

Monogram's New F-16C in 1/72nd scale



(Quick Look Review)

by Mark Soppet

Until recently, Hasegawa's F-16 family was the only choice for building an accurate F-16 in 1/72 scale. Hasegawa updated their molds in 2000 and 2001 to reflect the two newest variants of the venerable Fighting Falcon: the F-16CJ (block 50) and F-16CG (block 40.)

In 2001, Revell of Germany released a new F-16 kit that would give Hasegawa a run for its money. It had nothing in common with Revell-Monogram's previous F-16 efforts in 1/72 scale, the F-16A FSD aircraft and the F-16XL. Instead, the molding was produced in Poland, similar to other Pro Modeler kits in 1/72 scale. This fall, the kit came to the states under the Monogram label.

At a suggested retail price of a little more than thirteen dollars, Monogram's F-16C consists of 90 parts on four gray sprues and one clear sprue. Despite the kit's name, the Monogram F-16C can be built as practically any F-16 variant, including parts for the following:

- F-16A
- Early F-16A's with small stabilizers
- Belgian F-16A's with longer parachute housings
- Air National Guard F-16ADF's
- The small-mouth F-16C block 25
- Later models of the F-16C using the GE F110 powerplant and wide intake.

The kit cockpit is one of the best I've seen in a 1/72 scale model. The details of the front and side instrument panels are provided as fine raised and engraved panel lines. The ejection seat is three pieces, and it is far superior to the seats in the Hasegawa and Fujimi kits. The control stick and throttle are provided as separate pieces

Revell-Monogram chose an interesting means of dividing the fuselage when they cut the tooling for the kit. The wings are molded to the upper aft fuselage. The top half of the fuselage is separated into fore and aft halves just aft of the cockpit. I suspect that a future variant will feature a two-seat forward fuselage and a new cockpit. This is a little disappointing because the Fujimi kit provided a two-seat option in its kit.

The intakes on many jets have driven several model builders to madness because of the gaps they create in hard-to-reach areas. Monogram avoids this by breaking the kit intake into three pieces: the forward inlet opening, a left half, and a right half for the aft portion of the intake.

Overall detailing on the Monogram F-16C is second to none. Panel lines are finely recessed. The tiny antennas that appear on the F-16's empennage are represented on the kit, although a few were bent on my copy. A more accurate scale representation can be made by replacing these with stretched sprue or nylon wire, but the kit's antennas will suffice for most builders. The position lights that sit just inboard and forward of the stabilizers are given as separate clear pieces. Linkages and landing lights are provided as separate pieces for the landing gear.

The Monogram F-16C really shines in the area of ordinance. In addition to the standard load of fuel tanks, Monogram tosses in two HARMs, two AIM-9M Sidewinders, four AIM-120C AMRAAMs (the new variant,) two GBU-10's, and an AN/ALQ-131 jammer.

Decals are provided for three aircraft, one from the 79th Fighter Squadron, another from 113th Fighter Wing (D.C. Air National Guard,) and finally, probably of most interest to McKinstry members, the 170th Fighter Squadron (Illinois Air National Guard.) Both ANG birds are painted in the 50th anniversary markings of their respective units. The 79th FS had previously been the subject of Hasegawa's F-16CJ, although Hasegawa provided a more interesting variation of this unit's markings.

The new F-16C kit is not without its faults. The most conspicuous is the enlarged main wheels and bulged landing gear doors that appeared on the Block 40 (CG) and Block 50 (CJ) models. These parts are present in the newer Hasegawa kits but not in Monogram's. And although Monogram's assortment of ordinance is plentiful, the only targeting pod provided is for the HARM missile. As far as I know, the only F-16CJ on the decal sheet is the 79th FS aircraft. Yet the instructions indicate that all variants carry this pod (in reality, only the Block 50 / CJ carries it.)

Lacking in the kit are the LANTIRN and LITENING II targeting pods, essential to all newer F-16C's. You can find the appropriate LANTIRN pods in Hasegawa's Weapons Set VII, although I'm at a loss to find any LITENING II pod in 1/72 scale. Hasegawa's Weapons Set VII also yields valuable weapons that have recently been added to the F-16C's arsenal: the GBU-31 JDAM and AGM-154 JSOW.

We have a new champion. The Monogram F-16C is the best overall kit of the Fighting Falcon in 1/72 scale. Beautiful detail and numerous building choices are marred only by a few missing options. I'd still recommend Hasegawa's F-16CG and F-16CJ kits over Monogram for anybody wishing to build these planes.

My recommendation to any modeler is simple: consult your references! This is the only way to determine the correct engine, intake, landing gear, and ordinance for the particular production block you're trying to build. Still, Monogram's new F-16C should provide builders of small scale aircraft with hours of enjoyment.