

P2V NEPTUNE FIRE BOMBER



By Paul Gasiorowski

This project was picked after seeing some pictures of a modified Neptune as a fire bomber, What attracted me to it was the color scheme of the plane , the bright gloss colors of Red, Gray and Black. I will be using a 1/72 kit from Revell for this model.

Majority of Neptune disposals have been to air-tanker operations, with most going to two major users. This model SP-2H BU# 1479621 last few with code LZ-9 with US navy Patrol Squadron VP-94. It was sold at auction in April 1990 and towed to Minden's storage yard a short distance away. The US Forestry Service assigned this aircraft as Tanker #99 and went to its first fire season in the spring of 1999. Then on October 3, 2003 this aircraft was lost while flying near East Highlands, California. It was on a repositioning flight from Prescott, Ariz. to San Bernardino, Ca. when it flew into a canyon at about 5k feet elevation as observed by a forest lookout tower.

After doing some basic research, it will be required to do some major surgery on the fuselage. The big radome will have to be removed along with several bulges in the rear. Also there are several bulges on the sides which were probably some type of antenna's that will also have to go.

I will start work on the fuselage of removing the extraneous antennas and other such protuberances. The radome was removed using a saw blade and being careful not to mess anything else up. The bulges were filed away and then smoothed out using different grade of files and then using a plastic polish to finish up the sanding.

Proceeding to the cockpit area, I painted it with basic colors of gray for the seat frames, tan for the cushions, red for the headrest. Most of the front instrument panel will be hidden once the canopy glass is in place. The console between the seats was sanded smooth, so the supplied decal could be used.

I pinned the rudder so it could move freely, along with the elevators on the wings.

While I was doing some other work I built up the area where the massive radome was removed, using thin strip of styrene, putty and extra thick super glue. This took a couple of days working on it on and off. I got the results that I wanted for the most part, but found it to be tedious work to get everything smoother out correctly.



I treated the wings and engines as separate assemblies, so as to insure careful handling of these items. The instruction indicated all the wing work should be done after the wings are glued to the fuselage. Taking a hint from Steve h. for big models the wings will no be attached permanently, since the fit is very good, with hardly any gaps. It was easier to do the engines as separate assemblies also because of the small part and the delicate landing gear which fits into the bottom of the engine nacelles.

After completing all the assemblies I Then started the painting portion of the model. I used, the following colors, I first painted the entire model with FS gray, followed with a coat of Future and let it dry for 24 hours. I then masked of the areas to be painted RED, using Tamiya masking tape. I found that it did not pick up any paint after I removed the masks. The last thing to be painted was the engine nacelles BLACK. The propeller assemblies consisted of the spinner (Buff able Aluminum) and four blades (BLACK), VERY DELICATE, as one broke off after painting everything. The jet engine pods were painted in the same manner and will be attached to the model after final decaling takes place.



The cockpit canopy came in 2 pieces, (UGH). Trying to get them glued together was difficult. I used a then strip of styrene to hold the 2 pieces together. I masked off the frames and painted them zinc chromate, and after a couple of coats I then painted the frames RED, so if you looked through the canopy you would see the zinc chromate and not RED. The glass nose piece was done in the same manner, but it looks like the fit is not particularly good. If you line up the top the bottom has a little step to it and the n vice versa. So the nose piece will be lined up to the upper edge.

Some additional antennas will be added to the top of the fuselage as depicted in the pictures I have. These antennas will be made from the brass stock or whatever I can find in the spares box. The real trick will come in trying to get the LARGE 99's painted on the tail. This will take some brainstorming to come up with a plan to get this resolved...I couldn't find any decals large enough with the shadow, so I settled for some 1/48 scale 9's and let it go at that. I did enjoy putting it together and it is an unusual model to add to my collection. At least it's a conversation starter.