

Building the Academy Minicraft B-52H

By Dick Smith



The "H" model was the last of the Boeing Company's 744 total production of B-52 Stratofortresses. The "H's" appeared much like the earlier "G's" but were easily recognizable by their eight larger Pratt and Whitney TF-33 turbofan engines.

B-52 kits have been produced in various sizes from the very tiny 1/350th scale to the giant Monogram 1/72nd scale "D" version with a wingspan of almost 36 inches. I used the more manageable 1/144th scale kit from Academy Minicraft for a recent magazine assignment.

Construction begins with the painting of the cockpit and an interior base for the landing gear. These are sprayed interior green, FS-34151. Don't spend too much time on these parts as they are hidden when the fuselage pieces are glued together. The wings and the elevators are assembled and then cemented to the fuselage. The fit is good but take time to make sure these surfaces are "square" to the fuselage. Next glue the four engine struts to the cutouts in the wings.

Skip over the next step calling for the placement of the flaps. They are quite fragile and can be attached after painting. Assemble the four P&W TF-33 engine pods and the outboard drop tanks but do not attach them to the wings. These parts are also glued in place after painting.

With the basic aircraft assembled, prime the model with light grey or white to highlight any areas that need sanding and filling. Priming the dark green plastic with a light color will provide a base coat for the camouflage colors.

This kit is a version of an early B-52H that did not have the electro-optical nose pods that are common on later models. One of the benefits of writing a page for a national magazine is that often I am able to meet a person that actually flew an aircraft like the one I am modeling. In this case, the owner of the shop where I purchased the model, Don Phillips, was a co-pilot on a B-52H assigned to the 524th Bomb Squadron, 379th Bomb Wing at Wurtsmith Air Force Base, Michigan in 1972.



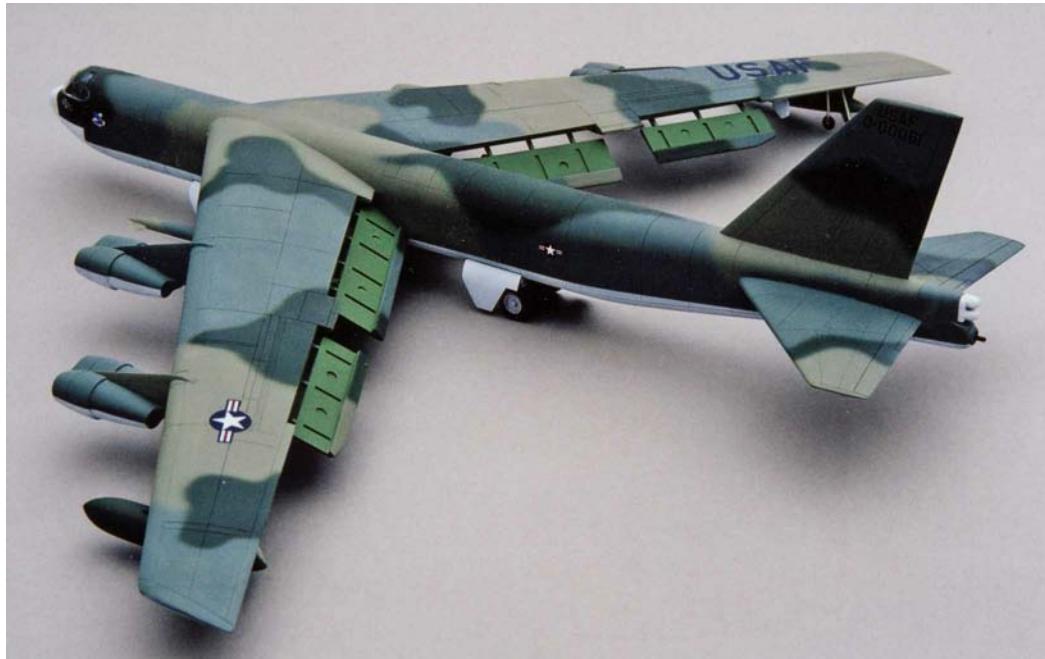
Captain Phillips recalled that the underside of all the aircraft in his squadron were painted in "anti-flash" white, FS-17875, as were the radomes on the nose and tail. (The white was to reflect the flash and heat from a nuclear blast directed toward the bombers.) The rest of the aircraft was painted in the standard Strategic Air Command's three-tone camouflage with a "hard" demarcation line separating the underside color from those on the topside.

To duplicate the camouflage, refer to the kit instruction sheet or to the painting on the back cover of Squadron/Signal Publication No.130, "*B-52 Stratofortress in Action*." A photo of one of the Wurtsmith aircraft appears on page 35 of the Detail and Scale publication "*B-52 Stratofortress*" by Alwyn T. Lloyd.

The camouflage scheme is an irregular pattern of "SAC Bomber Green", FS-34159, "SAC Bomber Tan", FS-34201 and dark green, FS-34079. These colors are best applied with an airbrush to achieve the "soft edge" pattern. With the

wings painted, match up the camouflage color to the engine pods and drop tanks that are located just below the corresponding portion of the wing surface.

With the painting complete, spray the landing gear legs with “aluminum” and the tires very dark gray and then attach the completed assembly to the fuselage. The engine pods and drop tanks can now be glued in place. Be sure the engine pods are perpendicular to the ground.



Early versions of the B-52H were capable of carrying cruise missiles and various other “standoff bombs.” The kit includes two GAM-77 Hound Dog missiles which can be painted in the same camouflage scheme as the B-52 carrier. A photo of a camouflaged Hound Dog appears on page 106 of Volume 9, of *“International Air Power Review.”*

Spray a coat of Johnson’s “Future” acrylic floor polish or Testor’s “Glosscoat” over the entire model to provide a smooth surface for the decals. The kit decals are quite thick and need a long soaking in water to get them to release from their backing. You’ll also need a decal setting solution to get them to conform to panel lines on the aircraft.

To finish your model, spray a coat of dulling spray over the model to seal the decals. Paint and then attach the cockpit windscreens with white glue and your model of a B-52H is complete.