FUJIMI'S A-4C SKYHAWK
BY PAUL HACKMANN

Background

On May 1, 1967 CVW-21 deployed on the USS Bon Homme Richard (CVA-31), was tasked with launching a strike against the airfield of Kep located in North Vietnam. That morning Lcdr. Ted Swartz manned NP 685, an A-4C with BUNO 148609. His mission was to suppress ground fire for the rest strike force and destroy any soft targets on the airfield. To support this, his Skyhawk was loaded out with a centerline drop tank and Zuni rocket pods on the two wing stations.

While attacking two MiGs on the runway, Lcdr. Swartz was warned by his wingman that two other MiGs were about to get deep into his knickers. He broke into the two MiGs using a high-G barrel roll, which quickly converted his defensive position to an offensive one. From a position behind and slightly above both MiGs, he applied the fighter pilot's first rule of gunnery (fill the windscreen and pull the trigger) and fired the rest of his Zunis at the two MiGs. Upon receiving another break call, he again reefed his A-4 into a hard turn to counter this new threat. In doing so, lost sight of the bogeys he was shooting at. Lcdr. Swartz's wingman observed one of the Zuni rockets strike one of MiGs and that MiG impact the ground. Thus confirming the only A-4 MiG kill of the war.

I had a hard time locating the markings for this particular A-4. I have found photos of an A-4 with a MiG kill marking, but it didn't have the same BUNO. This A-4 did have Swartz's name on the cockpit. All I can figure is that this airplane was his and had his MiG kill painted on it, but not the airplane he did it in. I did locate a photo of a VA-76 A-4C from the same cruise and made the assumption that NP 685 would be painted similarly.

References

A-4 SKYHAWK IN ACTION; 1973; Squadron/Signal Publications Inc.; Lou Drendel

A-4 SKYHAWK; 1989; TAB BOOKS Inc.; Bert Kinzey

DOUGLAS A-4 SKYHAWK; 1983; Osprey Air Combat; Peter Kilduff

TONKIN GULF YACHT CLUB; 1988; Naval Institute Press; Rene Francillon

Building The Kit

The kit is broken down so as to get the maximum number of A-4 versions with the maximum number of reused trees. So only the tree containing the forward fuselage is different from kit to kit. This kit does reflect the slightly extended nose of the C.

Since the fuselage is supplied as 4 parts, I began construction by assembling fuselage parts 1 (Left Cockpit) and 34 (Left Engine Bay) on a flat surface. This ensures that there is no step between the forward and aft parts. I did the same with the right side. This goes against the instructions which have you assembling the cockpit, then attaching it to the already assembled aft fuselage. I test fit the parts this way and got a better fit my way. (**HINT**: Remove the tailhook and paint and attach later.)

A heads up on the wing construction, I drilled out the holes for part 89 (Radar Altimeter Antenna) only to find that the part is not supplied. RATF###S!!! Nothing like making work for yourself. (**HINT**: Check the instructions against the parts supplied)
You're going to break off one of the slat supports accidentally, so save yourself some anxiety and frustration by breaking one off right at the start. You have the option to open the flaps, but I didn't try on this kit.

Once I was satisfied with the seams, the A-4 was painted in standard Gull Gray and White. The green rudder was done with Testor's Beret Green (closest I could find to the green used by attack squadrons). The inside of the slats and speedbrakes were painted flat red. A gloss coat of Floquil Gloss Coat was applied. The markings are a combination

Superscale and home-made (BUNO, side number, etc.). A flat coat of Floquil Flat blended the decals in. I'm toying with using a fine pencil to highlight the panel lines, we'll see.

NOTE: The leading edge slats hang too far down when compared to a real A-4. When looking down from the top of the wing through the slat, you should not see the ground. All you should see is the red portion of the slay bay. Shorten the slat supports about 1/8 - 1/16 of an inch. This will be more realistic and will hide the