

-or-

Some Spiffy Spads

by Jim Griffiths

Back in Vol.1, No. 5, I did the lead article on one of my favorite aircraft, The TBF Avenger. This issue gives me another opportunity to do some material on another favorite: the Skyraider.

The Skyraider began life back in 1944 as a literal overnight design change of the Douglas Co.'s initial plans for the XBTD-1 when the Navy Dept. abruptly cancelled the program. Called the XBT2D-1, or the "Dauntless II", the aircraft was delivered to the Patuxent River Naval Test Center on April 7, 1945. After the plane was put through all its paces, it was considered to be the best dive bomber ever tested at PRNTC. In May, 1945 the Navy signed a letter of intent to purchase 588 aircraft; this figure was cut to 277 after VJ Day. In February, 1946, the BT2D Dauntless II was renamed the Skyraider; and in April when the Navy completely revised it's aircraft role designation system, the BT2D Skyraider became the AD Skyraider.

'Spad', 'Able Dog', 'Workhorse of the Fleet', or just plain 'Skyraider'-call it what you will, there can be little doubt that the Douglas A-1 was one of the most versatile combat aircraft ever to serve with the US Navy; and the fact that it remained in use with the Fleet until virtually the dawn of the seventies is a clear indication of just how adaptable it was. And yet, were it not for the Korean War, the story might have been very different for the Skyraider...with it possibly passing into the obscurity which has been the fate of many other fine aircraft. With just over 3,000 examples produced during 12 years the A-1 is no heavyweight when it comes to numbers built; but it more than made up for this by successfully undertaking a multitude of roles ranging from airborne early warning, electronic countermeasures, close air support, target towing, and counter insurgency. It also achieved the rare honor of being one of the few piston-engined types to down a jet-powered MiG in air combat. Now, sadly, the 'Spad' is a rare sight; but it will never be forgotten by the men who flew her, by the men whose lives were saved by her long loiter time and heavy combat punch, and by aircraft enthusiasts everywhere.

Modeling the various types of Skyraiders used to be the province of 1/72nd scale. Now, fortunately, the quarter-scale builder has a good range of kits to choose from and build. The best of the group is Monogram Model's AD-6...an excellent kit in every way. Detailing is terrific! The only changes you might want to make would be to sand off the harness and seat belt detail and add your own; and to cut the molded-on ordinance from the underwing bomb pylons to change the weapons configuration. You have the option of folding the wings on this kit, and inner & outer wingfold parts are included.

Another variant is the AD-4W by ESCI. While it is not as detailed or as fine a fit as the Monogram kit, it does offer the Early Warning variant with it's huge ventral radome, early style drop tanks round gear well bays, the distinctive fairing on the top of the fuse-

lage, and the vertical fins attached to the horizontal stabilizers. The kit contains replacement side parts to give you the fuselage doors instead of the dive breaks. These fit terribly, and you'll end up removing a lot of the surrounding area's scribing (which in itself is way too thick and prominent) and then have to replace it! Cockpit is fair; the gear has no detailing, and the decals leave a lot to be desired. You have to decide if the variant parts are worth the pain of detailing and construction.

A semi-new release is the MPC kit of the AD-5/5N. Again, some of the fit is atrocious, detailing is minimal, but you get the -5N radome, small drop tanks, the differently shaped fuselage and tail, the new canopy, the possibility to drop the flaps, and fold the wings. In one of the past UPDATE 'TailHook Topics', a small review mentions problems with the placement of the underwing bomb pylons. So, there are problems with the kit, but it could look so spiffy when done!

Using the above three kits you can also 'cross-pollinate' parts to create other variants. You can make the AD-4 by taking the Monogram kit fuselage, sand off the extra armor plating and the exhaust shroud plates, remove the underside fuselage armor plating, replace the large wing hardpoints (2) with the ones from the ESCI kit, and you're all set. Another possibility is to use the ESCI kit minus the -4W parts. Use the ESCI fuselage with the divebrakes and carefully add the Monogram wings to it. To make the AD-4N, use the ESCI fuselage with doors and the Monogram wings. An AD-4NL is just a -4N with deicer boots. Both the N and the NL versions need flash hiders on the 20mm guns. To make the late version AD-5N, use the M.P.C. kit and make a new aft canopy section. An AD-5W is possible by grafting the ESCI 'Guppy' radome to the M.P.C. kit. Oh yes, a small omission from the -4N plane...take the radome from the M.P.C. kit for the underwing. Of course, depending on the particular plane you're going to do, this description of changes is very superficial. Many of these planes had extra antennae, ECM lumps & bumps, etc. that can be found in the references available for the plane. So, depending on your derring-do, a wide variety of Spads are there to model.

The first part of this article will have some detail drawings, and profiles for the AD-5 aircraft. Next issue will see more detail drawings, and profiles of AD-4, AD-4W, and AD-6 aircraft.

The following references can help out any modeler interested in the Skyraider:

SKYRAIDER IN ACTION, by J. Sullivan, Squad/Sig. Pub. no. 60

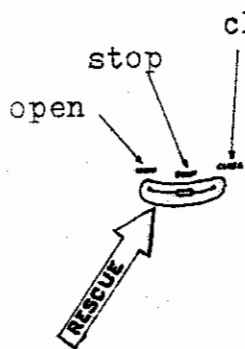
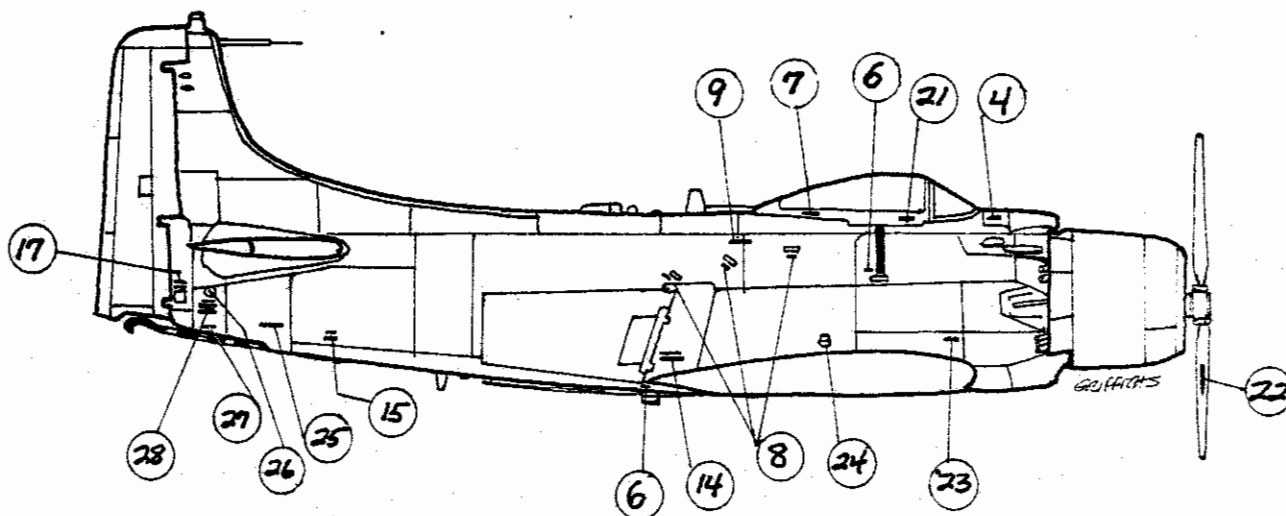
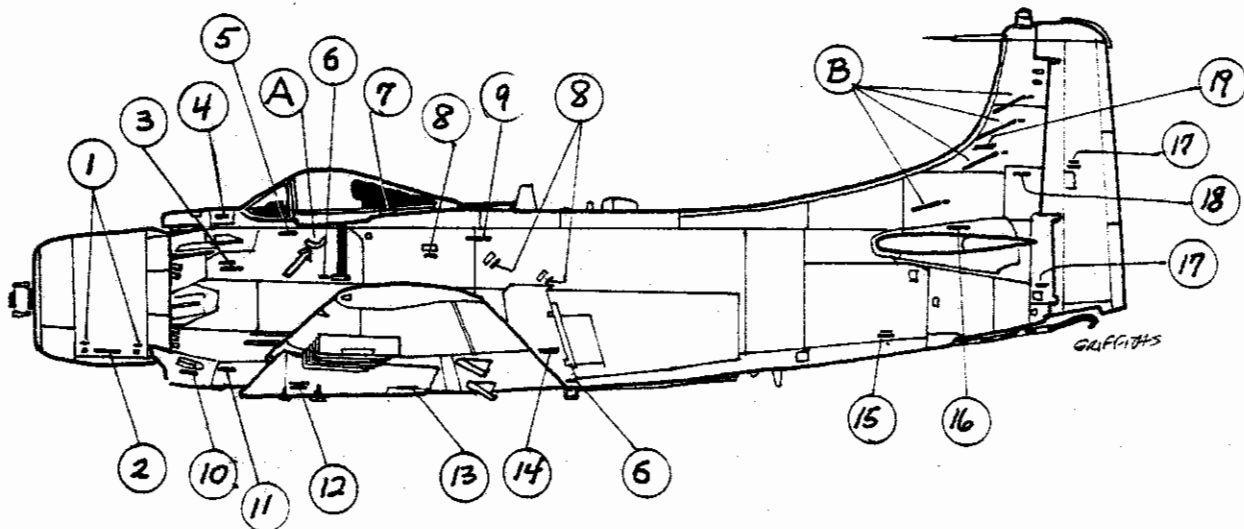
DOUGLAS SKYRAIDER, by B.R. Jackson, Aero Publishers

THE A-1 SKYRAIDER, by Steve Birdsall, Arco Pub. Co.

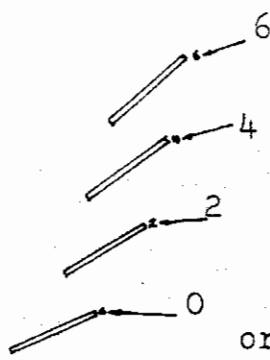
KOKU-FAN SPECIAL No. 13 (1971)

SCALE AIRCRAFT MODELING magazine, Vol. 2, No. 5 (Feb., 1980)

(continued)



close (left) Detail A  
 This is a close-up on the canopy actuator mechanism on the left side (only) of the fuselage



(left) Detail B  
 Most Skyraiders had these sight lines on the port side of the tail; they were thin lines each with a different numeral at the rear of the line. Color: white line on blue a/c; or blk. line on grey a/c

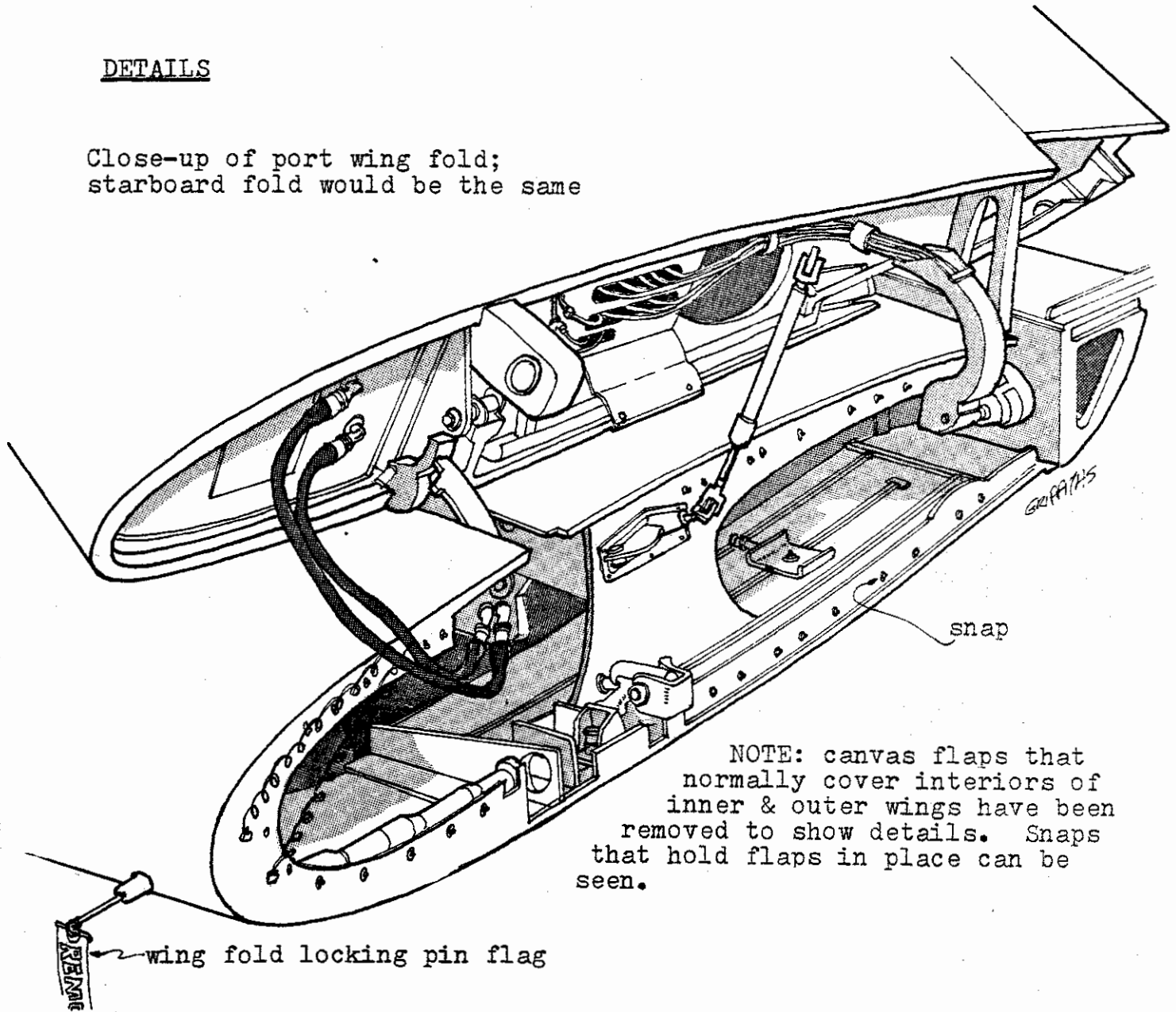
SKYRAIDER STENCILLING INFORMATION

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1. Latch  | 8. Grip   |
| 2. Max. latching torque 40 FT. LBS.             | 9. Jury strut socket  |
| 3. Hydraulic reservoir inside colw access below | 10. Oil dilution valve access   |
| 4. Instrument panel access door                 | 11. Fuel strainer   |
| 5. Enclosure release                            | 12. Bomb hoist/drop tank instructions inside                                  |
| 6. Step   | 13. Aux. equip. recept.   |
| 7. Danger explosive canopy                      | 14. Notice: flaps are rigged to fair with wing. Disregard fuse. lower surface |

- 15. Unlock tailwheel before towing
- 16. Lub. fitting inside
- 17. Spring tab mechanism
- 18. Stab. actuator
- 19. Approach light sighting marks
- 20. (there is no 20; I blew the numbering sequence on the drawings)
- 21. (to go on both sides of canopy) Pull to open
- 22. Blade Ser. No. 000000  
Blade Assem. N20A-160-0 Angle  
Lo. 28 at 42 in. sta  
Angle hi. 68 at 42 in. sta
- 23. Platform
- 24. Fuel filler
- 25. Control access
- 26. AMD NAS \_\_\_\_\_
- 27. Jack here
- 28. Overpainted epoxy primer MIL-P-23377A  
Epoxy white & lt. grey MIL-C-22750A  
Laqueur blue, red & yellow MIL-L-7178  
Laqueur camouflage black MIL-L-19538  
AMD NAS \_\_\_\_\_ 00/00/00

DETAILS

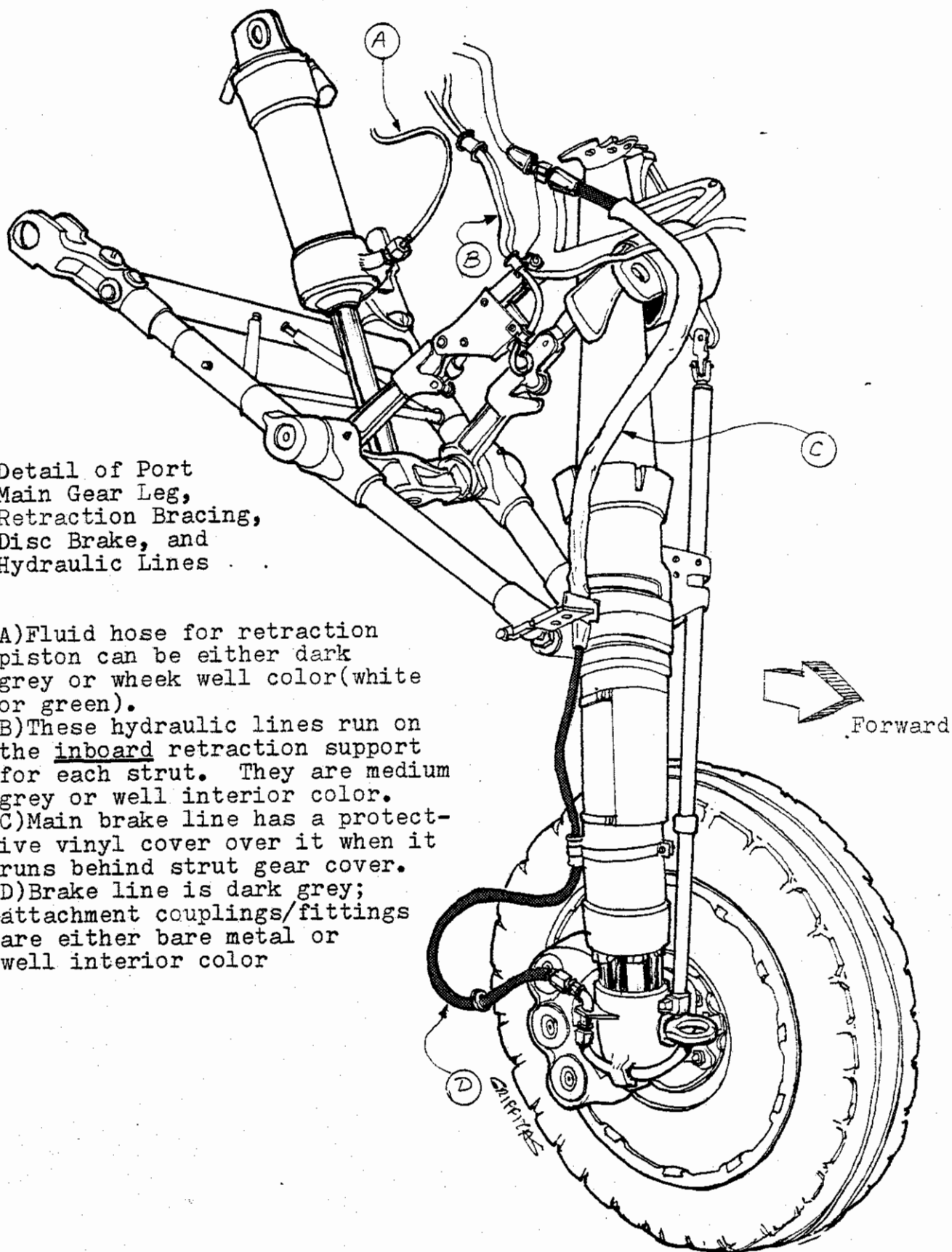
Close-up of port wing fold;  
starboard fold would be the same



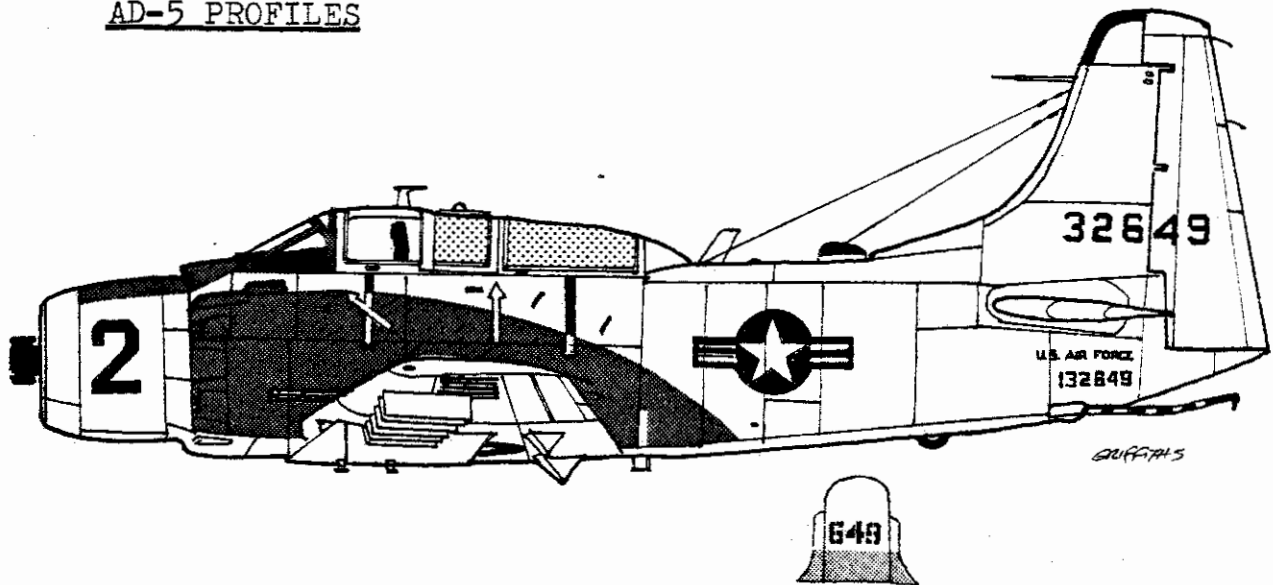
NOTE: canvas flaps that normally cover interiors of inner & outer wings have been removed to show details. Snaps that hold flaps in place can be seen.

Detail of Port  
Main Gear Leg,  
Retraction Bracing,  
Disc Brake, and  
Hydraulic Lines

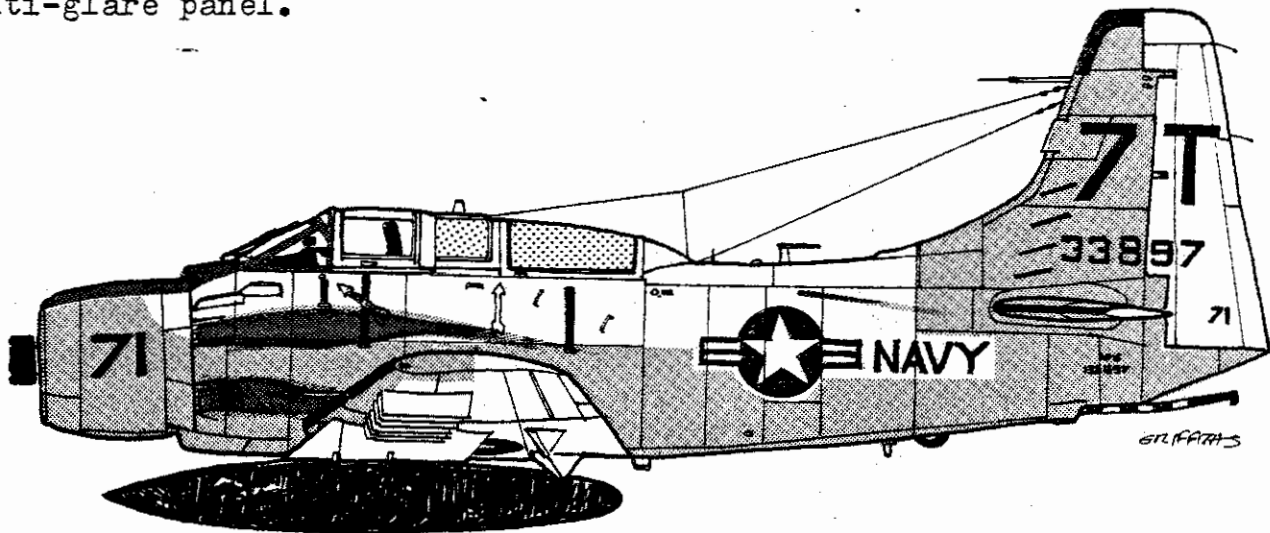
- A) Fluid hose for retraction piston can be either dark grey or wheel well color (white or green).
- B) These hydraulic lines run on the inboard retraction support for each strut. They are medium grey or well interior color.
- C) Main brake line has a protective vinyl cover over it when it runs behind strut gear cover.
- D) Brake line is dark grey; attachment couplings/fittings are either bare metal or well interior color



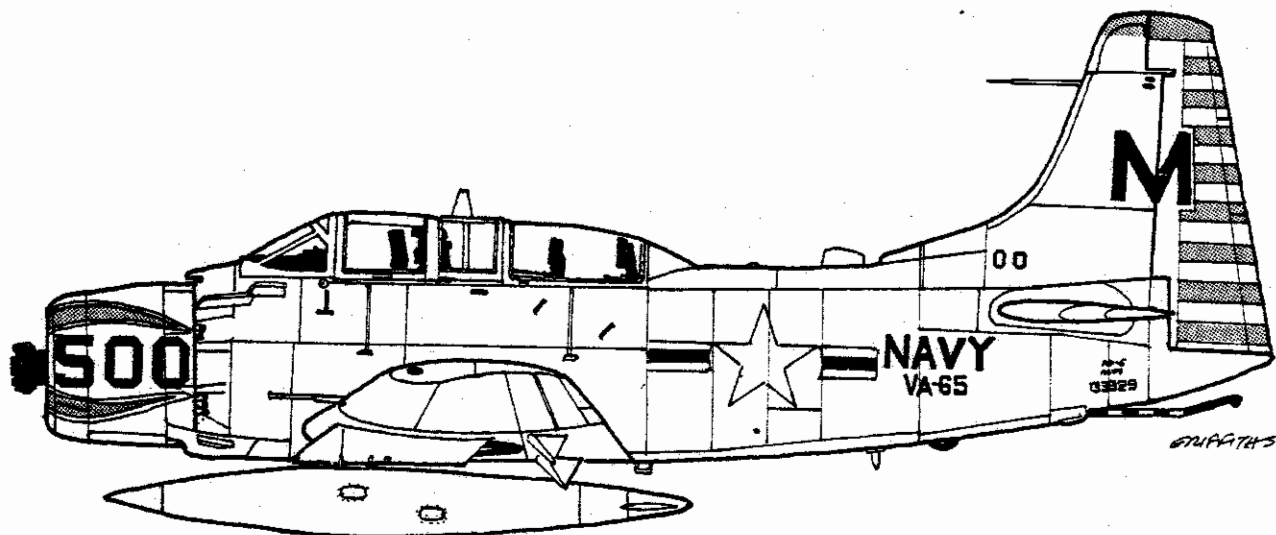
AD-5 PROFILES



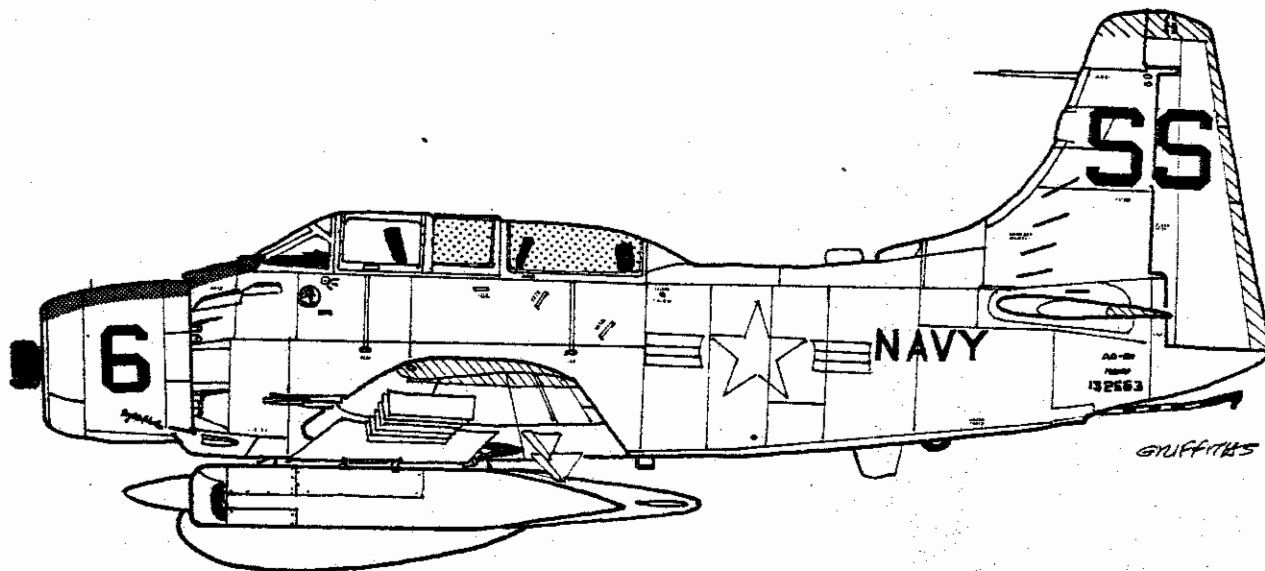
AD-5(A-1E), ser. no. 132649, of 1st Special Forces, Pleiku, South VietNam. This a/c was flown by Major Bernie Fisher during his rescue of a downed friend at the A Shau Valley, March 10, 1965. The a/c is completely restored and on display at the Wright-Patterson Air Force Museum; it is the only surviving "Medal of Honor" aircraft. The plane is overall COIN grey with flt. blk. exhaust panel. Numerals & lettering in blk. Star & bar in 4 locations; USAF on upper rt. and lower left wings in blk. stencil. Aft canopies have bright blue tinted glass. Bottom 1/3rd of gear strut cover in red(maybe); '649 in blk. stencil. Main wing leading edges in flt. aluminium. Flt. blk. anti-glare panel.



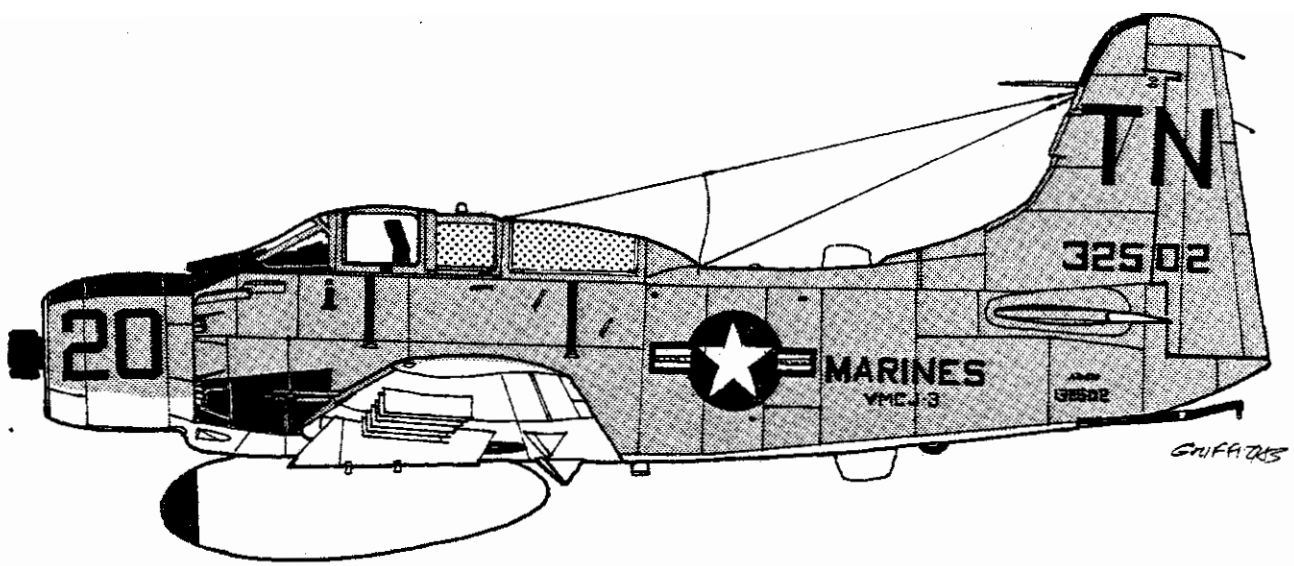
AD-5(A-1E), ser. no. 133897, of Seattle Naval Reserve(not date). A/c is in high visibility scheme of glossy white & international orange. All numerals & lettering in blk. Flt. blk. anti-glare panel and windscreen framing; note windshield wiper. Centerline drop tank is flt. blk. w/ a lot of chipping & weathering. Tailhook is blk. & wte. striped. Bright blue tinted aft canopies. Note APU exhaust stain above fuselage star. Very heavy, sooty exhaust stains on forward fuselage.



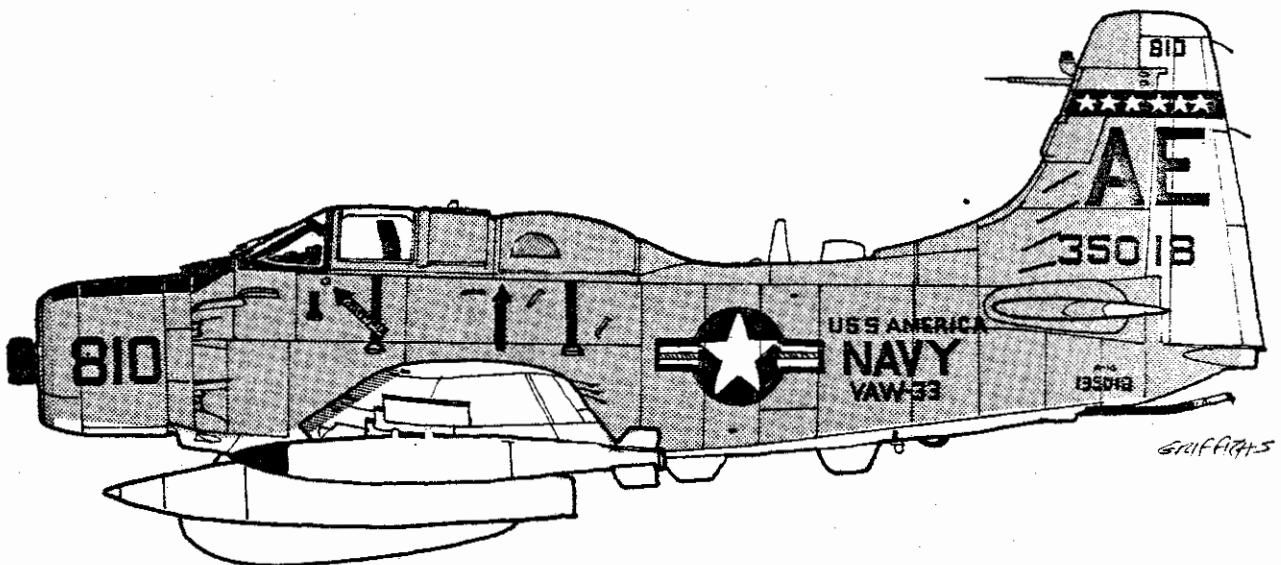
AD-5(A-1E), ser. no. 133929, of VA-65(from NAS Alameda, Ca.) as seen at NRAB Minneapolis, Minn., 1956. Aircraft is in overall glossy sea blue with white lettering & numerals. Striping on the tail is alternating bands of medium green and white. Cowl decoration is also medium green with white outline. Aft canopies are clear glass(no tinting). A/c carries the large wing drop tanks.



AD-5N(A-1G), ser. no. 132553, of VC-33 "Nighthawks", 1952. Aircraft is overall glossy sea blue with all lettering and numerals in white; a/c is heavily stencilled. "Nighthawks" is in white script lettering on both sides of the cowl below the '6'. Plane carries a glossy sea blue centerline drop tank, glossy s.b. searchlight under left wing, and glossy s.b. ECM pod under right wing. White trim to rudder top, rudder trim tabs(trailing edge of rudder), upper & lower elevator surfaces, and upper & lower main wing tips. Bright blue tinted aft canopies. Unit insignia on both sides of fuselage just below wind-screen. Anti-glare panel is either flt. blk. or flt. sea blue.



AD-5N(A-1G), ser. no. 132502, of VMCJ-3, MCAS El Toro, Ca., 1958. A/c is in gull grey upper surfaces and white lower & control surfaces. Black lettering and numerals. Black anti-glare panel and small exhaust panel between lower cowl and mainwing. Plane carries ECM pod only, located under rt. wing. Pod is white w/ flt. blk. nose. Blue tinted aft canopies .



AD-5N(A-1G), ser. no. 135018, of VAW-33 from carrier U.S.S. America as seen at RAF Luga, Malta, in March, 1967. A/c is in gull grey/white camouflage scheme. All lettering & numerals in blk. Anti-glare panel and windscreen framing in flt. blk. Note windshield wiper. Notice that the aft canopy has a new shape and is now an enclosed structure w/ blue-tinted windows. Band on tail is dark blue with white stars. Plane carries the ECM pod(solid white) on the underside of the rt. wing, a cut down version of the large centerline tank(in white), and a smaller drop tank(white w/ drk. blue tip) on the underside of the left wing. Note that there are only 3 wing bomb pylons per wing instead of the normal 6. The small drop tank is attached to the middle pylon. Note all the additional electronic lumps, bumps, and antennae on this variant. Leading edges of main wings are flat aluminium. Tailhook appears to have black shaft with steel hook.