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Eagle's Call

The Spitfire Mk.V flown by
U.S. Pilots in the RAF and USAAF



INSTRUCTION SHEET

DUAL COMBO, LIMITED EDITION

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Eagle's Call

American Pilots in the RAF and the dawn of the USAAF fighter groups in Europe

Several interesting personalities stood at the birth of the American Eagle Squadrons operating within RAF. One of them was Charles Francis Sweeny, a wealthy American businessman living in London. He convinced the British government to allow American citizens to serve in the British armed forces. To organize the recruitment of the Americans to join RAF, Sweeny worked with the Canadian Clayton Knight Committee, CKC. This committee was founded by Billy Bishop, the Canadian WWI fighter ace and Clayton Knight, the American aviation artist, and an aviator himself, a member of the US Signal Corps, having served with RFC during WWI.

The initial purpose of CKC was to engage the American aviation industry in the British program of the air power build up, BCATP (British Commonwealth Air Training Plan). The committee, headquartered at the famous New York hotel Waldorf-Astoria, came to existence in the spring 1940 and gradually created a network of nine recruiting offices in the large American cities such as Dallas, San Francisco, or Kansas City. After the USA joined the war efforts, almost 6,700 applications of the American citizens for service in RAF were received. However, 86 percentiles of them were rejected, so the final number of Americans accepted to RAF was around 1,000.

It has to be said that the service in the foreign army was illegal in the USA and breaking the law could result in the loss of the American citizenship. For all accepted candidates, the committee provided all-necessary documents and organized their travel to Canada. Beside it also compensated them for their travel expenses, officially in the form of a loan. Since the recruits typically did not repay the loans, they were in fact gifts which was also breaking the law prohibiting the American-citizens to serve in the foreign armed forces. Only thanks to the tolerance of the US Department of State and other authorities, including President Roosevelt himself, who secretly supported CKC activities, its operation and new candidates' recruitment could continue until the USA entered the war. Regardless CKC activities were often blocked and disrupted by US Department of State and FBI, especially in 1940. In 1941 the attitude of various American institutions, including US Department of Defense and the Air Command, gradually changed as it became apparent that US entry into the war was inevitable. That on the other hand meant that CKC activities represented a competition to the American own efforts to strengthen the armed forces by intense recruitment for all its branches. Besides the recruitment for RAF and RCAF, CKC also negotiated the civilian contracts for the flight instructors or pilots delivering the aircraft to the units.

According to some sources as many as 10,000 Americans served in RAF and RCAF in various capacities, be it soldiers or civilian employees. The motivation for joining RAF varied, from the desire to participate in the war efforts against Germany or seeking the better position than the American armed forces allowed. For instance, the American Air Force required at least two years of the university studies in order to commence the pilot training. RAF did not have such a strict requirement. To start the pilot training high school graduation was required, not even the prior military service was necessary however at least 300 flight hours were required. For example, the future fighter ace, Dominic "Don" Gentile joined the Canadian Air Force especially because of the lack of the university education which was common for many future Eagle squadron members.

The pilots who completed their training in Canada gradually formed three American units called Eagle Squadrons. Not all Americans in RAF joined them however, many remained serving with British or Canadian squadrons. For instance, another future ace and 4th Fighter Group, 8th Air Force commander Donald Blakeslee, who served with Canadian No. 401 Squadron, purposely avoided joining the Eagle squadron, supposedly due to the poor relations among the personnel and pilots overclaiming the kills. He changed his opinion anyway after he completed his tour of duty with No. 401 Squadron RCAF and the only option to continue flying combat missions was joining the No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron. On the other side, a number of the Eagle Squadrons members, after they completed their tours of duty, were for similar reasons leaving for British squadrons, quite often based in Malta or North Africa.

No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron

The first American unit within RAF, No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron was formed out of the American volunteers who at that time already served with RAF. Many of them were Battle of Britain veterans and some had even

served with the French air force. The squadron was established at RAF airbase Church Fenton on September 19, 1940. During the operational training they flew the American Brewster Buffaloes which, due to their obsolescence, were replaced by Hurricanes in November 1940. On February 5, 1941, at Kirton in Lindsey airbase, the unit was declared operational and in April commenced its combat flying at RAF airbase Martlesham Heath in Suffolk. In May the squadron recorded its first combat loss when Mike Kolondorski was shot down and killed during the offensive sweep over the Netherlands. In June the unit was deployed to RAF airbase North Weald under the No. 11 Group command. On June 21 Nathaniel Maranz was shot down and captured becoming the first American POW in WWII. A month later, on July 21 P/O William R. Dunn scored the first Eagle Squadron kill when he shot down a Bf 109F over Lille. Soon P/O Dunn became the first American fighter ace in WWII after scoring his fourth and fifth kills on August 27. In August 1941 No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron was re-equipped with Spitfires Mk.IIa just to replace them with more powerful Spitfires Mk.Vb in a short time. In December the unit was re-deployed to Martlesham Heath and in May 1942 relocated to Debden, where on September 29, 1942, together with the other two Eagle Squadrons, was transferred under USAAF command.

No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron

The second RAF American squadron, No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron, was established in May 1941 at RAF airbase Kirton in Lindsey. In July the unit was declared operational and initially flew Hurricanes Mk.IIb on the patrol sorties to protect the convoys. On September 15 the unit scored its first victory. Between August and September it was re-equipped with Spitfires Mk.II and in November received new Mk.Vs. In December it replaced No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron at RAF airbase North Weald and joined the RAF offensive against the targets in occupied Western Europe.

No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron

The last of the Eagle Squadrons was formed at RAF airbase Coltishall in July 1941, equipped with Hurricanes Mk.IIb. In August it was declared operational at RAF airbase Duxford. In January 1942 was the unit re-equipped with Spitfires Mk.V. In May 1942 No. 133 Squadron became the part of the Biggin Hill Wing. In September the squadron was re-equipped with Spitfires F Mk.IX as the only Eagle squadron. On September 26, 1942, however, the squadron suffered a loss of 12 aircraft and 11 pilots during the escort of 19 B-17Fs from 97th Bombing Group on their raid to Morlaix. Three squadrons, No. 133, 401 and 64, participated in this operation as the fighter cover. Due to the strong wind reaching 40 knots (74 km/h) and overcast skies, the fighter escort, which did not even meet the bombers, drifted too far south beyond Brest. Upon return, No. 133 Squadron led by F/Lt Brettel tried to land at the German airport in Brest by mistake. Eleven Spitfires fell victims to Flak fire and scrambled Fw 190As from JG 2. The twelfth Spitfire made the emergency landing on the British coast. The No. 64 Squadron commander Tony Gaze who led the escort was relieved of his command due to this incident. He was accused of the insufficient preparations of the operation and mistakes committed during its execution. F/Lt Brettel became POW and in 1944 was one of the victims of the famous Great Escape. This event is surrounded by some curious and strange circumstances. One of the interesting facts is that 13 Spitfires of No. 133 Squadron took off for the mission actually. Thirteenth Spitfire, the only one that survived Morlaix disaster unscathed, turned back to the base before the formation reached the French coast. The reason was that rather simple as the 13th aircraft was a "spare" in case one of the aircraft committed to the operation had to return, for instance due to the mechanical trouble. The "spare" would assume its position within the formation in such a case. If nothing occurred and all designated aircraft normally continued on their path, the spare returned to the airbase, typically from the line of enemy coast. That day a spare was flown by Dominic Gentile.

Dieppe/Operation Jubilee

The American squadrons never merged into any larger unit. They operated independently or within the British wings and the only opera-

tion where all three squadrons participated in was the Operation Jubilee, Dieppe landing. Not even in this case they were deployed under one command. No. 71 Squadron flew to Dieppe out of RAF airbase Gravesend and No. 133 Squadron relocated to Lympne. During this operation, the American squadrons shot down eight enemy aircraft and lost six Spitfires. One pilot was killed, and one became POW. In total until September 29, 1942, when they were transferred under the USAAF command, all three squadrons shot down 73.5 enemy aircraft. No. 71 Squadron claimed 41 kills, No. 121 Squadron 18 kills and No. 133 Squadron 14.5 kills. The price paid for this success were lives of 77 American and five British personnel.

The 4th Fighter Group and the 8th Air Force

Eagle squadrons' pilots' integration into the USAAF was not an easy task as it might seem from today's point of view. Enormous number of administrative issues had to be resolved and the actual transfer from RAF to USAAF was preceded by lengthy negotiations at all levels, including the top one. For example, President Roosevelt was involved in pardoning the infractions of the law on service in foreign armed forces. Practically none of the Americans in RAF undertook the American pilot training and therefore did not have a right to carry the American pilot's badge. Major topic of the ongoing negotiations was certifying the Canadian and British pilots' tests. After this matter was resolved, the new issue was the right to carry the British pilot's badge on the American uniform. This seemingly minor problem was resolved by granting the former American members of RAF the right to carry a smaller version of the British pilot's badge on the opposite side of the American pilot's badge. The British naturally presented their claims as well, for example the compensation for the loss of three complete and trained fighter squadrons. No wonder that the final agreement was reached after almost a year of intense negotiations. If we look closer this may remind us of the difficult negotiations between UK and EU about Brexit.

All is well that ends well, in the summer of 1942 all issues were resolved and for the Americans serving in RAF, and other British and Canadian armed forces, the door was opened to join the American armed forces. On September 29, 1942, all three Eagle squadrons were officially transferred under the USAAF command and together formed the 4th Fighter Group of the 8th AF. No. 71 Squadron RAF became 334th USAAF Fighter Squadron, No. 121 Squadron became 335th FS and No. 133 Squadron was renamed 336th FS.

All three units continued operating out of Debden airbase. Lt. Col. Edward W. Anderson was appointed the commander of 4th FG, the fighter squadrons were commanded by Majors Daymond, Daley and McColpin. The transfer under full 8th AF command was gradual and in October the operational command was still within RAF and RAF Debden station commander was responsible for it. The 4th FG was simultaneously operated as Debden Wing within RAF and mostly flew convoy patrols, coastal patrols, and offensive sweeps over France.

Only later the operational command was fully handed over to the USAAF and Debden became USAAF Debden AFB. On November 22, Major Blakeslee was appointed commander of 335th FS and set on the path to become one of the most respected battle commanders in the history of the American AF. 4th FG flew Spitfires until March 1943. In February 334th FS started its re-equipment with Thunderbolts. In the beginning of April, all three squadrons were operational on Thunderbolts and on April 8, led by Col. Anderson, they made their combat debut in the operation type Circus. On March 15, 1943, Donald Blakeslee scored the first victory of 4th FG on P-47D Thunderbolt and on July 28 he led 4th FG over Germany for the first time after becoming the group's operational officer in May. In February 1944, 4th FG was re-equipped with P-51B Mustang as one of the first 8th AF fighter groups.

In the course of several months, 4th FG was the only fighter group available to the 8th AF command. Another fighter group assigned to 8th AF was 78th FG equipped with P-38 Lightnings. It arrived in Britain in November 1942 but in February 1943 it was re-deployed to the North Africa under 12th AF command. In March it was back in England re-equipped with Thunderbolts. Since the summer however, the number of new fighter groups rapidly increased within 8th AF. In the end of 1943, there were eleven out-

of the final fifteen fighter groups located in Britain, which was the 8th AF inventory in the beginning of 1944.

Building the USAAF: The 31st Fighter Group

After the WWII outbreak in Europe, it became clear to the American government and President Roosevelt that the USA will need the equally powerful, and ideally stronger armed forces which are at the disposal of their potential enemies, Japan, and Germany above all. Major General Arnold, Chief of Staff of the United States Army Air Corps was commissioned to strengthen and modernize up until now relatively small air forces and bring them up to the competitive level. Before the WWII outbreak and in its beginning, the USAAC had only one fighter group, the 1st Pursuit Group. Its personnel formed the base of the 31st Pursuit Group established at Selfridge Field airbase in Michigan.

The group equipment was initially represented by obsolete aircraft, P-26, and P-35. Only in the middle of 1939 the unit was re-equipped with the new P-39 Airacobra. In the upcoming period, the 31st PG underwent rather complicated evolution when it changed several bases, in particular in the South of the USA. After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the unit was ordered to the West Coast, Payne Field airbase north of Seattle in Washington state. In January 1942, a new group, 35th PG, was built on its base utilizing its aircraft and already trained personnel. The rest of the 31st PG moved to New Orleans. It was equipped with P-40B aircraft, and the unit was rebuilt. At that time, the USAAC was already renamed to the US Army Air Force and since May 1942 the fighter groups continued to be designated as Fighter Group and fighter squadrons as Fighter Squadron. In New Orleans, now known as 31st Fighter Group, it was re-equipped with Airacobras. The Group was now formed by three squadrons: 307th FS, 308th FS and 309th FS and in May it was ready for deployment in the Great Britain.

The 52nd Fighter Group

The 52nd Fighter Group had similar genesis, established as the 52nd Pursuit Group based on 1st and 31st PG personnel on January 15, 1941. The new unit was composed of the staff squadron and typically three combat squadrons: 2nd PS, 4th PS and 5th PS. The equipment was again initially represented by obsolete aircraft, P-35, P-36, and P-43. The basic training was conducted on PT-17 Kaydet biplanes. Not even 52nd FG avoided the personnel transfer and transfers among the airports during which it met 31st PG on the regular basis. After the Pearl Harbor attack, the unit was re-equipped with P-39 Airacobra with which it participated in the large military exercises starting on January 1, 1942. During that time, 2nd PS was based in New York, 4th PS in Norfolk, Virginia and 5th PS at nearby airbase Langley Field at Hampton, Virginia. On January 15, all three squadrons moved back to Selfridge but as early as February 18 they moved again to various bases in South and North Carolina. In May, now 52nd FG, was ordered to deploy to the Great Britain and on May 11 it transferred to the Northeast to get ready for crossing the Atlantic.

Deployment to Britain

While establishing VIII. Fighter Command of the USAAF 8th Air Force, the USAAF headquarters anticipated that P-39 Airacobra will be suitable for the European theater of operations. It was one of the factors why 31st and 52nd FGs were selected first to build up the adequate fighter force of the 8th AF. While searching for the solution how to transfer the fighter groups to Britain, the flight across the Atlantic was considered. Owing to the distance, complicated weather and navigational conditions as well as insufficient pilots' training in the instrument flying it was assumed, they'll fly in the groups led by a B-17 bomber which will provide navigation for the whole group. The route was plotted via Newfoundland, Greenland, Iceland, and Ireland to England. Both units were transferred to Grenier Field airbase and together with B-17 were training for the long-distance flights. In April however, the majority of the involved B-17s was deployed to Pacific in the preparation to counter the anticipated Japanese assault on the Aleutians. At the same time, two 52nd FG pilots crashed and were killed during the training. But above all, the USAAF headquarters, based on the

evaluation of the combat reports from the ETO, simultaneously arrived at the conclusion that Airacobra will not be a match for German fighters and opted for another solution which was a transport of both groups by ships equipped with battle proven Spitfires. It is interesting to notice how little attention was paid to the naval transport of both the personnel and aircraft which was later became a standard means of transporting more units from the USA to Britain. The 31st FG, in two contingents, ground and aviation, was first transferred by train to Fort Dix base in New Jersey, boarded on the ship and crossed Atlantic. The ground contingent reached Britain on June 10, 1940, the aviation one two weeks later, on June 25. The group headquarters, 307th and 308th FS, were again transported by train to RAF airbase Atcham and 309th FS to RAF airbase High Ercall. All squadrons received Spitfires Mk.Vb at their bases and commenced the training. On August 1 they were declared operational and transferred to the operational bases: 307th FS to RAF Biggin Hill, 308th FS to RAF Kenley and 309th to RAF Westhampnett. On August 16, the units saw their first combat under the RAF operational command, Circus 204 over Lille and on August 19 the operation Jubilee, landing at Dieppe, during which the group scored two enemy aircraft shot down, three probables and one damaged at the loss of eight aircraft. At the end of August, all group squadrons gathered at RAF airbase Westhampnett and in September they took part in the further combat operations, patrols and offensive operations type Circus, typically over Abbeville and Le Havre. On September 14, the 31st FG was transferred from VIII. Fighter Command to XII. FC, on October 13 it was declared non-operational and on October 23 it boarded the ship for transport to Gibraltar.

The 52nd Fighter Group arrived in Liverpool in the middle of July 1942 and was transported by trains to Eglinton in Northern Ireland where it received Spitfires Mk.Vb and commenced the training. During the first half of August the squadrons gradually achieved the operational status: 2nd FS on August 5, 4th FS on August 7 and 5th FS on August 19, the date when Operation Jubilee was launched. The 52nd FG was not included among the units which directly participated in the air cover for Dieppe landing. On August 27, 2nd FS and 4th FS flew their first sorties, 5th FS did not manage to fly any sorties before the transfer under XII. Fighter Command. The 52nd FG was transferred under the XII. FC at the same time as 31st FG and its flying staff sailed for Gibraltar. Pilots of both groups arrived in Gibraltar on November 6, 1942.

Operation Torch

In the beginning of November, both fighter groups received in Gibraltar new Spitfires Mk.Vb and Vc with large Vokes dust filters. On November 8, 1942, before the operation Torch, the Gibraltar airport was packed with aircraft. They were parked in all available areas around the airport including the adjacent North Front Cemetery. On November 8, the mission of both groups was the air cover of the landing at Oran in Algiers. The sorties were flown from Gibraltar. According to the invasion plan, both groups should have landed and operated on the French base La Senia south of Oran but because La Senia was fiercely defended by French, who had shot down several Allied aircraft, the individual squadrons of both groups landed on November 8 evening and November 9 at already captured, further south located airport Tafraoui. The ground personnel were transported by ship. While 31st FG ground personnel landed at the port of Arzew on the night of November 8 reaching Tafraoui on trucks, 52nd FG personnel landed at Oran. Even though it is closer, some 35 km versus 60 from Arzew, the personnel went to Tafraoui by foot. Until they arrived, the pilots had to help themselves with basic maintenance and refueling. Fueling was done from drums and naturally the maintenance was not up to the speed. After the arrival at Tafraoui, 52nd FG ground personnel described their aircraft as war weary. Both groups flew sorties out of Tafraoui to support ground forces, missions against the Vichy AF as well as ground attacks. On November 9 they flew ground attacks against the armor columns of the French Foreign Legion advancing from their base at Sidi bel Abbes towards Oran. On November 9, the 2nd FS (52nd FG) escorted a B-17 with General Doolittle on board who was, with his staff, on the way to Tafraoui. Due to the inclement weather, several 2nd FS fighters got lost and after draining their

fuel tanks, they had to perform the emergency landings. Luckily, there was no loss of life during this operation. On November 13, the armistice was signed and as early as November 14, the 31st FG transferred to La Senna airbase followed by 52nd FG on November 19. Until the end of the year the air operations were restricted due to the bad weather. On January 11 the 308th FS transferred to Cases airport near Casablanca to provide the air traffic during the conference between prime minister Churchill and President Roosevelt held at Casablanca.

Fighting in Tunisia

On February 8, 1943, the 31st FG relocated to the east to Thelepte airbase in Tunisia, closer to the front. At this airbase they met with 33rd FG flying P-40 Warhawks, French GC II/5 Lafayette flying P-40Fs and the old friend, 52nd FG. All fighter groups flew escorts for P-39s and A-20s performing the ground attacks against German and Italian positions in Tunisia. On February 15, Afrikakorps and Italians launched the counterattack in the Casserine Pass together with increased Luftwaffe activity. Due to the frequent shelling, Thelepte airport was vacated and both groups retreated to Tebessa and on February 21 relocated to Du Kouif airfield. On March 8, after repelling the last German offensive in Africa, they returned to Thelepte. For the rest of March and April they continued escorting the bombers. On April 6, the re-equipment to Spitfires Mk.IX and Mk.VIII started, however the individual Spitfires Mk.Vb and Vc remained in the 31st and 52nd FGs inventory well into 1944. On May 10 and 11 the German and Italian armed forces in Tunisia unconditionally capitulated and fighting in North Africa ceased.

MACAF

After the end of fighting in North Africa, 31st FG and 52nd FG parted their ways. The 52nd FG, together with No. 322 Wing RAF were transferred under the Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force (MACAF) command. The mission of this Allied command was the convoy protection in the Mediterranean Sea, anti-submarine patrols, ports patrols and attacks on the enemy shipping in the Mediterranean. While completing their missions the 52nd FG squadrons were gradually moving among the airports in MTO. On June 17, the group hosted the visit of King George V, Winston Churchill, and General de Gaulle. On July 23, the unit relocated to Sicily, Boca di Falco airfield, where it also dedicated itself to the night interception. In November 1943 it relocated to Corsica, where 2nd and 5th FS flew out of Borgo airport and 4th FS out of Calvi. During this period, the unit also performed dive bombing on enemy shipping and ports and while doing it frequently engaged the Luftwaffe aircraft in combat and recorded several kills. In the beginning of April 1944, the re-equipment to P-51B Mustang was commenced. On May 1, the 52nd FG was integrated into the 15th AF and on May 10 performed its first mission escorting B-17s on their raid to Nice in France. While flying Spitfires, 52nd FG scored in total 164 victories over the enemy aircraft. Flying P-51 Mustangs of all versions the score was increased by another 257 kills.

The 31st FG in Italy

After the fighting in Africa ceased, the preparations for landing in Italy commenced. As a part of the preparations intense bombing of Pantelleria island, which is located midway between Cape Bon in Tunisia and Sicily and served as an Italian Air Force base, was performed. The air attacks on Pantelleria were under way from May 14 until June 11, 1943, and the 31st FG participated in both bomber escorts and strafings of Korba airport.

Sicily, Operation Husky

In June 1943 31st FG was transferred under 64th Fighter Wing command led by Col. Hawkins and relocated to Gozo island northwest from Malta. Gozo is the second largest island of the Malta archipelago. On 10 and 11 June the group provided air cover for the invasion convoy which was accompanied by heavy shelling from the invading ships. On June 11, the group shot down 7 enemy aircraft attacking the Allied shipping. On June 14, the unit relocated to Ponte Olivo airport at little town of Gela and became the first Allied fighter unit operating from the Italian territory. On

June 23 the national insignia was changed, white rectangles were added to the sides of the blue circle and red outline was introduced. On August 14 it was replaced by blue one. In the end of 1943, the color of propeller spinners was changed from white to red. On July 26 Benito Mussolini resigned. On August 2 31st FG relocated to Termini airport southeast of Palermo and on August 17 the Sicilian campaign was completed after the Allies occupied the whole island. On August 31 31st FG aircraft escorted the airplane bringing the Italian delegation to the armistice negotiations held in Rimini which was concluded on September 3. As of September 1, the 31st FG was based at Milazzo airport on Sicilian east coast.

Operation Avalanche, landing at Salerno

On September 9, the Allied forces invasion of Italy at Salerno commenced resulting in a week-long bloody fighting. As early as September 11 the preparation of the airfield at Monte Corvino started which was however subject to heavy shelling. On September 18, the artillery fire destroyed a B-25 and killed III. Air Support Command inspector preparing the airport for the operational use. On September 20 the 31st FG landed here. On October 14, the unit relocated to Pomigliano near Naples and even though this airport was frequently strafed by attacking Fw 190s the personnel could enjoy unusual comfort, when for the first time since February, they could sleep in houses instead of tents. Also, for the first time since 31st FG left England, the American girls showed up, being from women's auxiliary corps, Red Cross nurses and there were chances to meet the local girls as well. The resting camp on Capri was also available. In November the group was flying sorties to Rome and Monte Cassino. Spitfires Mk.V usually flew at the lower altitudes with Spitfires Mk.IX and Mk.VIII covering them at higher altitudes. The 307th and 308th squadrons flew Spitfires Mk.IX, 309th squadron Mk.VIII. Spitfires Mk.VIII were camouflaged in Desert Scheme while Spitfires Mk.IX in Day Fighter Scheme. On November 11 Pomigliano airport was bombed. On January 18, 1944, the group relocated to Castel Volturno airfield which featured runway with PSP (Perforated Steel Plates) surface.

Operation Shingle, Anzio landing

Landing at Anzio commenced on January 22, 1944, with the mission to bypass the German positions in Gustav Line, barely 150 km south of Rome. The 31st FG task was air cover of the beaches and invading units. As early as January 28, the 307th FS ground personnel was transported by boats to Nettuno, the port and city section of Anzio, with the intention to build a runway there. The 307th FS flew over there on February 1 and maintained a small contingent there, however the airport was constantly under fire and on February 25 the 307th FS retreated from Nettuno to return to Castel Volturno in the middle of March. At the same time, the new P-51B started to arrive from Algiers to Castel Volturno and the 31st FG squadrons started the transition to them. On March 14, the mock combat between the new Mustang and Spitfire Mk.IX took place. Despite the conclusion that Spitfire is better in dogfight the further transition process remained unaffected. On March 24 the Vesuvius erupted. On March 29, 36 Spitfires flew the last sortie of this type with 31st FG to Rome. As of April 1, 31st FG was transferred under 15th AF command and with its new P-51B Mustangs relocated to San Severo airbase at the Italian east coast from where it continued flying escorts for 15th AF strategic bombers raiding the targets in Europe. During the month of April, the group flew twice to Ploesti in Romania, Sofia in Bulgaria, Wiener Neustadt in Austria, Piombino, Milano and Monfalcone in Italy and also Toulon in France. During these missions the pilots of the group shot down 51 enemy aircraft. Flying Spitfires of all versions the 31st FG shot down in total 185 enemy aircraft.

About the kit

This kit is dedicated to the American pilots flying Spitfires Mk.Vb and Mk.Vc within the RAF and USAAF units. The selection of camouflages and markings covers approximately three years period of the Americans operating Spitfires Mk.V. Spitfires from the other units or Spitfires Mk.VIII and Mk.IX serving with American units are not included. These later Spitfire marks will be featured in the future releases.



Carefully read instruction sheet before assembling. When you use glue or paint, do not use near open flame and use in well ventilated room. Keep out of reach of small children. Children must not be allowed to suck any part, or pull vinyl bag over the head.



Před započítím stavby si pečlivě prostudujte stavební návod. Při používání barev a lepidel pracujte v dobře větrané místnosti. Lepidla ani barvy nepoužívejte v blízkosti otevřeného ohně. Model není určen malým dětem, mohlo by dojít k požití drobných dílů.

INSTRUCTION SIGNS * INSTR. SYMBOLS * INSTRUKTION SINNBILDEN * SYMBOLES * 記号の説明

OPTIONAL
VOLBABEND
OHNOUTSAND
BROUSITOPEN HOLE
VYVRTAT OTVORSYMETRICAL ASSEMBLY
SYMETRICKÁ MONTÁŽREMOVE
ODŘÍZNOUTREVERSE SIDE
OTOČITAPPLY EDUARD MASK
AND PAINT
POUŽIT EDUARD MASK
NABARVIT

PARTS



DÍLY



TEILE

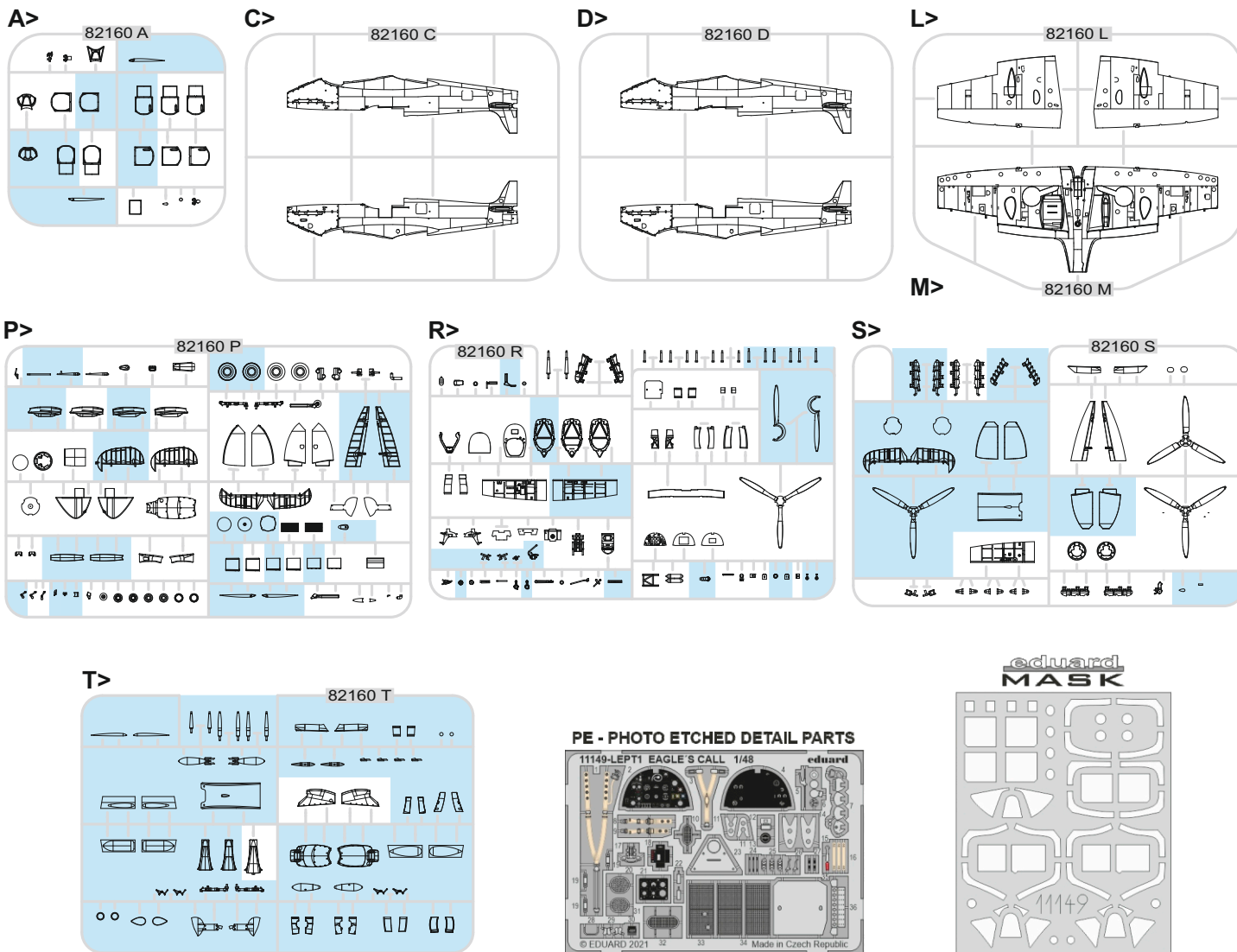


PIÈCES



部品

PLASTIC PARTS



-Parts not for use. -Teile werden nicht verwendet. -Pièces à ne pas utiliser. -Tyto díly nepoužívejte při stavbě. - 使用しない部品

COLOURS



BARVY



FARBEN



PEINTURE

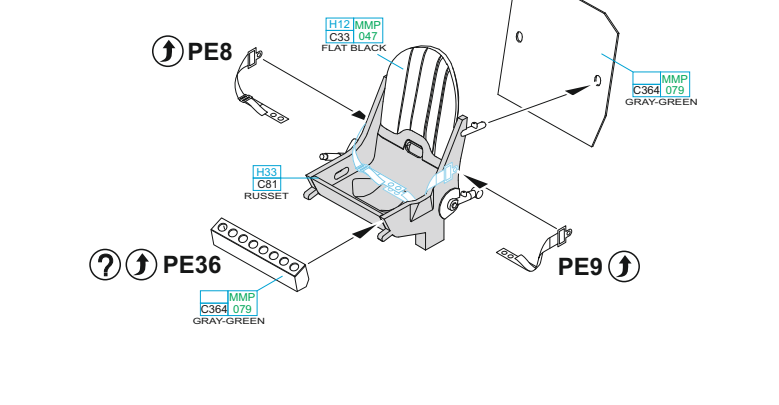
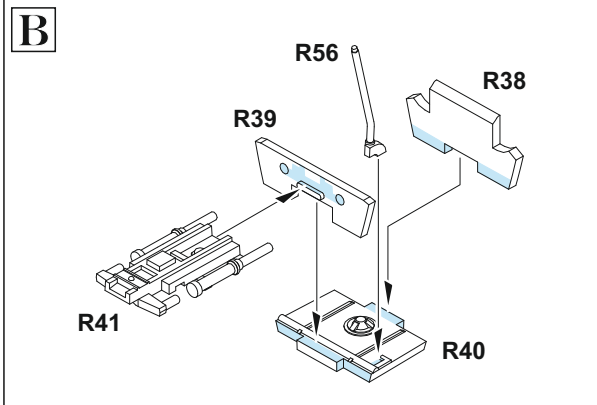
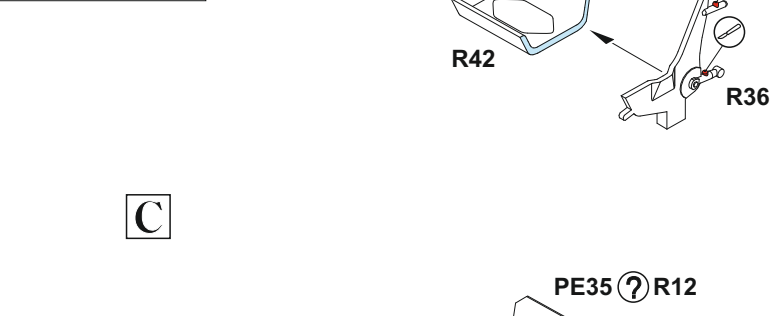
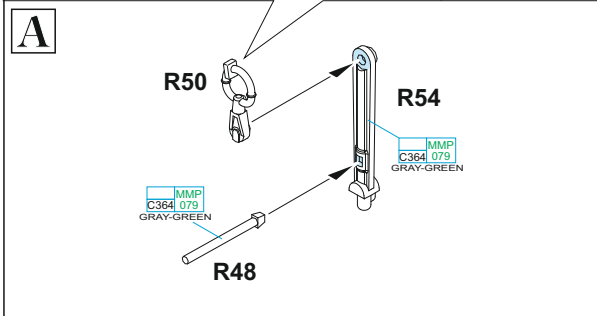
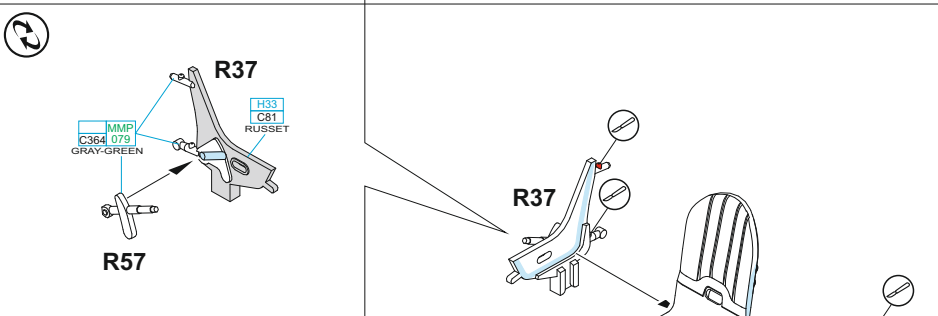
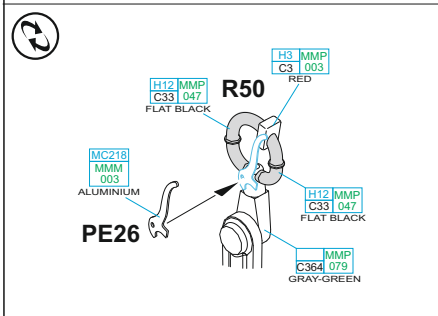
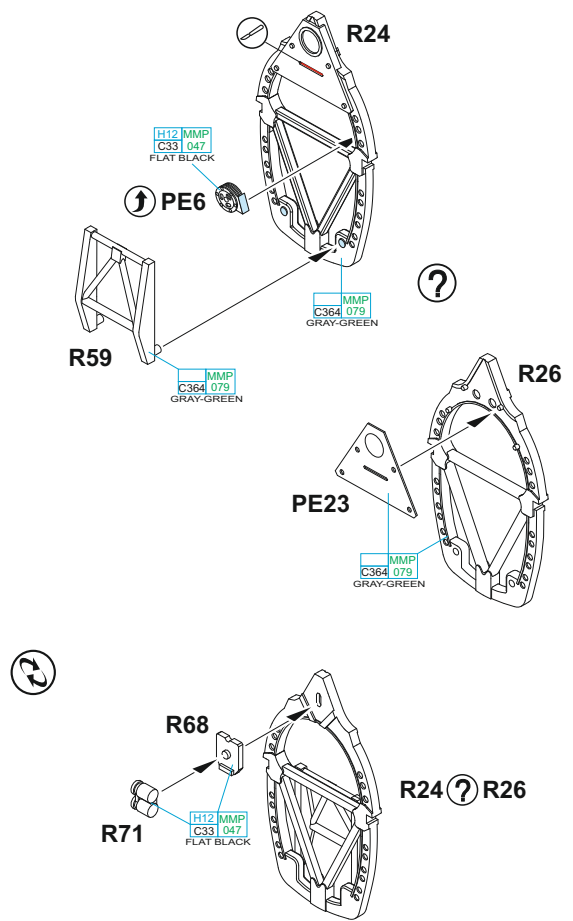
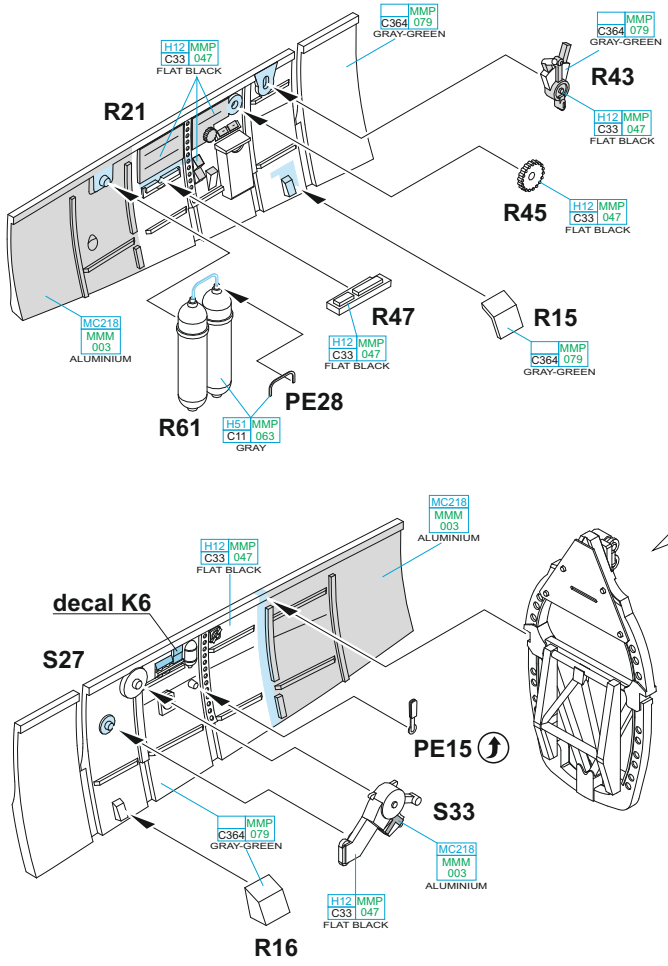


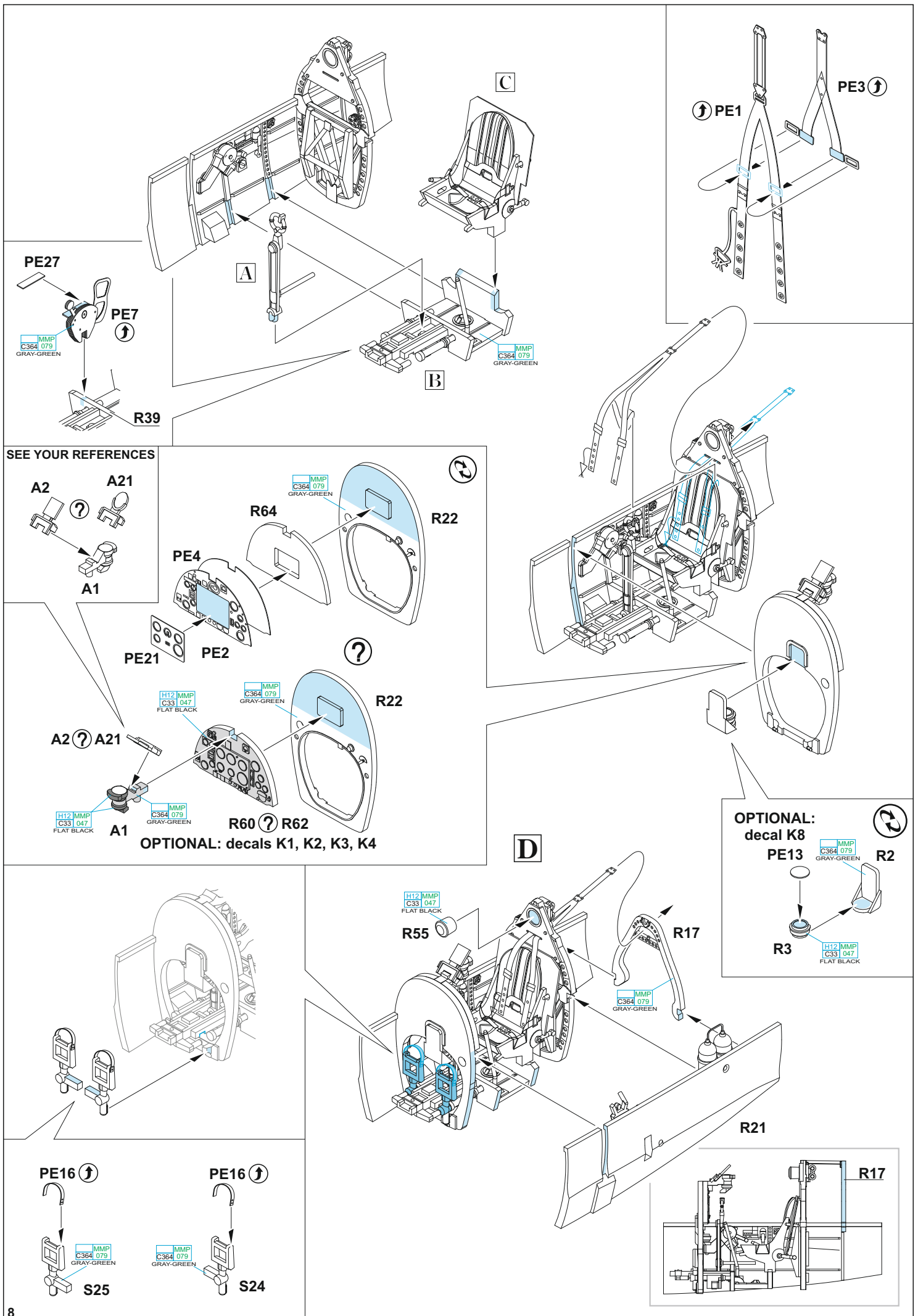
色

GSI Creos (GUNZE)		MISSION MODELS	
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	PAINTS	
[H3]	C3	[MMP-003]	RED
[H4]	C4	[MMP-007]	YELLOW
[H8]	C8		SILVER
[H11]	C62	[MMP-001]	FLAT WHITE
[H12]	C33	[MMP-047]	FLAT BLACK
[H27]	C44		TAN
[H33]	C81		RUSSET
[H51]	C11	[MMP-063]	LIGHT GULL GRAY
[H71]	C21	[MMP-076]	MIDDLE STONE
[H72]	C369	[MMP-078]	DARK EARTH
[H74]	C368	[MMP-080]	SKY
[H77]	C137	[MMP-040]	TIRE BLACK
[H90]	C47		CLEAR RED

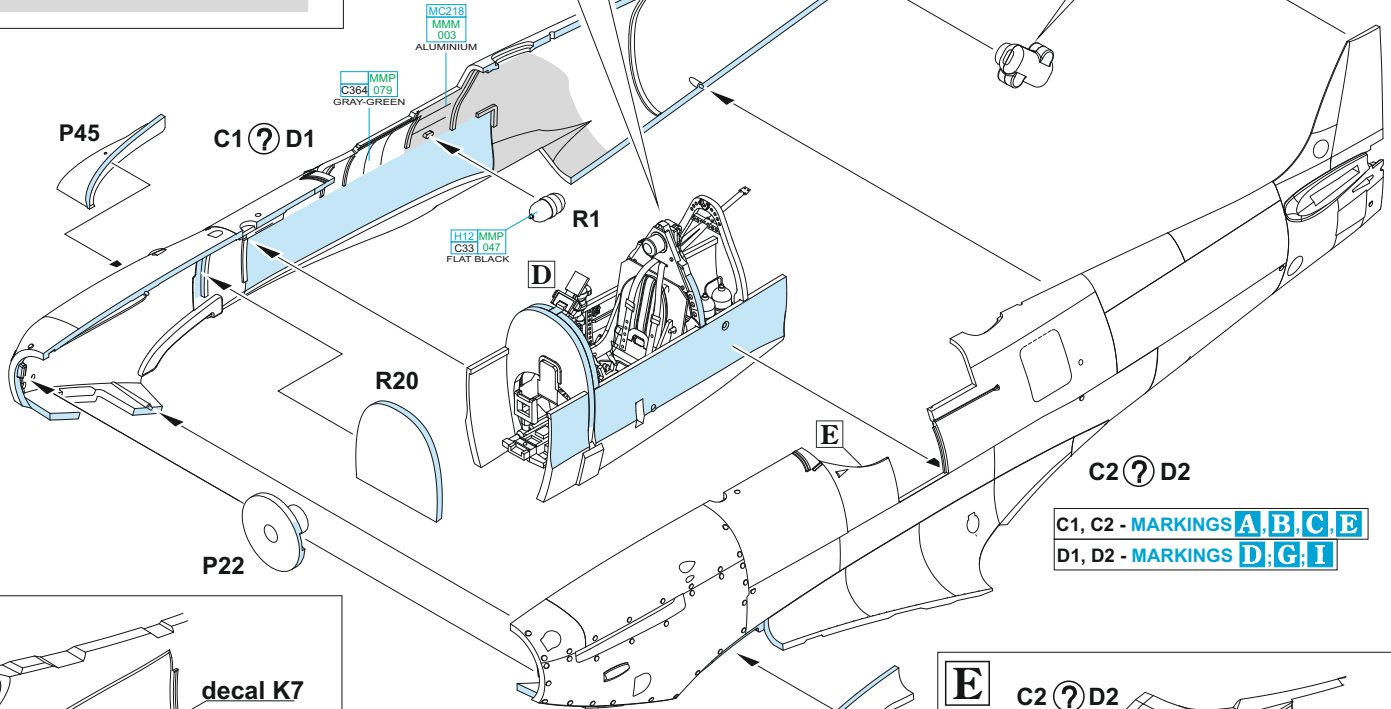
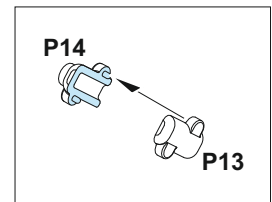
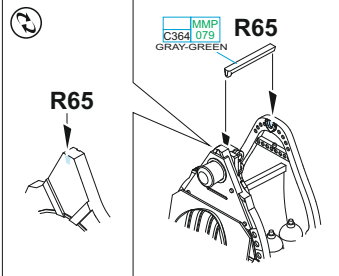
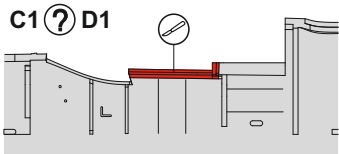
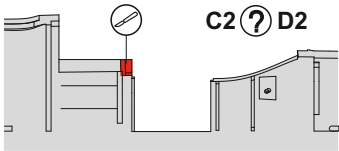
GSI Creos (GUNZE)		MISSION MODELS	
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	PAINTS	
[H94]	C138		CLEAR GREEN
[H327]	C327	[MMP-101]	RED
[H330]	C361	[MMP-077]	DARK GREEN
[H335]	C363	[MMP-094]	MEDIUM SEAGRAY
	C362	[MMP-093]	OCEAN GRAY
	C364	[MMP-079]	AIRCRAFT GRAY-GREEN
	C370	[MMP-092]	AZURE BLUE
Mr.METAL COLOR		METALLICS	
	[MC214]	[MMM-001]	DARK IRON
	[MC218]	[MMM-003]	ALUMINIUM
Mr.COLOR SUPER METALLIC		METALLICS	
	[SM201]	[MMC-001]	SUPER FINE SILVER

Spitfire Mk.Vb

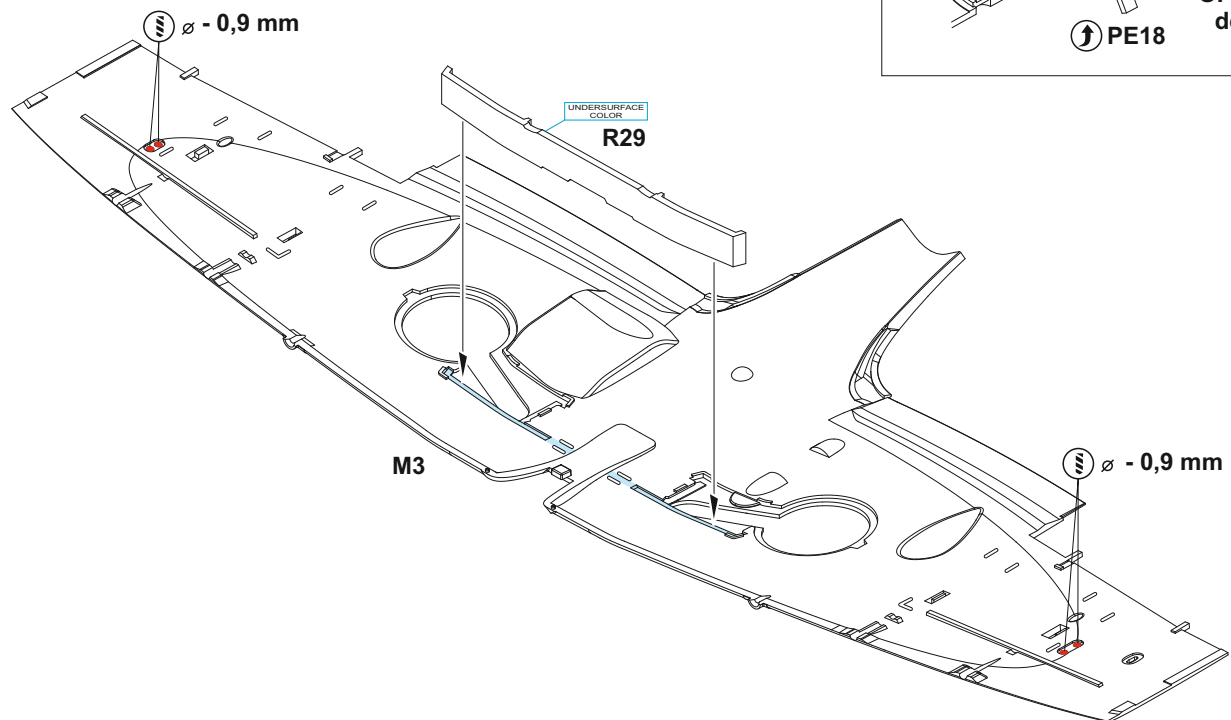
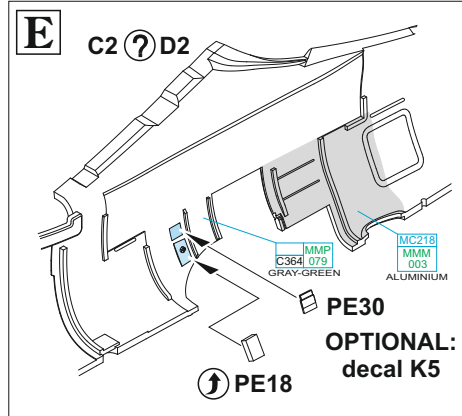
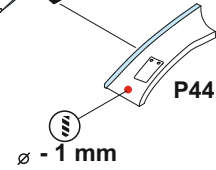
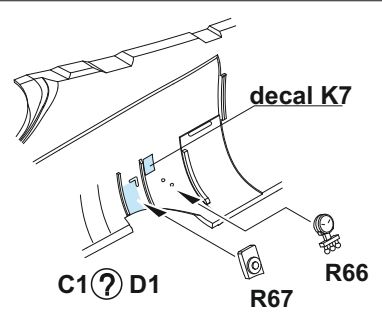


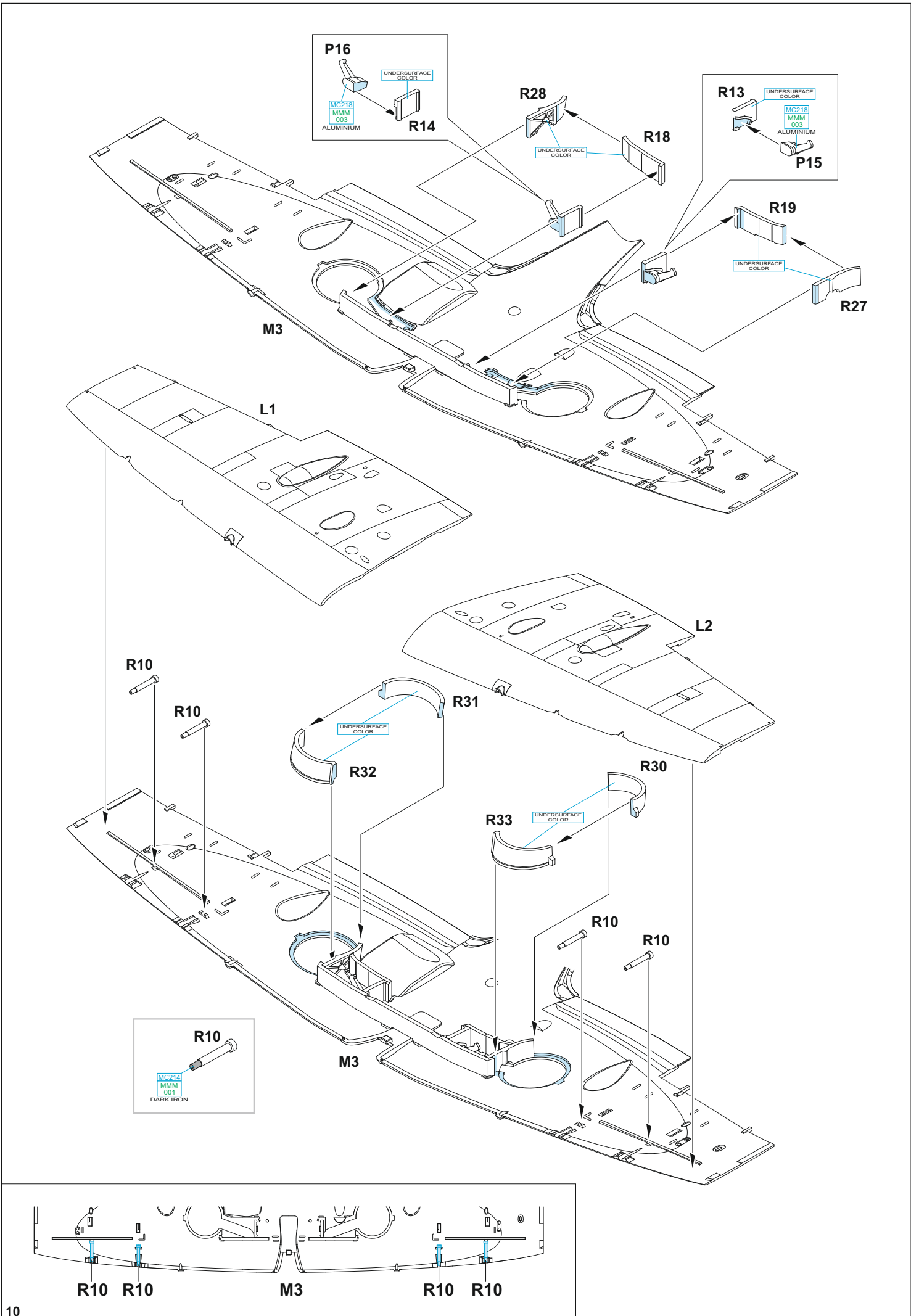


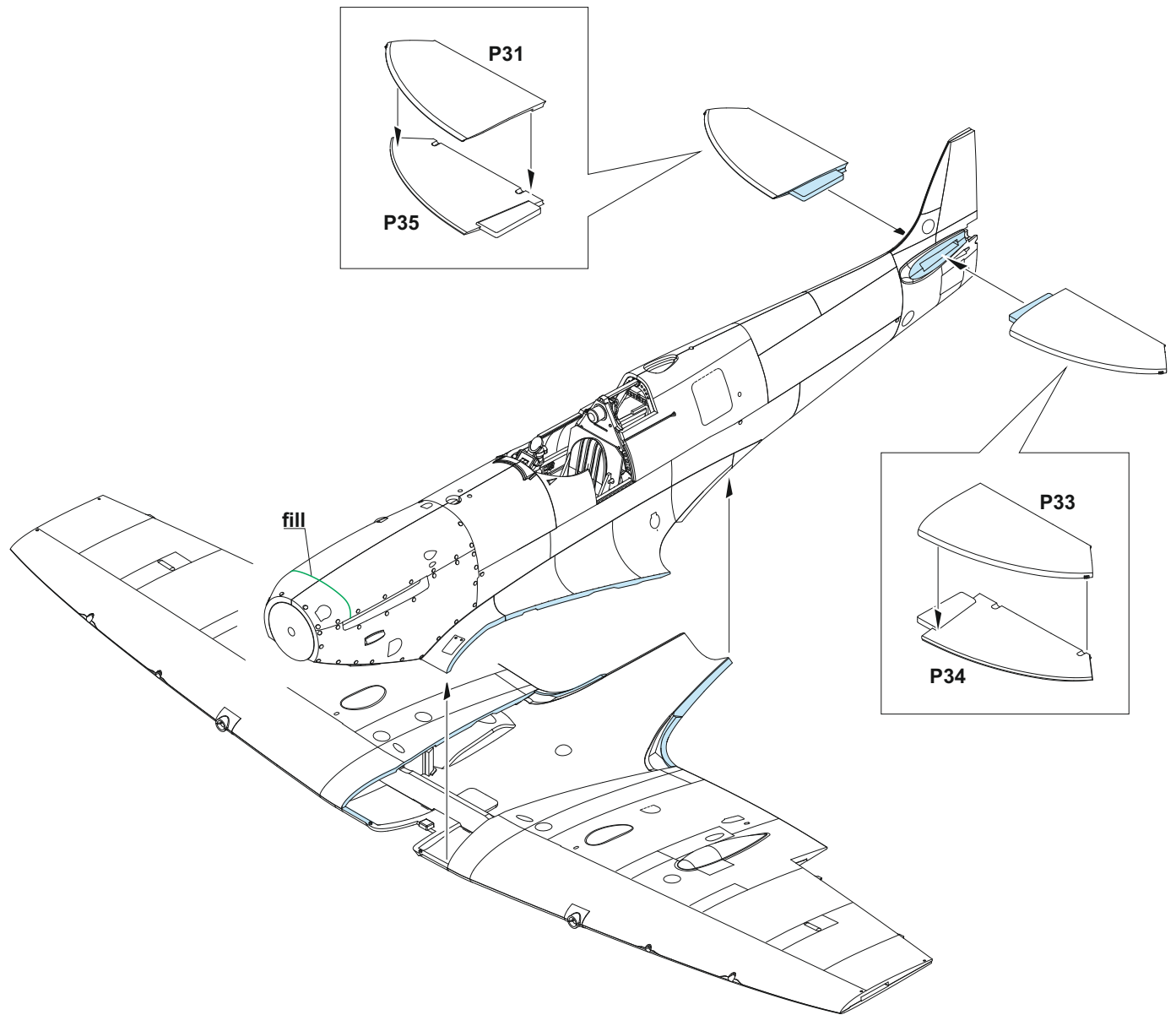
FOR CLOSED CANOPY ONLY



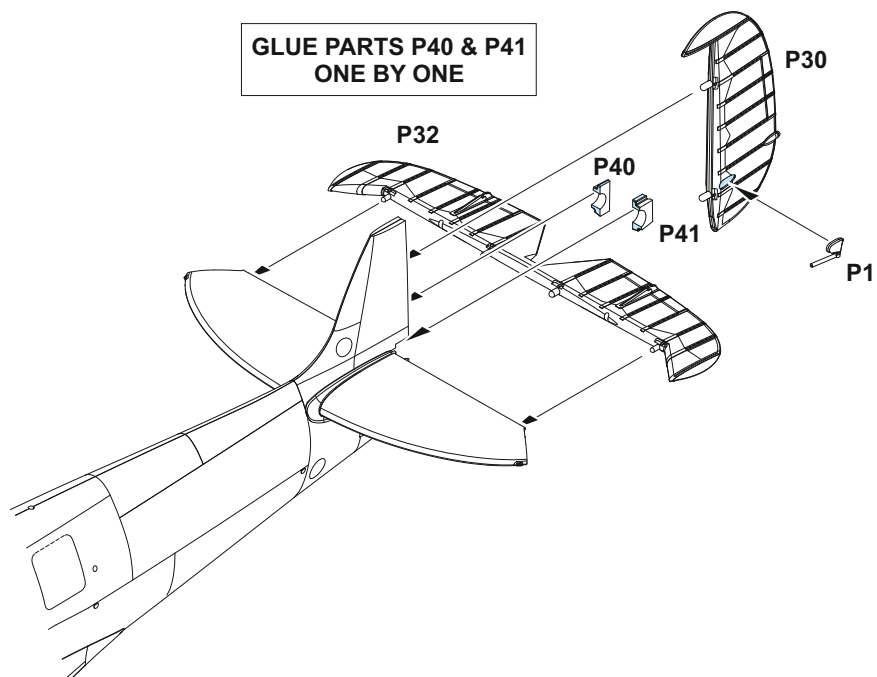
C1, C2 - MARKINGS A, B, C, E
D1, D2 - MARKINGS D, G, I

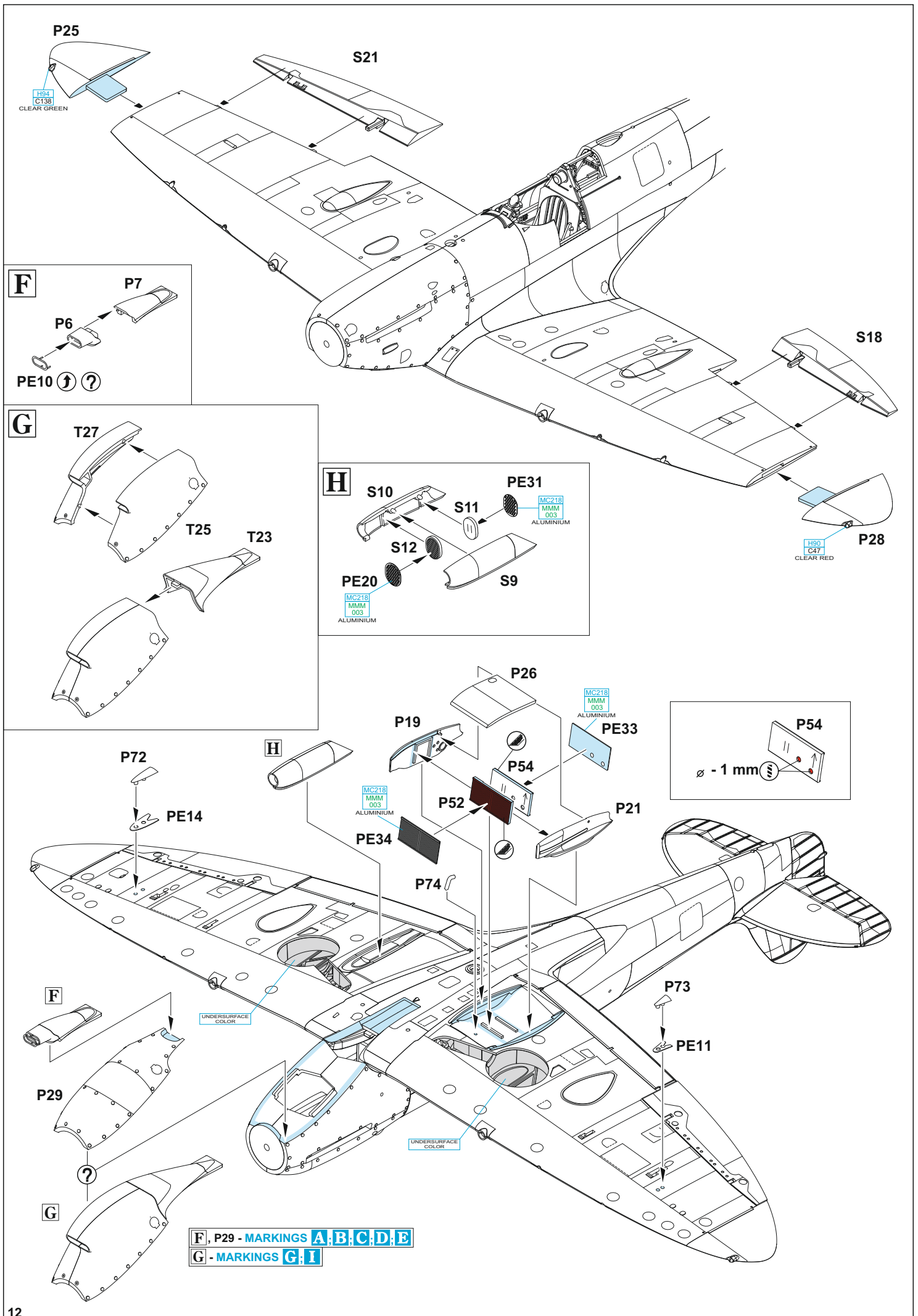






**GLUE PARTS P40 & P41
ONE BY ONE**





P25

S21

H94
C138
CLEAR GREEN

F

P7

P6

PE10 ↑ ?

S18

G

T27

T25

T23

H

S10

S11

PE31

MC218
MMM
003
ALUMINIUM

S9

H90
C47
CLEAR RED

P28

P26

MC218
MMM
003
ALUMINIUM

PE33

P54
∅ - 1 mm

H

P19

P54

P21

P52

MC218
MMM
003
ALUMINIUM

PE34

P74

P72

PE14

P73

PE11

F

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

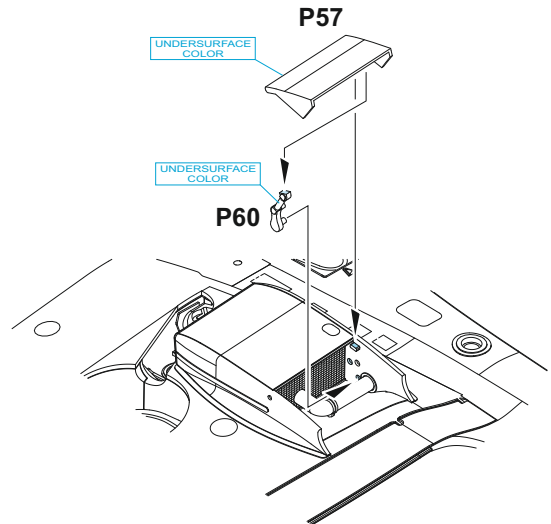
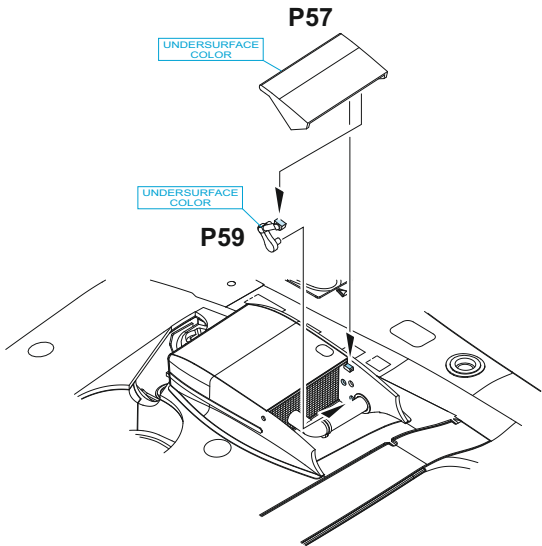
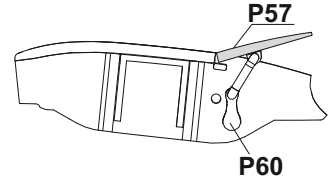
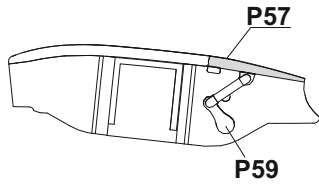
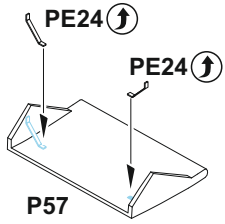
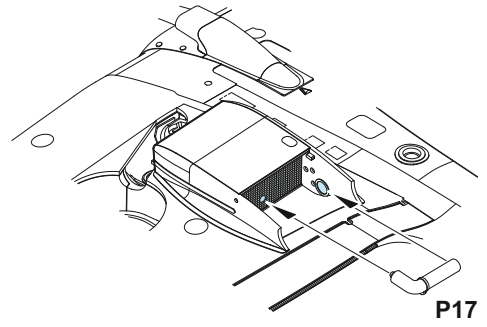
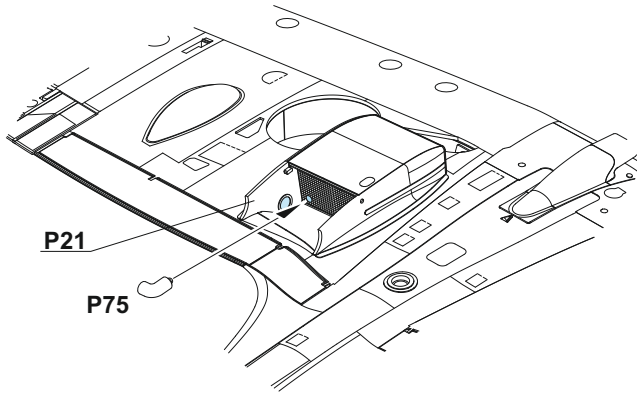
P29

UNDERSURFACE
COLOR

G

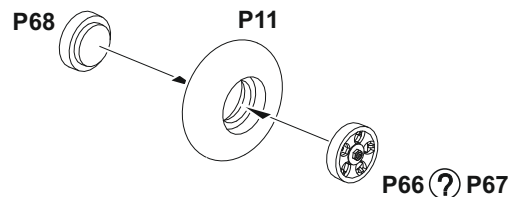
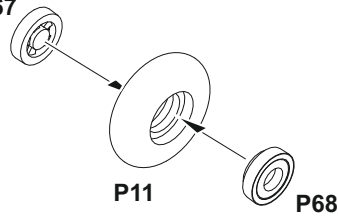
F, P29 - MARKINGS **A**, **B**, **C**, **D**, **E**

G - MARKINGS **G**, **I**



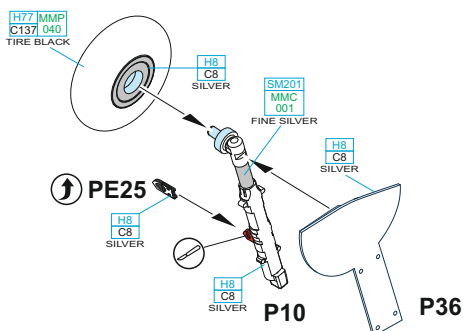
P66 - MARKINGS **A, B, C**
 P67 - MARKINGS **D, E, G, I**

P66 ? P67

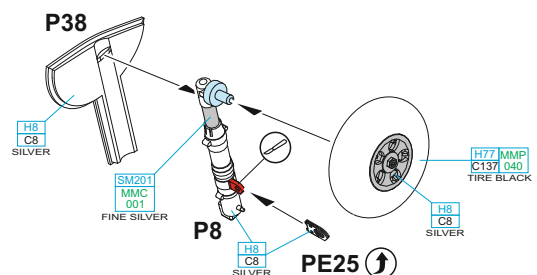


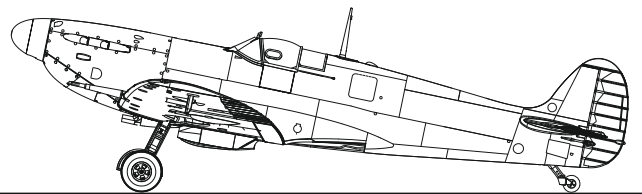
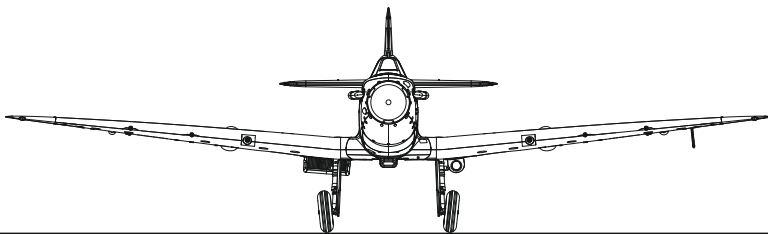
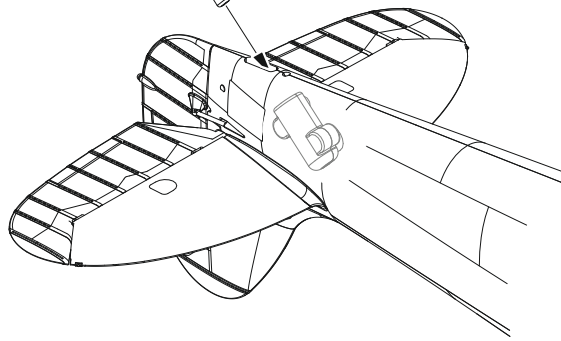
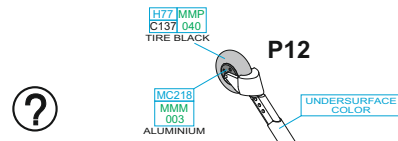
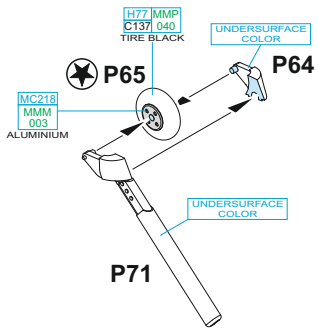
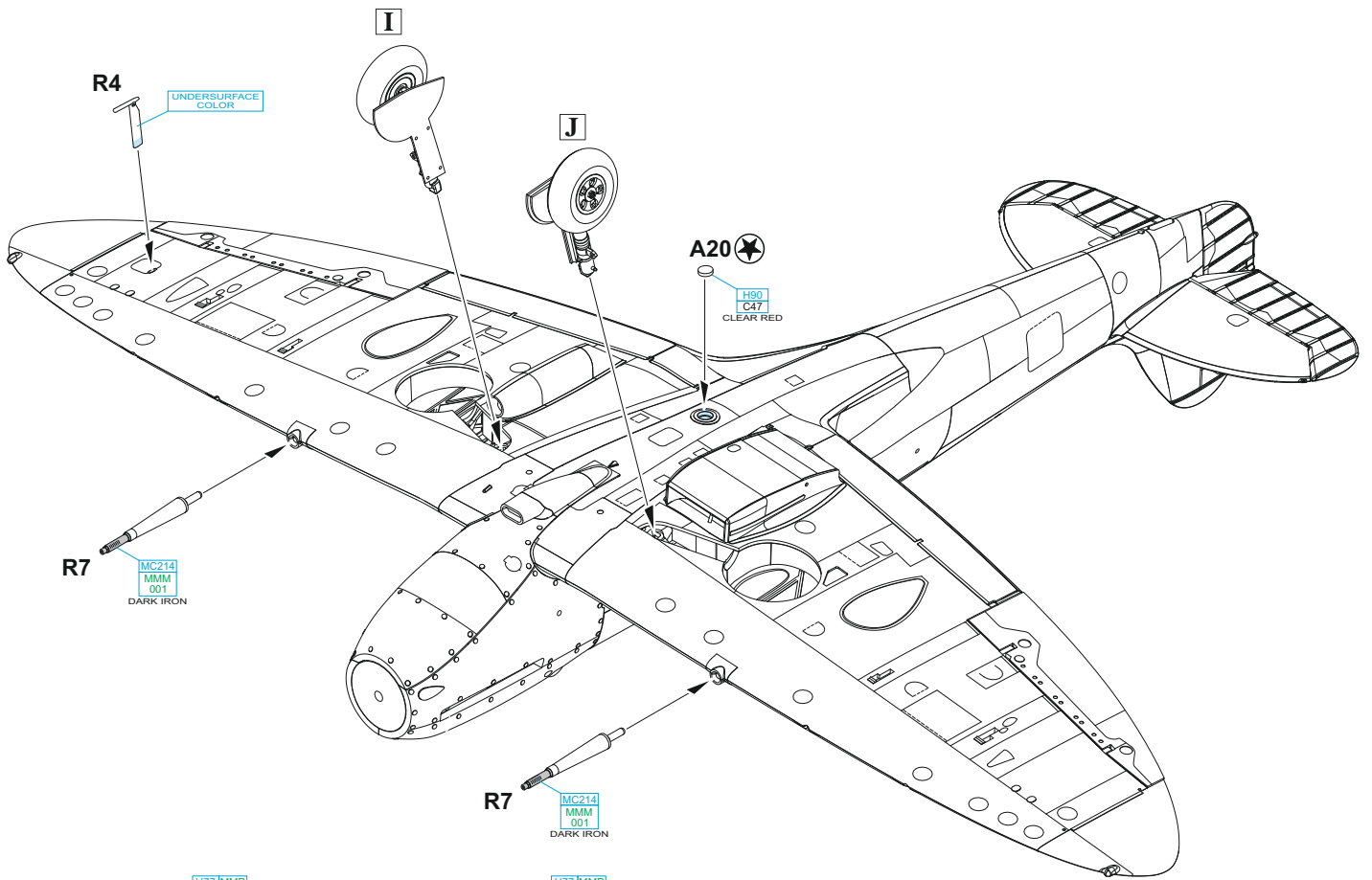
P66 - MARKINGS **A, B, C**
 P67 - MARKINGS **D, E, G, I**

I



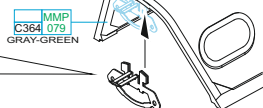
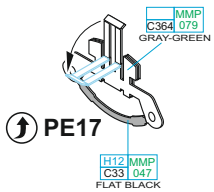
J





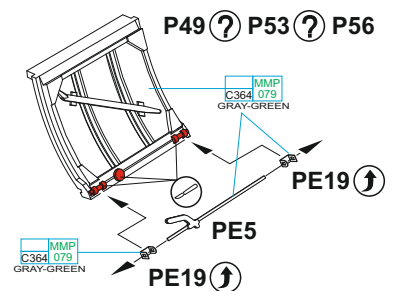
K

A7 ? A10 - MARKINGS **G, I**
 A13 ? A14 - MARKINGS **A, B, C, E**
 A15 ? A16 - MARKING **D**



- A7 ? A10 ⚡
- ? ⚡
- A13 ? A14 ⚡
- ? ⚡
- A15 ? A16 ⚡

L



M

SM201
MMC
001
FINE SILVER

PE12

PE12, 29 - MARKINGS **A, B, C, G, I**

PE29 PE12

A3 A5

A3 - MARKINGS **D, G, I**
A5 - MARKINGS **A, B, C, E**

P

P24 S29 S31

P23 S1 S4

R34 S22 S23

P23, P24, R34 - MARKING **I**
S1, S22, S29 - MARKINGS **B, C, D, E, G**
S4, S23, S31 - MARKING **A**

N starboard side

S26 S28 S5

MARKING **G** ONLY

port side

S6 S26 S28

MARKING **I** ONLY
MARKING **G** ONLY

O starboard side

S26 S28 S30

port side

S32 S26 S28

OPEN CANOPY

A7 A13 A15

A18

A19

P4 P5

R6

PE22

H3 MMP C3 003 RED

MMP C364 079 GRAY-GREEN

MC214 MMC 001 DARK IRON

MC214 MMC 001 DARK IRON

H3 MMP C3 003 RED

∅ - 0,3 mm

R9 N O

R8 N O

R8, R9 - MARKINGS **A, B**
N - MARKINGS **G, I**
O - MARKINGS **C, D, E**

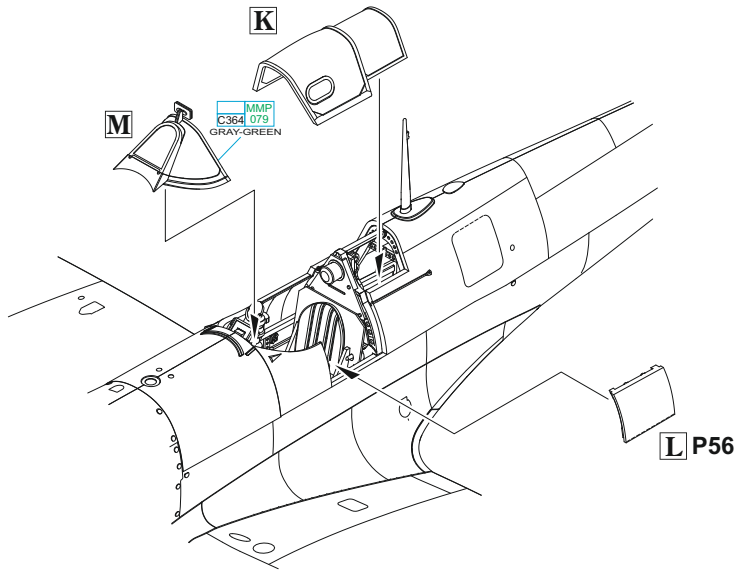
P53 P49

∅ - 0,3 mm

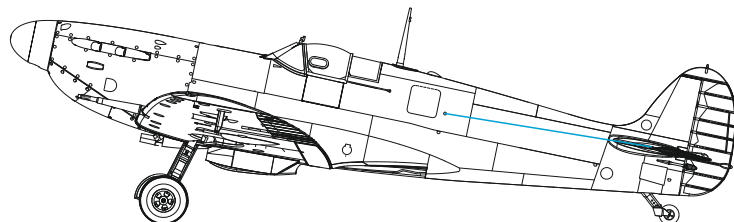
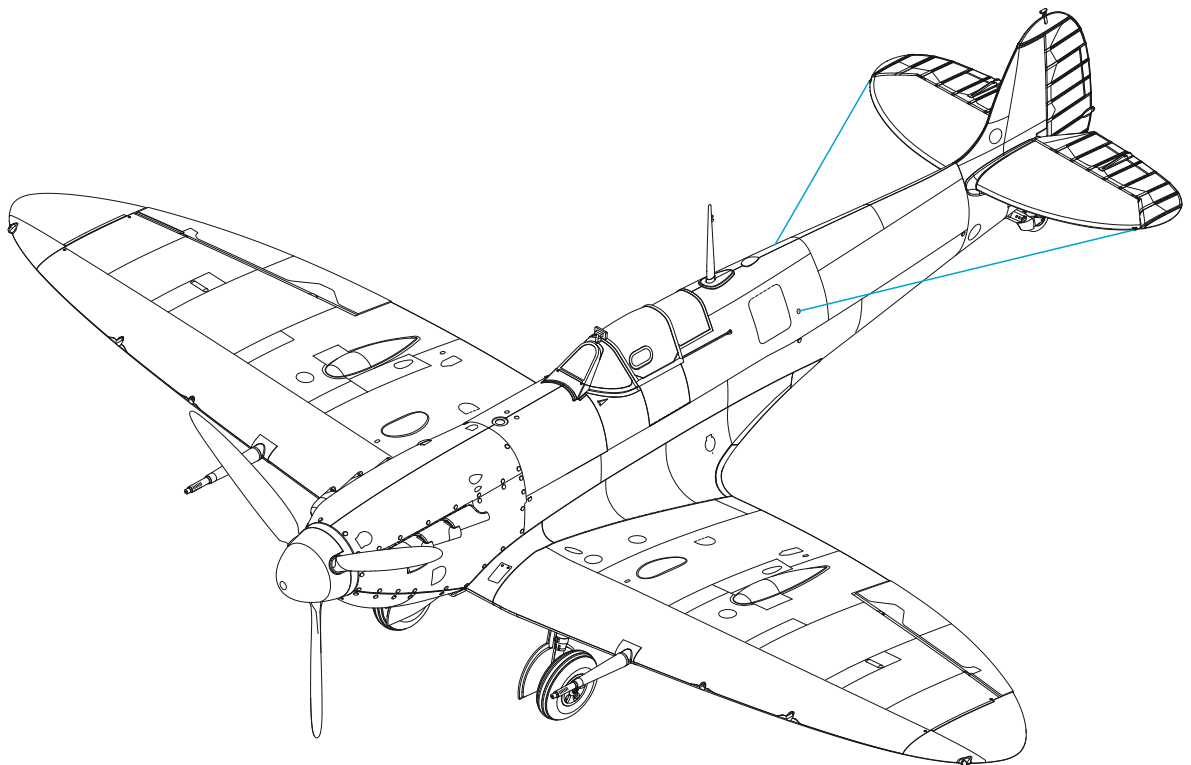
CLOSED CANOPY



A10 ? A14 ? A16



MARKINGS **A**; **B**; **C**; **D**; **E** ONLY





Carefully read instruction sheet before assembling. When you use glue or paint, do not use near open flame and use in well ventilated room. Keep out of reach of small children. Children must not be allowed to suck any part, or pull vinyl bag over the head.



Před započatím stavby si pečlivě prostudujte stavební návod. Při používání barev a lepidla pracujte v dobře větrané místnosti. Lepidla ani barvy nepoužívejte v blízkosti otevřeného ohně. Model není určen malým dětem, mohlo by dojít k požití drobných dílů.

INSTRUCTION SIGNS * INSTR. SYMBOLS * INSTRUKTION SINNBILDEN * SYMBOLES * 記号の説明

OPTIONAL
VOLBABEND
OHNOUTSAND
BROUSITOPEN HOLE
VYVRTAT OTVORSYMETRICAL ASSEMBLY
SYMETRICKÁ MONTÁŽREMOVE
ODŘÍZNOUTREVERSE SIDE
OTOČITAPPLY EDUARD MASK
AND PAINT
POUŽIT EDUARD MASK
NABARVIT

PARTS



DÍLY



TEILE

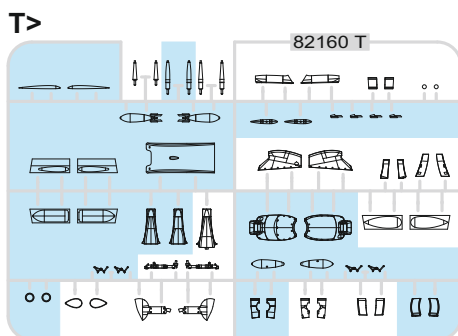
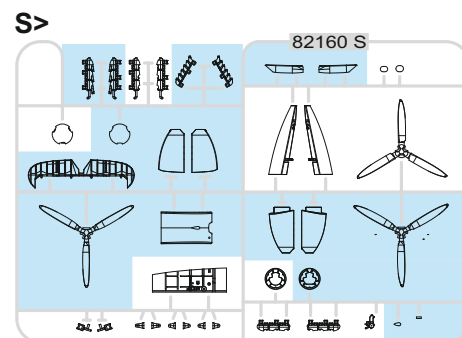
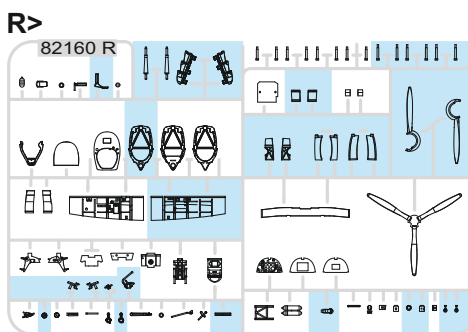
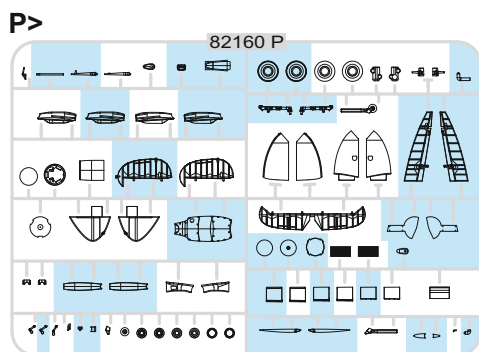
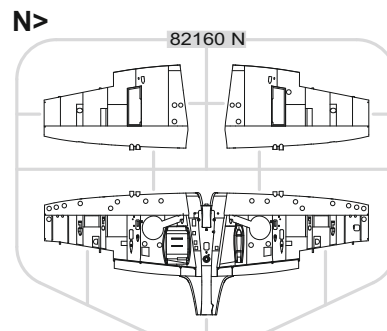
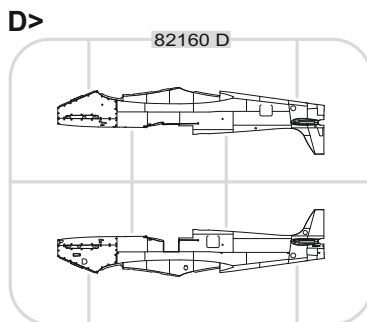
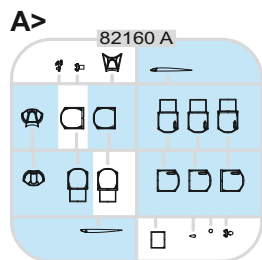
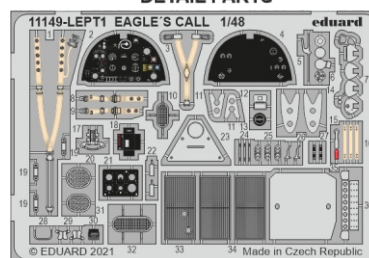


PIÈCES



部品

PLASTIC PARTS

PE - PHOTO ETCHED
DETAIL PARTS

-Parts not for use. -Teile werden nicht verwendet. -Pièces à ne pas utiliser. -Tyto díly nepoužívejte při stavbě. - 使用しない部品

COLOURS



BARVY



FARBEN



PEINTURE

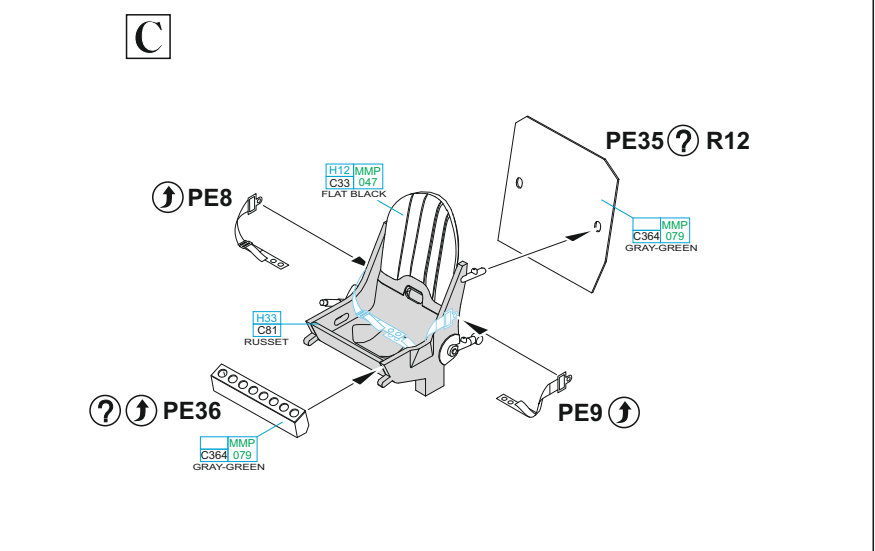
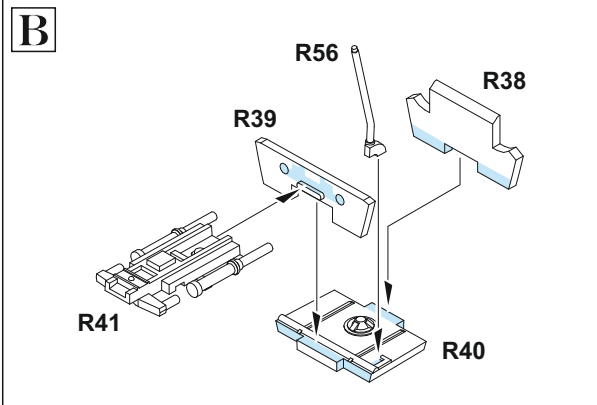
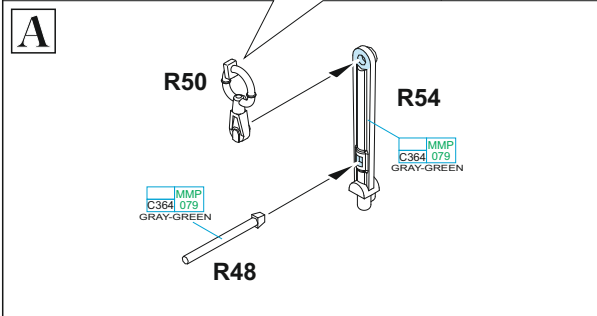
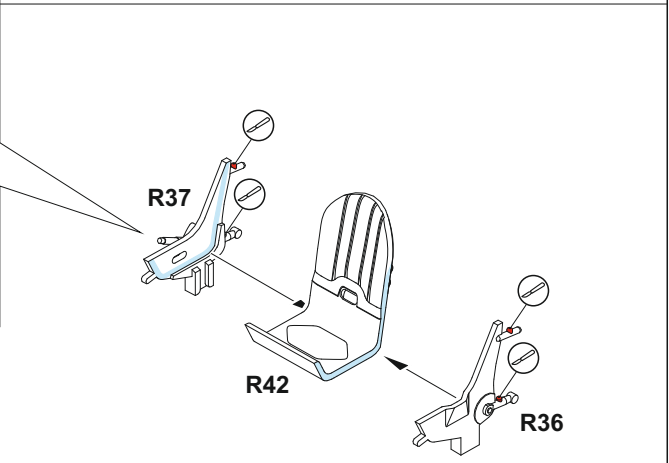
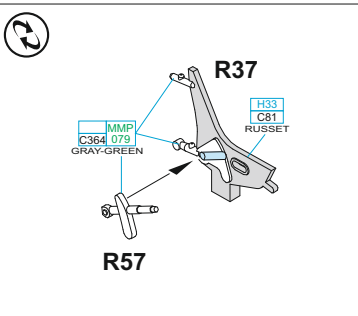
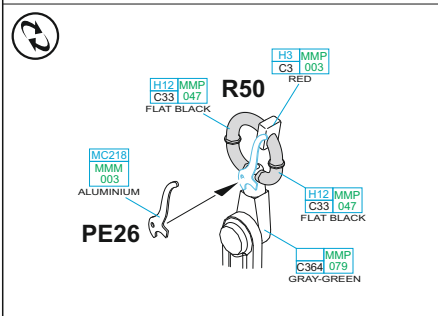
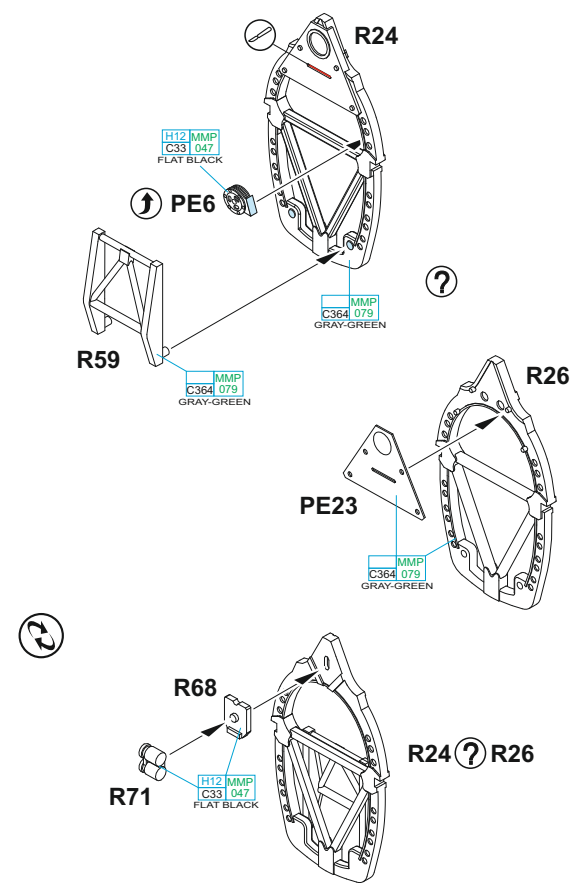
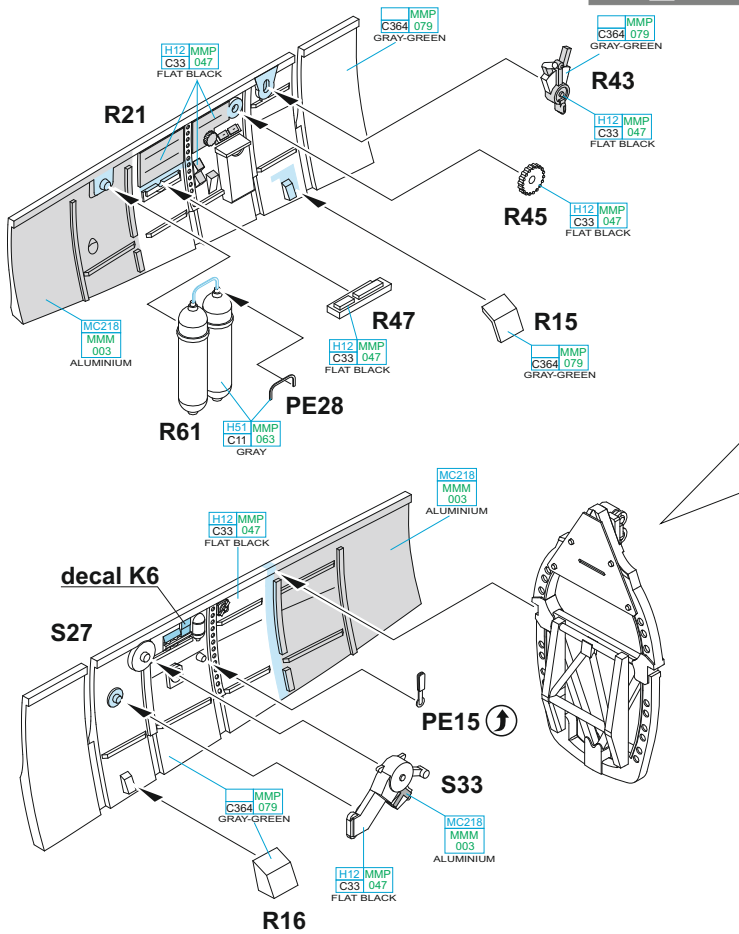


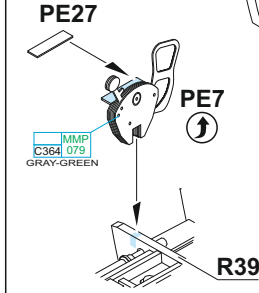
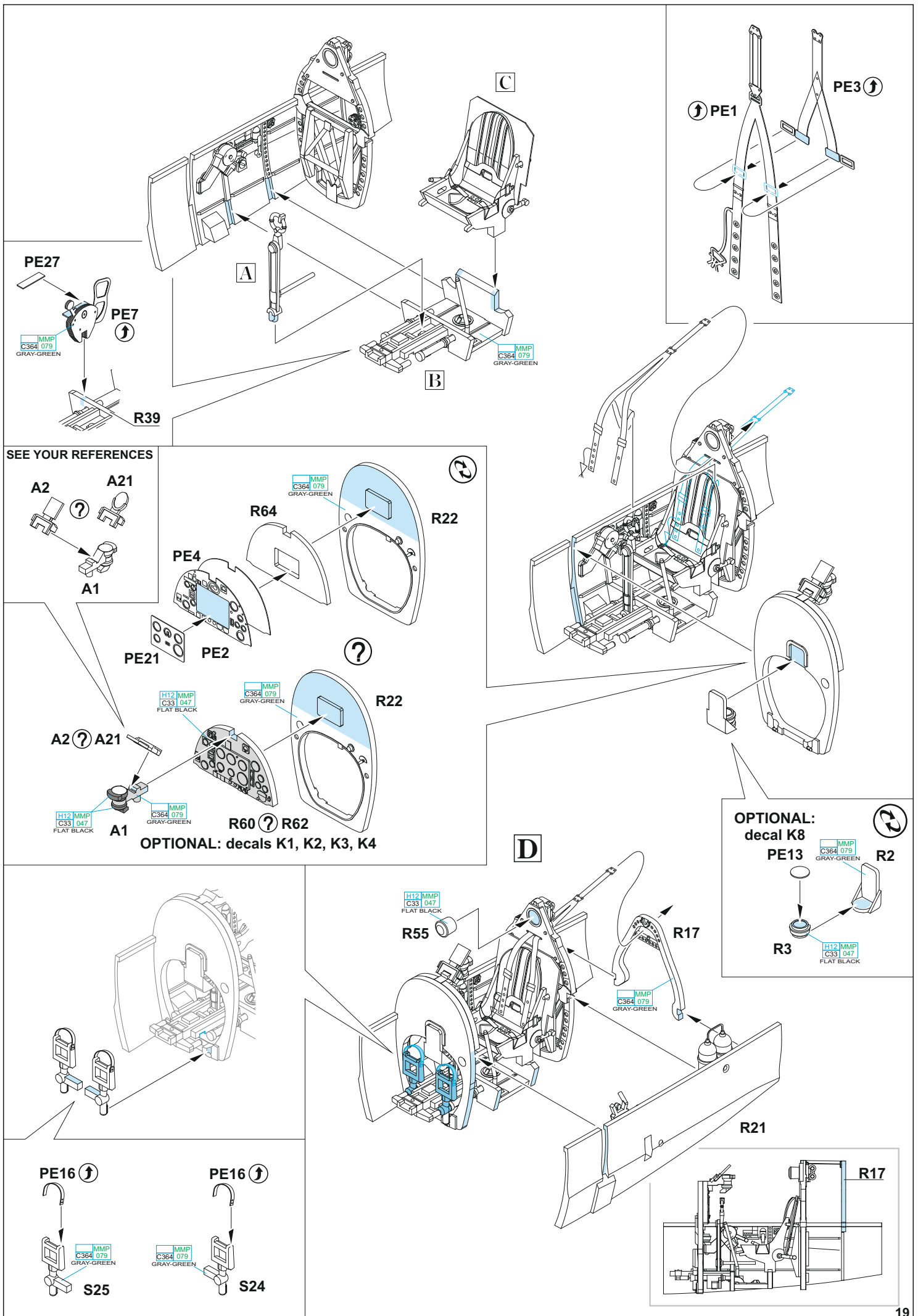
色

GSI Creos (GUNZE)		MISSION MODELS	
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	PAINTS	
H3	C3	MMP-003	RED
H4	C4	MMP-007	YELLOW
H8	C8		SILVER
H11	C62	MMP-001	FLAT WHITE
H12	C33	MMP-047	FLAT BLACK
H27	C44		TAN
H33	C81		RUSSET
H51	C11	MMP-063	LIGHT GULL GRAY
H71	C21	MMP-076	MIDDLE STONE
H72	C369	MMP-078	DARK EARTH
H74	C368	MMP-080	SKY
H77	C137	MMP-040	TIRE BLACK

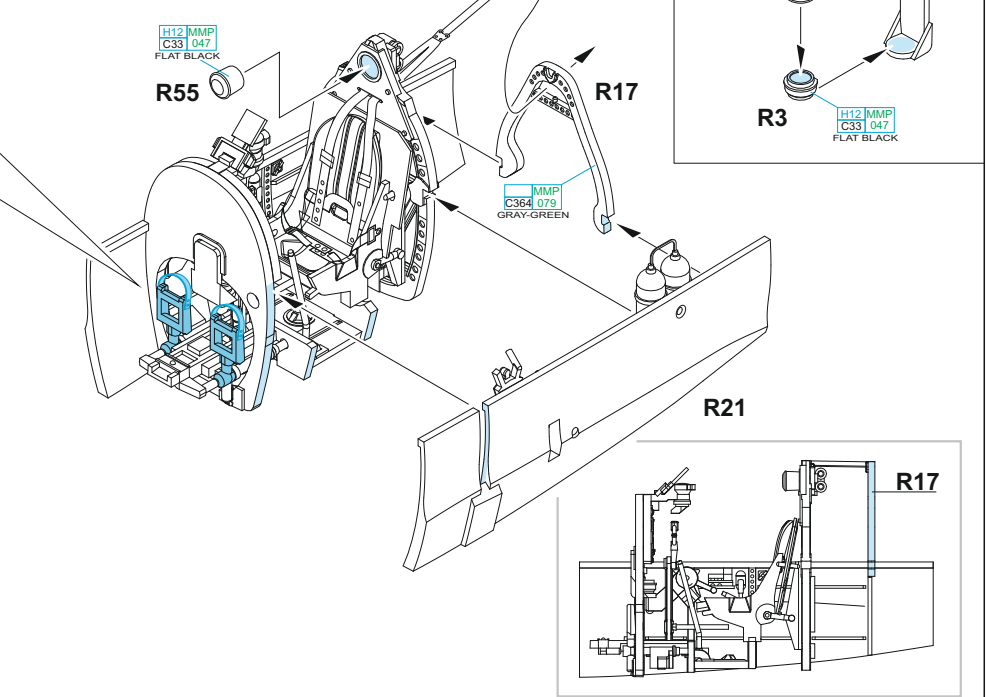
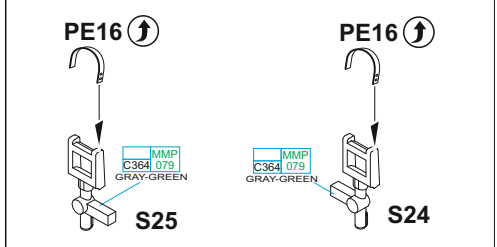
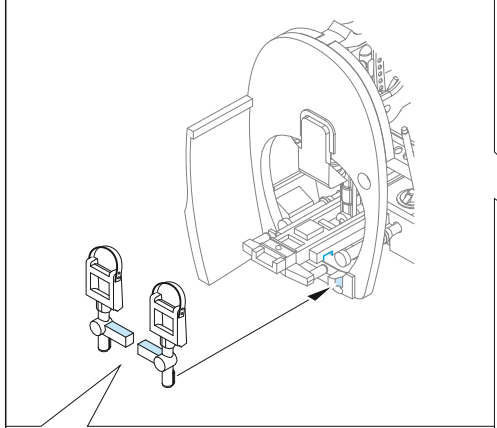
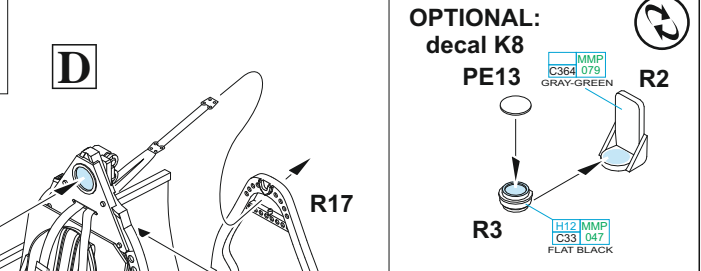
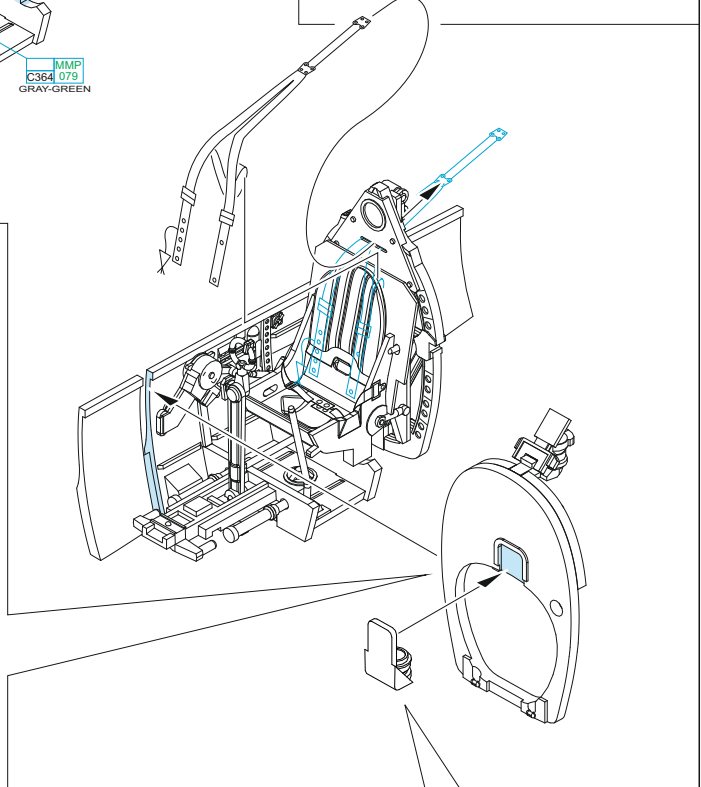
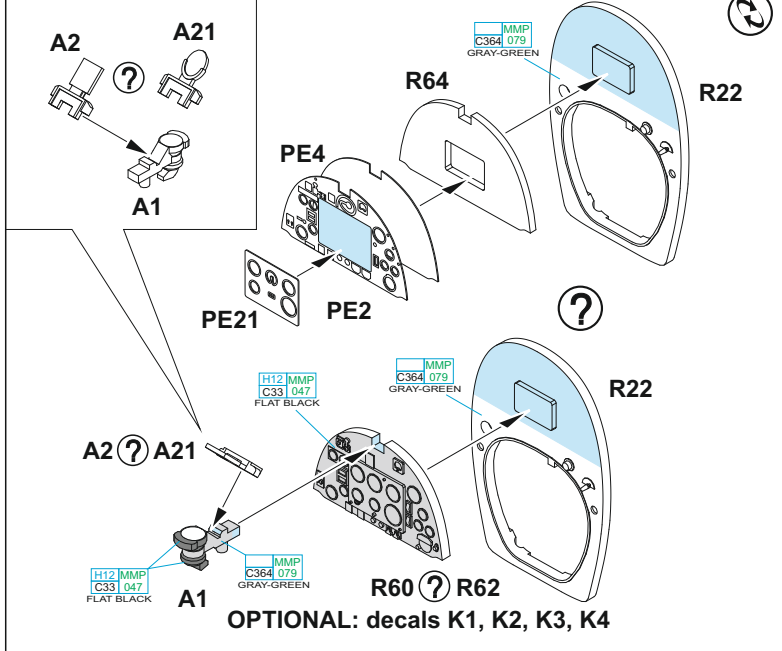
GSI Creos (GUNZE)		MISSION MODELS	
AQUEOUS	Mr.COLOR	PAINTS	
H90	C47		CLEAR RED
H94	C138		CLEAR GREEN
H321	C321	MMP-086	LIGHT BROWN
H327	C327	MMP-101	RED
H328	C328		BLUE
	C364	MMP-079	AIRCRAFT GRAY-GREEN
	C370	MMP-092	AZURE BLUE
Mr.METAL COLOR		METALLICS	
	MC214	MMM-001	DARK IRON
	MC218	MMM-003	ALUMINIUM
Mr.COLOR SUPER METALLIC		METALLICS	
	SM201	MMC-001	SUPER FINE SILVER

Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop

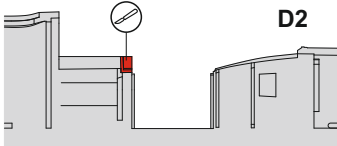




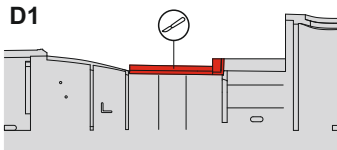
SEE YOUR REFERENCES



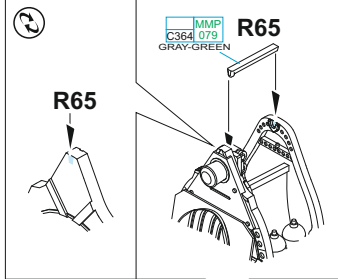
7 FOR CLOSED CANOPY ONLY



D2

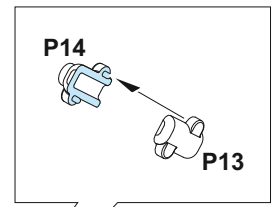


D1



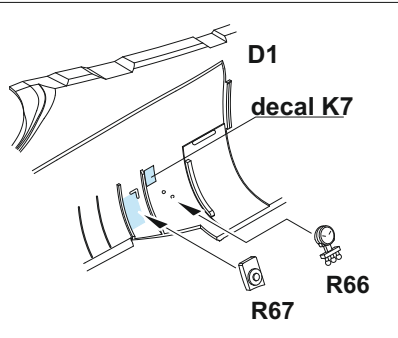
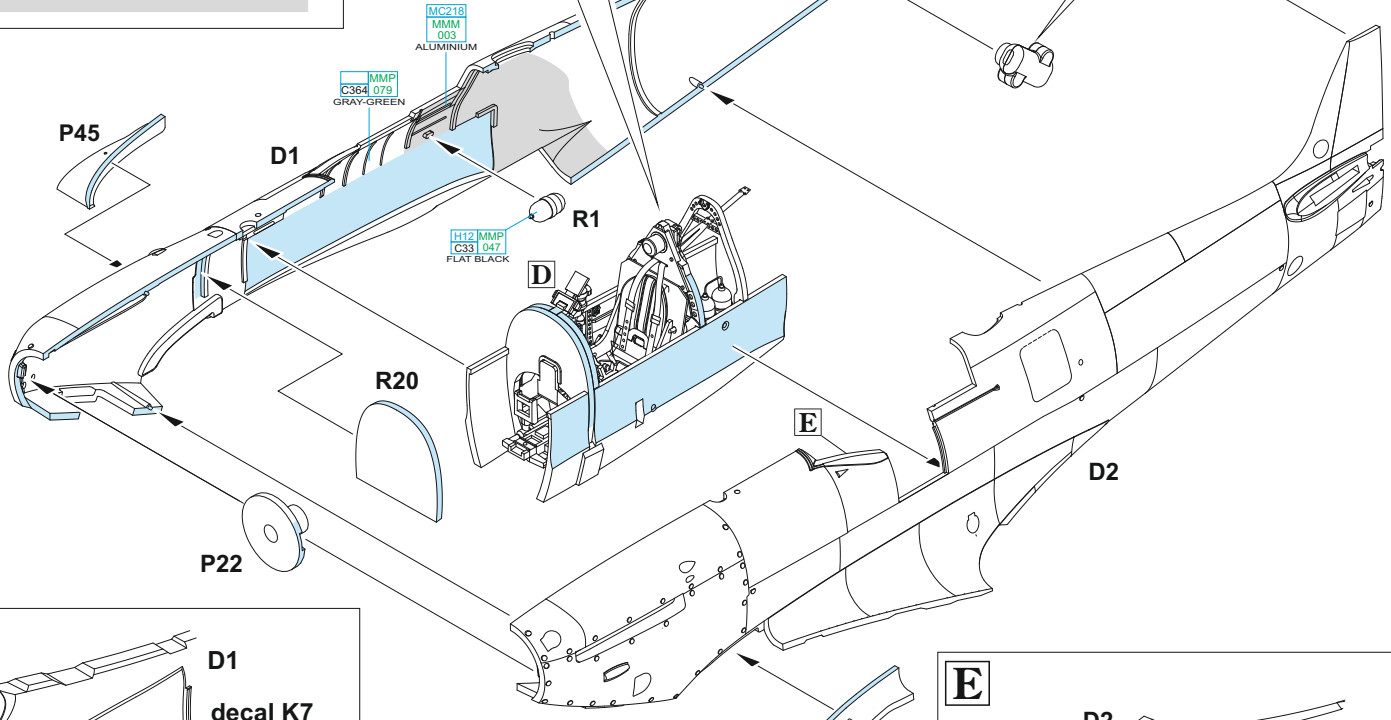
R65

R65



P14

P13

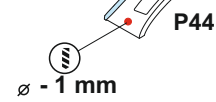


D1

decal K7

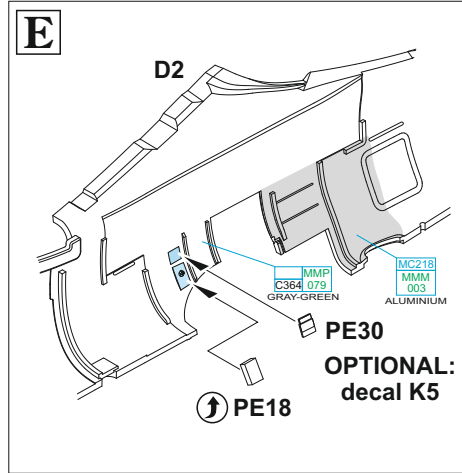
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R66



P44

∅ - 1 mm

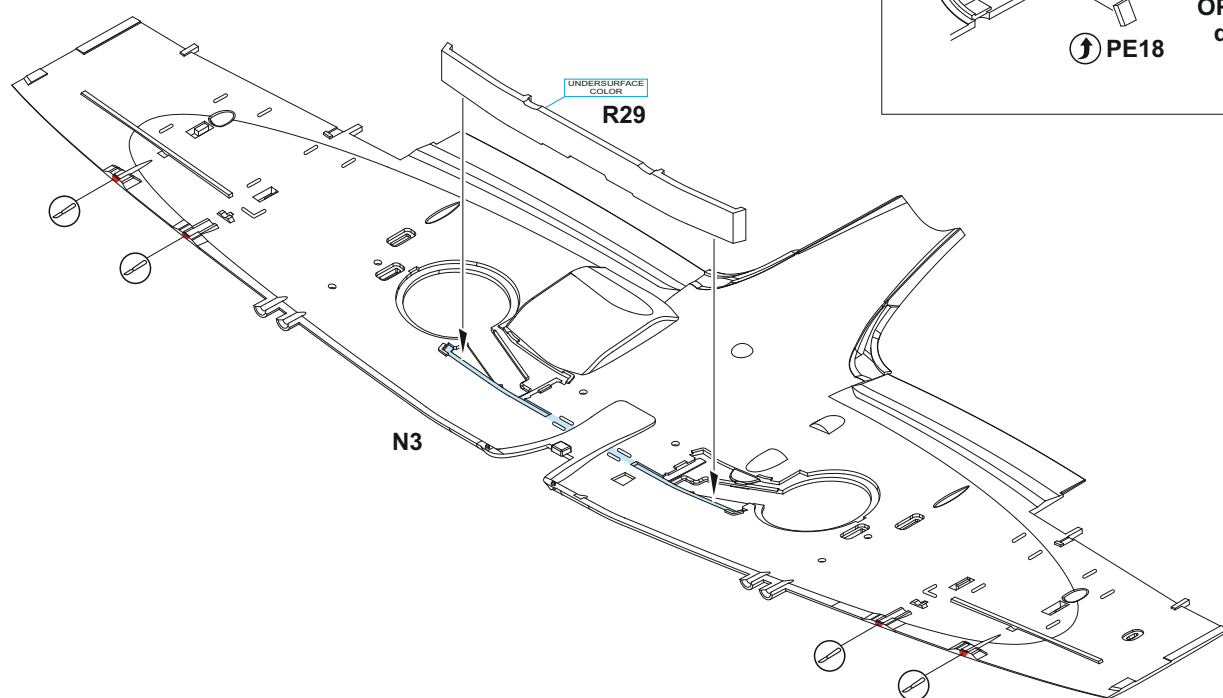


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D2

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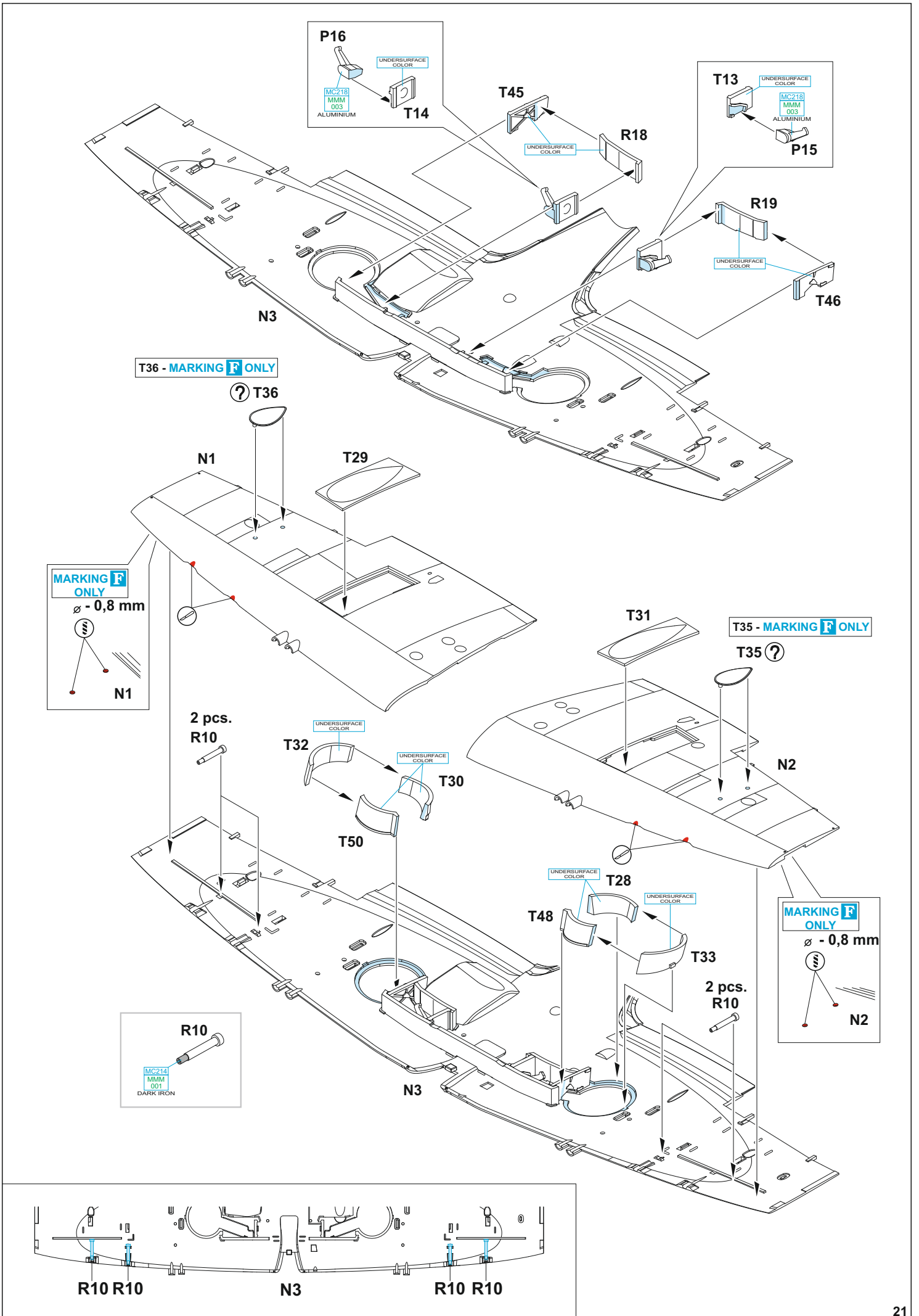
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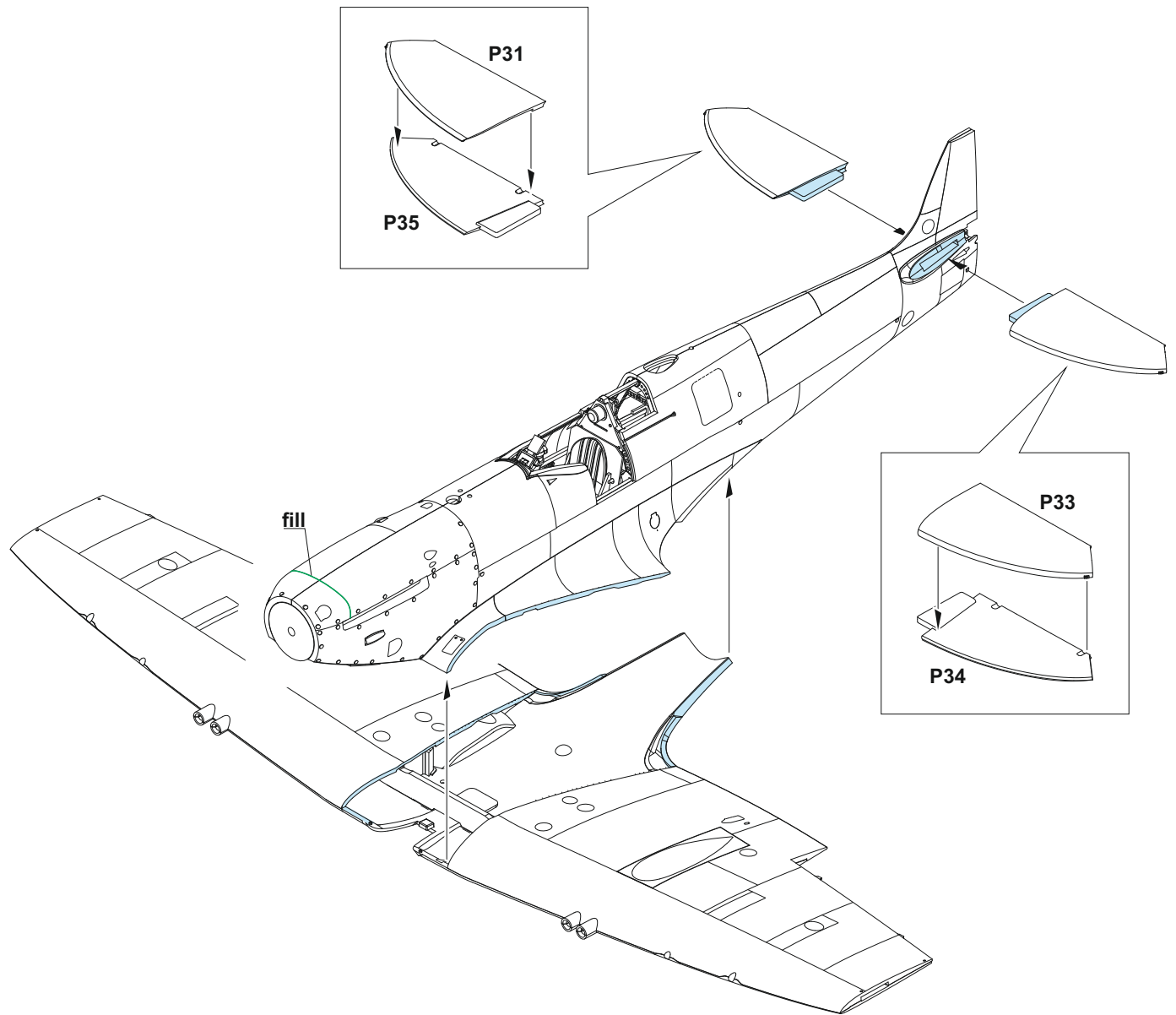


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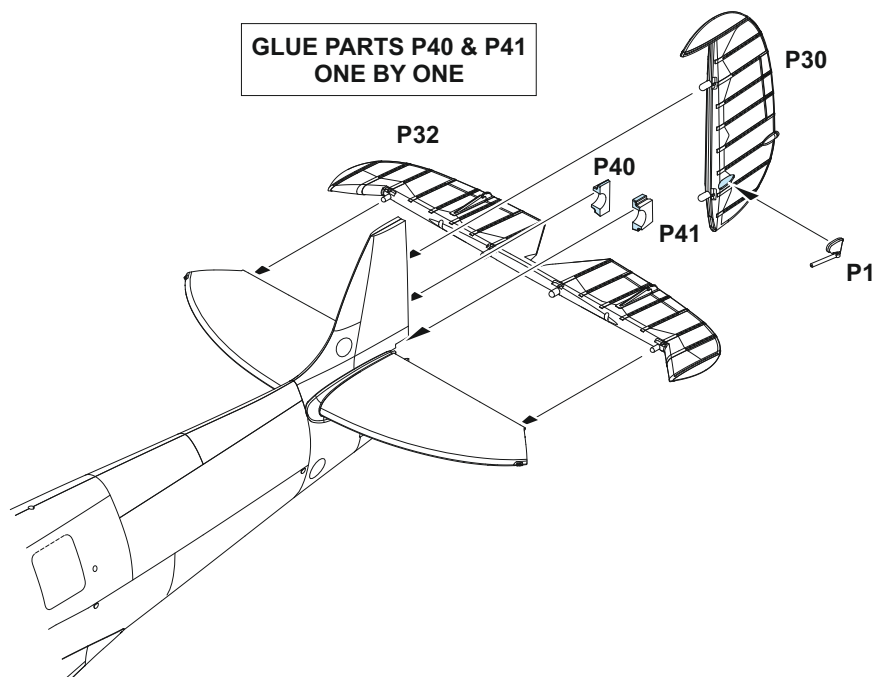
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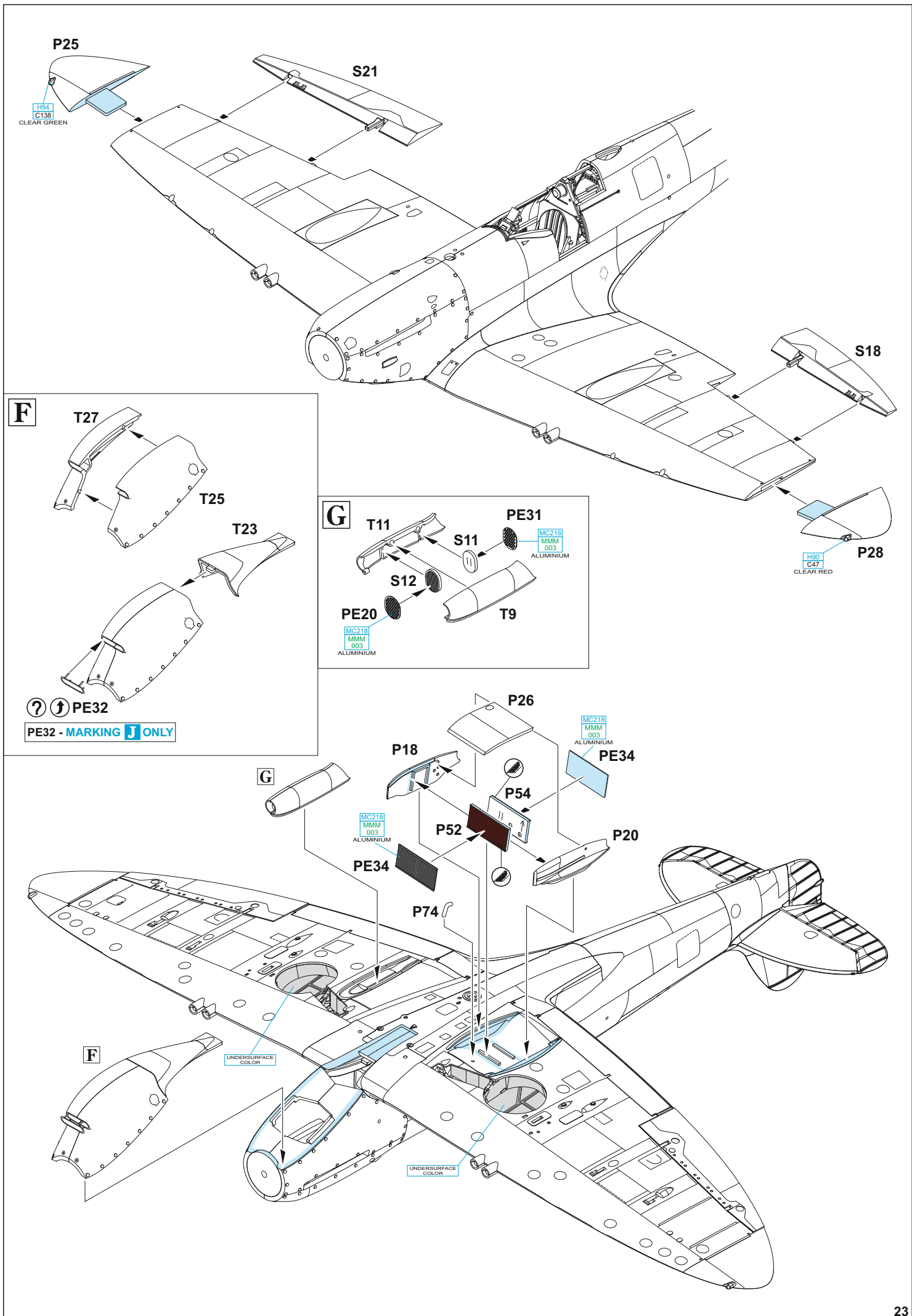
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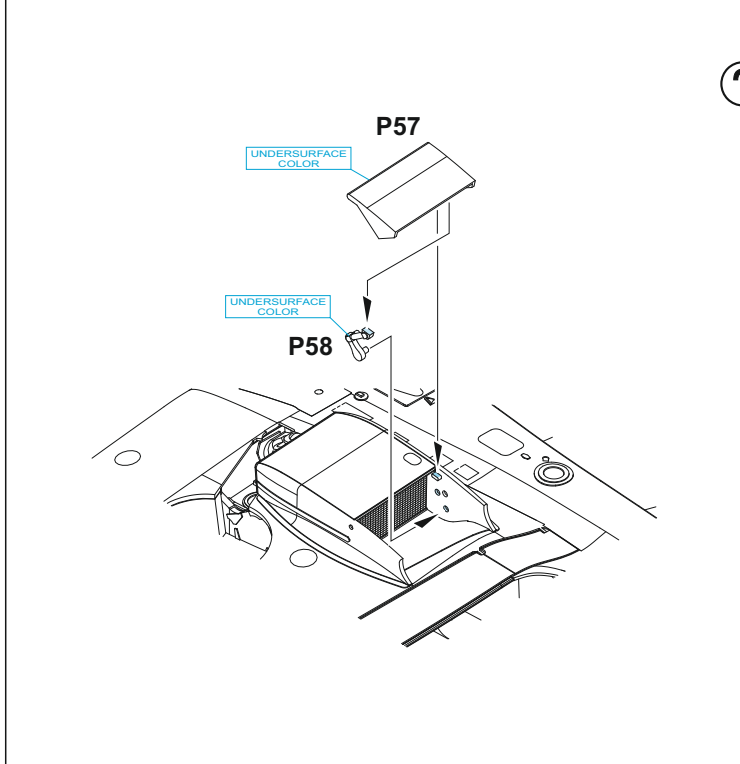
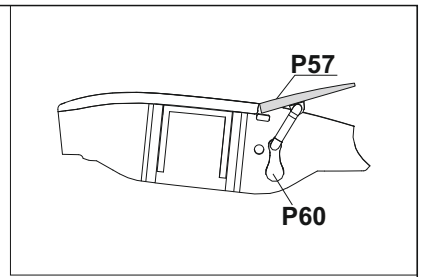
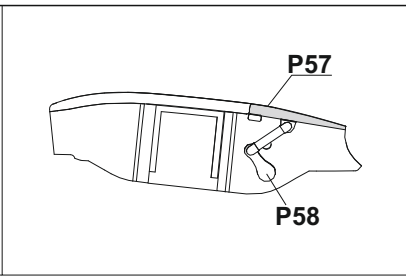
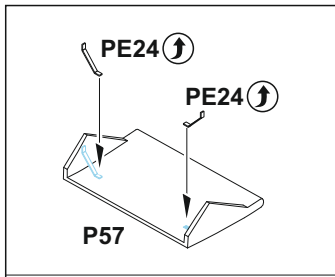




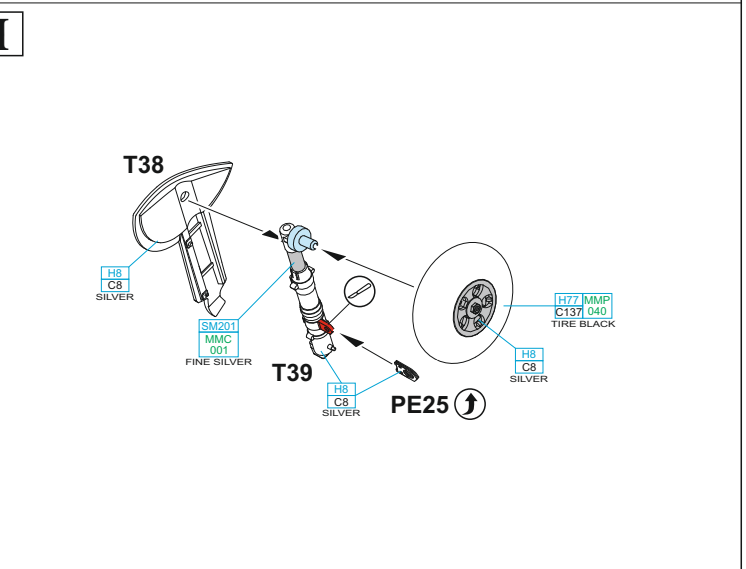
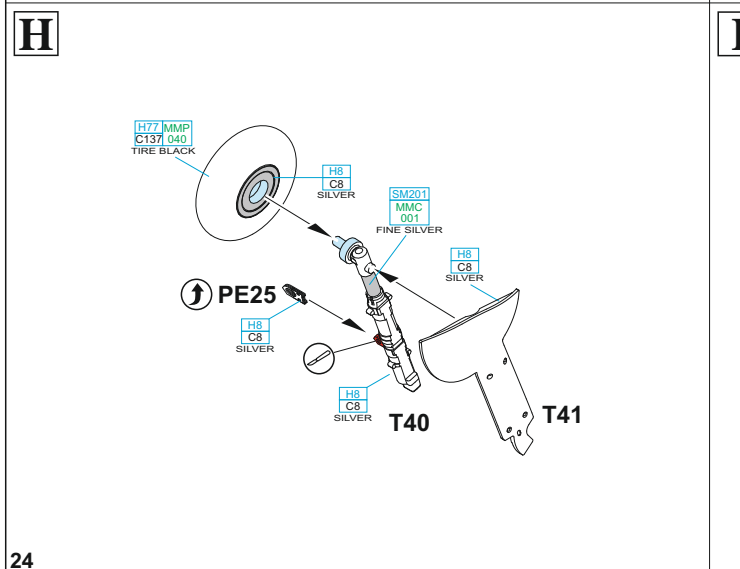
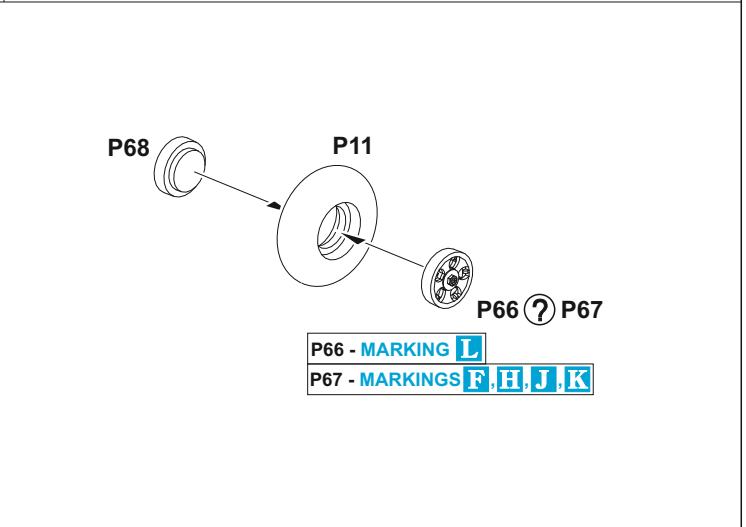
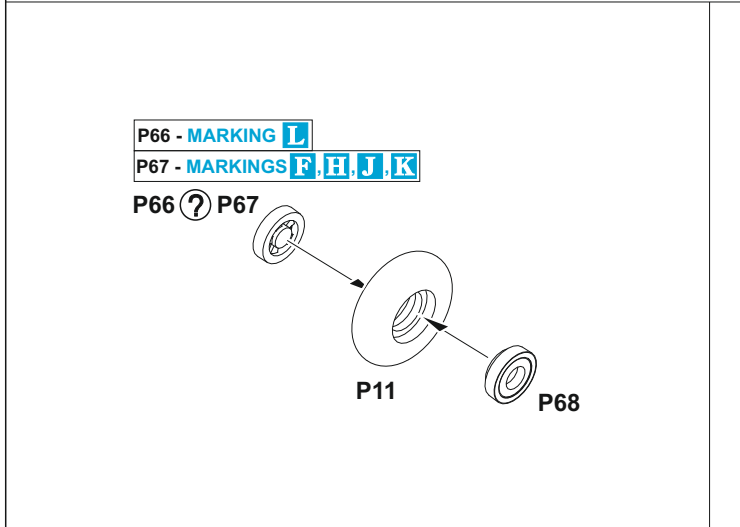
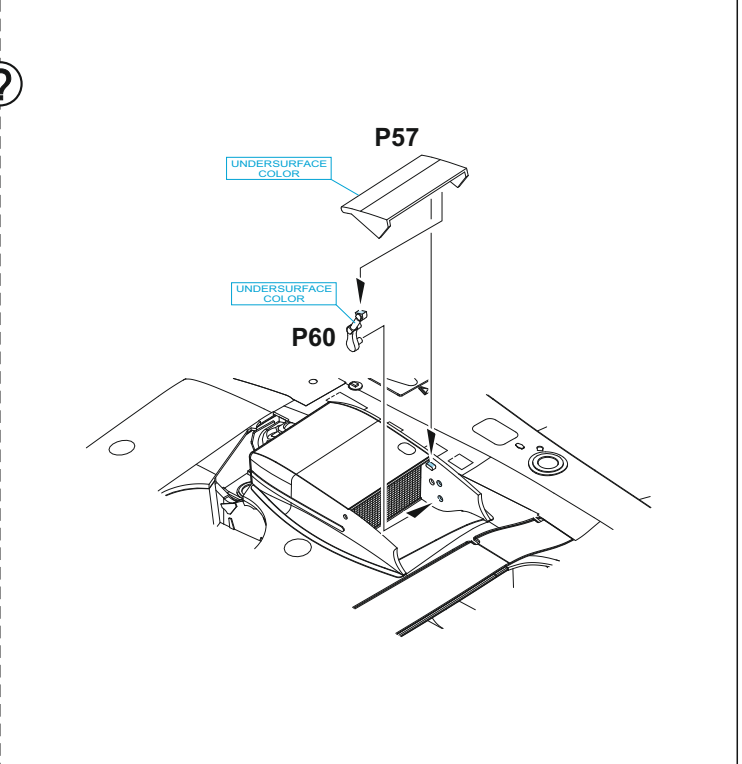
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ONE BY ONE**

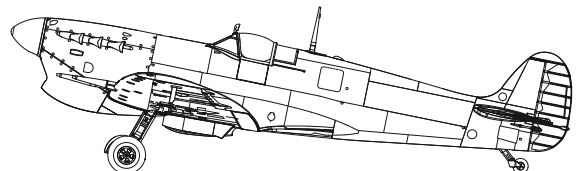
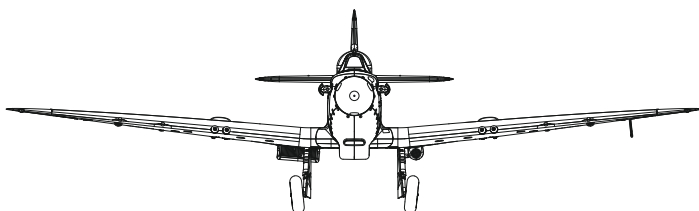
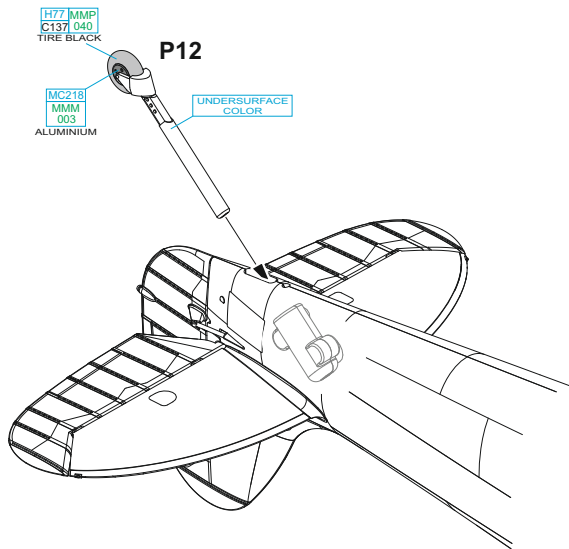
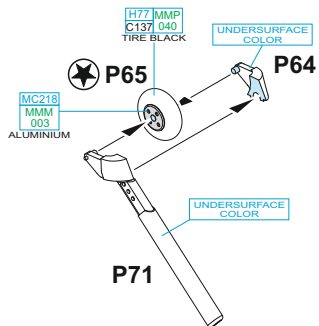
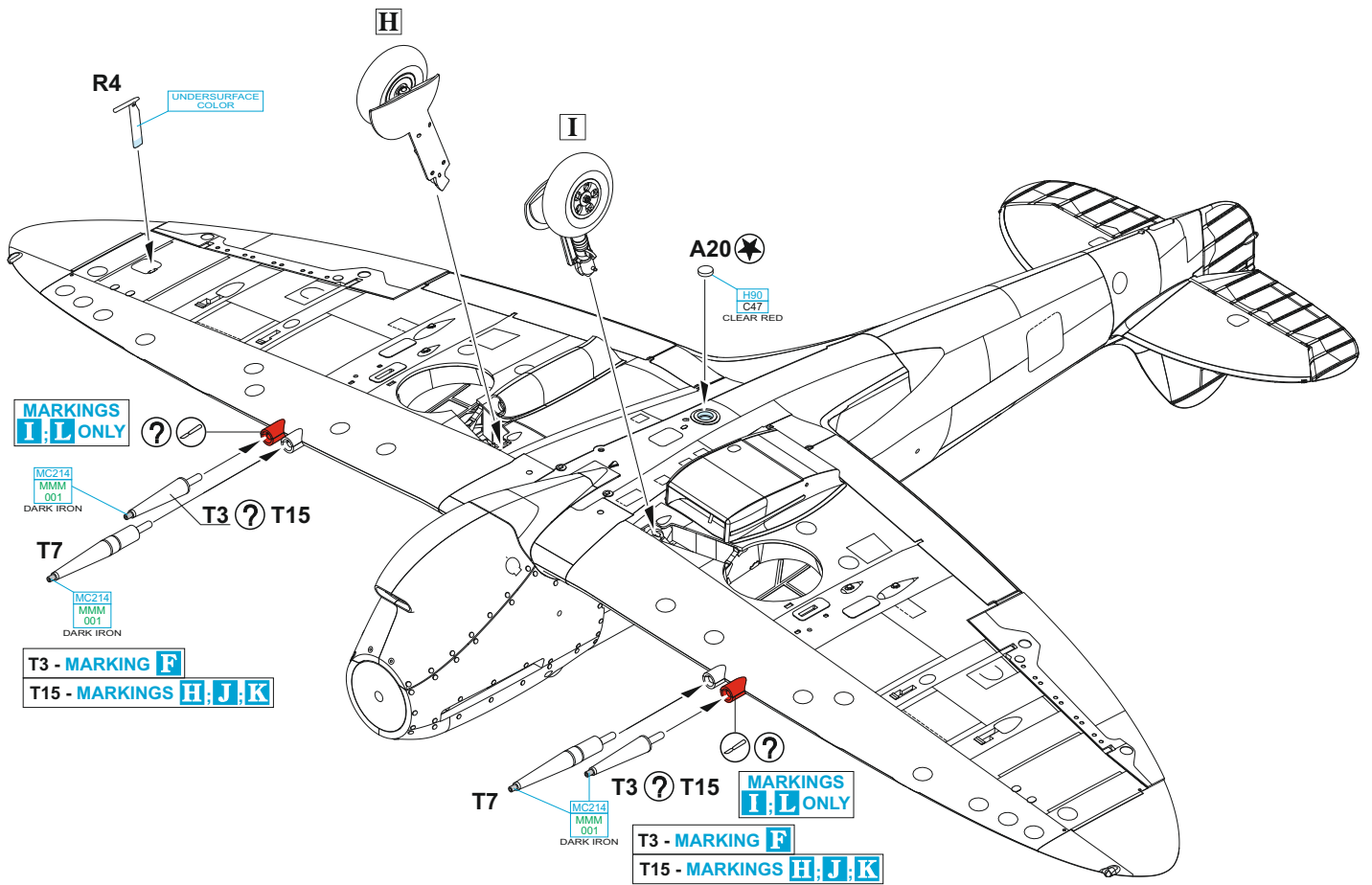




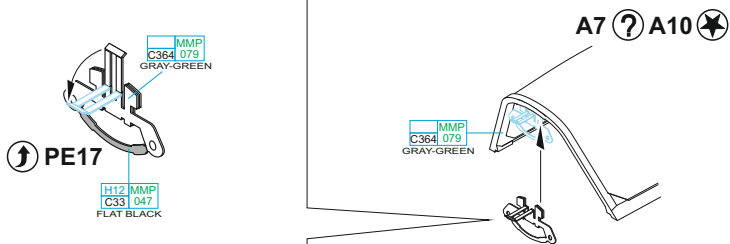


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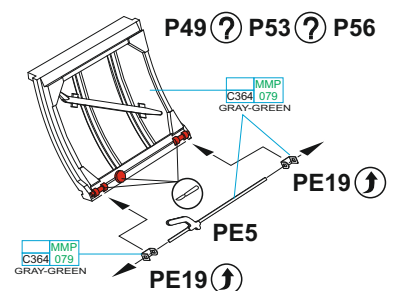


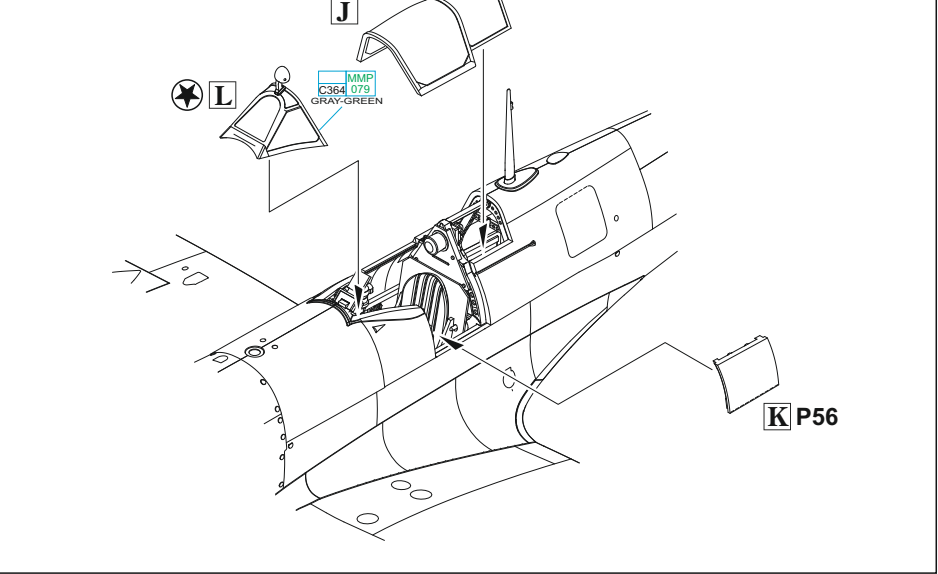
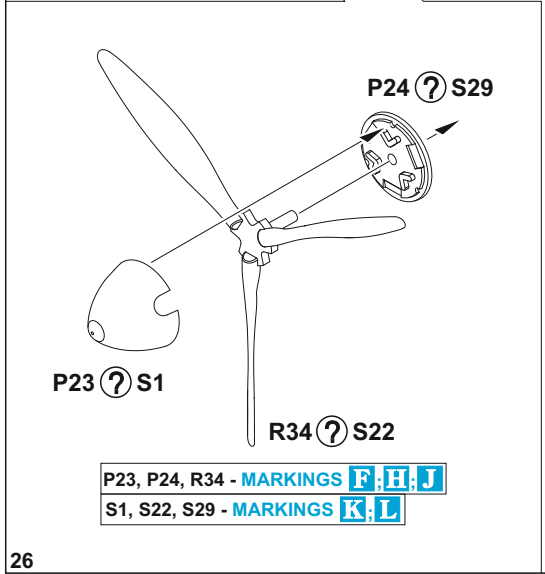
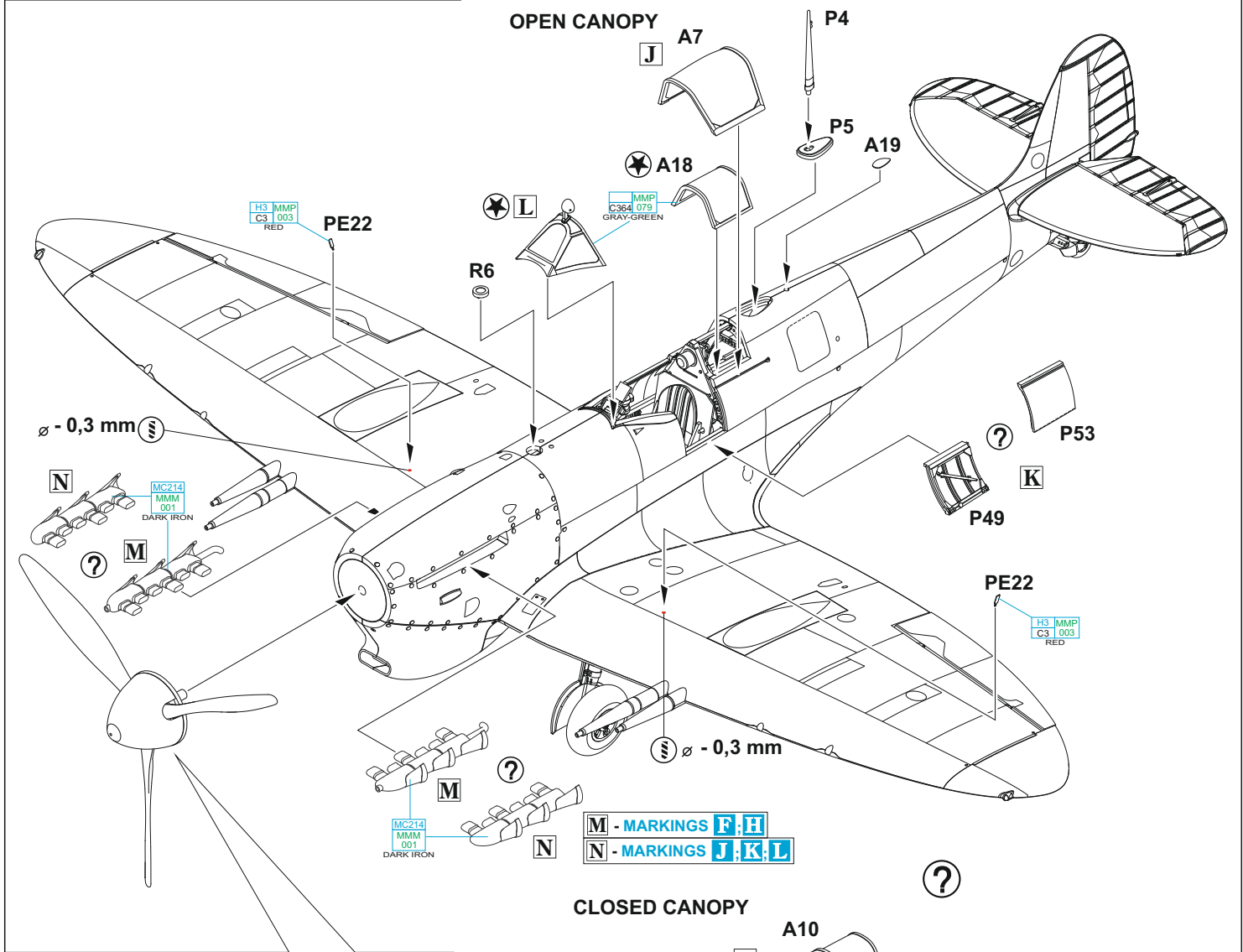
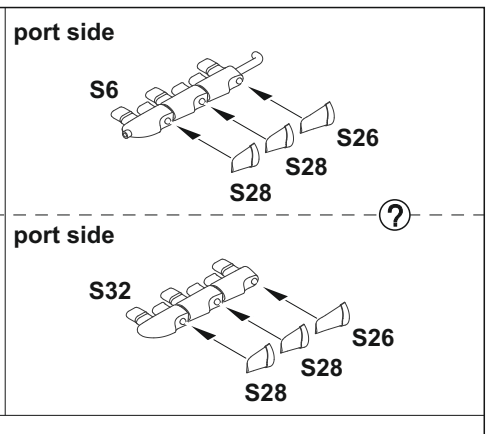
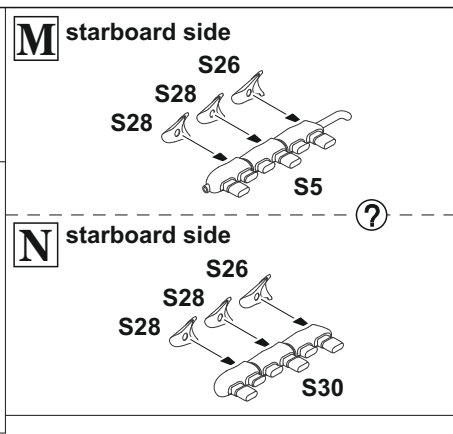
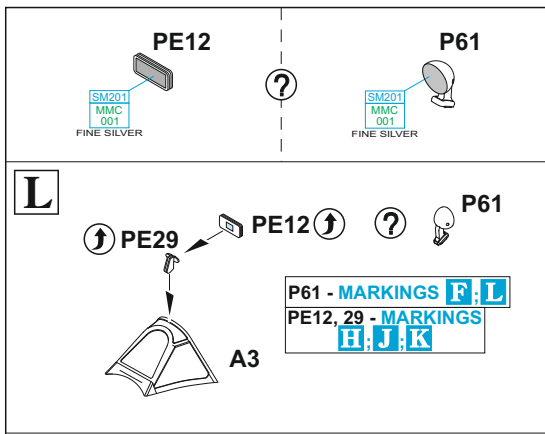


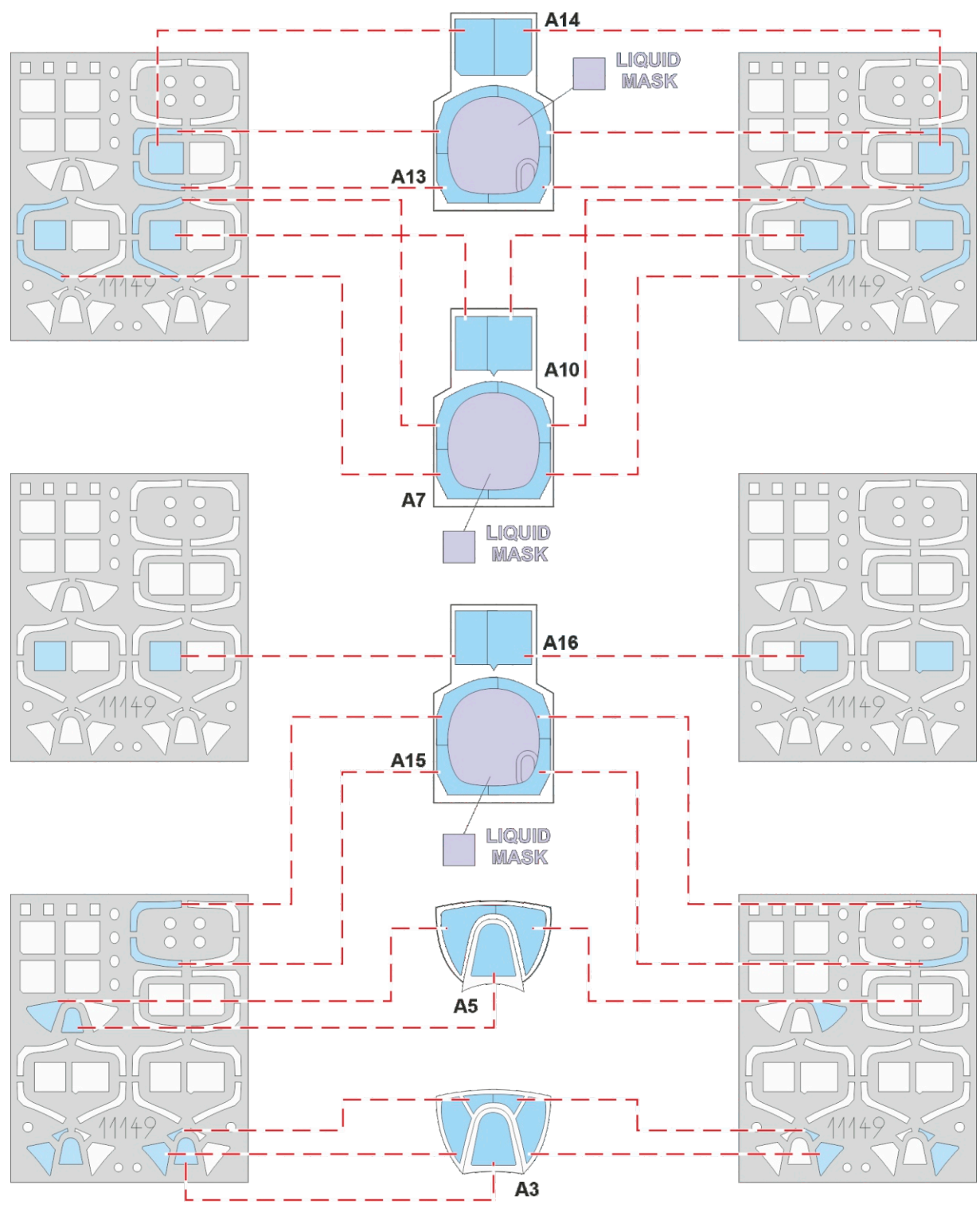
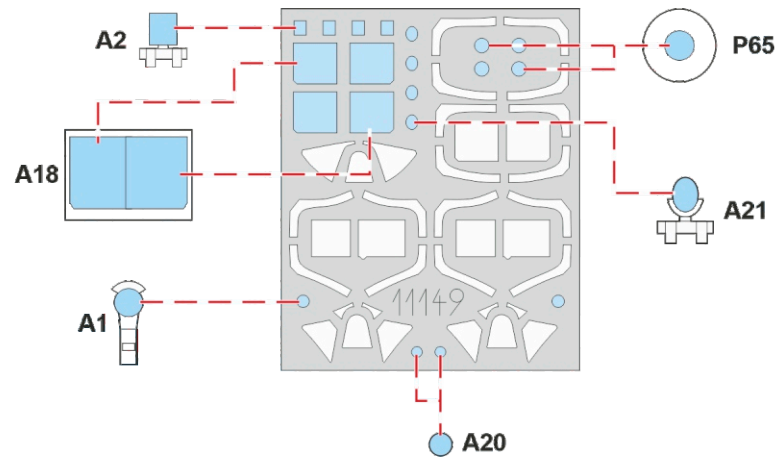
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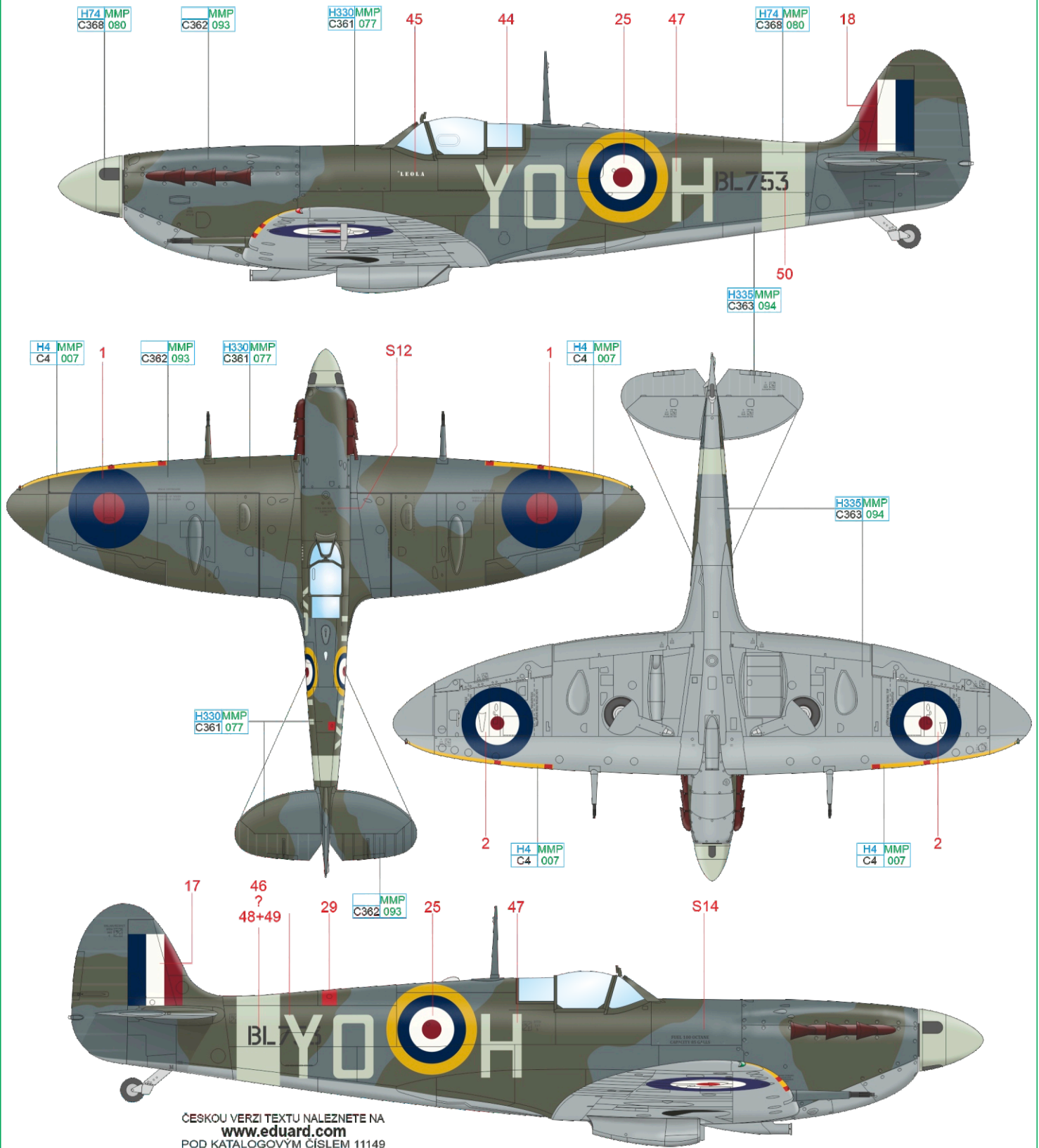






B Spitfire Mk.Vb, BL753, P/O Donald J. M. Blakeslee, No. 401 Squadron RCAF, RAF Gravesend, Kent, United Kingdom, April – May 1942

Donald Blakeslee, the future fighter ace and commander of the 4th FG USAAF landed in England on May 15, 1941, having completed the pilot training in Canada and was assigned to No. 401 Squadron RCAF, part of the Biggin Hill Wing. On November 22 he was credited with the first kill, Bf 109 over Desvres. Initially, Blakeslee was reluctant to serve in the American Eagle squadrons, but after he completed his tour of duty with No. 401 Squadron, he joined No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron as it was the only possibility to continue combat flying. After the 4th FG was established within 8th AF USAAF at the end of September 1942, he was appointed to command 335th FS (ex No. 121 Squadron RAF) and on February 1 he became the commander of the whole 4th FG. On March 15, 1943, he scored his first kill with 4th FG flying P-47D Thunderbolt and on July 28 he led 4th FG over Germany for the first time. In February 1944 4th FG under his command became one of the first 8th AF fighter groups to be re-equipped with P-51B Mustang. In November 1944 Don Blakeslee retired from the operational service with 15.5 kills, 500 combat flights and more than thousand operational hours to his credit.

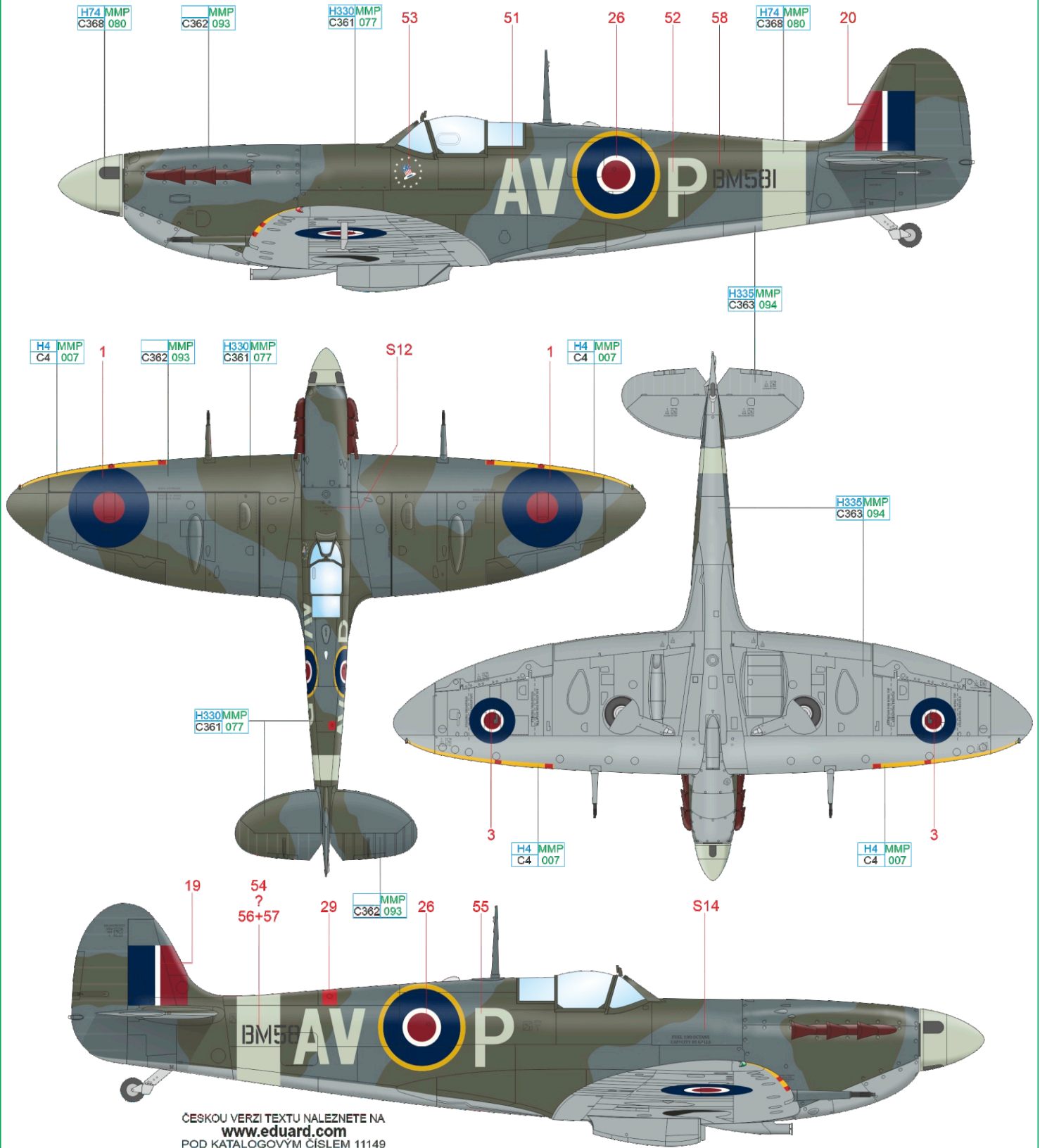


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YELLOW	H4 MMP C4 007	SKY	H74 MMP C368 080	DARK GREEN	H330 MMP C361 077	OCEAN GRAY	MMP C362 093	MEDIUM SEA GRAY	H335 MMP C363 094
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C Spitfire Mk.Vb, BM581, P/O William P. Kelly, No. 121 (Eagle) Squadron, RAF Southend, Essex, United Kingdom, July 1942

The second Eagle squadron, 121st, was established in May 1941 at RAF airbase Kirton in Lindsey. In November 1941 it transitioned from Hurricanes to new Spitfires Mk.Vb. In December it replaced No. 71 (Eagle) Squadron at RAF airbase North Weald and joined the offensive operations over occupied Europe. On July 21, 1942, Spitfire BM581 was damaged by Flak fire during the sweep over the Netherlands. After repair, it was returned to the unit where it served as AV-K even though on September 29 the unit became 335th FS, 4th FG, 8th AF. In April 1943 after the 4th FG re-equipped to new P-47D Thunderbolt, this aircraft was returned to RAF. William Kelly, as well as the whole unit, was transferred under the USAAF command. In February 1943 he lost his life during the sortie as one of the last 4th FG pilots who were killed in combat when flying Spitfires.



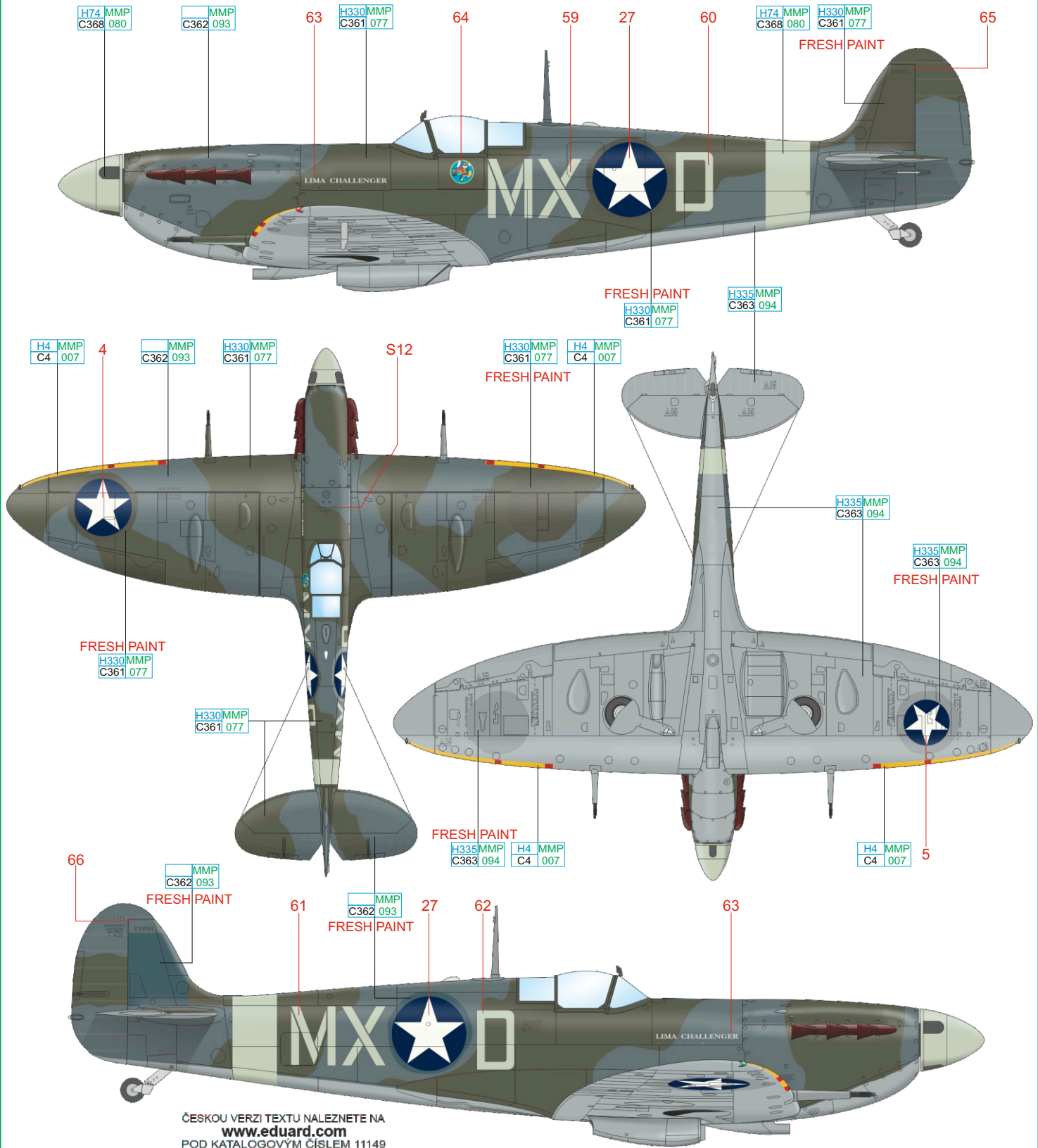
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D Spitfire Mk.Vb, EN851, Lt. Roland F. Wooten, 307th FS, 31st FG, 8th AF, RAF Merston, West Sussex, United Kingdom, late August 1942

The 31st FG arrived in the Great Britain in June 1942. It received Spitfires of various versions at RAF airbases Atcham and High Erccall and commenced the training. EN851 is a good example of the coloration and markings of the American Spitfires on the eve of the USAAF operations in Europe. The aircraft remained in the standard British camouflage (Day Fighter Scheme) including the recognition stripe on the tail. British insignia were overpainted at the unit level and replaced with the American white stars in the blue circle. The insignia on the vertical tail, left lower wing and right upper wing insignia were just oversprayed with the camouflage color. As of October 1, 1942, the yellow outlines of the national insignia were introduced. On July 18 31st FG flew its first combat mission. On August 19 it was the only USAAF fighter unit deployed in the Dieppe landing. The 31st FG was transferred to the newly established 12th AF in October. In Gibraltar it was re-equipped with Spitfires Mk.Vb Trop and readied to be deployed in the Operation Torch, the Allied landing in North Africa.



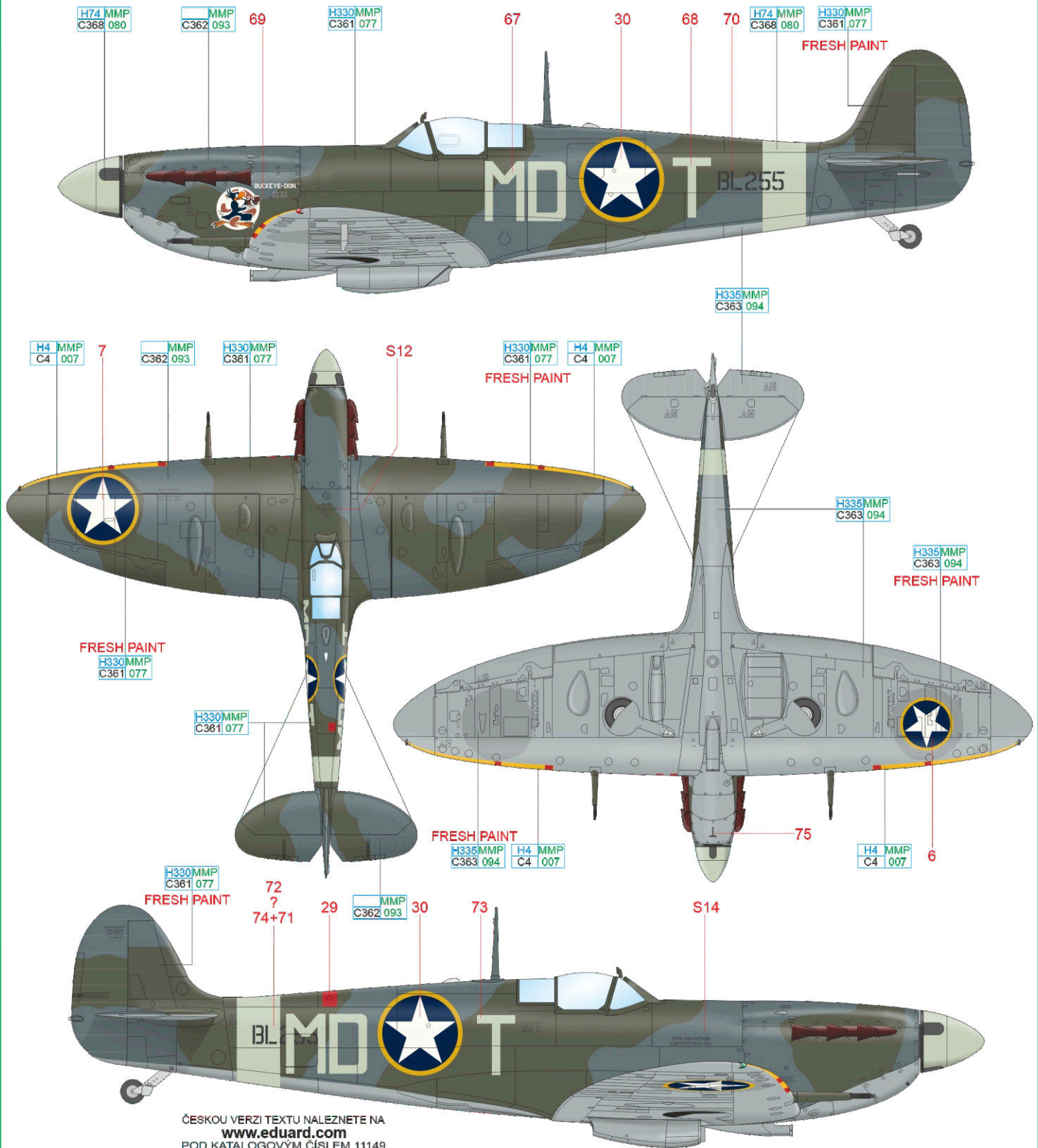
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E Spitfire Mk.Vb, BL255, Lt. Dominic S. Gentile, 336th FS, 4th FG, 8th AF, Debden, Essex, United Kingdom, August 1942

The third and last Eagle squadron, 133rd formed in July 1941 at RAF airbase Coltishall, was in 1942 the first American squadron re-equipped with Spitfires Mk.IX. However, the unit lost its twelve „Nines“ in only three days before Eagle squadron was transferred under the USAAF command, during the B-17 escort over Morlaix. After its inclusion into 8th AF USAAF on September 29, 1942, it continued flying the good old Spitfires Mk.Vb as it was transformed from No. 133 (Eagle) Squadron RAF into 336th FS, 4th FG. The BL255 Spitfire, nicknamed “Buckeye Don”, was the personal aircraft of Don Gentile, the future most successful fighter pilot of the 8th AF with 19 kills, 3 damaged and 6 on the ground destroyed enemy aircraft. He was credited with two more kills during the combat over Dieppe on August 19, 1942, while he was still serving with RAF. The same nose art as on BL255 was later sported on the famous P-51B Shangri La and it was also incorporated into 334th FS insignia.



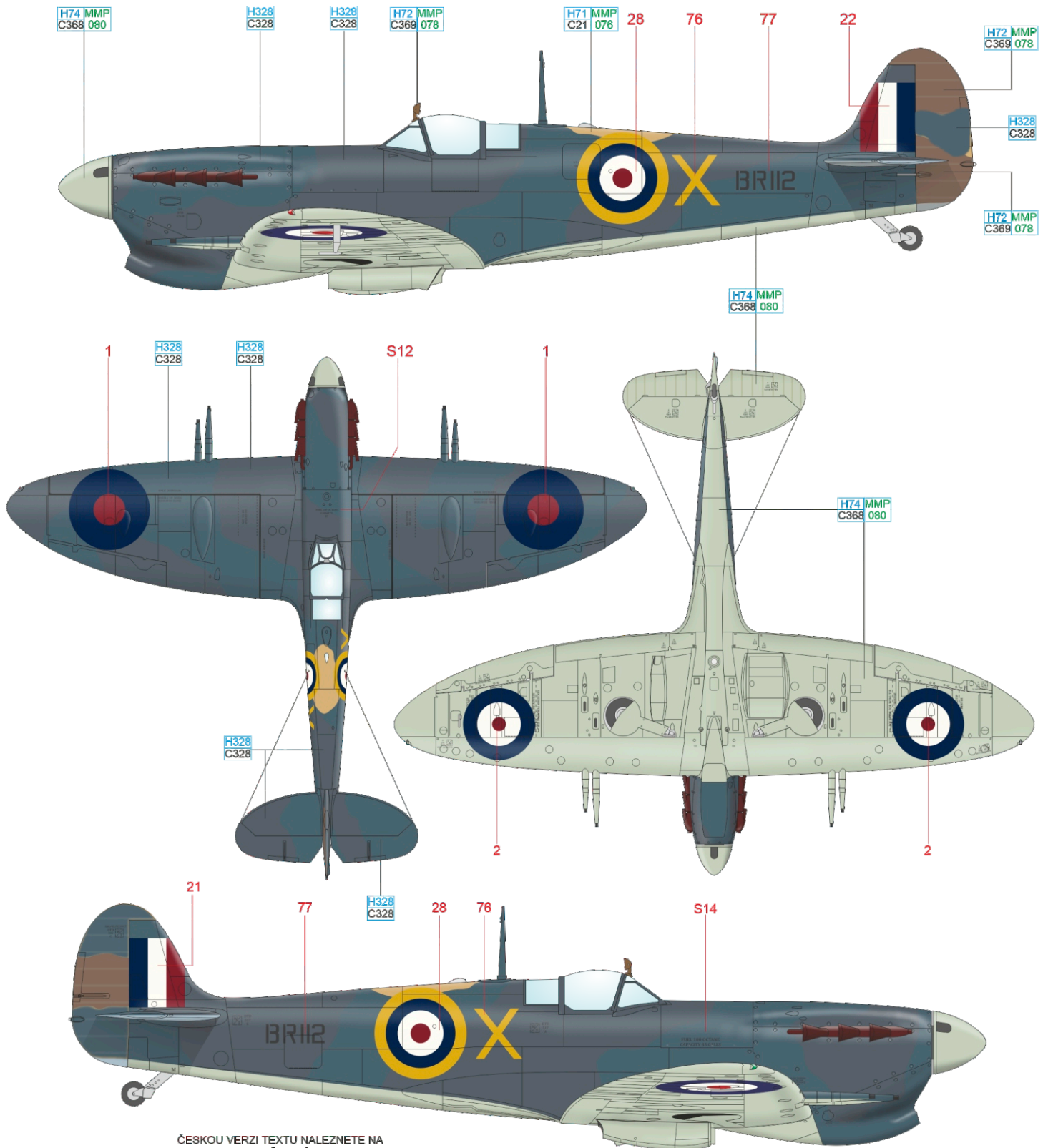
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F Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop, BR112, Sgt. Claude Weaver, No. 185 Squadron RAF, Hal Far, Malta, September 1942

Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop BR112, armed with four cannons, arrived in Malta on April 20, 1942, on board of USS Wasp air carrier during the Operation Calendar. It was probably camouflaged in RAF Mediterranean Desert Scheme, Dark Earth and Mid Stone on the upper surfaces and non-standard Sky on the lower surfaces, upper surfaces were oversprayed with dark blue paint. This was supposedly done while still on board of USS Wasp. The propeller spinner was apparently in Sky, overspraying with dark blue paint cannot be excluded though. There are some patches of different color on the vertical tail surfaces and fuselage spine, possibly Dark Earth. On September 8, 1942, BR112 was shot down during the dogfight with Macchi C.202 from 352^a Squadriglia over Sicily. The American pilot, Sgt. Claude Weaver, an ace with 10.5 kills, made an emergency landing on the beach in Scoglitti and became POW. Sgt. Weaver was one of the Americans serving with RAF who after finishing his tour of duty volunteered for the service in the Mediterranean. At the time BR112 was shot down, it probably carried only two cannons in the outer weapon wells.



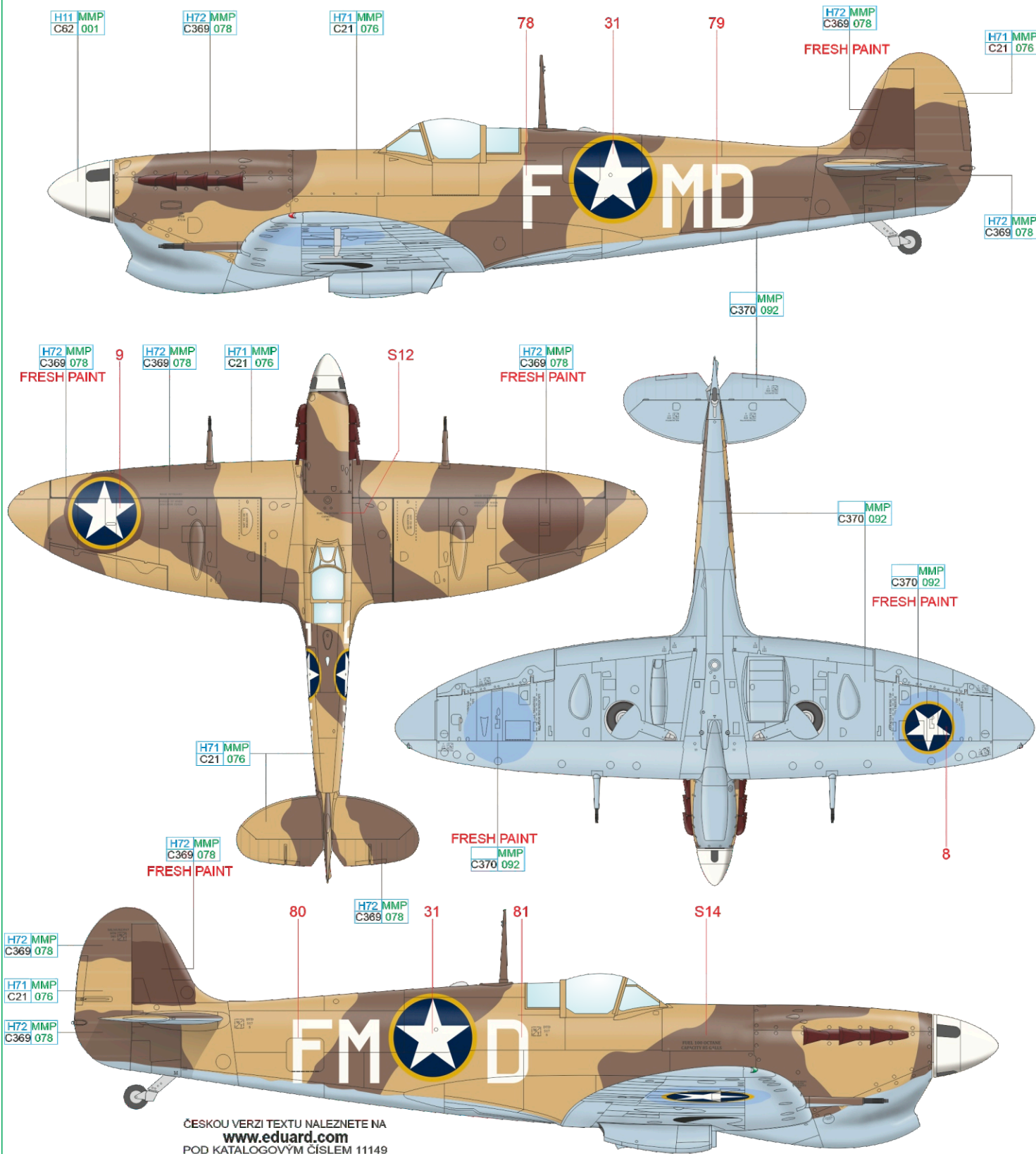
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YELLOW	H4 MMP C4 007	SKY	H74 MMP C368 080	BLUE	H328 C328	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076
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G Spitfire Mk.Vb Trop, ER200 (probably), Lt. Col. Fred M. Dean, CO of 31st FG, Korba, Tunisia, May 1943

The personal aircraft of Col. Fred Dean is the good sample of the camouflage and markings of the American Spitfires in North Africa. The camouflage consists of the patterns of Dark Earth and Middle Stone on the upper surfaces and Azure Blue on the lower surfaces. The propeller spinner was white. The national insignia featured yellow outlines and code letters were white. The aircraft depicts the aircraft as it appeared in May 1943, just after the fighting in Tunisia ceased. Shortly afterwards, on June 28, the change of insignia took place as white rectangles on the sides and red outlines were added. Fred Dean commanded 31st FG for eight months since December 5, 1942. In July 1943 he handed over the leadership to Lt. Col. Frank Hill, who up until then was commanding 309th FS as a Major. Frank Hill was one of 31st FS aces, credited with 6.5 individual kills, 3 shared and 4 probables. After he handed over the command Fred Dean returned to the United States and joined General Arnold's staff. On May 31, 1943, he was decorated with Silver Star.



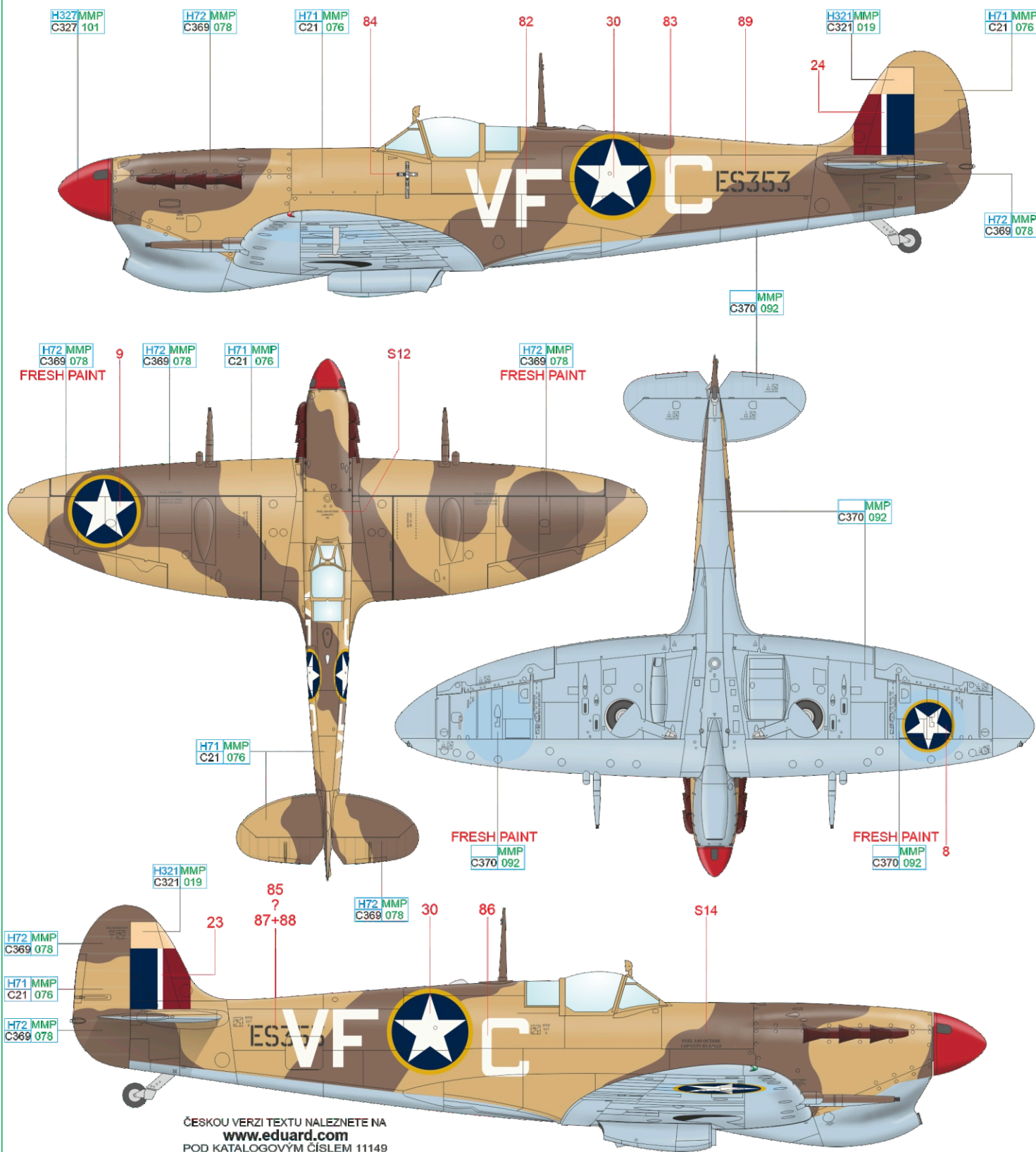
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WHITE	H11 MMP C62 001	AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078
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H Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop, ES353, Capt. Jerome S. McCabe, 5th FS, 52nd FG, Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force (MACAF), La Sebala, Tunisia, June 1943

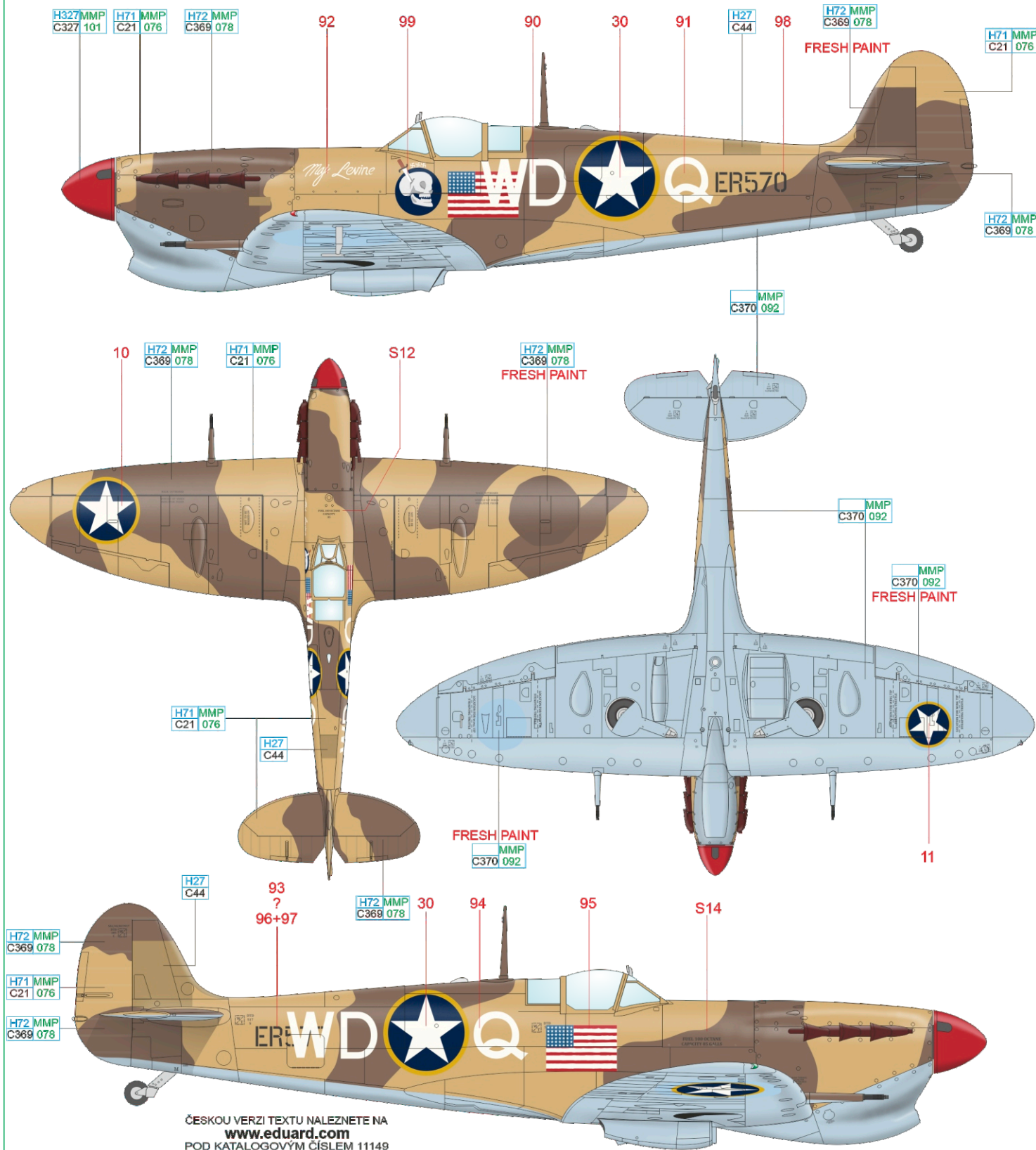
Same as the majority of 5th FS Spitfires, this Mk.Vc ES353 sported the RAF tail cockade on its vertical tail surfaces. Worth of notice is the unusual combination of dark, apparently red propeller spinner and yellow outlined national insignia. The red spinners were introduced in the Mediterranean only in the end of 1943 while yellow outlined national insignia were replaced by red outlined ones with side rectangles as early as June 28, 1943. Capt. McCabe's personal insignia was painted under the canopy in the form of Christ's cross with motto in Latin: IN HOC SIGNO VINCES (In this sign thou shalt conquer). This symbolism reminds us of the Battle of Milvian bridge between emperors Constatin I and Maxentius in 312. By the way, this motto is part of the city of Pilsen coat of arms.



AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078	RED	H327 MMP C327 101	LIGHT BROWN	H321 MMP C321 019
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Spitfire Mk.Vb Trop, ER570, Maj. Robert Levine, 4th FS, 52nd FG, Mediterranean Allied Coastal Air Force (MACAF), La Sers, Tunisia, August 1943

Spitfire Mk.Vb ER570 flown by 4th FS commander Maj. Robert Levine sported the hand-painted American flag on both sides of the fuselage. This was to ensure that local population can better recognize it belonged to the American air force. Unlike the French, the local population was friendly towards the Americans. These markings were carried until August 1943 when 52nd FG was already part of MACAF. The overpainted British tail cockade is clearly visible on the vertical tail surfaces. Levine was credited with three victories, all achieved on Spitfires. Among those was a Fw 190 shot down on January 8, 1943. On December 28, 1943, Levine led the first 52nd FG dive bombing mission. In February 1944, already a Colonel, he became the commander of the whole 52nd FG replacing Lt. Col. McNickle. In April 1944, the 52nd FG under his command was re-equipped with P-51B and was integrated into the 15th AF USAAF.



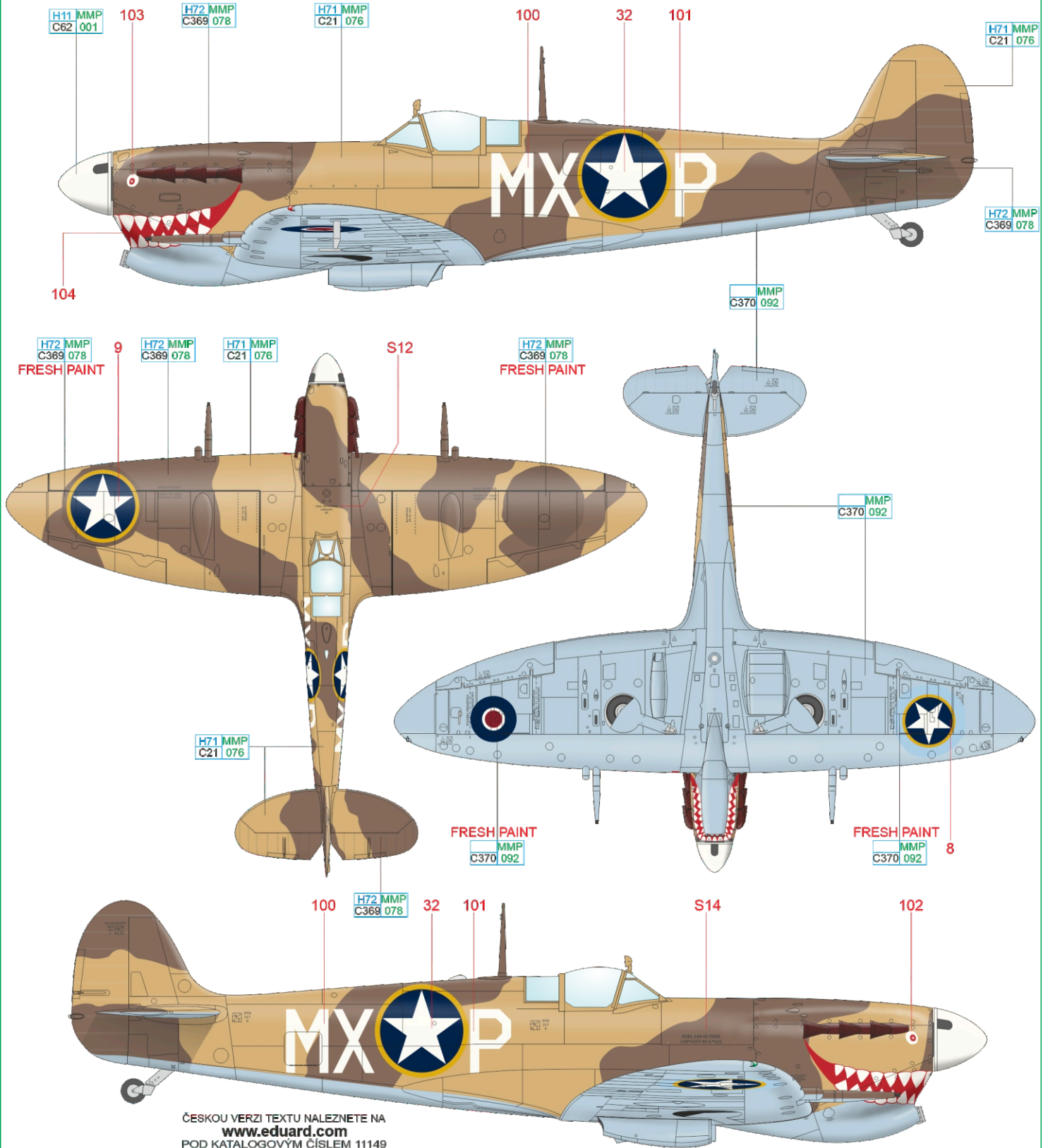
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AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078	TAN	H27 C44	RED	H327 MMP C327 101
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J Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop, 307th FS, 31st FG, 12th AF, La Senia, Algier, end of 1942

Teethed Spitfire Mk.Vc of the 307th FS received its smiling mouth probably at La Senia airbase in December 1942, when the inclement weather restricted the air traffic but offered enough time for detailed maintenance as well as nose art artistic creativity. Camouflage consisted of Dark Earth/Middle Stone patterns on the upper surfaces, Azure Blue on the lower surfaces, white propeller spinner, yellow outlined national insignia and white code letters all corresponding to the end of 1942 standard. In the photographs the machine gun muzzles feature very visible patches in the light color. Another thing worth noticing are little eyes, the smaller version of the fuselage ones, painted on the cannon muzzles cloth patches. The aircraft is usually assigned the serial ER180, but it seems to be an error because ER180 was a Spitfire Mk.Vb. The serial of our teeth-adorned aircraft remains unknown then.



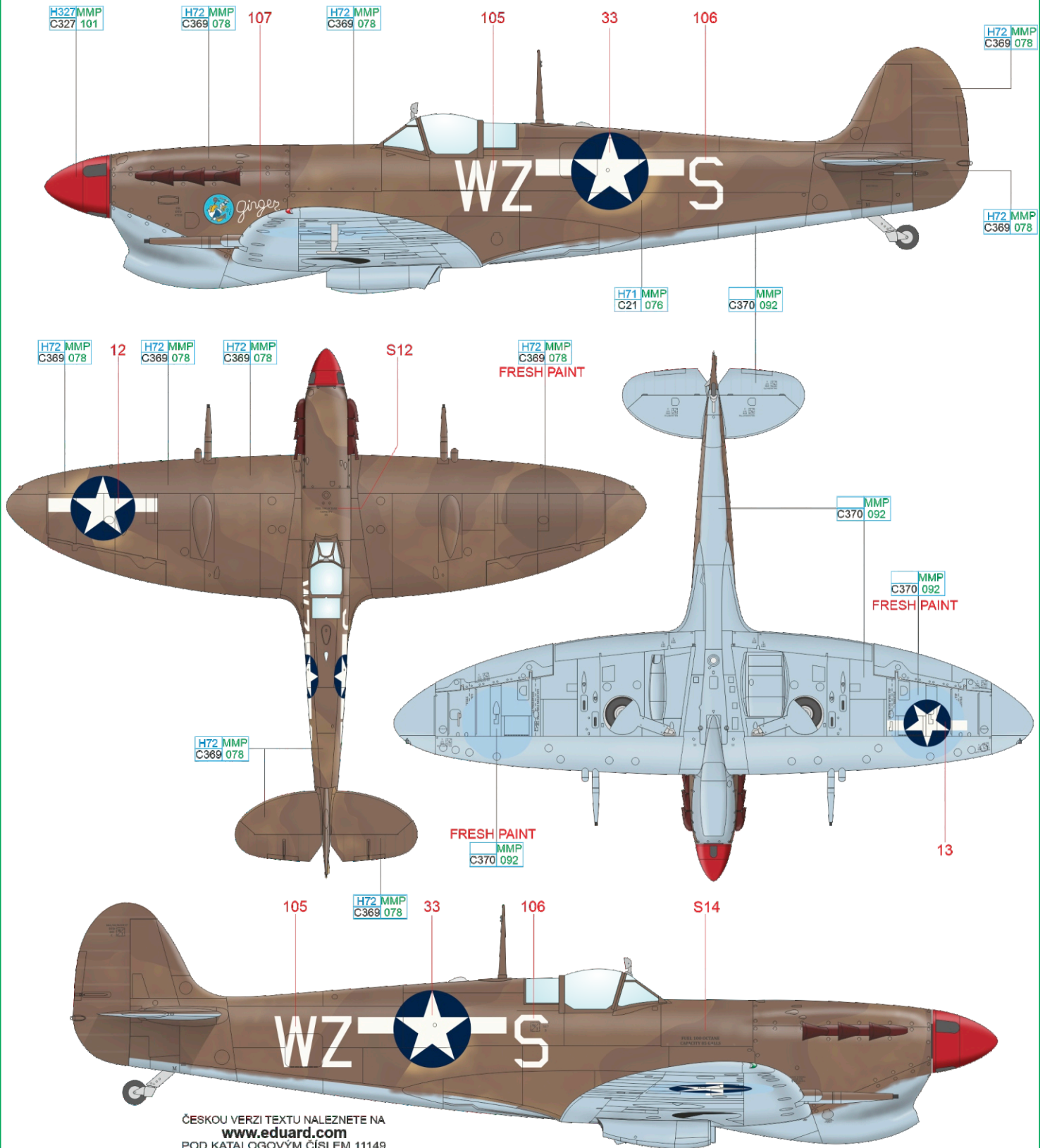
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WHITE	H11 MMP C62 001	AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078
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K Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop, Lt. George G. Loving, 309th FS, 31st FG, 12th AF, Pommigliano, Italy, December 1943

Spitfire Mk.Vc flown by Lt. Loving represents the final appearance of 31st FG Spitfires at the end of their career. The aircraft were oversprayed with green paint on the upper and side surfaces, probably US Olive Drab while the original colors were still showing through. The camouflage therefore seemed to have consisted of two green shades. The national insignia outlines were over painted as well, as long as they had been carried. The paint around the insignia appears in the lighter shade. The propeller spinner is red and the code letters white. At that time 309th FS aircraft sported the red stripes on the wing tips. In November and December 1943 31st FG squadrons were escorting the light and medium bombers, such as A-36 Apache, A-20 Havoc and B-25 Mitchell to Rome and Monte Cassino.



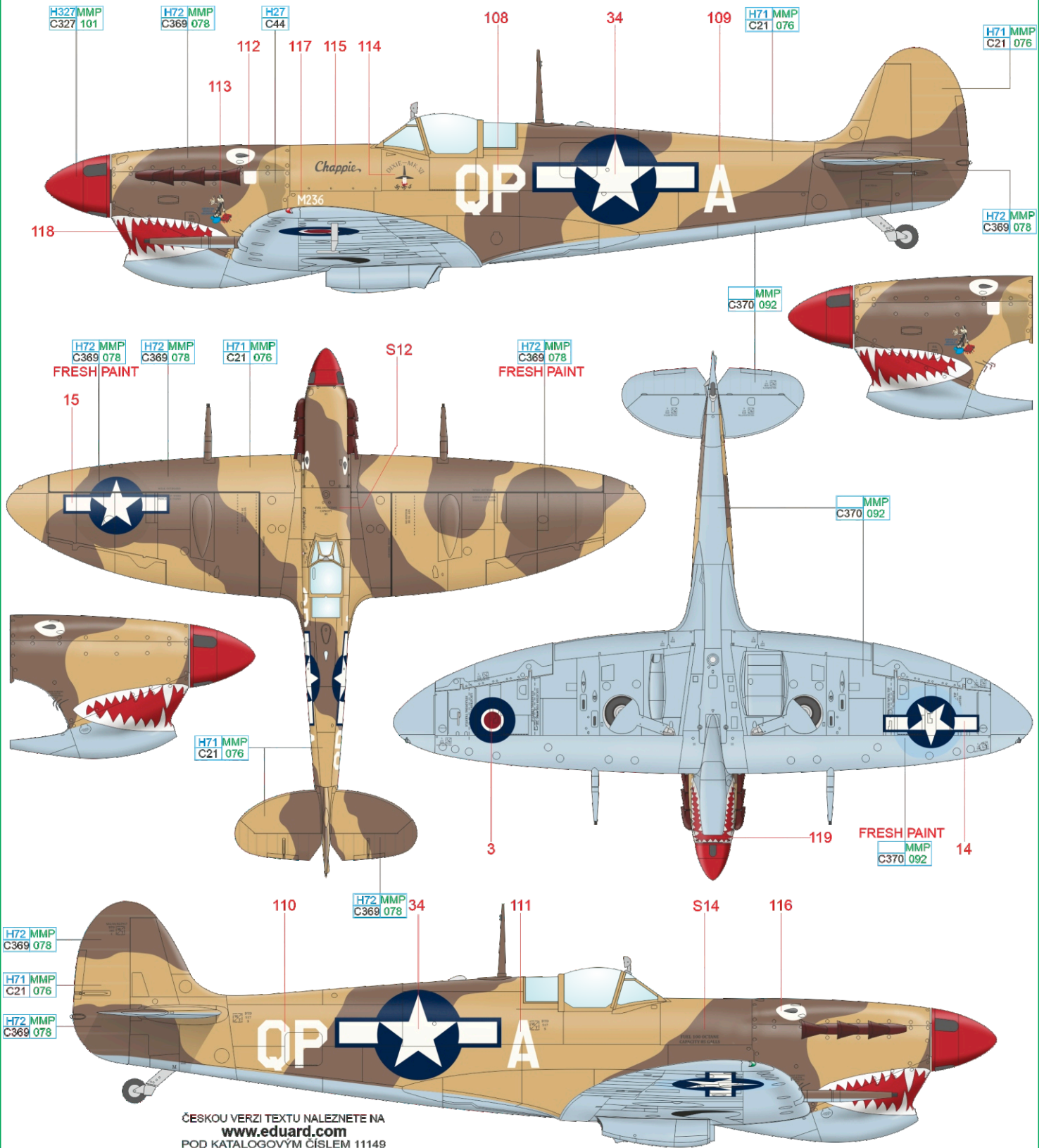
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AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078	RED	H327 MMP C327 101
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Spitfire Mk.Vc Trop, Lt. Richard Alexander, 2nd FS, 52nd FG, 12th AF, Borgo, Corsica, early 1944

Richard Alexander was one of the original Eagle Squadron pilots and his service fairly reflects the story of all Americans fighting on Spitfires. His teethed QP-A was one of the last "Fives" finishing their service with 2nd FS at Borgo airport in Corsica, still in the beginning of 1944. In June 1943, when 2nd FS was still stationed at La Sebala airport in Tunisia, its members gave the unit the nickname "American Beagle Squadron", a play with words on the account of the more famous Eagle squadrons. The American Beagle Squadron marking was painted on several 2nd FS Spitfires and was also carried on Alexander's aircraft together with some other emblems on various locations of the fuselage. It needs to be stated, that the achievements of the whole 52nd FG on both Spitfires as well as Mustangs after the integration into 15th AF, did not fall short of achievements of their more famous colleagues from 8th AF and made its mark in the history of the American aviation.



AZURE BLUE	MMP C370 092	MIDDLE STONE	H71 MMP C21 076	DARK EARTH	H72 MMP C369 078	TAN	H27 C44	RED	H327 MMP C327 101
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