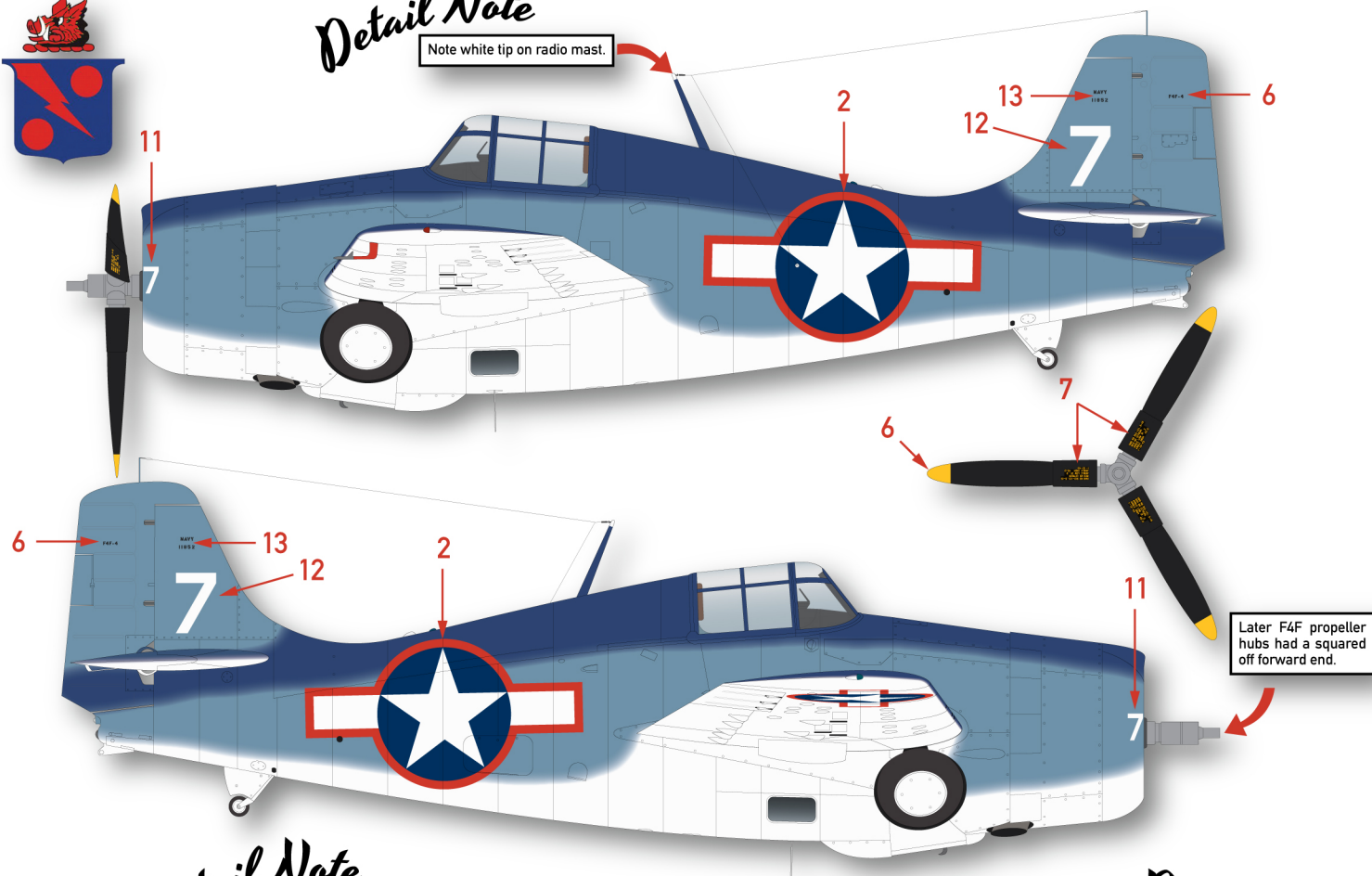




Detail Note

Note white tip on radio mast.

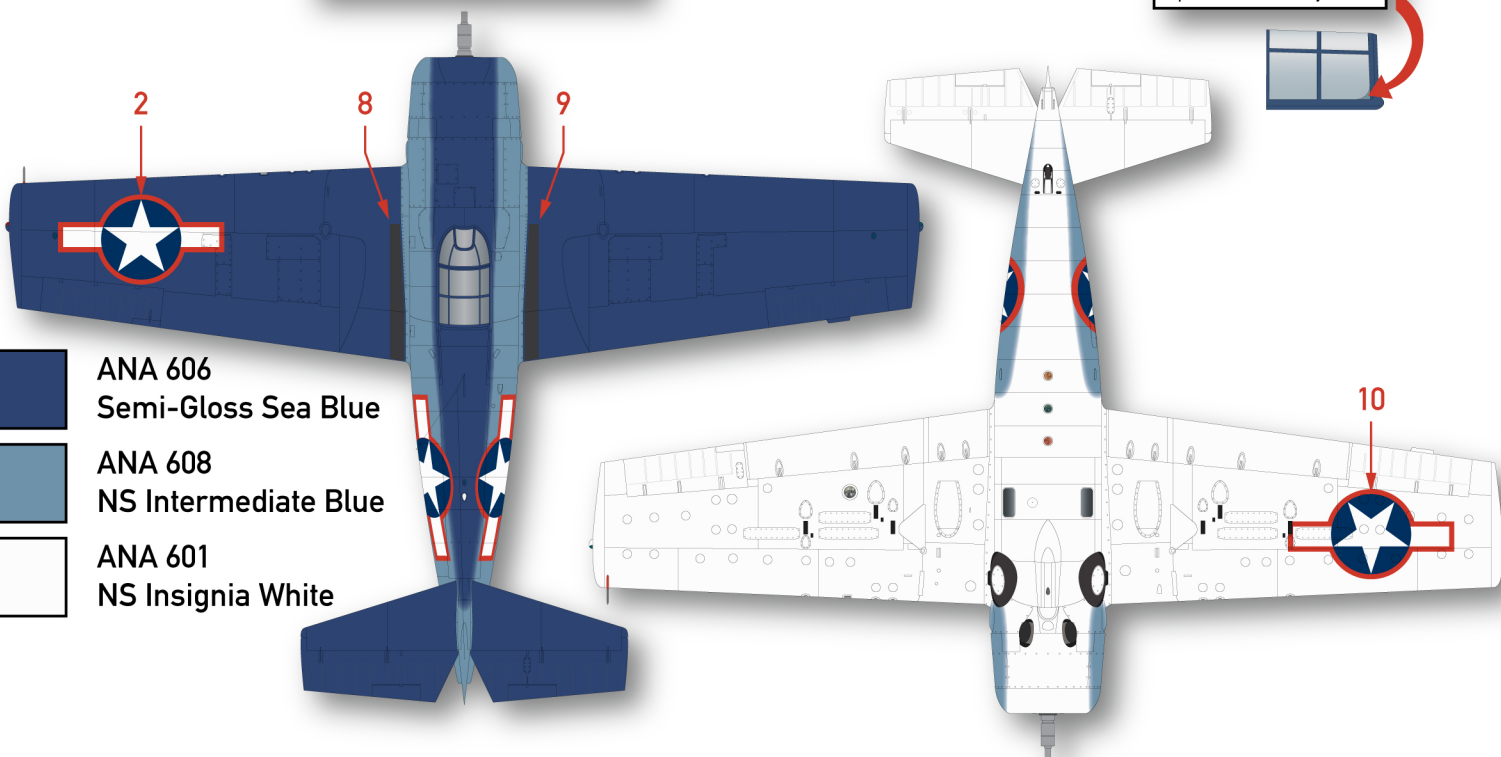


Detail Note

This aircraft was factory-finished in NS Blue-Gray over NS Light Gray. The new tri-color scheme was applied by the Navy, possibly at the NAS Norfolk or NAS Jacksonville depot.

Detail Note

Note the crescent of sheet metal inside aft-most canopy section is painted NS Blue-Gray.

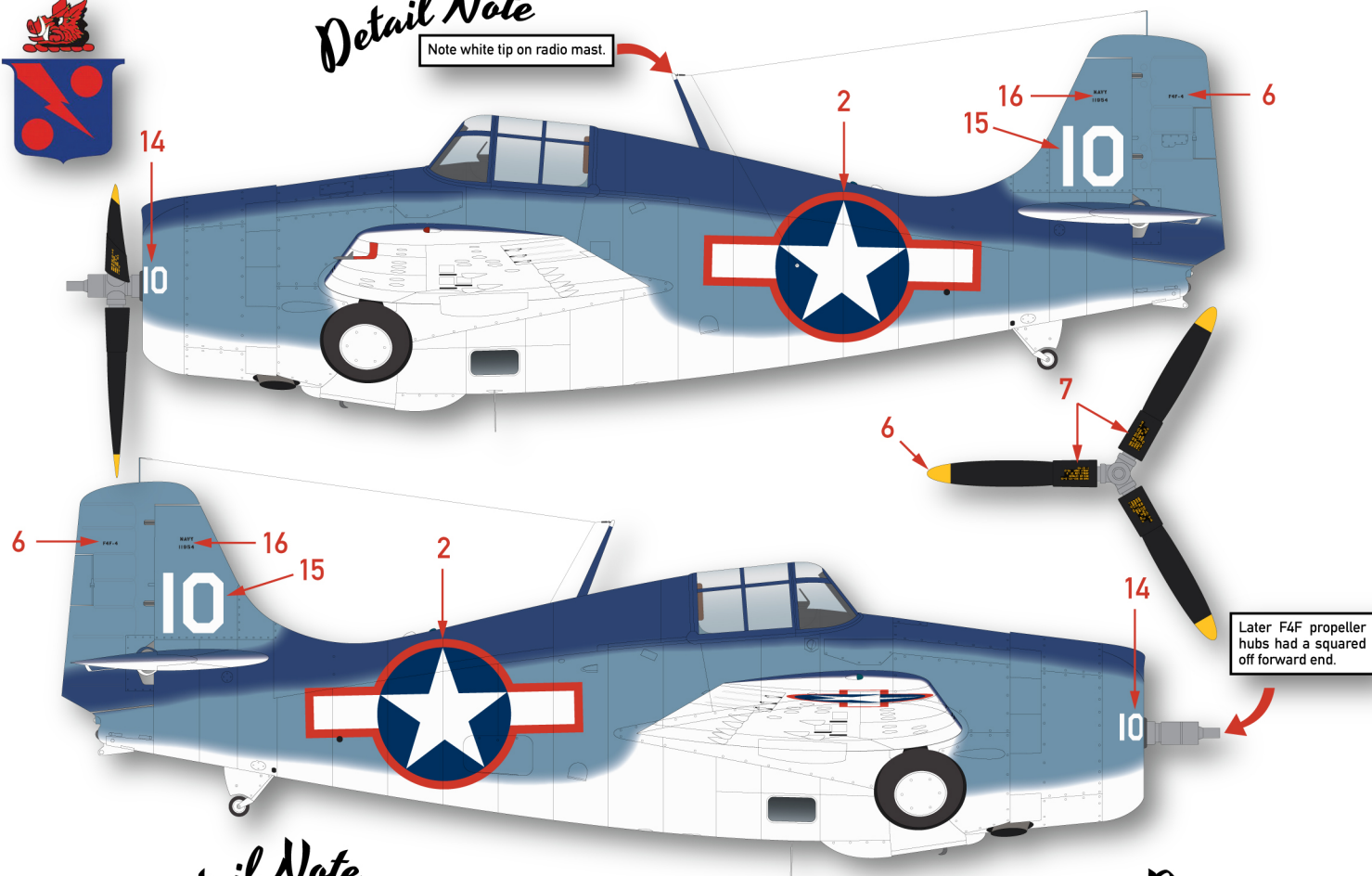


- ANA 606
Semi-Gloss Sea Blue
- ANA 608
NS Intermediate Blue
- ANA 601
NS Insignia White



Detail Note

Note white tip on radio mast.

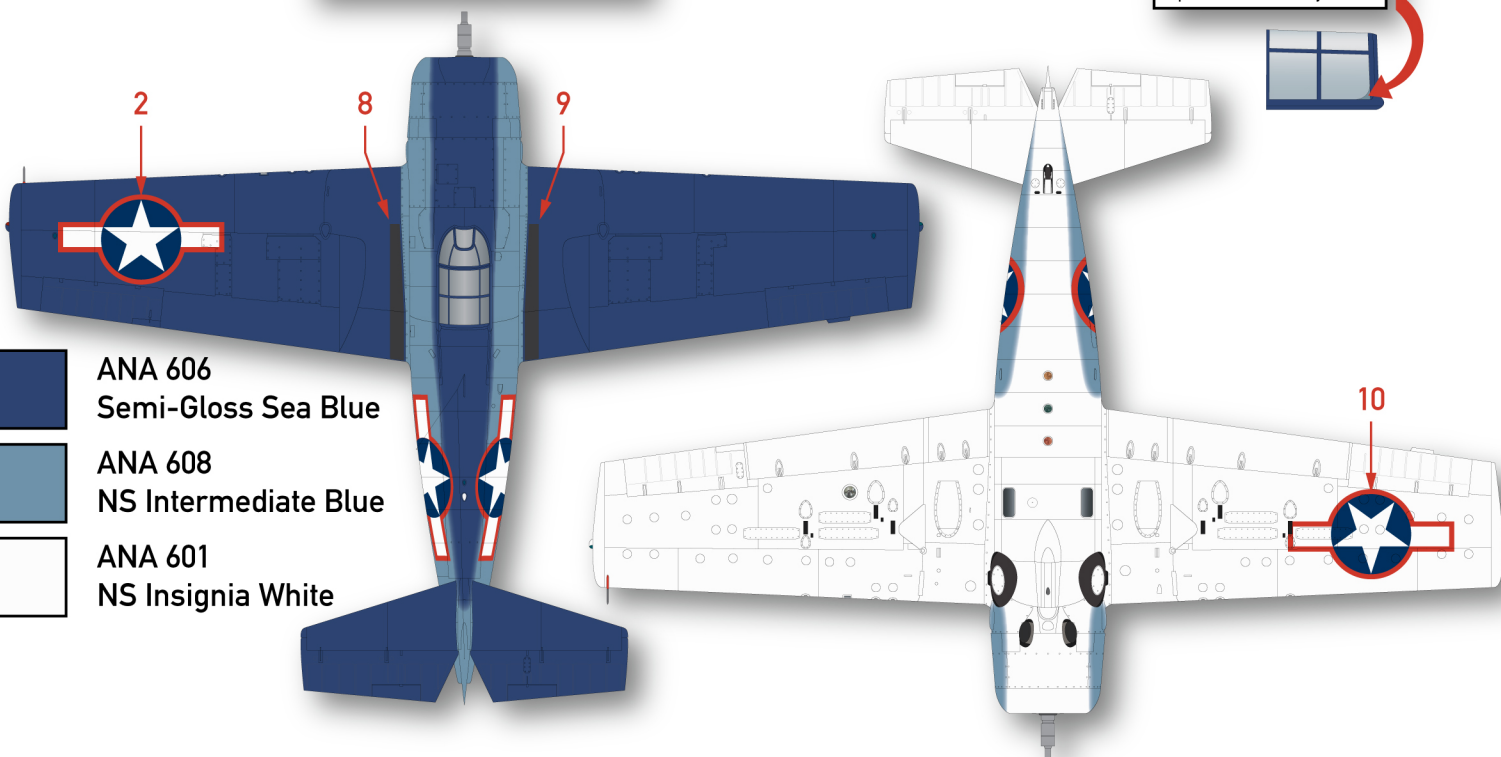


Detail Note

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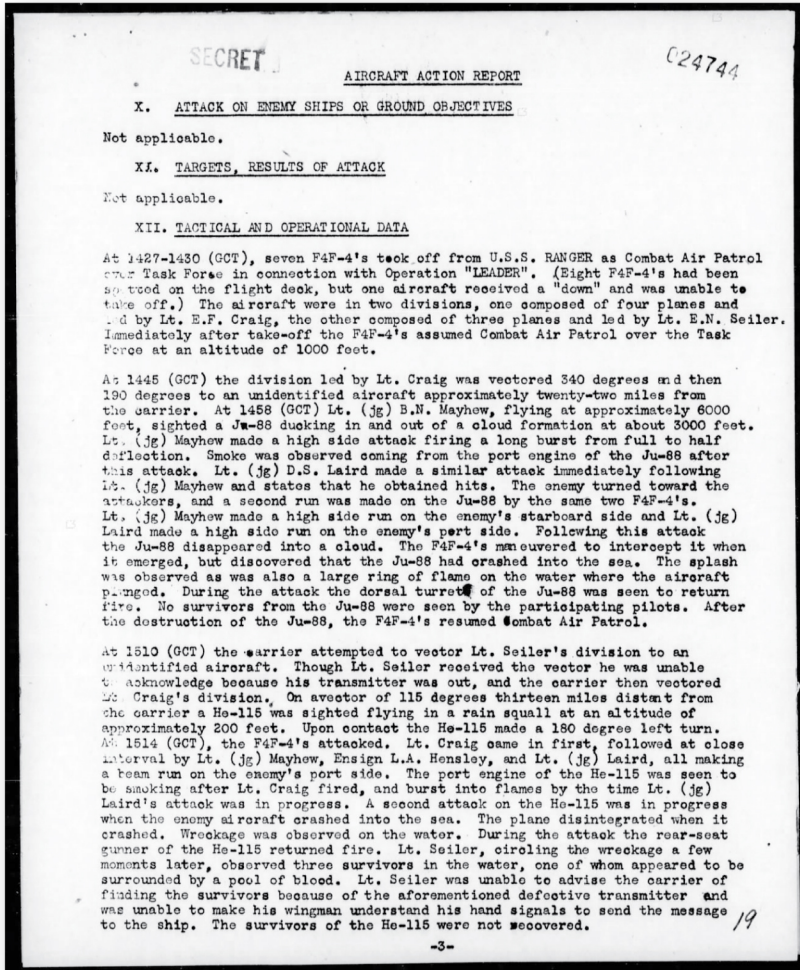
Detail Note

Note the crescent of sheet metal inside aft-most canopy section is painted NS Blue-Gray.



- ANA 606
Semi-Gloss Sea Blue
- ANA 608
NS Intermediate Blue
- ANA 601
NS Insignia White

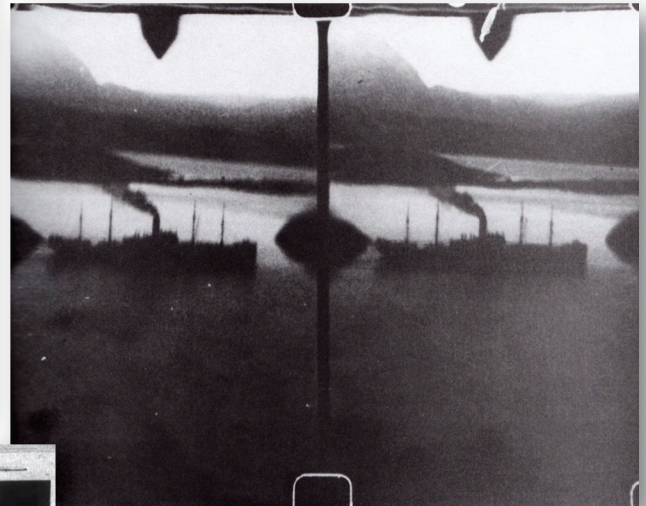
Operation Leader



Operation Leader was an attempt to counter the German fleet based in Norway, including the battleships Tirpitz and Scharnhorst, and the heavy cruiser Lützw. The British home fleet had been drained by sending ships to the Indian Ocean and the Far East, leading the Royal Navy to request backup from the U.S. Navy. USS Ranger and her battle fleet were dispatched, and sailed from Scotland on 2 October 1943 to attack the German fleet in the area near Bodø, Norway. This action would mark the first time the U.S. Navy and the F4F Wildcat would see action against the Germans directly, and remains virtually unknown to this day.

The operation was launched on 4 October 1943, with notable success. While several US aircraft were downed, but the Germans lost a disproportionate number of vessels and aircraft, and the operation was considered the first proof that the Royal Navy and the U.S. Navy could work together cooperatively in combat operations.

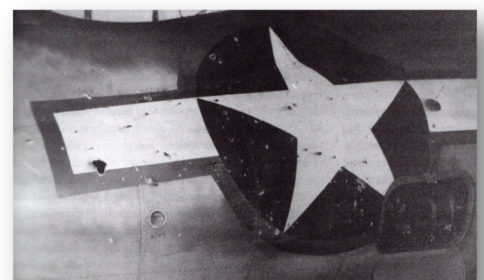
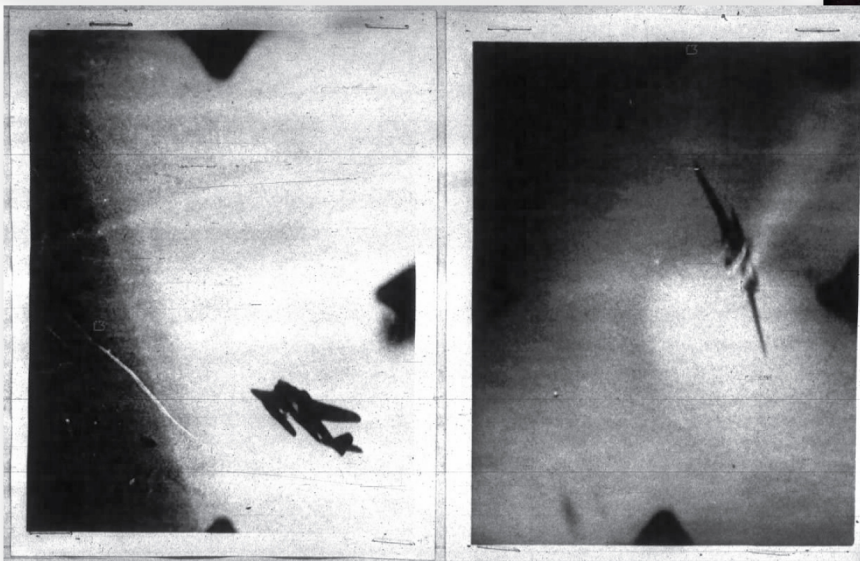
Until Operation Dragoon (the invasion of southern France) in 1944, Leader was the last time the U.S. Navy encountered German opposition. USS Ranger became a training carrier based in the U.S. in early 1944, and never again met the enemy in battle - the only pre-war U.S. carrier never to have seen action against the Japanese.



Above: Gun camera footage of the German freighter La Plata under attack by LCDR Moore.

Left: He-115B (W.Nr. 1866) coded K6+MH of 1./Ku.FI.Gr. 406 piloted by Oberfeldwebel Friedhelm Schulz falls to the guns of VF-4's F4Fs.

Below: Shrapnel damage to LCDR Moore's F4F.



F4F-3 Details

Grumman produced the F4F-3 in four distinct groups. Each had its own unique configuration as shown in the illustrations below. All Grumman-built Wildcats featured Bronze Green cockpits, and Grumman's unique light grey (a very light, almost off-white color) inside the cowlings, wheel wells, and other interior areas.

F4F-3 Group A

BuNos 1848-1896 delivered to VF-4 (later VF-71) Dec 1940 - Jan 1941. Probably never used in combat.

BuNos 2512-2538 delivered to VF-71 and VF-42 Feb 41. Some used in combat. 2512, 2517, 2526, 2530, and 2537 converted to F4F-3P.

F4F-3 Group B

BuNos 3856 - 3874 delivered to VF-42 and VF-71 in Jun 1941. Never used in combat, but later used as stateside trainers.

F4F-3A Group C

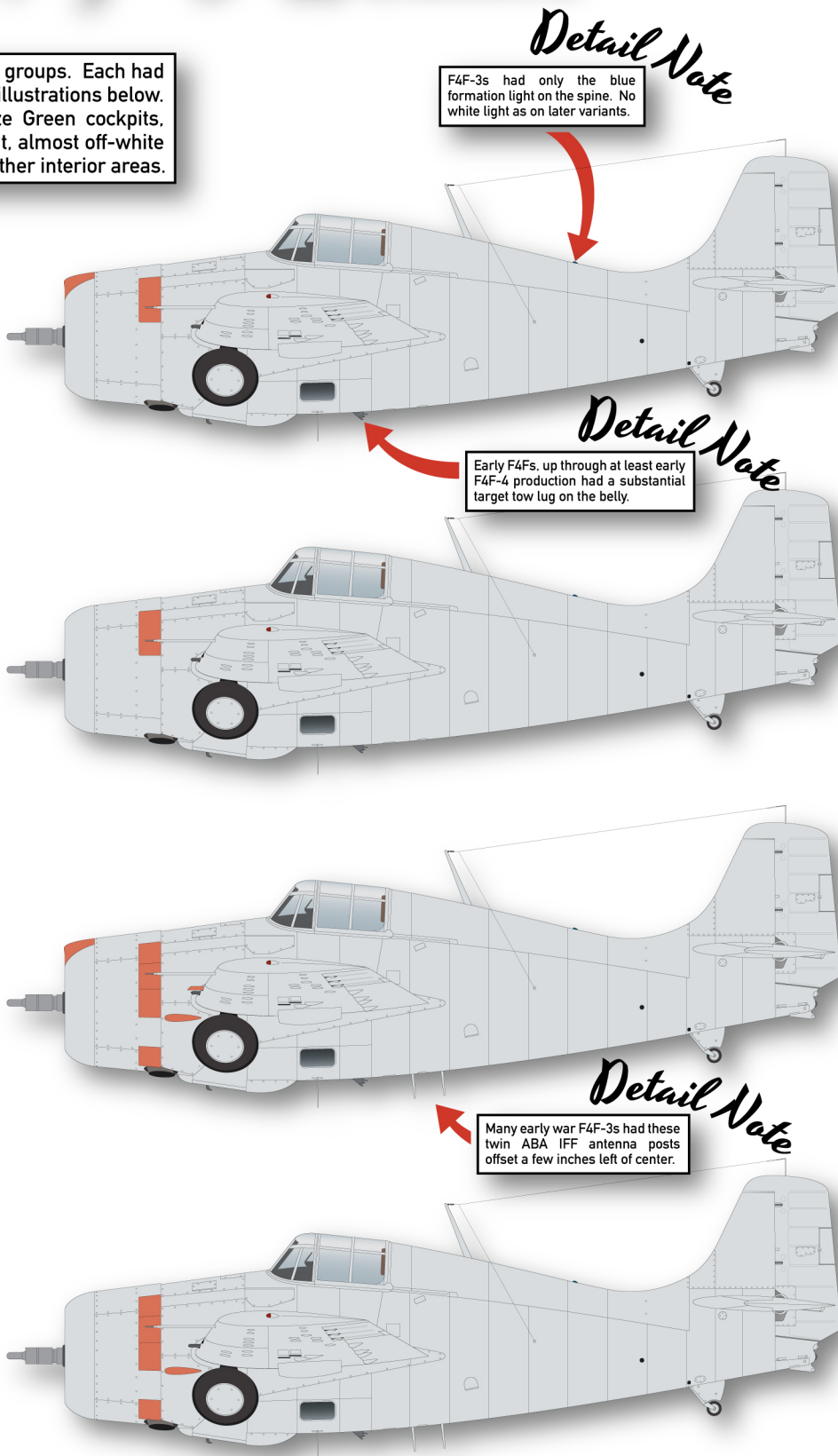
BuNos 3875 - 3969 delivered to VF-5, VF-6, and VMF-111 in May - Jun 1941. Most aircraft saw combat with VF-2, VF-3, VF-6, and VMF-212. 3918 converted to F4F-3AP photo reconnaissance fighter.

The F4F-3A had a single-stage, two-speed supercharger, and had markedly inferior performance compared to other F4Fs with two-stage superchargers.

F4F-3 Group D

BuNos 3970-4057 delivered to VF-3, VF-5, VMF-121, VMF-211, and VMF-221 between Jul - Sep 1941.

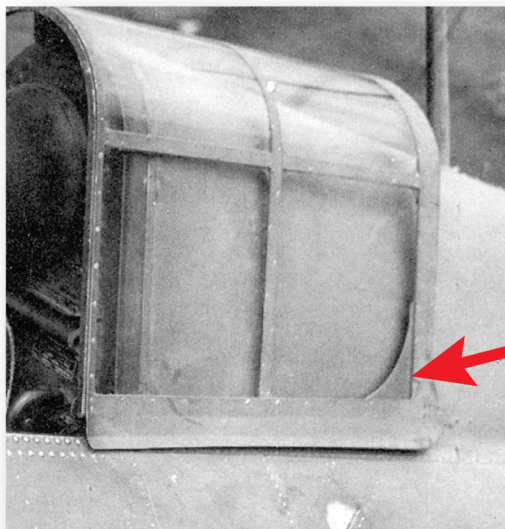
BuNos 12230-12329 delivered Jan - May 1943 and used only for stateside training.



Detail Note
F4F-3s had only the blue formation light on the spine. No white light as on later variants.

Detail Note
Early F4Fs, up through at least early F4F-4 production had a substantial target tow lug on the belly.

Detail Note
Many early war F4F-3s had these twin ABA IFF antenna posts offset a few inches left of center.

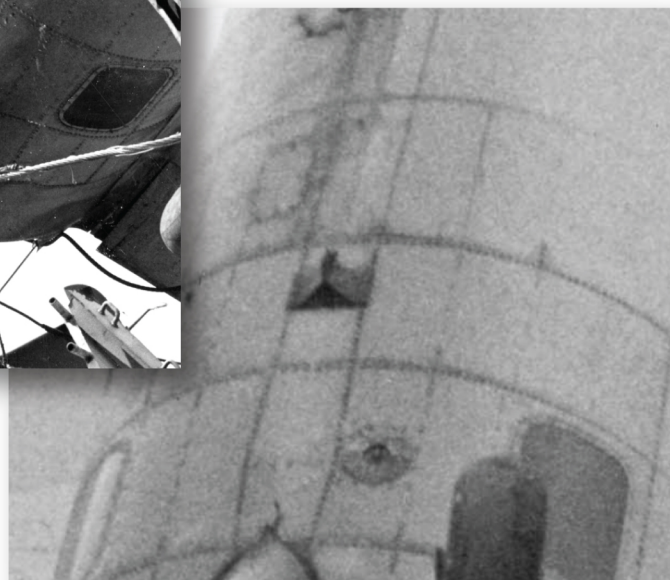


Main Canopy

The sliding canopy on F4Fs had this crescent shaped piece of sheet metal on the *inside* of the glass. It was factory finished in the external camouflage color, but when aircraft were repainted, it was usually left in the original color. Thus, on early F4F-3s that left Grumman in overall NS Light Gray, that is the color you see, even when the aircraft was repainted in Blue-Gray. On later aircraft, this part would have been NS Blue-Gray on the Atlantic ASW scheme and tri-color repaints.

Target Tow Lug

F4F-3s and at least some F4F-4s and FM-1s had a rather large, substantial target sleeve towing lug on the centerline of the lower fuselage as seen in these photos. Utility aircraft of the day were invariably obsolete biplanes that lacked the performance of the more modern fighters, so the Wildcat was recruited to provide a more realistic target speed. We've never seen a photo of an F4F actually towing a sleeve, but once you start looking, the tow lug is present on almost all of the early war aircraft. We don't believe this has ever been documented before, and F4F kits simply ignore this detail.



Bonus Markings!!

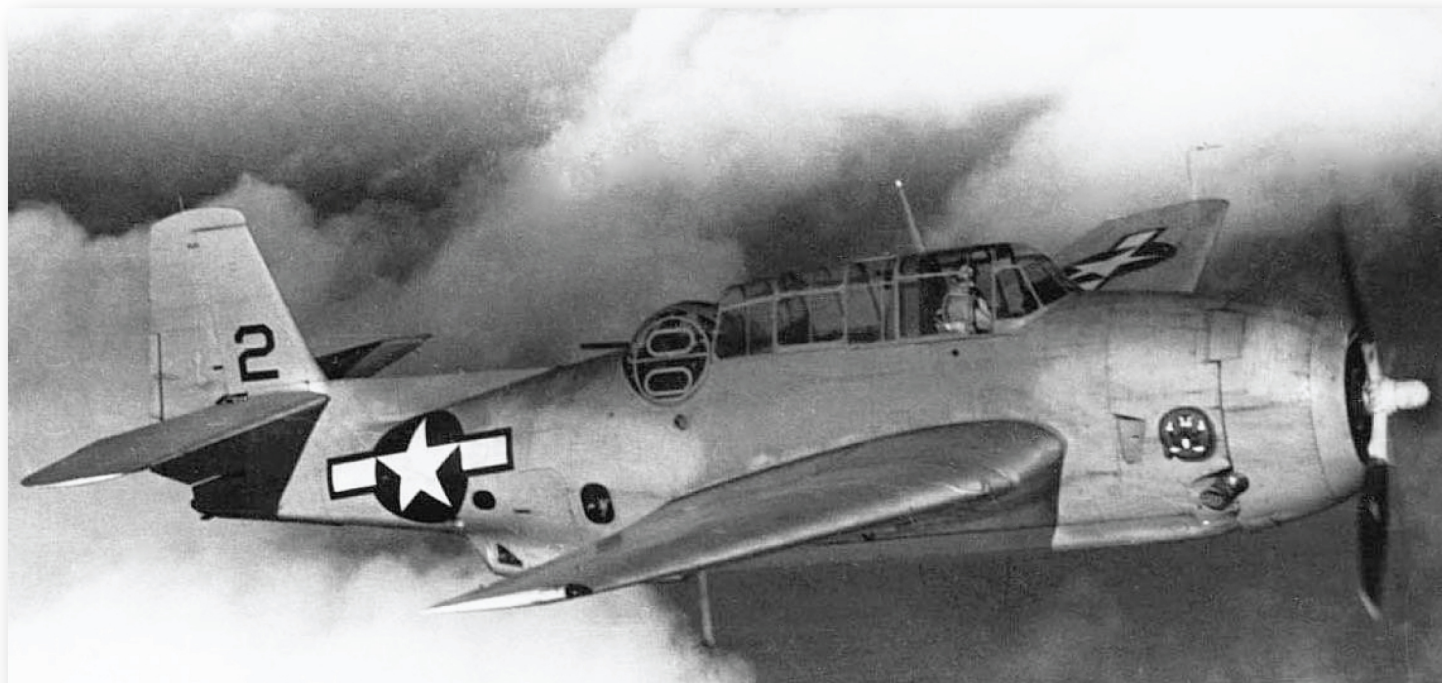


Photo: USN

This was just too cool not to include, even though it's not a Wildcat! We had the room, and we were printing the colors needed for the badge anyway, so why not? This is a TBF-1C of VC-13 off the USS Core, carrying the rarely seen ASW Scheme I, basically as seen on the F4F-4. Note the very softly sprayed edges between the colors - something characteristic of aircraft repainted at depot level (probably NAS Norfolk in this case). It appears the white has been carried up across the wing tips as on the F4F (note the white pitot mast on the left wing). Although it's difficult to say for certain, we might be persuaded that the upper wing insignia is slightly toned down. Note that the VC-13 badge has a blue outer ring - something seen on a few later FM-1s and FM-2s of the squadron.

Being a Grumman-built TBF, this aircraft would have had a Bronze Green cockpit interior, with the very pale grey used by Grumman on the inside of the cowling.

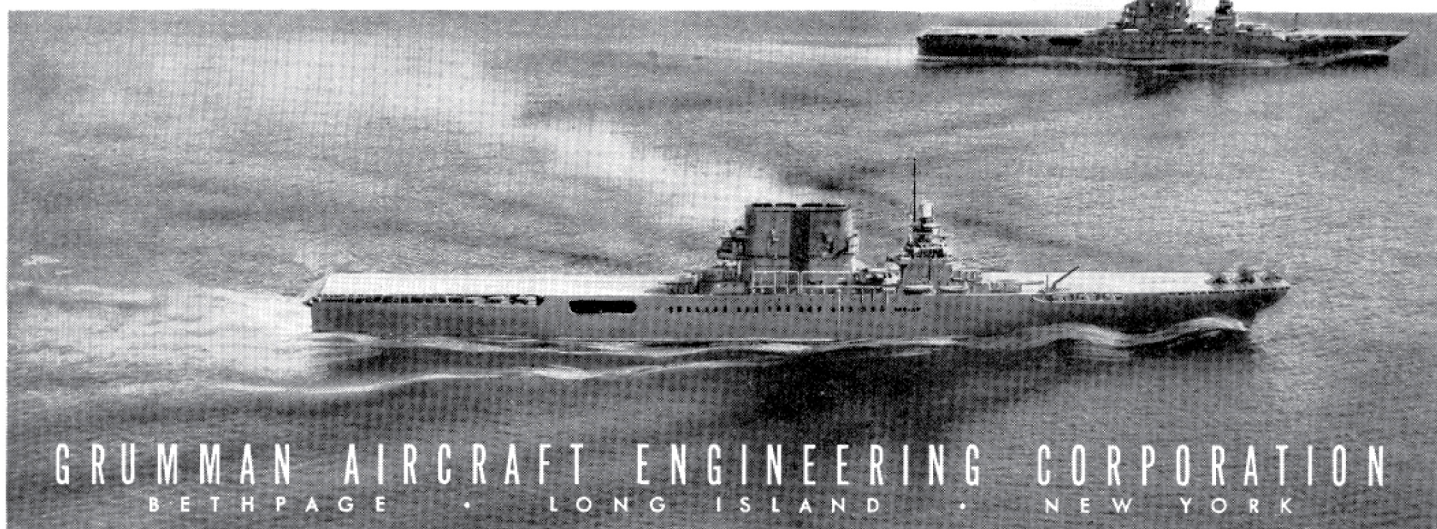
The aircraft lacks the rocket rails under the wings, indicating it was probably aboard USS Core during her first or second combat cruises in 1943, probably at the same time as our first three subject F4F-4s. Note that it does have the mast mounted Yagi antennas under the wings however.



Wildcat



A GILE as the wildcat after which it has been named, the formidable Grumman F4F-3 U. S. NAVY FIGHTER boasts an enviable record in the day-in, day-out performance of its gruelling task.



GRUMMAN AIRCRAFT ENGINEERING CORPORATION
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