

Hasegawa F-104C 1/48th scale



By Norris Graser

Well, assembly starts off pretty good.

I bought a resin seat for this kit plus an Eduard Zoom detail set just for the instrument panels. These little etched metal items take all the pain out of doing up the cockpit details. However, I found that the kit supplied decals work very well and so didn't use the zoom set. The decals suck right down over all the detail and look very good. The assembled cockpit is keyed and is a press fit to the forward fuselage. Very nice - there is nothing to align. I did add a Cutting Edge resin seat to complete the cockpit. A note: if you use an aftermarket seat, you will still need to use the kit supplied back framing (parts R23, 24) as no resin seat kit has these parts.



The cockpit, main gear wells & tail pipe all fit together with no hassles. All three sections plus a couple of baffles are glued to one side of the fuselage or the other.

The main gear bay area is about as press fit as you can get. Just pay attention and DON'T reverse the main gear assembly or you will find that the fuselage halves DON'T fit.

When you get to the main gear (and nose gear) install the rubber pieces before gluing the parts together (I didn't do that) or you will not have that landing gear press fit feature and will have to glue the gear in the traditional manor.



When all sub assemblies are ready to be glued to a fuselage half, use slow set glue so you have time to align everything to the opposing fuselage half. Don't forget to add some weight to the nose cone and set aside to dry; assuring that the plane will sit without falling back on the tail.

There are a few quirks though; including a pair of raised ejector marks inside the vertical tail will need to be sanded flush before gluing the fuselage halves together.

Oh, and don't forget to punch out whatever holes will be needed for items like the in-flight refueling probe and belly tank before gluing the halves together.

I was surprised that each wing comes in 5 pieces until I realized that you find F-104's on the ground, static, with flaps lowered a bit. The good news is that the wings are a tight fit to the fuselage. Go ahead and butt them against the fuselage and glue them to place. The slats and flaps can be added later, though before you do you will encounter a few annoying recessed pin ejector marks conveniently located on the underside of each flap. I chose to close the speed brakes though, as most images I have studied do not show them open.

As opposed to the rest of this kit, the ventral filet is a loose fit. I glued it in place and later used Elmer's white glue to fill in around it. I also thought the refueling probe was a bit too parallel and angled it up slightly. That also required a little Elmer's to fill the void I created by doing that adjustment. The tail plane had a wave through it that any baseball fan would be proud of. A bucket of hot-as-you-can-stand water and a few minutes later it was barely acceptable so I opted for another from a spare kit (Thanks Mike, for letting me know that you can glue the main gear bay backwards and screw up an entire model. That info helped when I glued mine to place and it also helped out when I realized that you had a spare tail plane!

About this time, I needed to decide what scheme I was going to use.-either a gray or camo scheme was what I had in mind. I did several F104A/C schemes for Superscale a few years ago – so had several good options to choose from. I finally decided on doing a SEA scheme.

Colors for this scheme are 34219 tan + 2 greens (34102, 34079) and 36622 light gray. It didn't take long to apply the light gray and tan, but I found applying the two greens were another matter. I had just bought a new double action Iwata airbrush but had trouble getting an even finish with it. I found after several hours of work and a LOT of paint trying to refine the scheme, that I couldn't give the blended look I am used to getting. I finally gave up and grabbed what I have always used- a Paasche single action! It took about 20 minutes to finesse the scheme.



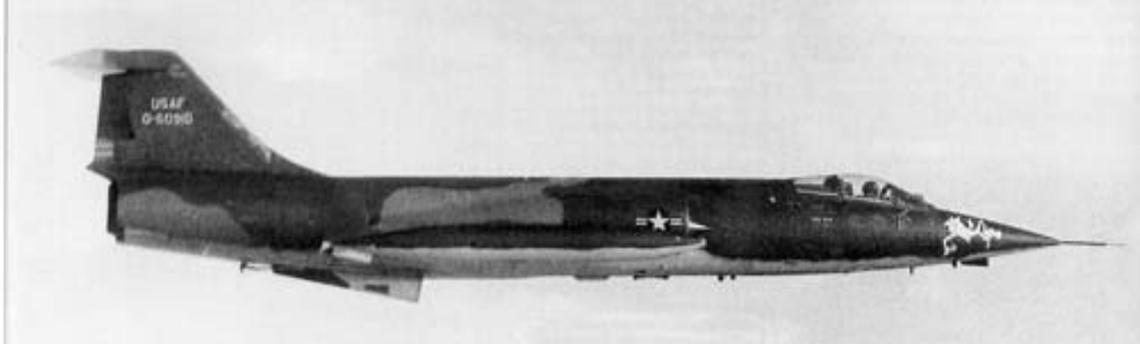
As for colors, I'd like to note that I am happy using either Model Master or Gunze for SEA schemes- except for FS 34102. I think that the Model Master version is a bit too intense. Not usually a problem as I do like the Gunze green. However, I had no Gunze left and it isn't available in the U.S at this time! To fix the color problem, I added about 20% of the ModelMaster 34079 into the 34102 taking the edge off of it.

The decal used was SuperScale 48-1135 which covers 5 Starfighters with names and/or nose art that flew missions out of Udorn in 1966-67.

It's a good sheet but I failed to realize that ALL 5 of these 104's were outfitted with APR 25/26 RHAWS equipment for SAM warning.

The only close up I could find of the APR25/26 forward fuselage shape. It is located, in the above image, under the Pussycat's butt. (Referring to the one on the left!)

These parts are not in the kit! The mods comprise of "2 "Bullet" shapes on the aft section near the exhaust, an additional pair of antenna and a wedge shaped projection under the nose, I found exactly one close up of the wedge shape. One of the smaller type A-1 Skyraider wing pylons from the "spares box" was sanded to as close a shape as I could determine from this image. The 2 aft fuselage pods were made from F-16N targeting pods I had left over from a Revell box top project from several years ago. They could also be easily fabricated from just about any medium range missile you may have. Udorn Starfighters often flew with bombs on 2 wing pylons and I would have liked to add a pair. I couldn't find any info or close up images to help out, so left them off.



The Pink Pussycat, at work. Note the AN 25/26RHAWs equipment under the aft fuselage, shy of the exhaust and also under the forward fuselage.

A couple of instruction sheet nitpicks:

1, Instructions are not clear as to position of the main gear doors- which on the 104 were always slightly relaxed when at rest. DON'T try to make them flush to the fuselage. They don't fit very well because they aren't supposed to! Thanks again to Mike's F-104 screw up as I was able to use gear doors from his "spares" kit after I DID try to close the doors.

2, I could not find any indication as to where formation lights are located or what to color them. (There are 2 on either side of the fuselage and 1 each on either outer side of the wingtip tanks- Gunze clear red was used on the left and clear green on those located on the right side.)



Final item: I saved the pitot tube for last and of course, broke it off (twice, actually)

I guess this would've been a more "fun" build if I hadn't stretched the kit out over a year. There just aren't any major problems and I do happen to have several more of these Hasegawa kits sitting around and expect to build a few more.



A few references:

Starfighters in Viet Nam, International Air Power Review Vol. 12, Spring 2004, Airtime Pub

F-104 In Action, Squadron Signal Pub

Wings Of Fame, Vol. 2, Airtime Pub., 1996

Century Jets, Airtime Pub., 2003