

Monogram 1/48 AC-47



Doug Barbier

The major changes distinguishing a 'Spooky' Gunship from a standard WW2 C-47 are the miniguns, the antenna fit, the paddle bladed props, the lack of a tail cone fairing and finally the rotating beacon on the tip of the vertical tail. Not to mention the SEA camo paint scheme & that black belly.....

The kit is the standard old Monogram C-47 with a new sprue containing new (B-17 style) props, late model miniguns (there were at least 3 completely different variations), ballistic curtains for between the guns, aft stairs, one blade antenna and a couple of flare containers. New clear parts include the (A-1 Skyraider) gunsight that mounts in the left cockpit side window area and a rotating beacon for the tail fin.

Missing are virtually all of the antennas – but those are easy to gin up – and the ballistic curtains for the port side fuselage windows – ditto. Note – I forgot to do these on my model – just paint some scraps of sheet styrene a light gray & glue them in on the interior..... I built it pretty much OOB except removing the glider tow hook fairing from the tail and adding the many missing antennas.

The build itself is very straightforward with a couple of significant exceptions:

First, virtually all of the SEA birds had the forward cargo door removed & were seen with the aft door closed – so that's the way I did it. I split the cargo door and removed the aft hinges, which was simple enough, but the fit of the aft door to the fuselage is terrible. Plan on using plenty of sheet styrene to fill the gaps & reinforce it from the inside. This is most easily done before the fuselage halves are glued together, but be careful you leave enough room for the floor to fit. Then get out the putty tube, because you'll need it – and keep it handy for later.....

Also – the tail wheel housing that goes up inside the aft fuselage has a very important front & back and it is NOT evident which way it is supposed to face. Take your time & get it right or the resulting buffoonery will not win you any contests because the tail wheel will be seriously cockeyed. I got lucky & managed to break it out & glue it back in the correct way around.

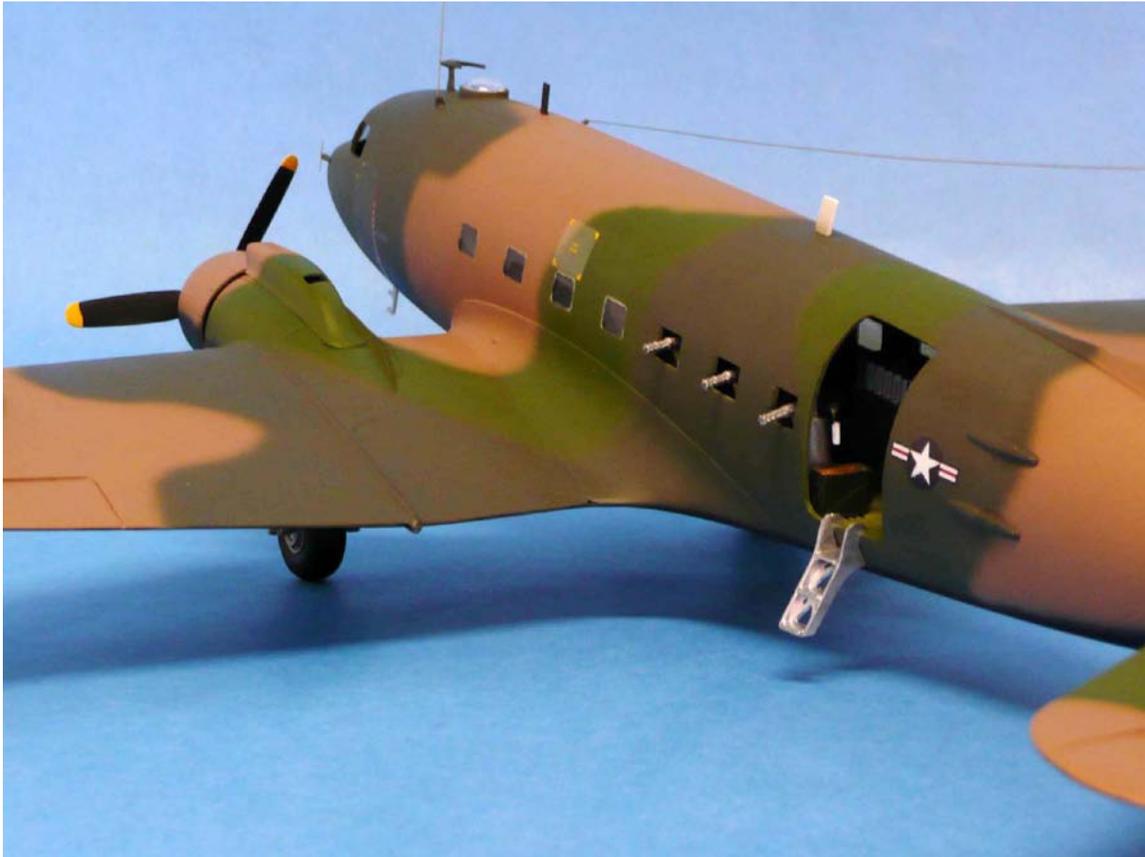
Finally, the lower wing to fuselage fit has always been the big weak point on this kit – get the aft end flush with the fuselage, then match the upper wing to the fuselage the best you can and then use a tub of putty on the lower leading edge.



As far as the rest of the construction goes, the windows on fuselage side are best tube glued into place (after cutting the port side windows down to the correct number) – let them stick out high above the fuselage skin, just get them glued in well – then putty the gaps, file & sand them down until they are nearly flush – then when you sand all the raised lines off the rest of the fuselage, you can polish them out. Looks great that way. The cockpit windows are not tall enough. Start on that early – before you paint. You can either try to pull the upper fuselage down, or shim up or fill the gaps. I removed both side windows – that way you can see in & you don't have to fight that fit problem. If you want the later style gunship, you have to cut out an additional window in front of the cargo door, as shown in the instructions, which I did.

After reviewing every photo I could lay my hands on, it was very apparent that all SEA gunships had the tail cone fairing covering the glider tow hook removed. I

made one cut on a 45 degree angle from the top & another vertical cut up from the bottom to remove the excess plastic once I had the fuselage halves glued together. Then I simply glued a couple of pieces of sheet plastic in – not caring about shaping them. After they dried, I took a sharp knife & simply traced around the fuselage outline to cut off the excess. A small amount of putty faired everything in nicely.



I painted the a/c with White Ensign enamels. They come from the UK and come in the familiar “Humbrol” tinlets. They are semi-gloss and the colors are not only very accurate, but they are extremely easy to spray. I would suggest adding a small amount (maybe 10%) of gloss if you want to decal over them without a clear coat however. I was quite happy with them and recommend them highly. They also match the FS 595 colors much better than the U.S. paints.

The kit decals have a couple of shortcomings. First, the instruction sheet is printed in error and you get 2 pages of painting schemes and no decal locations. Second, the markings are for a ‘base defense’ bird from Thailand after the Spooky outfits were disbanded and I wanted an operational aircraft – so I went to the spares sheets and cobbled together the correct tail codes. (note – NOW they have aftermarket decals out for the AC-47’s with all of the correct codes and serials)

Then it was time to add all of the antennas that make the aircraft look so 'busy'. I started stretching sprue to act as antenna mounts for the FM Command, Marker Beacon and HF antennas. After cementing them in place, I took a pin vise and a .025" drill and drilled out mounting holes for the Glide path antenna (the small 180 degree loop right on the tip of the nose cone), the vertical FM Comm antenna and the HF antenna. Sheet stock was cut & carved to make the UHF,



IFF, Radio compass sense and TACAN antenna's. The kit VHF, localizer and ADF football antennas were also used. Finally, I carved a small piece of stretched sprue and attached it to the left forward fuselage as a mount for the FM command antenna. Once all the mounts were in place, I used BSI insta-cure IC-Gel superglue to fix pieces of .022" dia wire into place for the antenna's proper. For the HF and Marker Beacon antennas, I glued one end into place & waited for the glue to dry. Then I glued the other end & waited for it to dry. Finally, I used a flush cutting pair of wire cutters to get the wire to the correct length. In retrospect, I would use smaller diameter wire next time, but this was handy. I highly recommend the BSI superglue – apparently, it is a new type and I love it.

If you are short on references, I strongly suggest that you get a copy of "Gunships, A Pictorial History of Spooky" from Squadron/ Signal publications before you start building. Overall then, it was a typical Monogram kit and while I haven't gotten the final flat coat on yet, I'm very happy with the way everything turned out.

