

Notes on Building the Hasegawa 1/72 F-14A Tomcat Part 1

By

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Photos by the Author unless noted



Here's the deal on the choice of this kit for my current build. I haven't assembled a model in quite a few years, and in that time, the family moved to a new(er) house, which meant tearing down the old work place in the old basement, and waiting until a lot of other silly matters were tended to, like getting kitchen, living room and yard up and running, before being able to set up a place to do some modeling. The family doesn't see it quite this way, but the reason we moved, as far as I can determine, was to find a bigger basement space for a modeling workshop. In the new place, a good deal of time was spent this past year in setting up a real paint booth with a vent to the outside, and a full sized work table with a row of electrical sockets above it to really shed some light on projects. After the final touch of planting an old TV down near the workbench, some thought started being given to doing something with all the opportunity this work area offered.

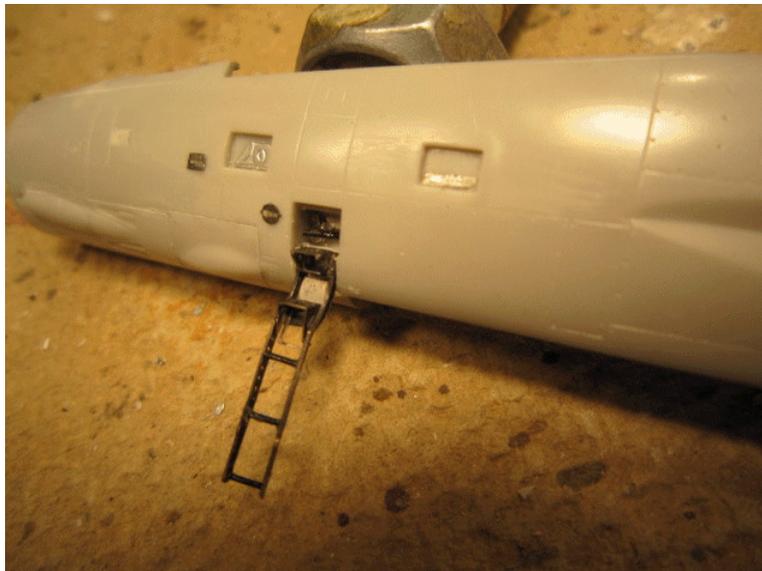


I thought the Tomcat might be a good place to start getting a hand back in after several years, as I have generally focused on Navy aircraft in 1/72 scale and have built only one F-14 before - which I gave away to a Tomcat lover. The Tomcat is a beautiful airplane, with its sleek lines sculpted in to a big, burly, aggressive looking machine which carries out all the tasks required of a modern fighter with poise and perfection. I think it looks a bit gawky with wings extended, but when they are swept, it looks like something from Star Wars.

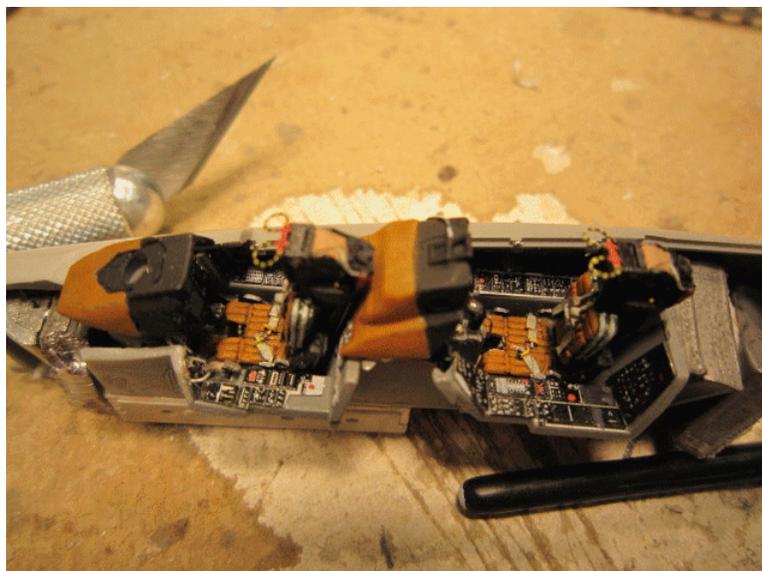


I chose to build Hasegawa's 1/72 scale F-14A. The kit is the newer edition, with indented panel lines. The kit is considered by some

to be the best production of an F-14 Tomcat in this scale. There is debate about this, though, as some favor the Fujimi model, which has fewer parts, is pretty accurate, and offers the plus of including ordinance of various types. Hasagawa provides pylons, but you have to buy their separate weapons kit to load up their Tomcat. There is a small photo etch sheet in the kit, which is pretty basic, but Eduard has a colored etched sheet that includes beautiful instrument panels and other little bits and pieces. There is also a large uncolored PE sheet that offers a boarding ladder and a further variety of detail parts, related to the landing gear, the gear wells, and the arms pylons.



Hasagawa's kit includes two multi part ejection seats, which look like they will build up to attractive models.



However, a very nice Martin Baker ejection seat, the type used in the F-14A, is molded in resin by Eduard Co. , sold separately. It is fantastic and only requires painting. (The same company makes the GRU type seat used in the B and D models.) One can spend at least as much as the kit for aftermarket goodies like these. Some of the PE parts are so small that one needs all the tricks you can learn for dealing with such tiny pieces.



Excellent references for building the Hasegawa kit are Brian Plescia's "Amazing Hasegawa F-14 Kit Review" on the internet, and a book, Uncovering the Tomcat by DannyCoremans.

I started construction with the cockpit. Since the Tomcat features a big, open tandem seat cockpit, this area can be given quite a bit of attention, as it will be a big part of what is seen on a Tomcat model whether the canopy is open or closed. The cockpit tub and the interior walls of the cockpit were sprayed Dark Gull Gray. This area can be seen in various shades of gray, from Light Gray to Dark Gull, in different aircraft. The Eduard etched instrument and side console panels were positioned and tacked down with Super Glue. There are canvas protective covers on the side walls above the consoles, which were represented with wrinkled Kleenex, painted gray. The covers over the instrument panels are partly metal painted black and partly canvas, which apparently starts out in a tan canvas color and gradually turns dark as the sun has its effect on it. F-14 photos show these covers in many different shades of brown, down to almost greenish-black. The ejection seats were sprayed flat black and the cushions, handles and

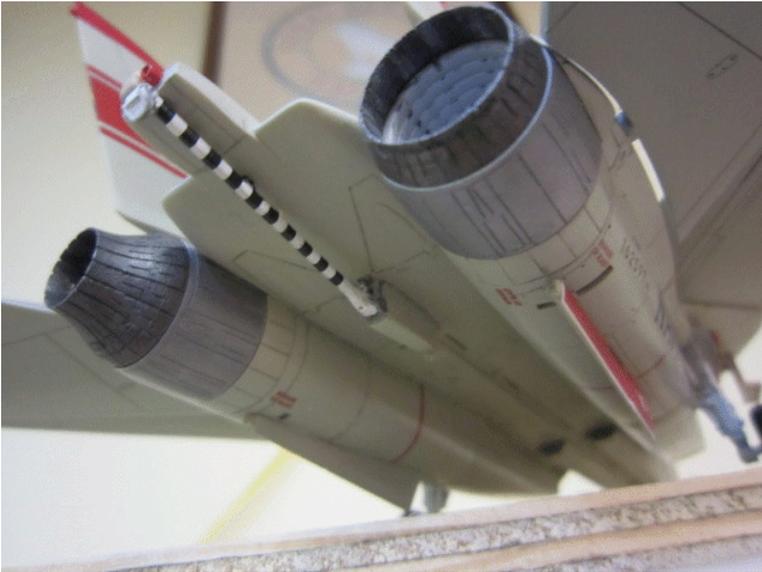
seatbelts were hand painted, following colored photos from references.



The windscreen and the canopy were trimmed up and the ridge down the centerline of the canopy was sanded off. The sanding causes dulling of the transparency, which can be polished clear with ultra fine sanding sponges. I dipped the clear parts in Future floor wax and set them on paper toweling, which absorbs any excess wax. This was the first time I have tried this procedure, and I was impressed with the clarity this brings to the parts - and with no streaking at all. I left the canopy to dry for a week before touching it. Eduard makes a set of canopy masks; they fit well and greatly simplify the preparation of the canopy for painting. I understand these masks are made of the same material as found in Tamiya masking tape.



The completed cockpit tub was attached to the front wheel bay and this assembly was sealed between the forward fuselage sides, along with a hefty clump of lead weights. The forward landing gear is thin and not well supported, so it might be possible to put too much weight in the nose, and over stress the landing gear.



I chose to emphasize the engraved panel lines on all parts by going over them with the back of a #11 X-acto blade. This may have been unnecessary, as the panel lines can be very neatly delineated after painting, using a technique described later.