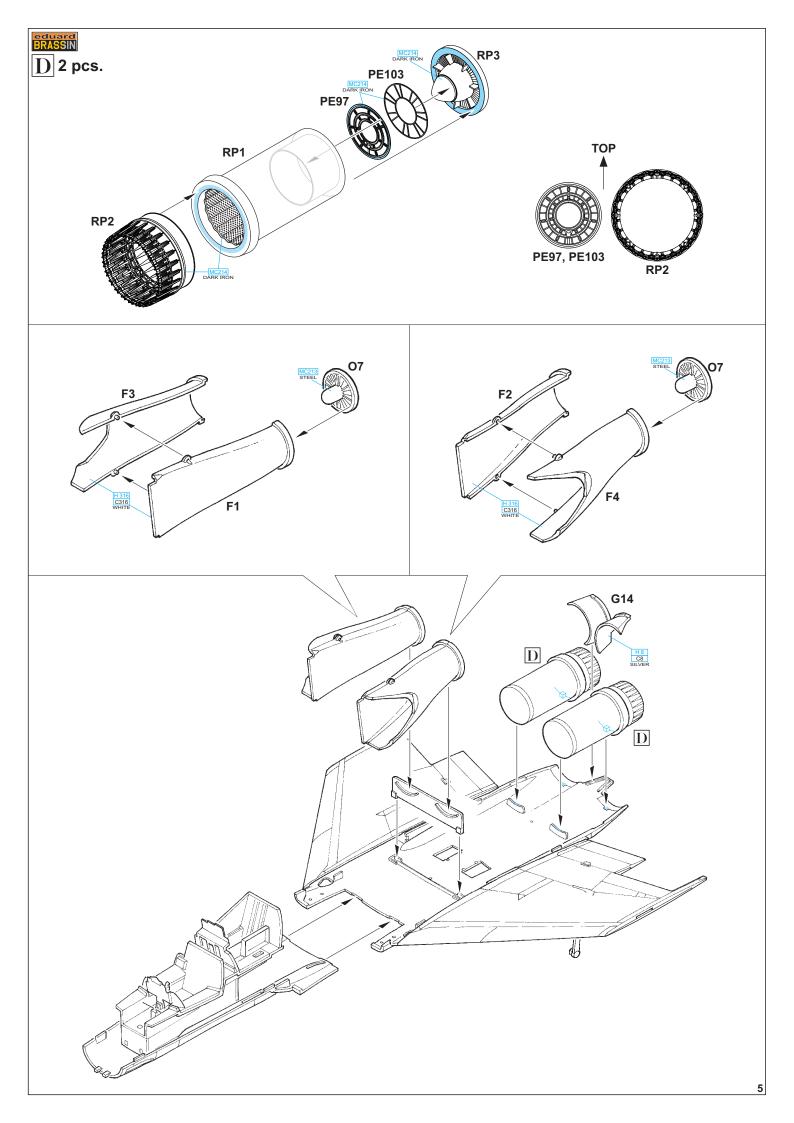
All of the featured Phantom IIs are F-4N models, which were refurbished from F-4Bs. The Navy, as part of Project Bee Line begun in 1972, rebuilt 228 F-4Bs to the new standard, strengthening and re-stressing the airframe, replacing some of its electronics adding new mission equipment, and fixing the engine-smoke issues of earlier models. The F-4N was physically distinguishable from the F-4B by the long antenna fairings fitted along the upper engine intakes, which housed the Saunders AN/ALQ-126 Defensive Electronic Counter Measures (DECM) system.

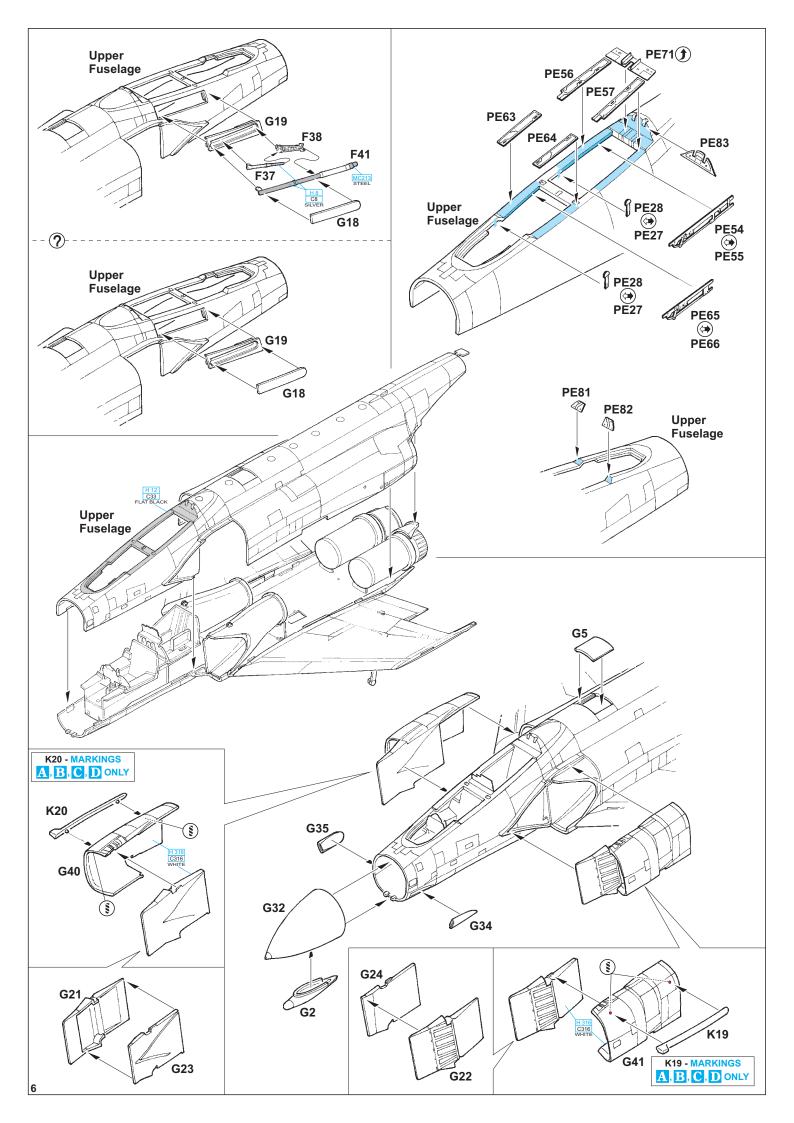


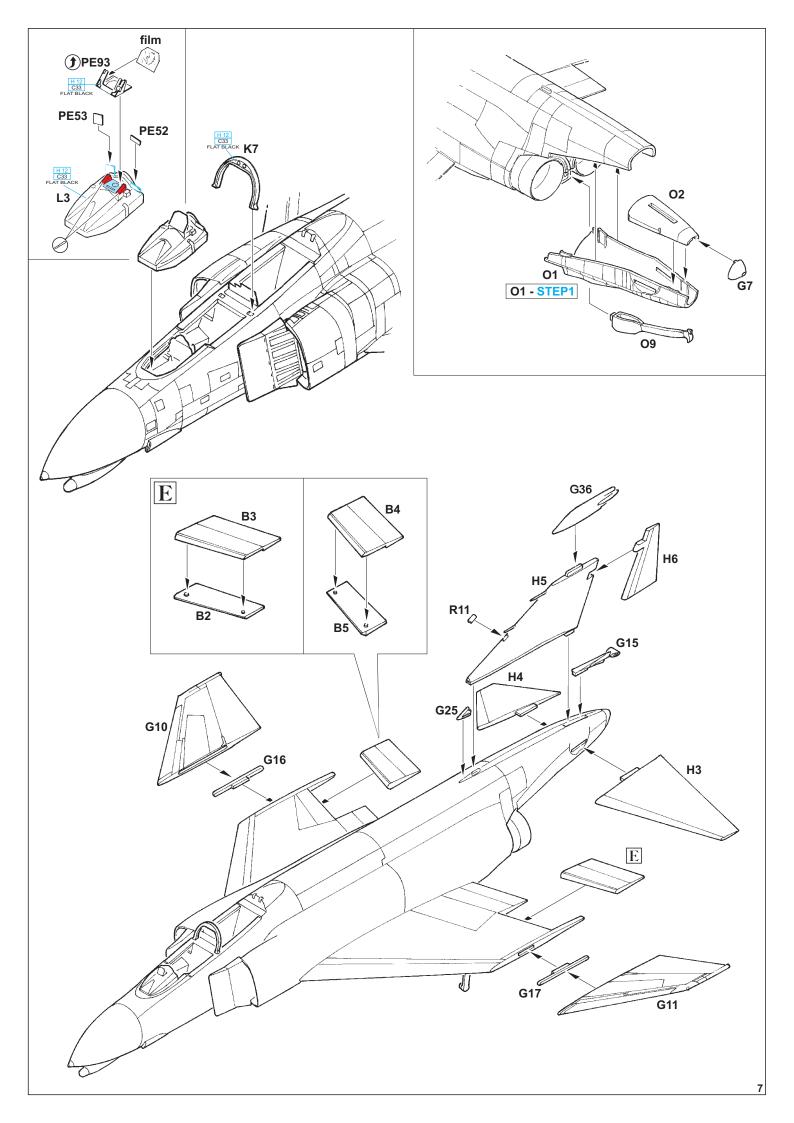


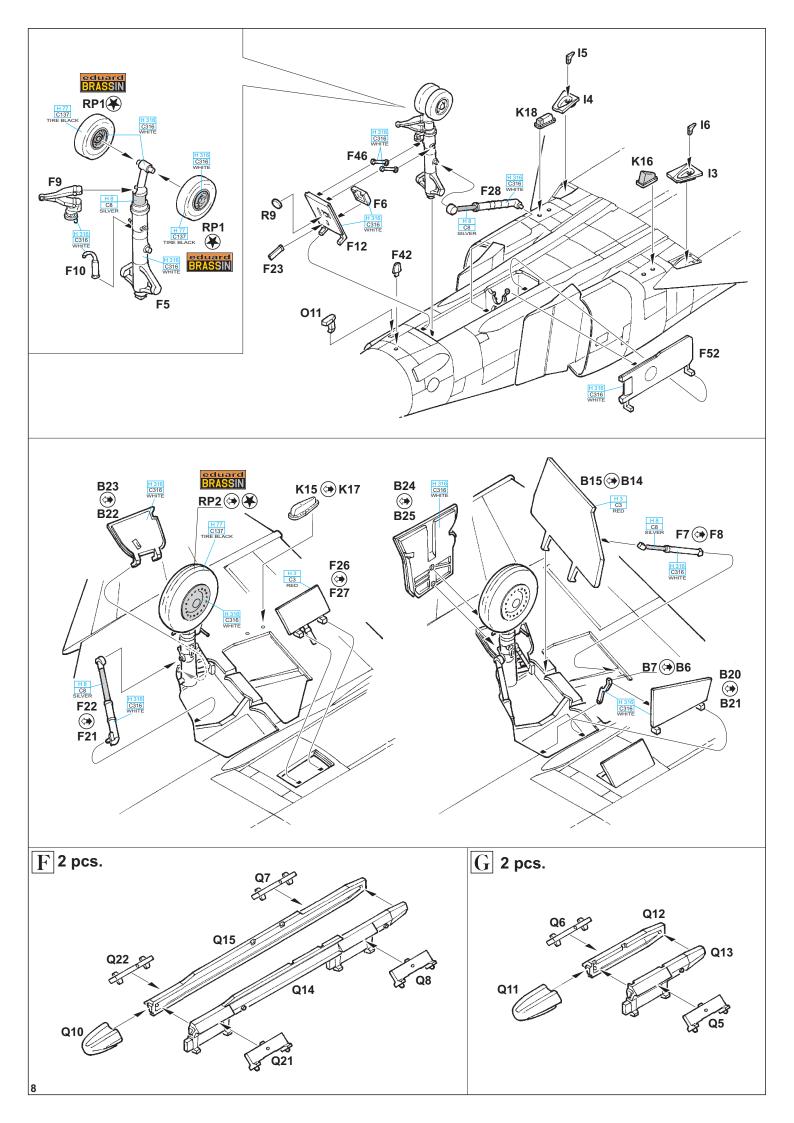


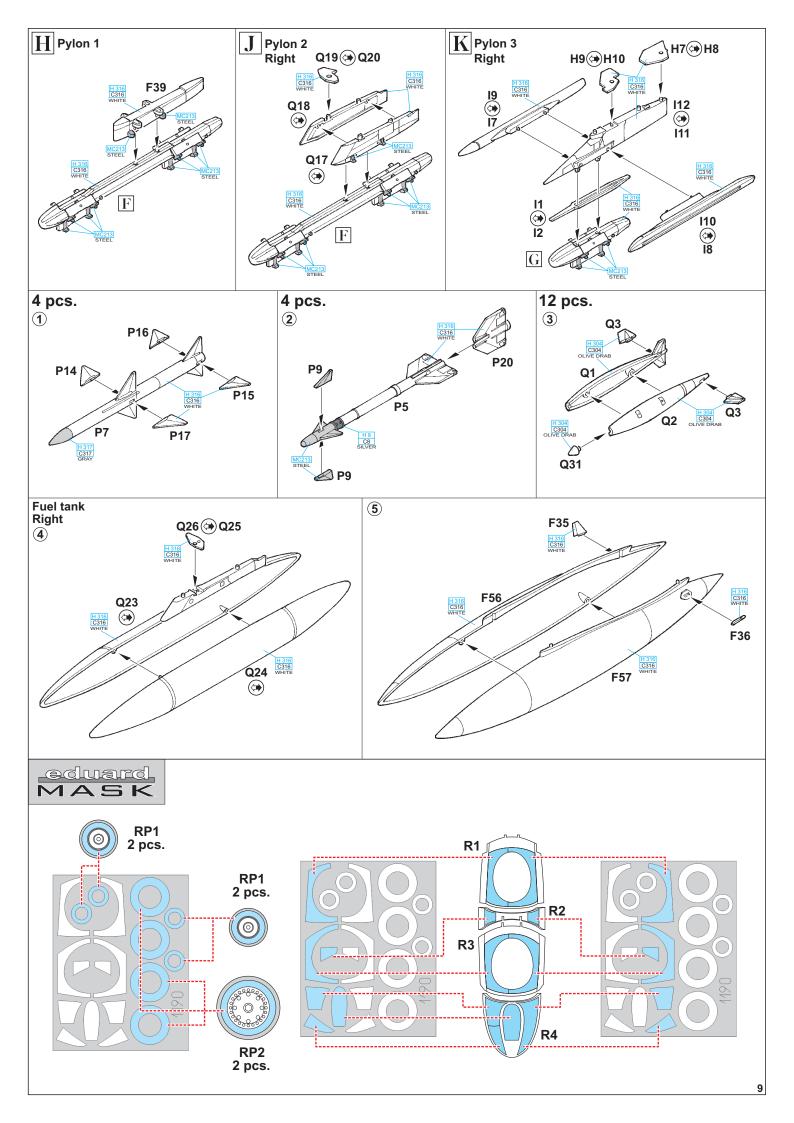


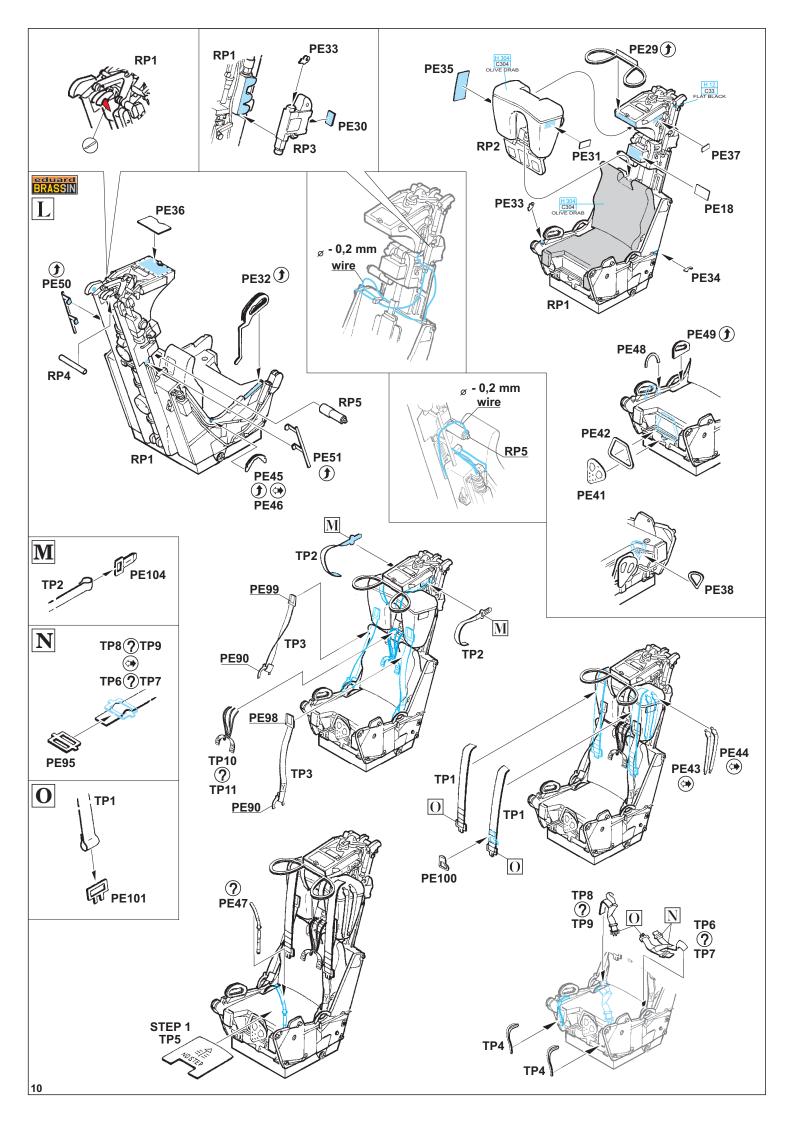


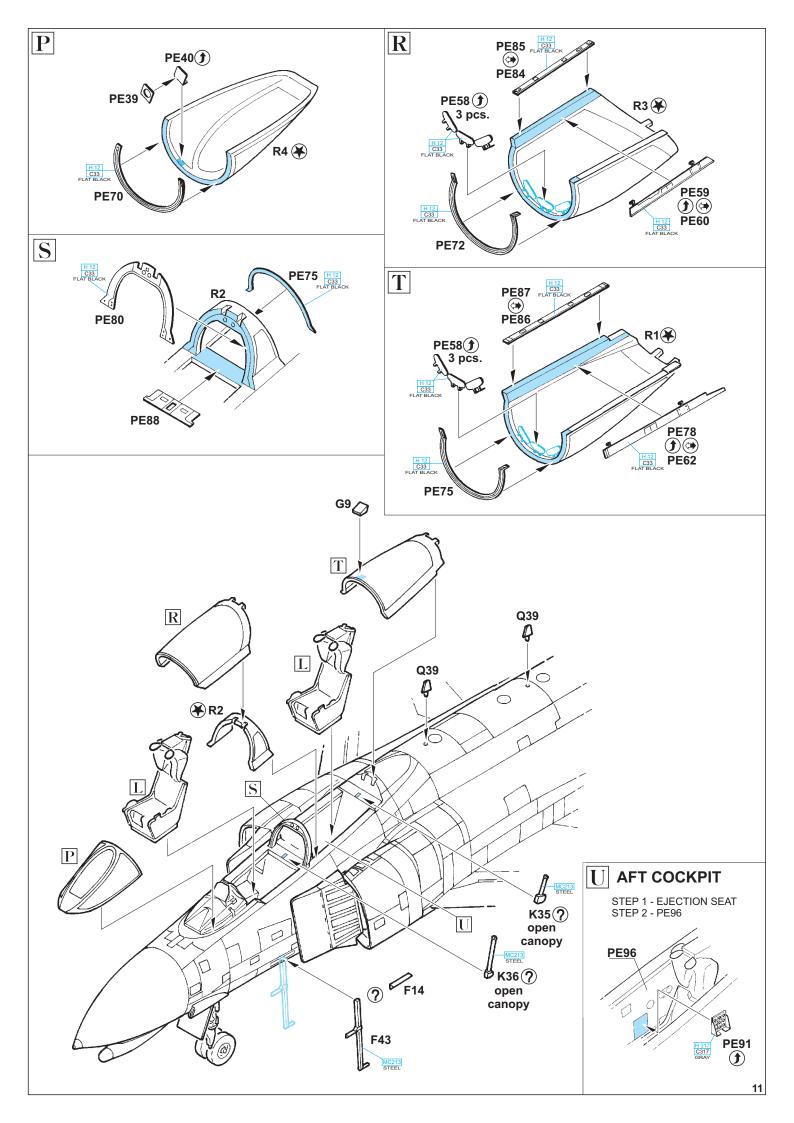


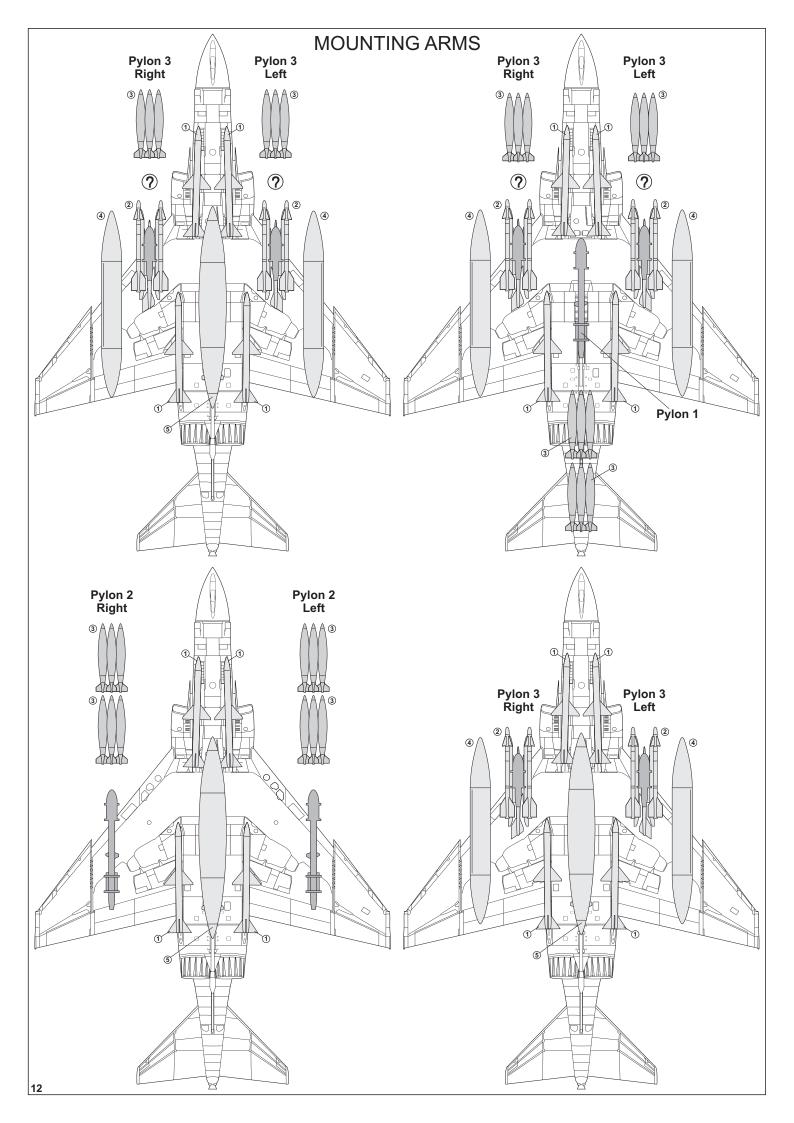






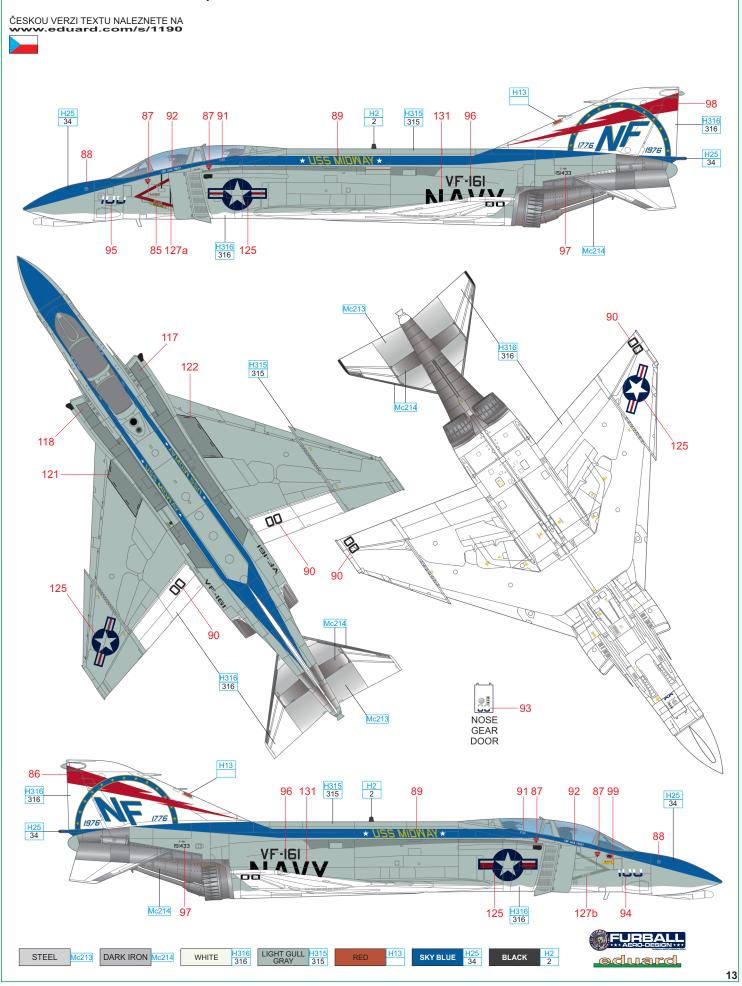






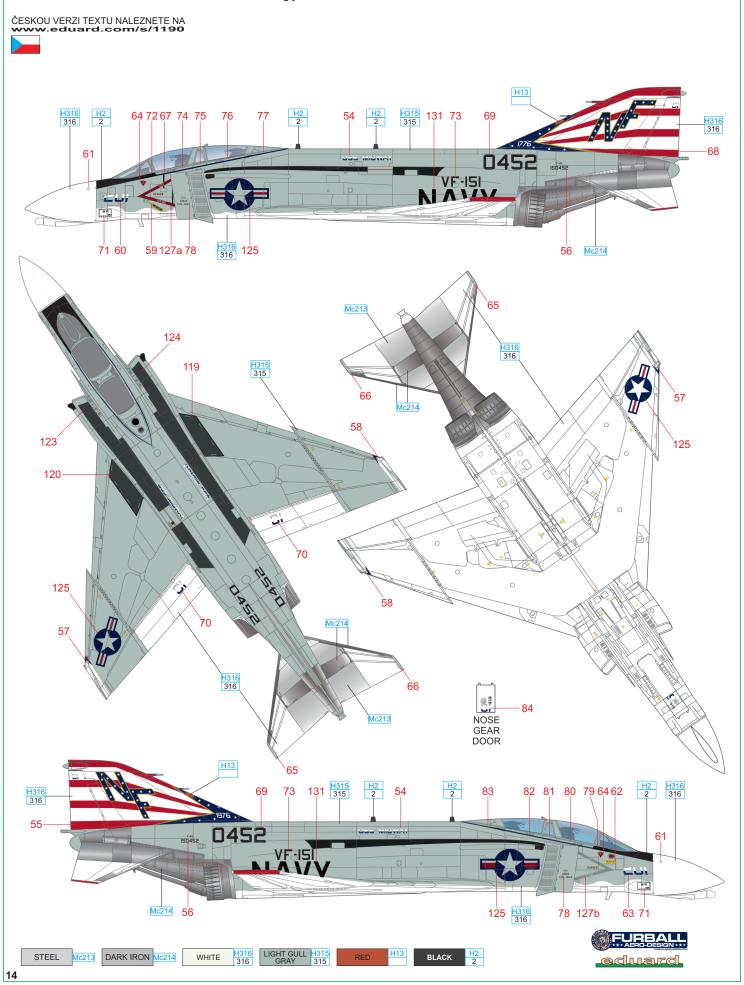
A F-4N 151433, VF-161 "Chargers", USS Midway, 1976

On of the classic Phantom schemes of all time, this aircraft was VF-161's Bicentennial showbird. The aircraft wore the "100" modex signifying it as belonging to CVW-5's CAG, Commander Jack Finley. The 13 stars on the tail design represented the original 13 US Colonies. The aircraft was retired from service a year later in October 1977.



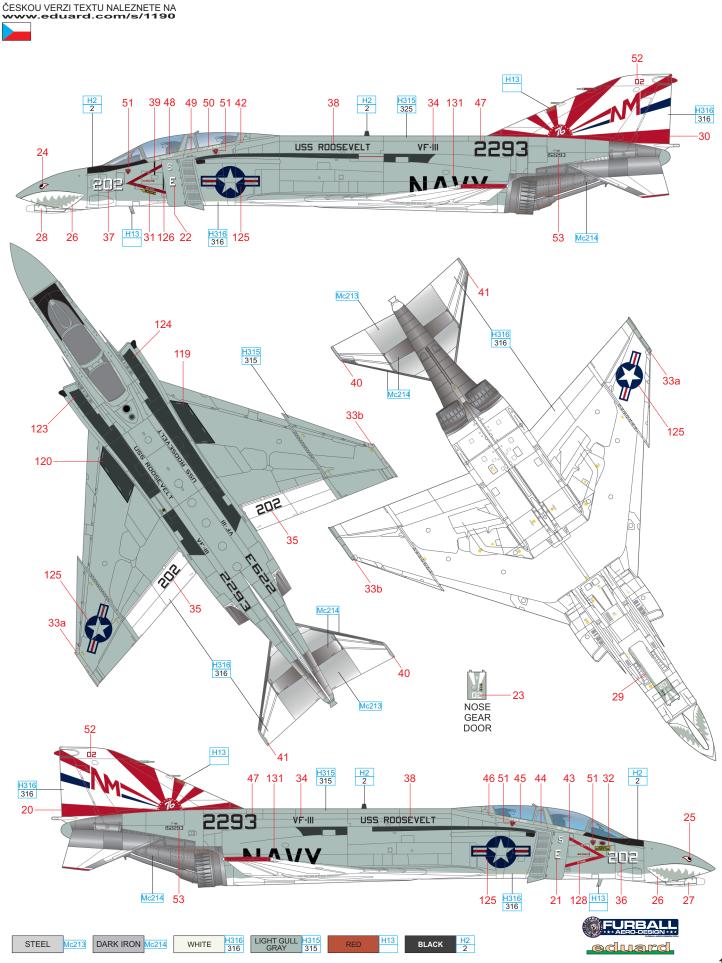
B F-4N 150452, VF-151 "Vigilantes", USS Midway, 1976

Based at NAF Atsugi Japan when not sea deployed aboard the USS Midway, CVW-5 aircraft have historically worn some of the more elaborate paint schemes of any US Navy aircraft. NF-201 was the personal aircraft of the Vigilantes' squadron CO Commander Jim Curry. This arcraft would be retired from service the following year in 1977.



C F-4N 152293, VF-111 "Sundowners", USS Franklin D. Roosevelt, 1976

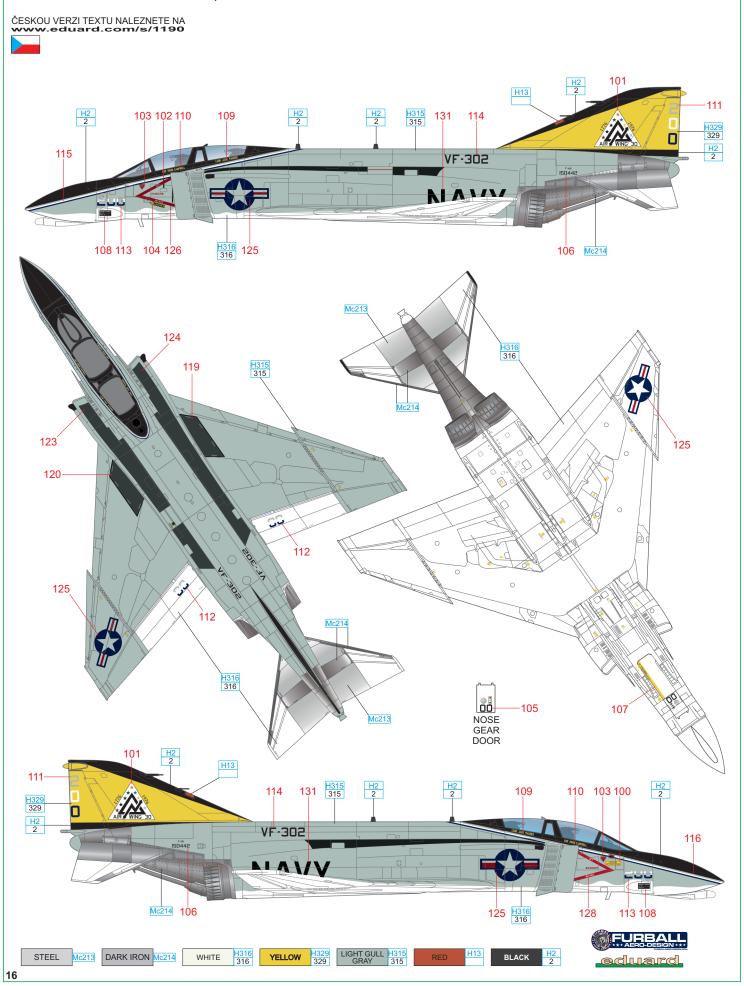
This arcraft belonged to the squadron's Executive Officer, Commander Tom Clift. CVW-19 was deployed aboard the USS Roosevelt for the carrier's final cruise during 1976-1977. The Airwing's deployment was unique in that it took the AV-8A to sea for the first time during this cruise. This aircraft was retired from service in 1983.



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D F-4N 150442, VF-302 "Stallions', NAS Miramar, 1976

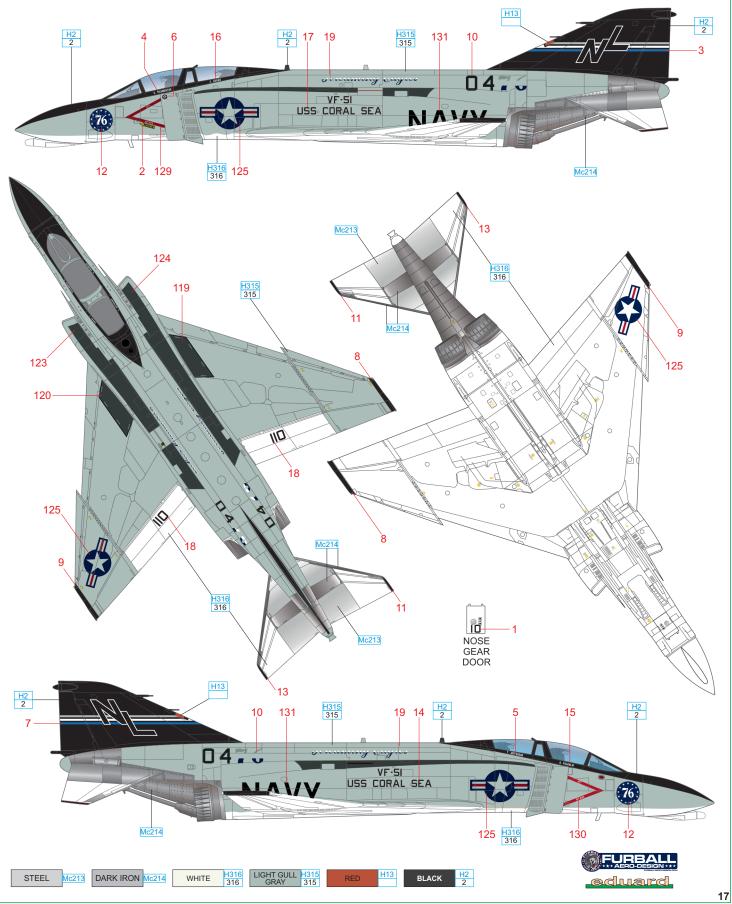
VF-302 was one of 2 fighter squadrons assigned to Reserve Carrier Air Wing 30. This aircraft was the personal mount of CVWR-30's CO, Commander Norm Campbell. The 8 stars in the CVWR-30 badge the on tail represent the 8 squadrons of the Air Wing. This aircraft was retired from service in 1981 when the squadron transitioned to the F-4S.

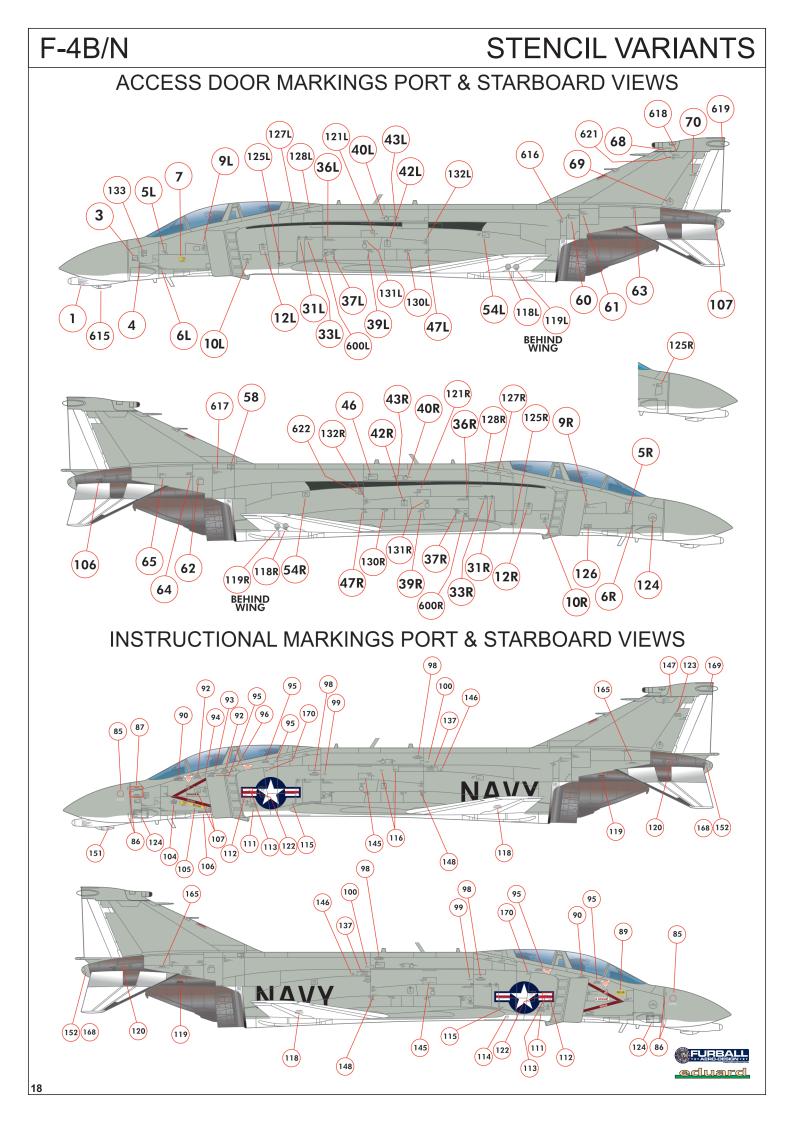


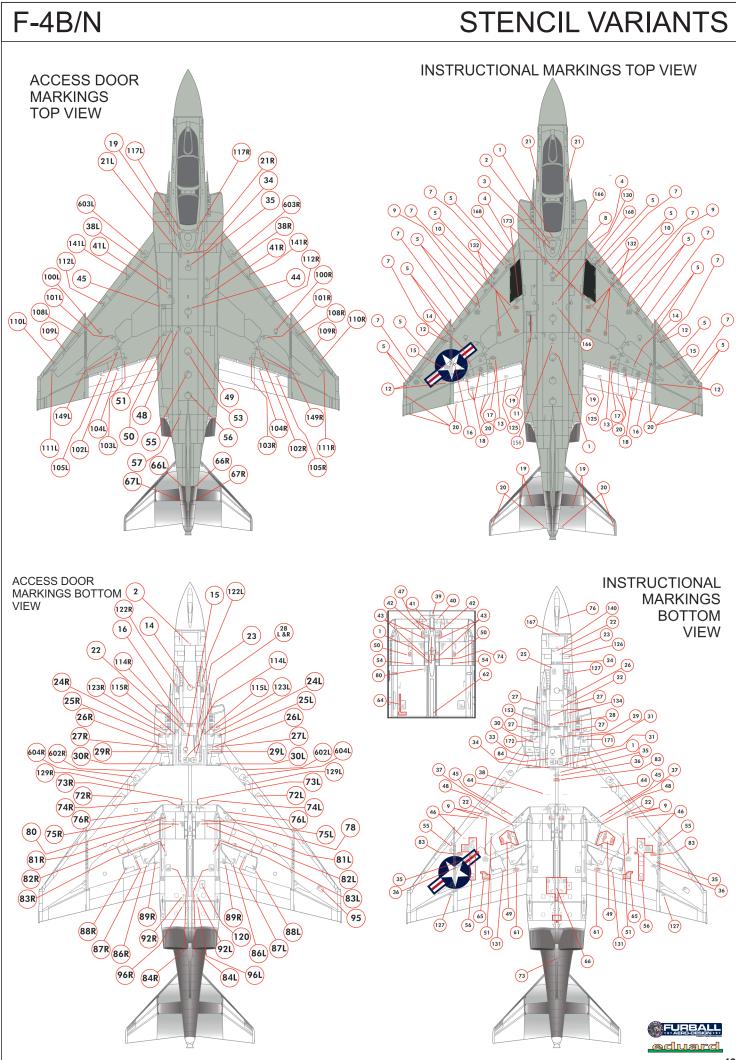
E F-4N 150476, VF-51 "Screaming Eagles", USS Coral Sea, 1976

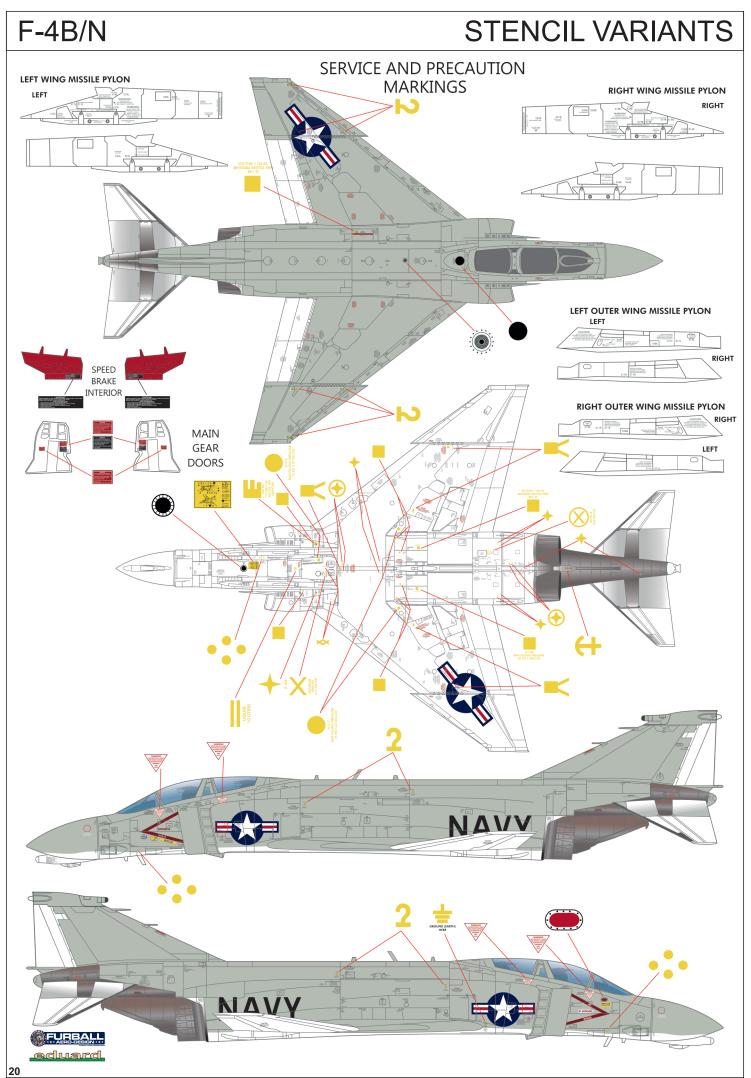
VF-51 used this aircraft as their Bicentennial showbird because of it's patriotic bureau number ending in "76". Although this aircraft wore the modex "110" on its wings, on the nose it wore the number 76 on a blue disk with 13 stars representing the original 13 colonies of the Unites States. Instead of VF-51 crew names, this aircraft bore the names of 4 US presidents. This aircraft would eventually be transferred to VF-202 and retired from service in 1983.











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