

Remodeling Monogram's Thud



Backdating the classic F-105D Thunderchief for early Vietnam service

By Darwin Evelsizer

Monogram's 1/48 scale F-105D Thunderchief is one of those "must have" kits. And nearly everyone who has one ends up painting it in the familiar combat camouflage used in the war in Vietnam. I wanted to do something different, yet still represent a combat machine. James Geer's *The Republic F-105 Thunderchief Wing and Squadron Histories* (Schiffer) provided just the right amount of push. The book's photos of pre-camouflaged combat Thuds gave all the information I needed.

The subject I chose, F-105D 62-4398, was assigned to the 388th Tactical Fighter Wing at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan.,

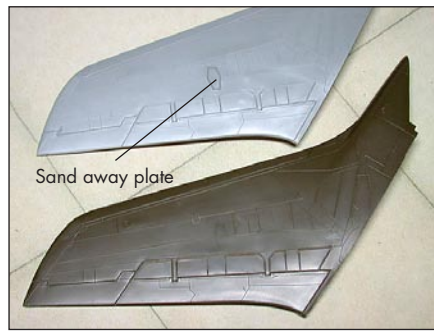
in late 1963. It was transferred to the 23rd TFW, 563 Tactical Fighter Squadron at Takhli Royal Thai AFB, Thailand, on April 6, 1965, where it flew its first combat mission on April 14. Its short combat career ended when it ran out of fuel and crashed returning from a July 3, 1965, mission. The pilot ejected safely and was rescued.

For a pre-camouflage machine, 398 was fairly colorful. A picture in the book shows it toting the heaviest possible bomb load – 16 Mk. 117 750-pound bombs – and that was the mark for me. But modeling an early-war Thud is not just a matter of paint.

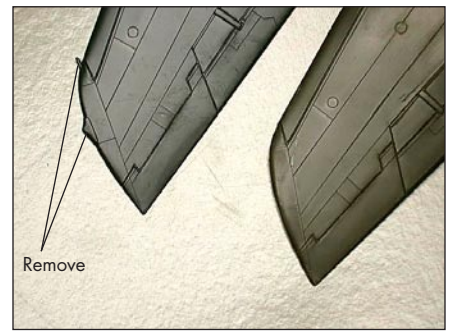
Monogram's kit represents a late-war single-seater, and some of the details molded into the parts are correct only for the F-105G two-seat "Wild Weasel," Monogram's original issue in its Thunderchief family. Follow along to see what needed to be removed and changed to represent the early-war Thud. **FSM**



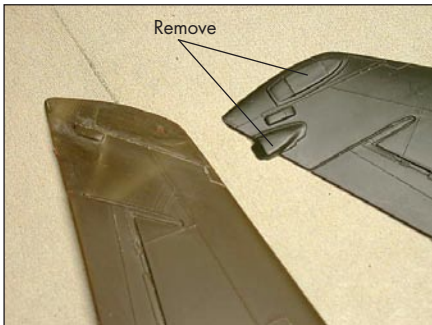
1. Items to be removed included the stiffening plates on the bottom of each wing. I sanded them away and rescribed the panel lines.



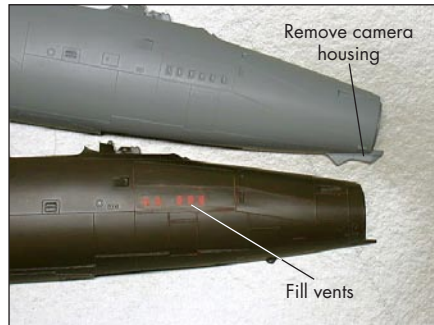
2. The top of the wing also had a stiffening plate that had to go.



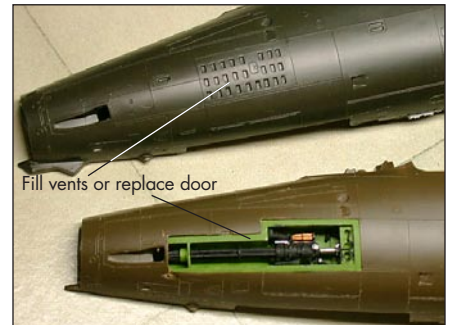
3. The wingtips have radar warning antennas molded on that were accurate for F-105Gs only. I shaved them off.



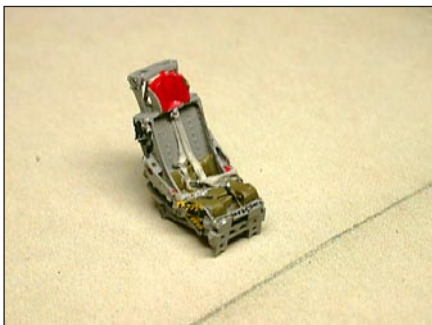
4. The late-war Thuds had radar warning and other antennas mounted on the fin tip. My early-war Thud didn't carry them, so off they came. I also filled the mounting holes for the rear fuselage air scoops that weren't needed.



5. The extra vents on both sides of the nose were also a late modification, as was the combat-camera installation under the nose. All evidence of them was removed.



6. I installed a Legend Productions resin M61 Vulcan cannon and bay, made new bay doors from sheet styrene, and hung them open to show off the weapon.



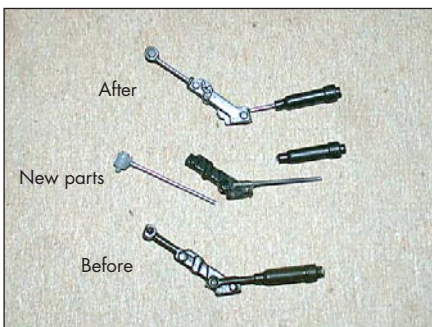
7. The cockpit was enhanced with a resin seat from Legend Productions.



8. I painted the instrument panel flat black and dry-brushed silver to highlight the raised detail. An unpainted panel is on the left.



9. I improved the kit's main gear wheels by drilling out the faces.



10. One of the problems with the kit was the short main-gear strut retractors. I replaced the piston rods with wire, drilled holes in the cylinders, and reassembled the components.



11. The improved retractors now reach the proper spots in the wing and on the struts.



12. The centerline multiple ejector rack (MER) and its pylon look better with the plastic between them removed.

Thud colors

Like most U.S. Air Force aircraft of the 1950s, the F-105s were delivered in unpainted “natural metal” finish. All the F-105B and early F-105Ds went into service in natural metal.

All F-105s initially assigned to the war in Southeast Asia in 1964-'65 had either gone through “Project Lookalike” or had been manufactured to that standard. This included giving the entire aircraft a coat of aluminum paint. In other words, the “silver” Thuds of the mid-1960s were not natural metal, but painted aluminum. On most F-105s, an olive-drab antiglare panel was painted from the radome through the canopy and back to the fin. Some, however, had a lighter color applied to the hinged canopy and spine, with olive drab on the windscreen and nose.

Unit colors were, for the most part, subdued, and tactical camouflage was on its way to being the standard finish. When the planes went through depot maintenance, usually in Tainan, Taiwan, they received the camouflage scheme of dark green (FS 34079), green (FS 34102), and tan (FS 30219) topsides, with light gray (FS 36622) bottoms. As the camouflage scheme developed, a few variations appeared; some of the “Commando Nail” (“Ryan’s Raiders”) aircraft had their undersurfaces painted in a “wraparound” scheme instead of light gray.

After the Vietnam War ended, F-105s were returned to the United States. A handful of Reserve and Air National Guard units flew the Thuds for a few more years, most retaining their tactical camouflage. More wraparound variations were tried, including a single tan/brown/dark green scheme, and a sole green/dark green/dark gray/ “European I” F-105D.

— Paul Boyer



13. I sprayed the entire model with gray primer, then masked to spray the fin top, rudder, and wing and stabilizer tips gloss white. After it dried for 48 hours, I masked the white areas and prepared to spray on Model Master Metalizer non-buffing aluminum. I sprayed Testor silver to simulate replaced panels, then applied a couple of coats of Future acrylic floor polish. After another 48 hours, I was ready to decal.



14. The markings came from Cutting Edge and went on without problems. A little Solvaset made them conform to the raised panel lines. I cut slivers of yellow stripe decals to simulate the gaskets on the windscreen and canopy.



15. The heavy bomb load required weapons scrounged from three F-105D kits. I removed the fuse extenders from the bombs that had them molded on. The two wing-mounted MERs came from the spares box. Each carried four bombs as the inboard mounts would have interfered with the landing gear. The finished model shows the F-105 at its colorful best.