

Supermarine Spitfire Mk.V - North West Europe 1941-44



Cat. No. 72591

Scale 1/72



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IBG Models would like to thank Wojtek Matusiak and Radim Vojta for their help and advice during the preparation of this model kit.

Supermarine Spitfire

The Supermarine Spitfire is without doubt one of the most iconic and recognisable aircraft of the Second World War. While its story spans the entirety of the conflict—from the earliest days to the final victory—it was the early variants powered by the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine with a single-stage supercharger that laid the foundations of the modern Royal Air Force, both technologically and symbolically.

The Spitfire's origins trace back to the 1930s, when Great Britain, recognizing the growing threat posed by Nazi Germany's expanding air force, began modernizing its own aerial capabilities. Reginald Mitchell's design, influenced by his experience with high-speed Schneider Trophy racing aircraft, proved to be a masterpiece: aerodynamically clean, structurally modern, and exceptionally agile. The Spitfire quickly became the RAF's premier fighter, embodying the new spirit of a reformed and ready air force.

Early operational variants, such as the Mk I and Mk II, armed with eight Browning machine guns, played a central role in the Battle of Britain, giving the RAF the means to resist and ultimately repel the Luftwaffe's aerial assault. Later models, like the Mk V, introduced heavier armament and improved performance, while retaining the Spitfire's hallmark manoeuvrability and flying pleasure.

Among the lesser-known but crucial developments were the high-altitude versions, such as the Spitfire Mk VI, which featured extended wingtips, a pressurized cockpit, and specialized equipment for high-altitude interception missions. Designed to counter enemy reconnaissance and bomber aircraft operating at extreme altitudes, these variants pushed the Merlin engine to its limits. In parallel, Photo Reconnaissance (PR) versions were developed, optimized for long-range missions with additional fuel tanks, stripped-down equipment, and high-altitude capability. These unarmed but swift aircraft flew deep over enemy territory, capturing vital intelligence with unmatched precision.

Spitfires powered by early single-stage supercharged Merlins saw combat on every front of the war: from the white cliffs of southern England, across the deserts of North Africa, over the besieged skies of Malta, and into the jungles of the Far East. Their adaptability and reliability made them indispensable across vastly different environments and theatres of war.

Although the single-stage Merlin engine defined the early war years, it was by no means the end of the Spitfire's evolution. Later models were fitted with two-stage supercharged Merlins, dramatically improving high-altitude performance, and eventually with the even more powerful Griffon engine, extending the aircraft's relevance and capability to the very end of the war—and even beyond.

The Supermarine Spitfire Mk Vb became the backbone of RAF Fighter Command's offensive and defensive operations over North West Europe between 1941 and 1943. Entering front line service in early 1941, the Mk Vb equipped many of the squadrons conducting the "Circus," "Rodeo," and "Ramrod" operations—daylight fighter sweeps and bomber escorts intended to draw the Luftwaffe into combat. Its improved Merlin 45 engine and universal wing made it a versatile platform, though by mid 1941 it was already meeting increasingly capable German opposition.

The real test came in early 1942 with the appearance of the Focke Wulf Fw 190A over France. The so called "Focke Wulf Summer" exposed the Mk Vb's limitations in speed, roll rate, and climb at low to medium altitudes. RAF losses rose sharply, and Fighter Command was forced to adapt tactics while waiting for the Spitfire Mk IX to restore parity. Despite this disadvantage, Mk Vb units continued aggressive cross Channel operations, often led by experienced aces such as Robert Stanford Tuck or Wilfrid Duncan Smith, two of the very few RAF fighters pilots to earn the Distinguished Flying Cross with Two Bars for repeated gallantry in combat.

The Mk Vb played a major role during the Dieppe Raid on 19 August 1942, the largest single day air battle of the war in the West. More than 50 Spitfire squadrons—many flying Mk Vbs—provided air cover, fought continuous engagements with Fw 190s and Bf 109s, and attempted to protect the vulnerable naval forces. Although gradually replaced by later marks, the Mk Vb remained in service through 1943–44 with RAF, Dominion, and Allied squadrons, including Polish, Czech, Belgian, Norwegian, and Free French units. During the run up to D Day, surviving Mk Vbs were used for coastal patrols, shipping strikes, and fighter bomber sorties. On 6 June 1944 they flew beachhead cover, armed reconnaissance, and close support missions, marking one of the final chapters of the Mk Vb's long and hard fought service over North West Europe.



Element assembled in previous step
Element złożony we wcześniejszym etapie



Version to choose
Wersja do wyboru



Make your own
Wykonaj samodzielnie



Paint colour
Kolor farby



Element after assembly in current step
Element po złożeniu w aktualnym etapie



Sub-assembly in step
Kolejne kroki w etapie



Cut/sand off
Odetnij/zeszlifuj



Decal
Kalkomania

Please read instructions before assembly. Follow the sequence of assembly presented in instructions. Glue and paint not included.
Przed montażem przeczytać instrukcję. Przestrzegać kolejności montażu podanego w instrukcji. Klej i farby nie wchodzą w skład zestawu.

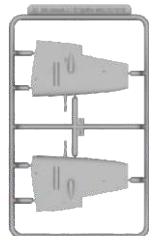
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ibgsc@ibg.com.pl
www.ibg.com.pl
www.ibgmodels.com

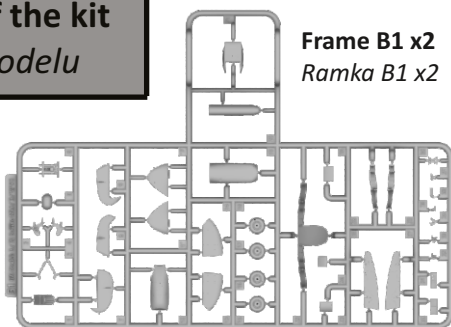
Elements of the kit

Elementy modelu

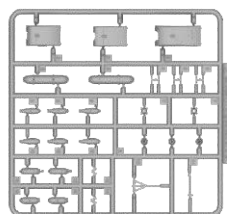
Frame N
Ramka N x2



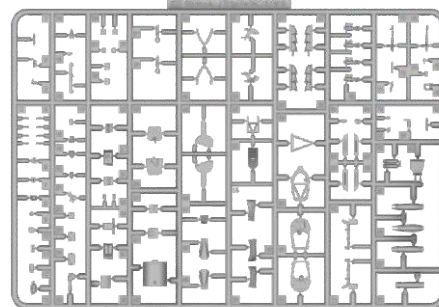
Frame B1 x2
Ramka B1 x2



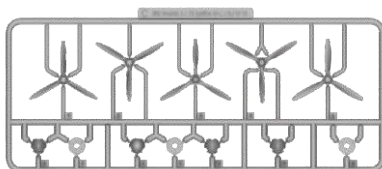
Frame E x2 / Ramka E x2



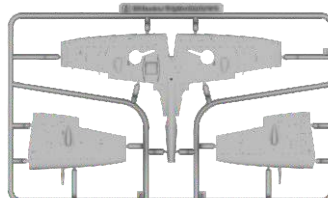
Frame B2 x2 / Ramka B2 x2



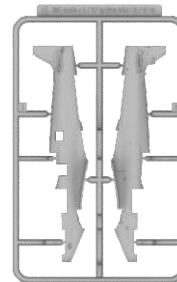
Frame C x2 / Ramka C x2



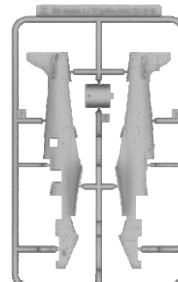
Frame M x2 / Ramka M x2



Frame G / Ramka G
x2



Frame R / Ramka R
x2



Painting masks

Maski do malowania
x2



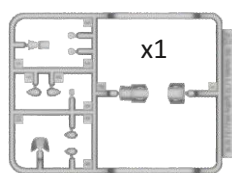
Photo-etched parts

Elementy fototrawione
x2



random packed bonus 2
3D figures (not shown)
losowo pakowane 2
figurki 3D (nie pokazano)

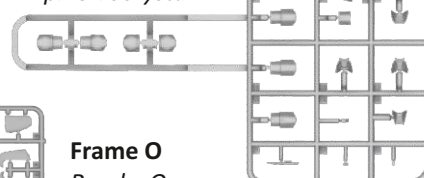
Frame AB transparent
Ramka AB przezroczysta



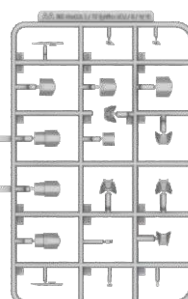
Frame L x2
Ramka L x2



Frame AA x2
transparent
Ramka AA x2
przezroczysta



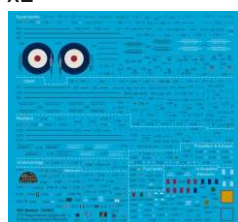
Frame O
Ramka O



Decals / Kalkomanie



x2



3D printed parts „X”

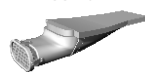
Części drukowane 3D „X”

X1R



X1L

X14



X13



X12



X11



X10

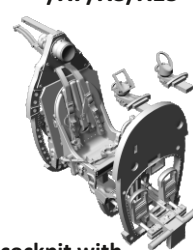


X9



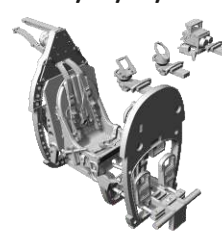
set of mirrors
- set x2

X2/X4/X5/X6
/X7/X8/X15



cockpit with
headrest - set x1

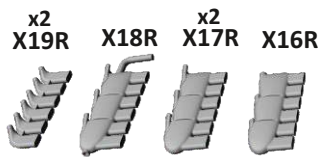
X3/X4/X5/X6
/X7/X8/X15



up-armoured cockpit
without headrest - set x1

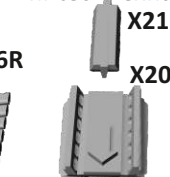
X22 x2

Rotor spinner base

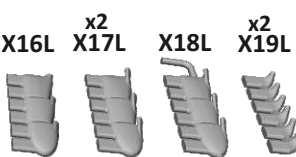


seamless wheels - set x2

hi-tec exhaust



seamless intake
for Merlin 45 -x2



Color table / Tabela kolorów

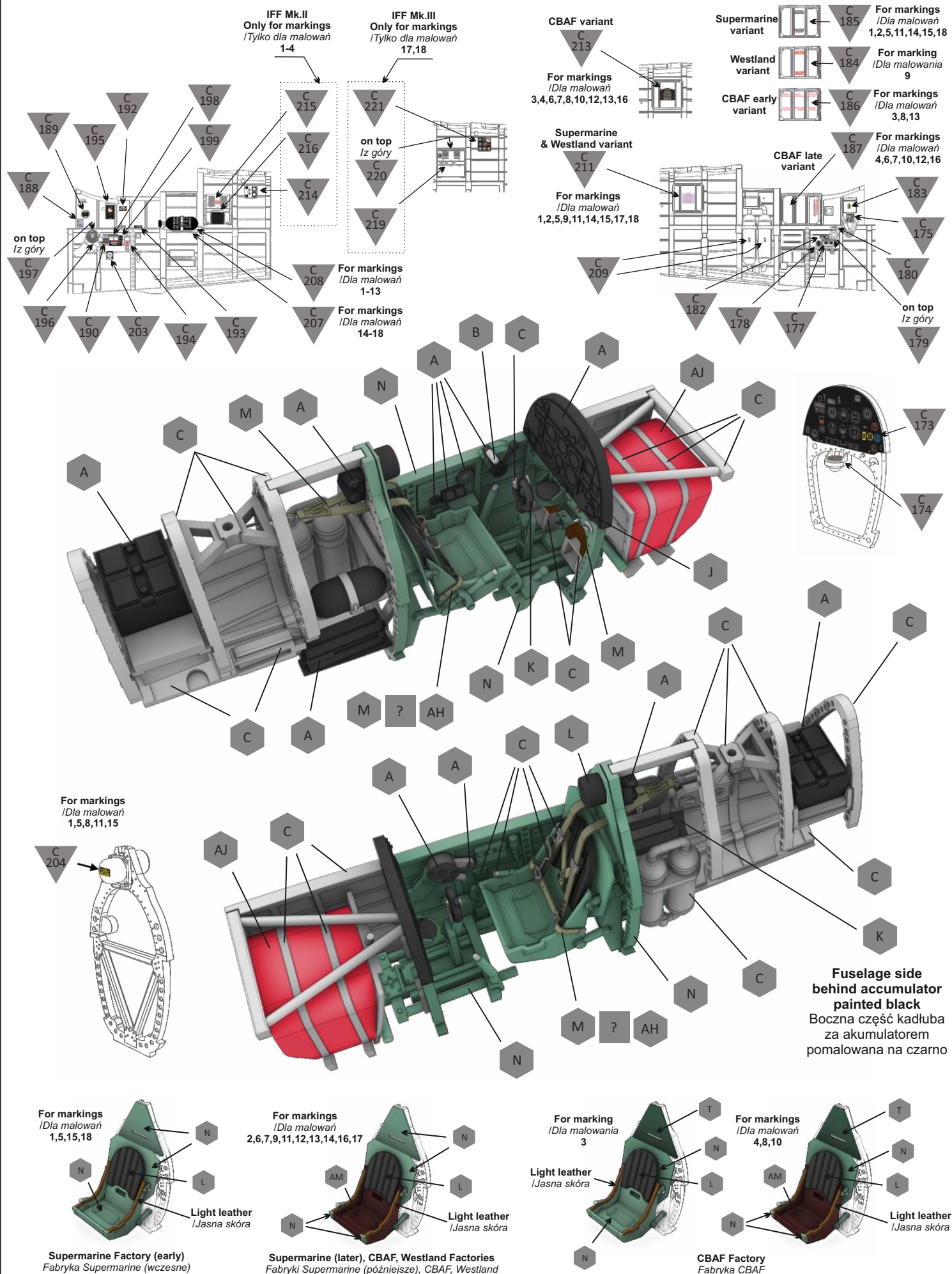
Colour	#	Hataka	Vallejo	Mr Hobby	AK Interactive
Night	A	HTK_041	71.057	H012	AK11895
White	B	HTK_101	71.001	H021	AK11002
Aluminium	C	HTK_078	71.062	SM208	AK481
Red	D	HTK_103	71.003	H023	AK11213
Blue	E	HTK_102	70.736	H093	AK11178
Yellow	F	HTK_010	70.915	H004	AK11045
Green	G	HTK_327	70.936	H094	AK11216
Rust	H	HTK_132	71.130	H047	AK11103
Gunmetal	I	HTK_106	71.072	H018	AK11212
Brass	J	HTK_109	70.801	C219	AK11194
Tyre black	K	HTK_125	71.315	C135	AK11027
Black Leather	L	HTK_100	71.057	H012	AK11026
Seatbelt Grey-Brown	M	HTK_074	71.075	H321	AK11009
Interior Grey Green	N	HTK_025	71.305	C364	AK11847
Dark Green	T	HTK_016	71.324	C361	AK11840
Dark Earth	U	HTK_009	71.323	C369	AK11841
Sky	W	HTK_026	71.302	C368	AK11844
Ocean Grey	X	HTK_032	71.273	C362	AK11842
Medium Sea Grey	Y	HTK_034	71.307	C363	AK11843
Mixed Grey	AA	80 % HTK_034 20 % HTK_041	80% 71.307 15% 71.057 5% 76.019	70% C363 30% C125	65% AK11843 20% AK11360 15% AK11895

Colour	#	Hataka	Vallejo	Mr Hobby	AK Interactive
Mixed Grey (dark)	AB	60 % HTK_034 40% HTK_041	45% 71.307 45% 71.057 10% 76.019	50% C363 50% C125	40% AK11843 40% AK11360 20% AK11895
Mixed Grey (very dark)	AC	50 % HTK_034 50% HTK_041	30% 71.307 50% 71.057 20% 76.019	40% C363 60% C125	25% AK11843 50% AK11360 25% AK11895
Faded Dark Green	AD	70% HTK_016 30% HTK_048	50% 71.324 50% 71.273	75% C361 25% C325	80% AK11840 20% AK11866
Faded Ocean Grey	AE	80% HTK_032 20% HTK_101	65% 71.273 35% 71.001	70% C362 30% C62	75% AK11842 25% AK11001
Special Night (R.D.M.2A)	AF	HTK_100	71.057	C33	AK11360
Extra Dark Sea Grey	AG	HTK_140	71.110	C333	AK11850
Dark Slate Grey	AH	HTK_202	71.309	50% C331 25% C361 25% C38	AK11849
Linatex colour	AJ	20% HTK-D013 50% HTK-A148 30% HTK-A101	90% 70.802 10% 70.817	40% C81 20% C79 40% C62	90% AK11084 10% AK11087
High Temperature Paint No.41	AK	25% HTK-D012 25% HTK-A009 50% HTK-A101	50% 71.130 25% 71.271 25% 71.001	50% C7 50% C325	20% AK11097 50% AK11813 30% AK11001
Resin Red-Brown	AM	HTK_098	71.084	H047	AK11434

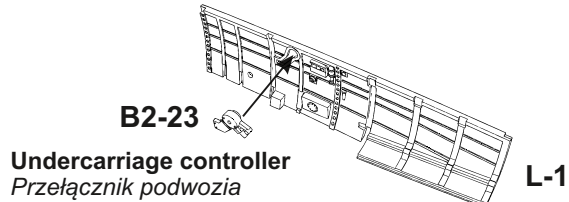
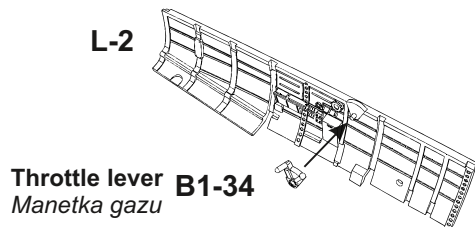
Malowanie i kalkomanie wnętrza

Naturalny metal - wszystkie pozostałe powierzchnie

**Note: no inscription on door
for painting no. 17**
/Uwaga: brak napisu na drzwiach
dla malowania nr 17



Step 1 Etap 1



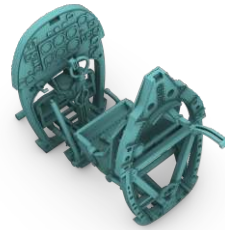
Preliminary Step - cockpit - choose your path Krok wstępny - kokpit - wybierz swoją ścieżkę



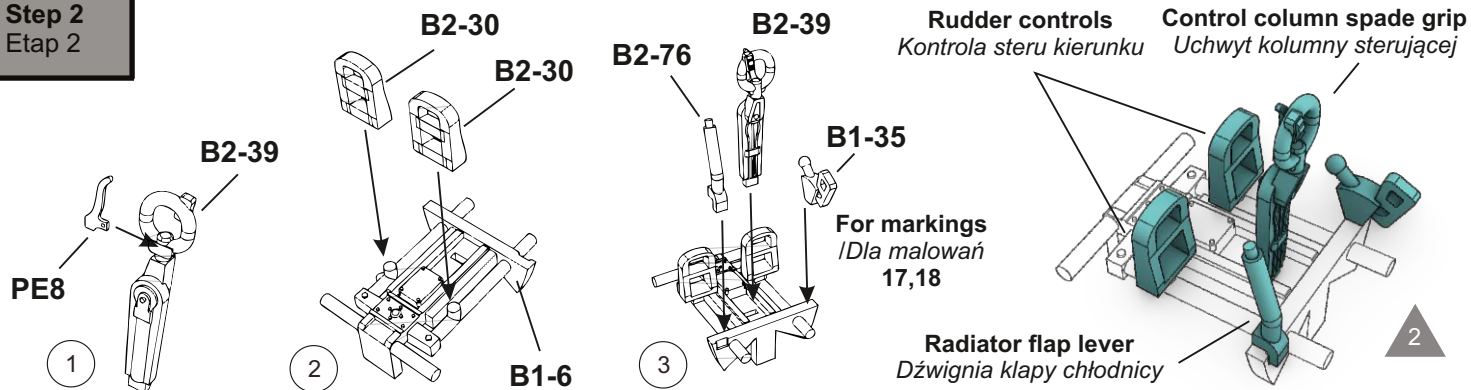
?

If using a printed 3D cockpit,
skip steps 3-6 and proceed to steps 7-9.
W przypadku użycia drukowanego kokpitu 3D,
pomiń kroki 3-6 i przejdź do kroków 7-9.

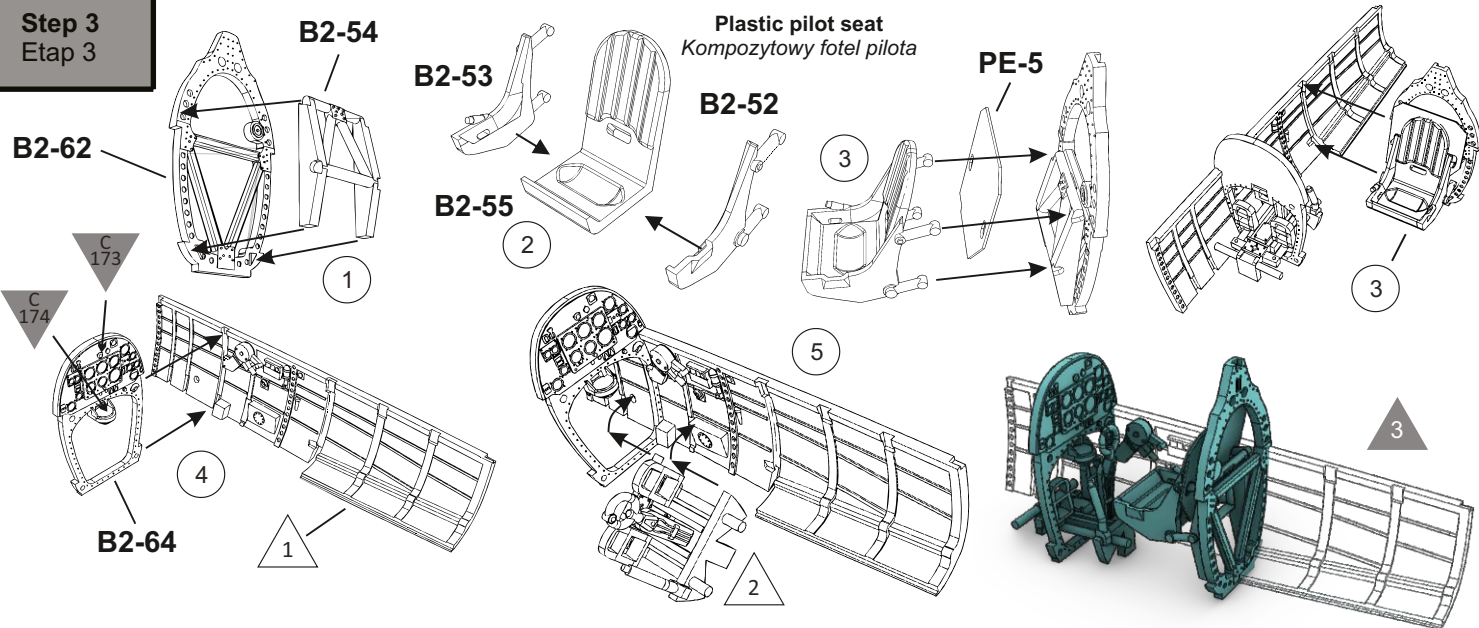
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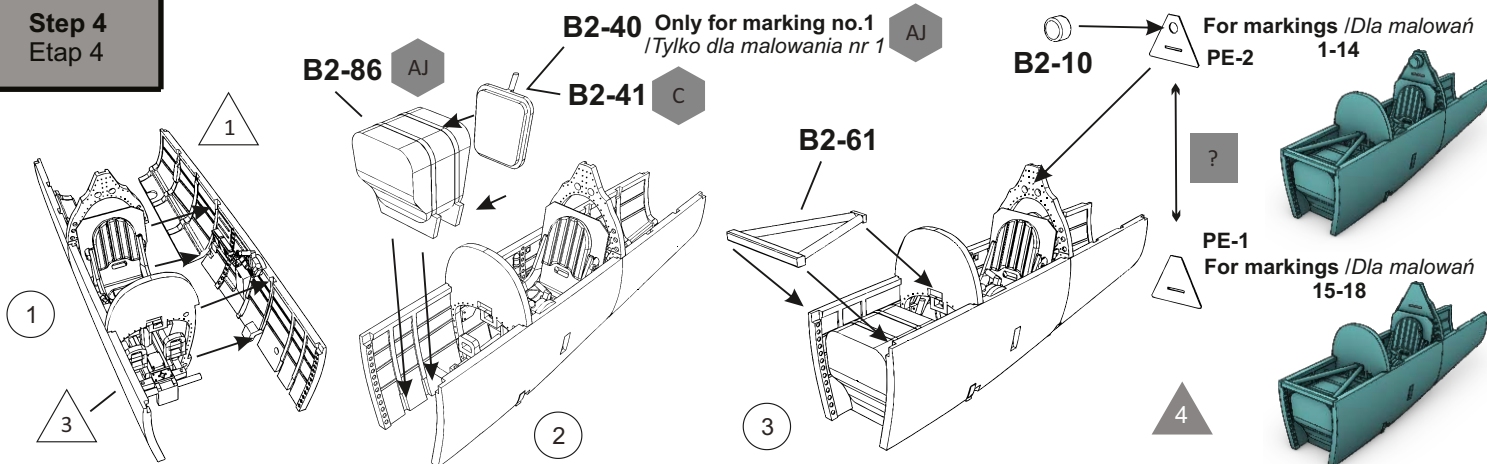
Step 2 Etap 2



Step 3 Etap 3



Step 4 Etap 4



Step 5 Etap 5

For markings /Dla malowań
2,3,4,6,7,9,10,12,13,14,16,17,18

B2-8 Voltage /Regulator
regulator napięcia

B2-9 For markings /Dla malowań
1,5,8,11,15

PE13
or/lub
B2-80

J

3

B2-14

A

B2-26

Oxygene bottle
Butla z tlenem

Accumulator
Akumulator

Compressed air
cylinders
Butle sprężonego
powietrza

B2-85

2

1

6

Step 6 Etap 6

B1-2

B2-75

PE32+35

PE29

PE32

PE35 bend
zagnij

B2-75

PE32+35

For markings
/Dla malowań

1-14

15-18

Sutton harness
Uprząż Sutton

PE29

PE29

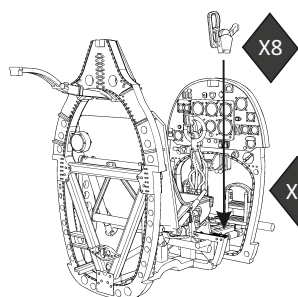
Voltage regulator type
as in the previous step
Typ regulatora napięcia
jak w poprzednim kroku

Go to Step 10
Idź do Etapu 10

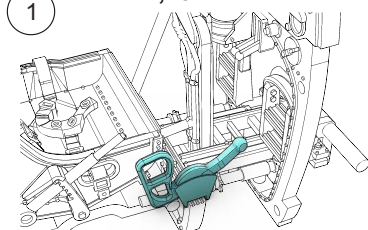
For markings /Dla malowań
1-14

For markings /Dla malowań
15-18

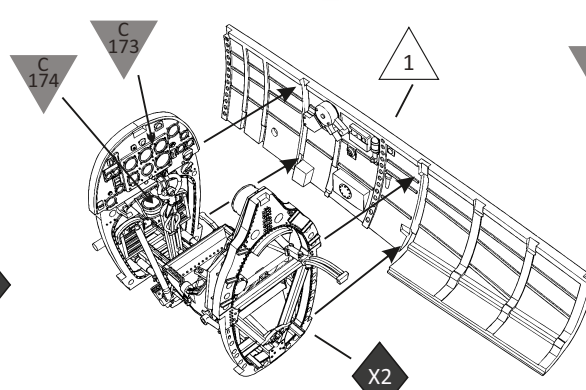
Step 7 - alt. resin parts Etap 7 - alt. części żywiczne



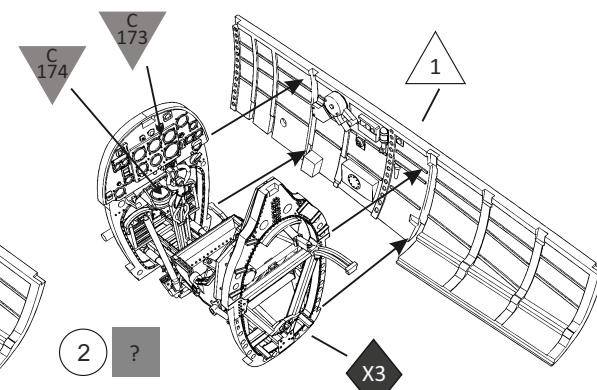
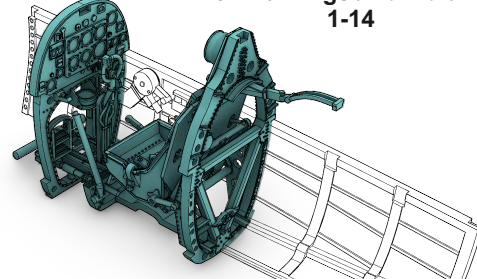
For markings /Dla malowań
17,18



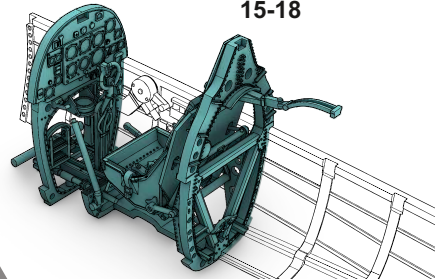
fuel tank cock/ejection control
zawór/zrzut zbiornika paliwa



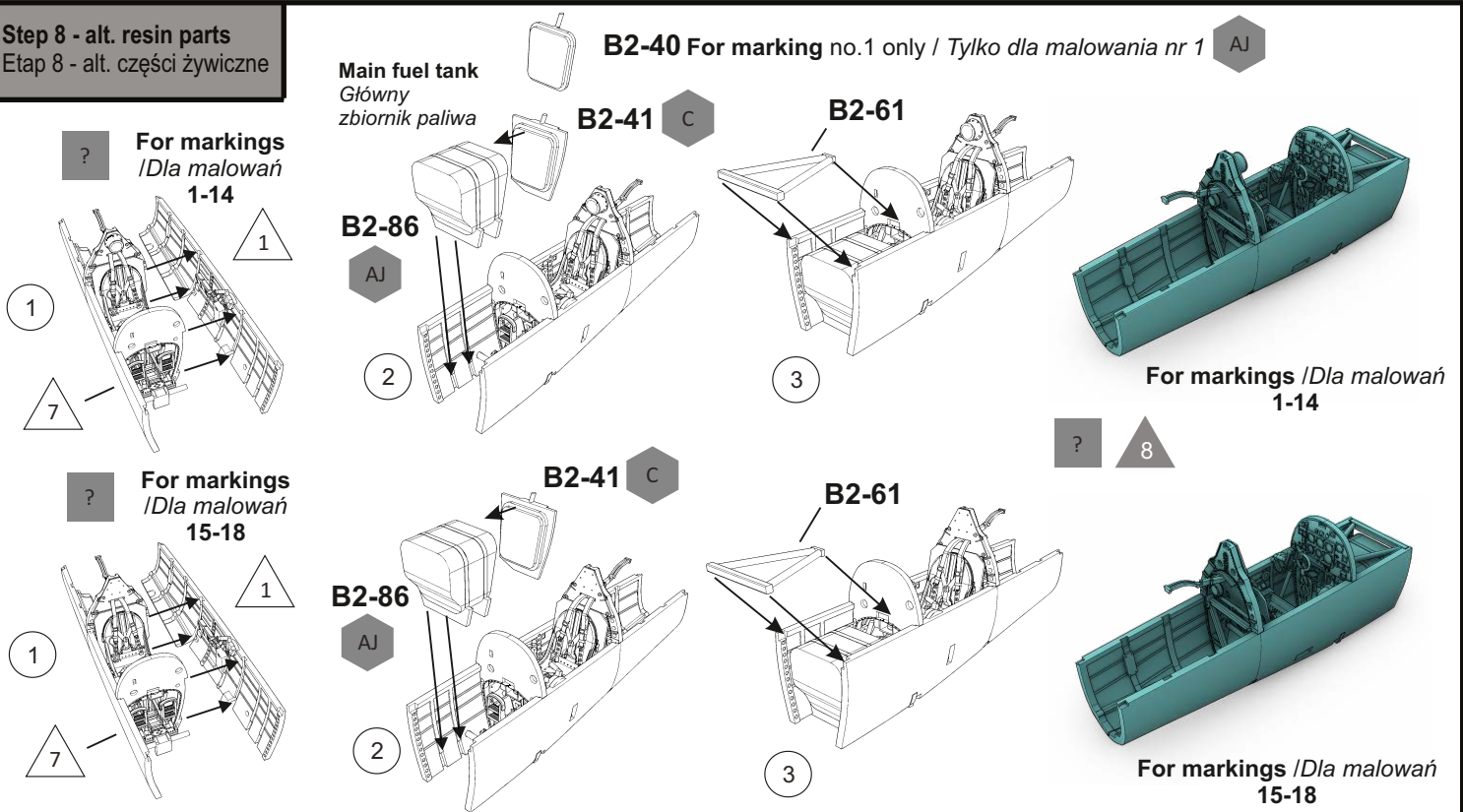
For markings /Dla malowań
1-14



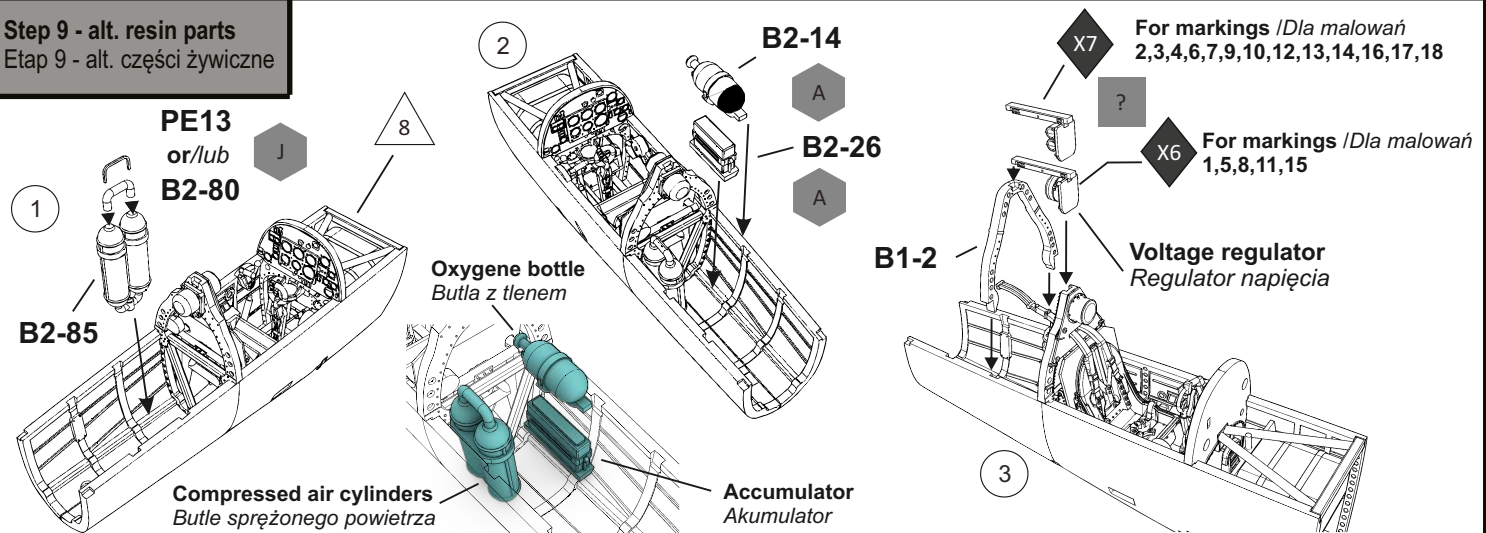
For markings /Dla malowań
15-18



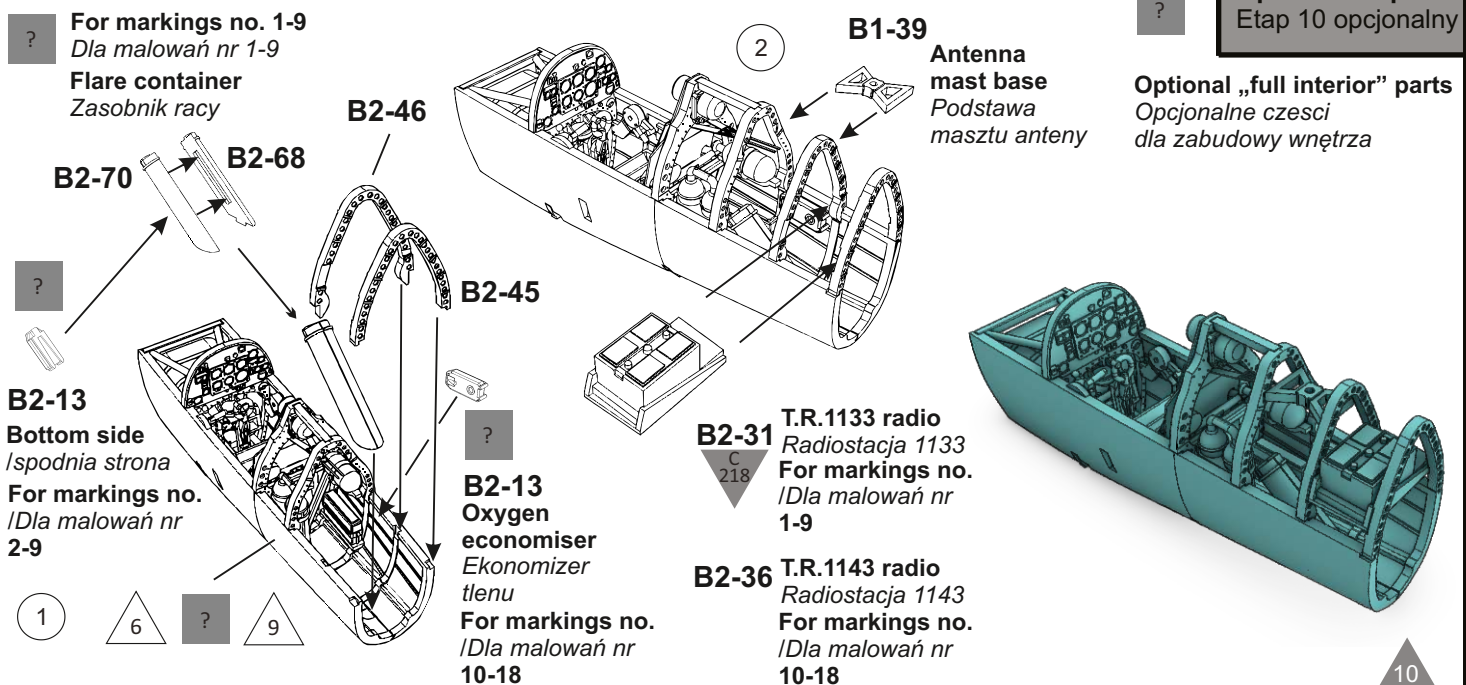
Step 8 - alt. resin parts
Etap 8 - alt. części żywiczne

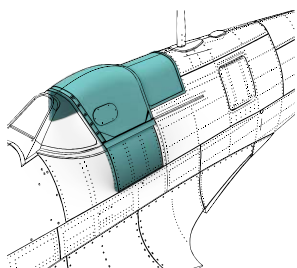


Step 9 - alt. resin parts
Etap 9 - alt. części żywiczne



For markings no. 1-9
Dla malowań nr 1-9
Flare container
Zasobnik racy



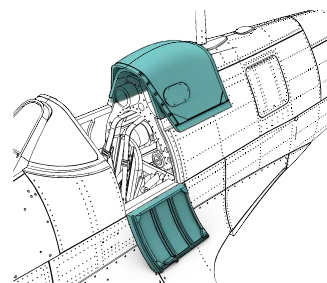


Preliminary Step - canopy - choose your path Krok wstępny - osłona kabiny - wybierz swoją ścieżkę

Closed
Zamknięta

?

Open
Otwarta



It requires initial preparation - see step 13 and 14.
Wymaga wstępnego przygotowania - patrz krok 13 oraz 14.

The fuselage is prepared for an open cockpit
(skip steps 13 and 14 and go to step 15).
Kadłub jest przygotowany do otwartej kabiny
(pomiń kroki 13 oraz 14 i przejdź do kroku 15).

Step 11 Etap 11



Drill 0,35mm
Wywierć 0,35mm

For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
1,2,5,9,11,14,15,17,18

Drill 0,35mm
Wywierć 0,35mm

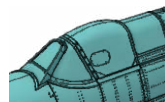
For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
3,4,6,7,8,10,12,13,16

Drill a hole 0,5mm
Wywierć otwór 0,5mm

For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
1,2,3,4,5,8,9,11,13,14

G-2 For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
1,3,4,6,7,8,10,13,16,18

R-3 For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
2,5,9,11,12,14,15,17



Step 12 Etap 12

Canopy door
Drzwi kabiny

B1-24

B1-24

B1-24

B2-1

B2-1

For markings no.

1,16,17,18

IDla malowań nr

2-14

17

Step 13 Etap 13

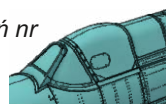
Closed canopy
Kabina zamknięta

G-1 For markings no.
IDla malowań nr
1,3,4,6,7,8,10,13,16,18

R-1 For markings no.
IDla malowań nr
2,5,9,11,12,14,15,17

Step 14A Etap 14A

For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
1,3,4,6,7,8,10,13,16,18



Cut off
Wytnij

Only for closed canopy
Tylko dla zamkniętej kabiny

Fill for marking
no.1
/Zaszpachluj dla
malowania nr 1

G-1

Cut off
Wytnij

1.3

5.6

5.6

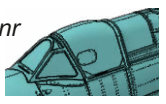
1.3

G-2

Fill for marking
no.1
/Zaszpachluj dla
malowania nr 1

Step 14B Etap 14B

For markings no. /Dla malowań nr
2,5,9,11,12,14,15,17



Cut off
Wytnij

Only for closed canopy
Tylko dla zamkniętej kabiny

R-1

Cut off
Wytnij

1.3

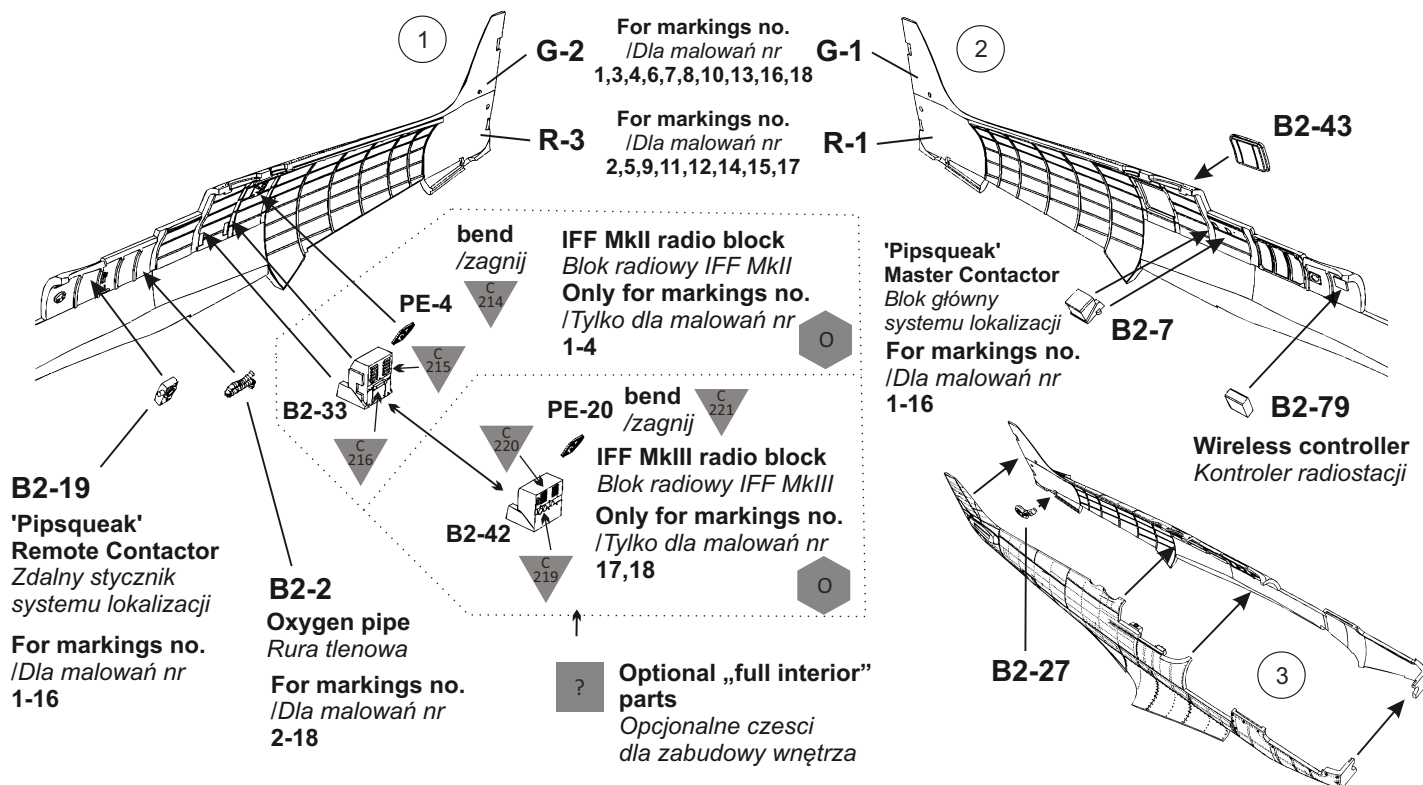
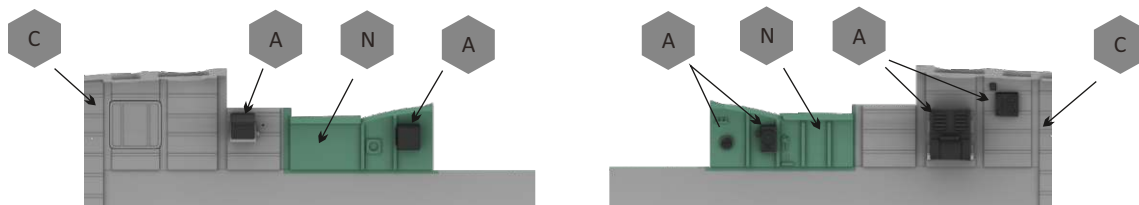
5.1

5.1

1.3

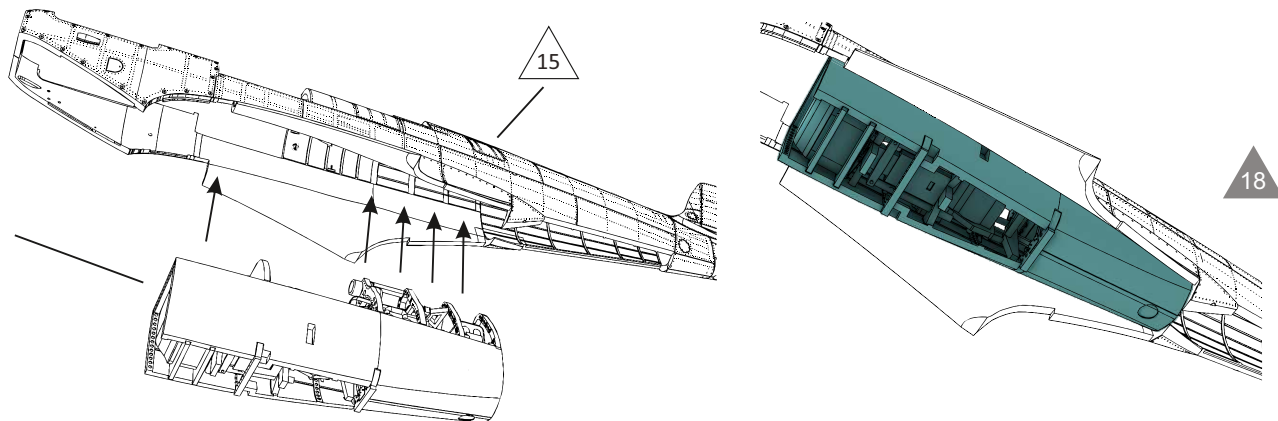
R-3

Step 15 Etap 15



Step 16 Etap 16

? 6
Or 8
Lub 10



Step 17 Etap 17

?

For markings no. /Dla malowań nr 1-11,15

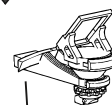
AA-7 after Steps /po krokach 2-6
X15 after Steps /po krokach 7-9



Reflector Sight Mk.II
/Celownik odbłaskowy Mk.II

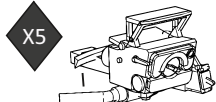
For markings no. /Dla malowań nr 12,13,14,16,18

AA-7 after Steps /po krokach 2-6
X4 after Steps /po krokach 7-9

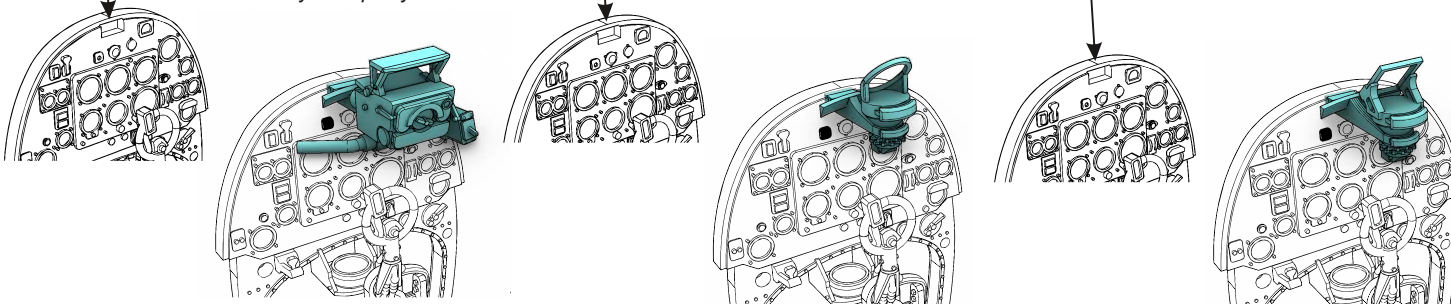


Reflector Sight Mk.II*
/Celownik odbłaskowy Mk.II*

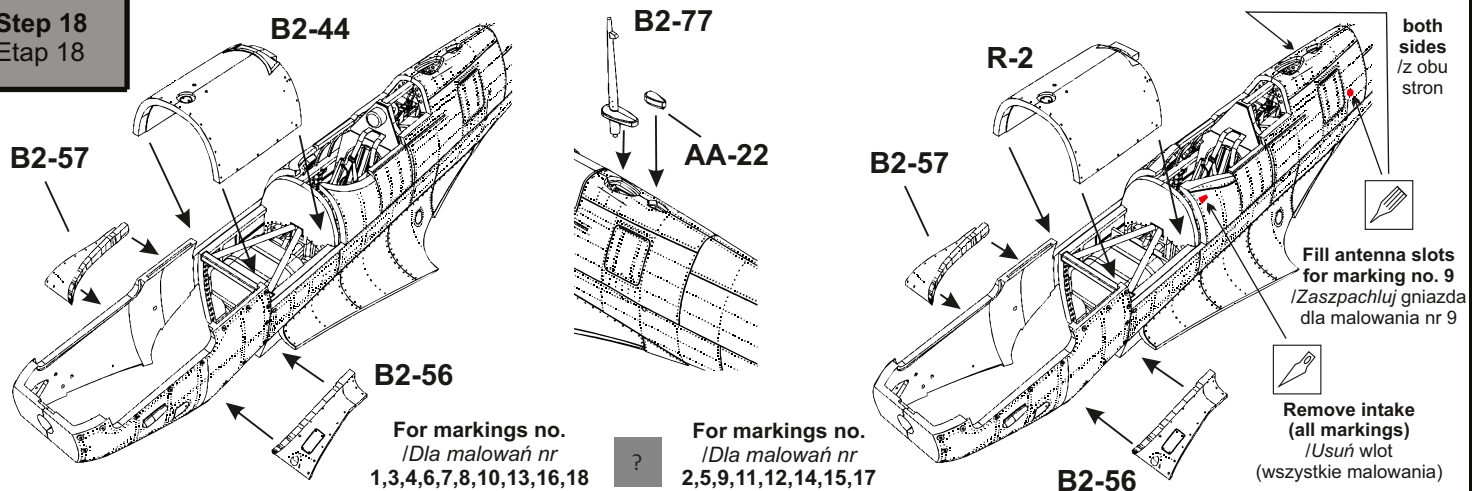
Only for marking no.17
/Tylko dla malowania nr 17



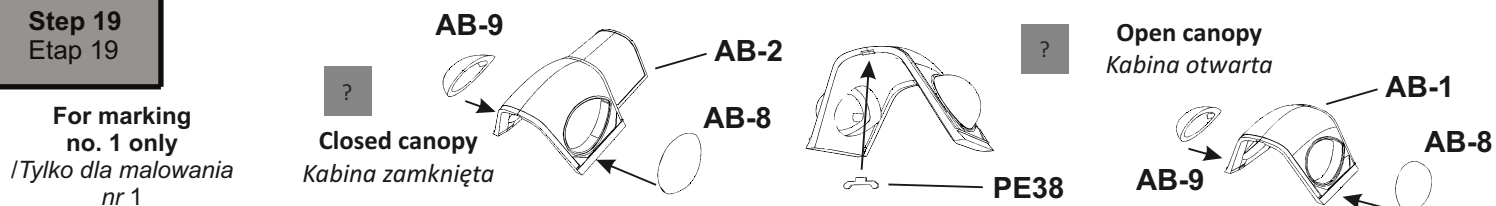
Gyroscopic Sight
/Celownik żyroskopowy



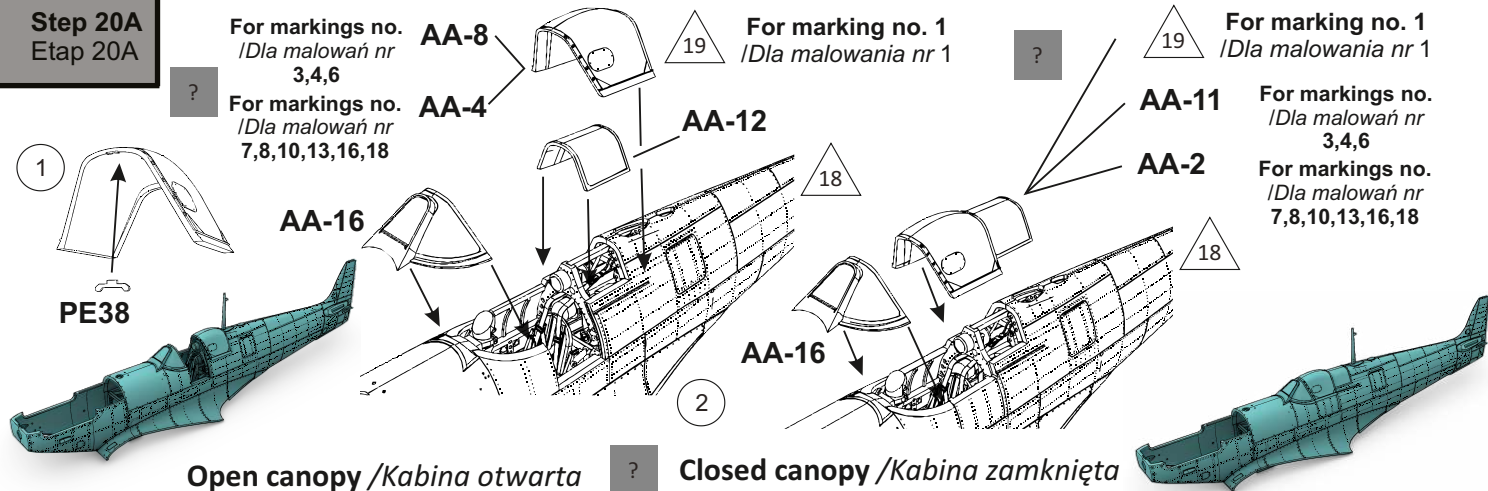
Step 18
Etap 18



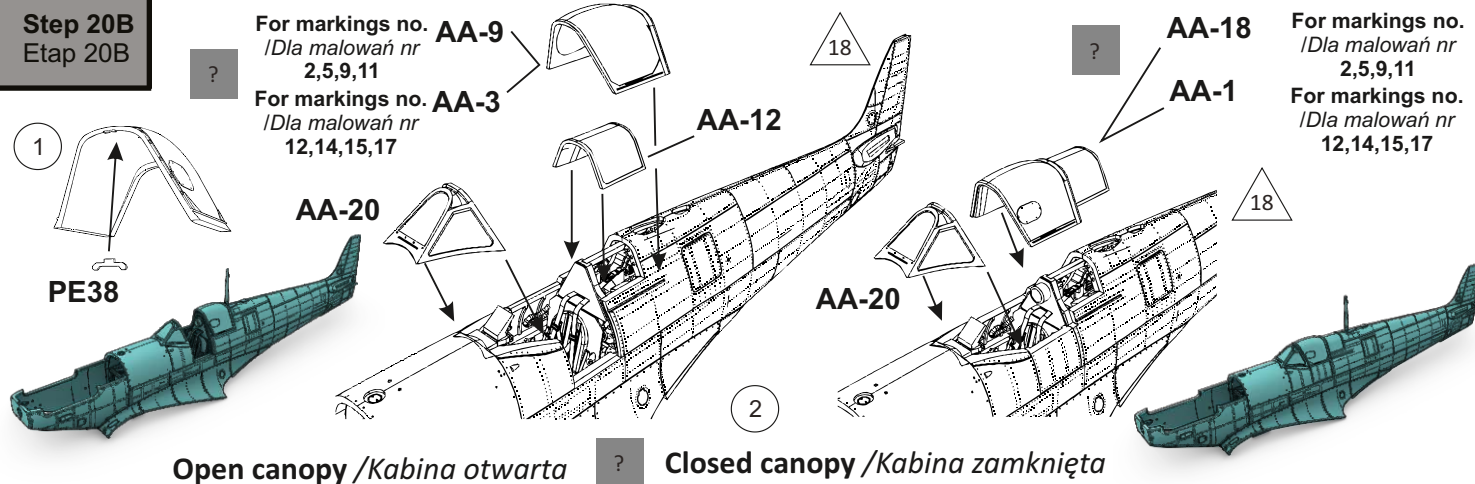
Step 19
Etap 19



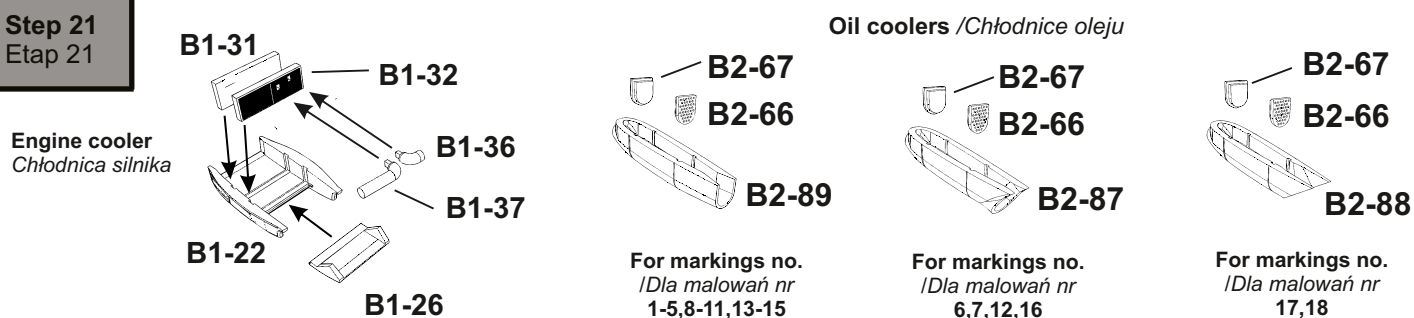
Step 20A
Etap 20A



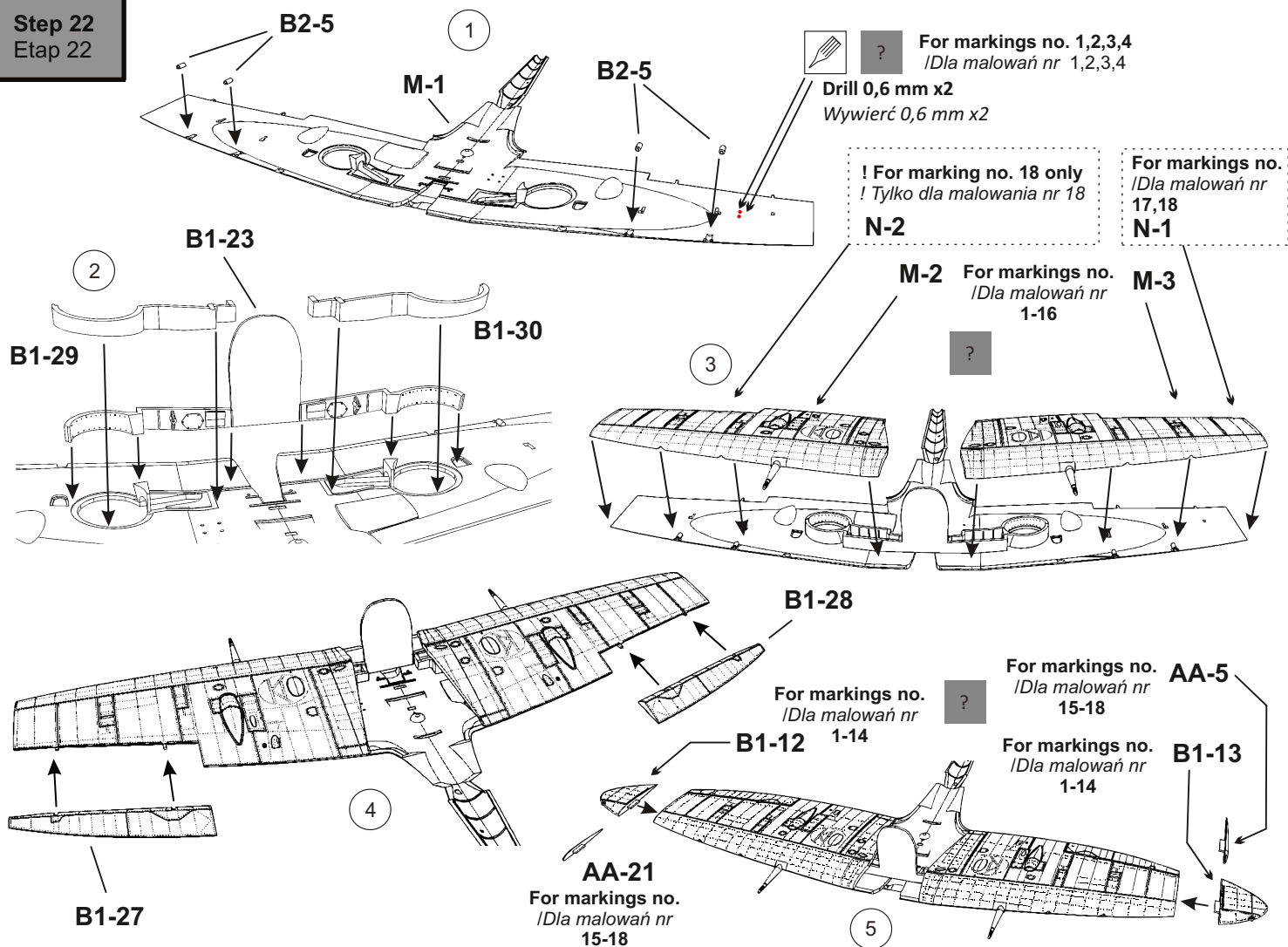
Step 20B
Etap 20B



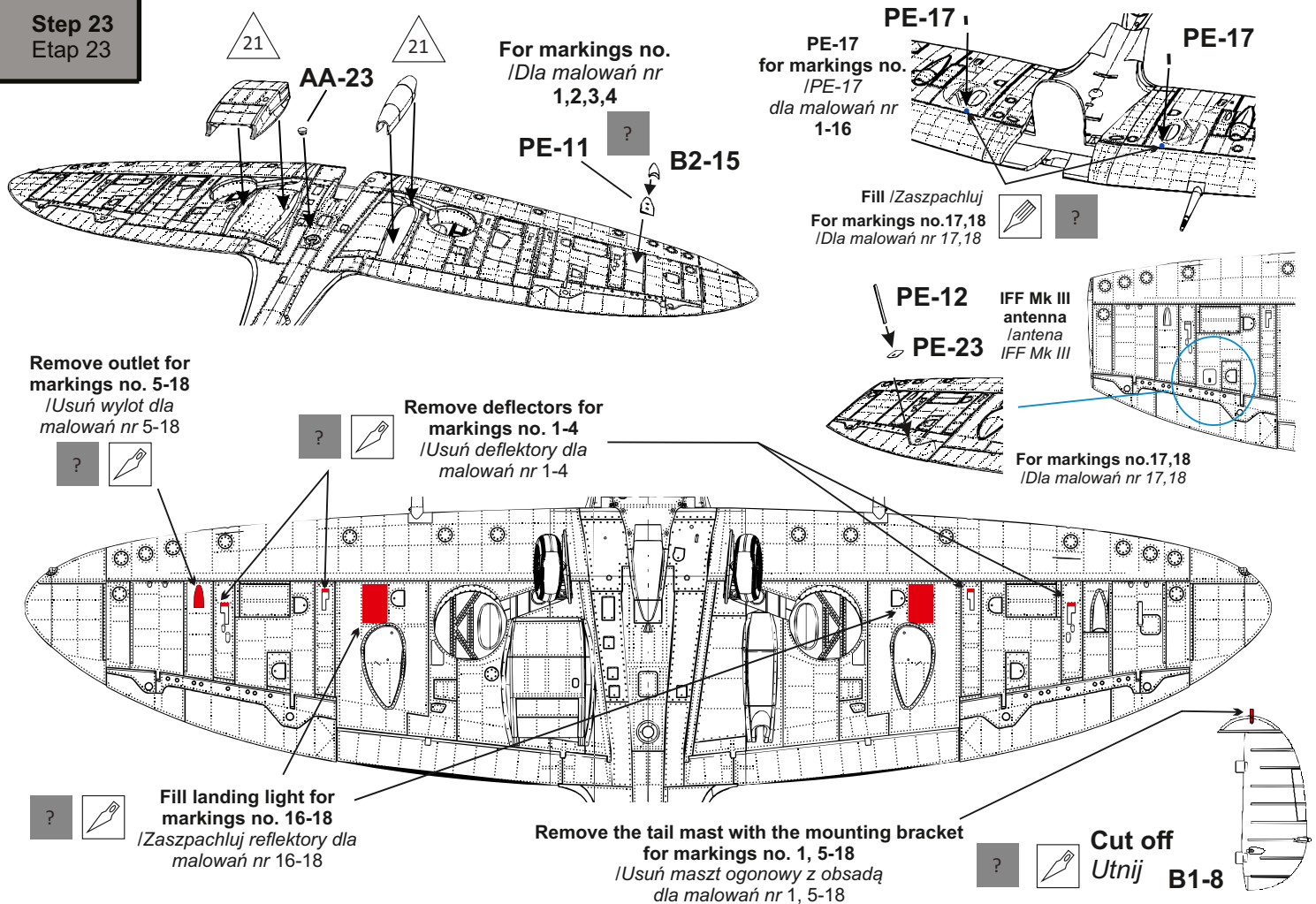
Step 21
Etap 21



Step 22
Etap 22

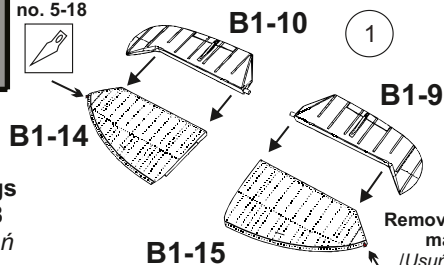


Step 23
Etap 23

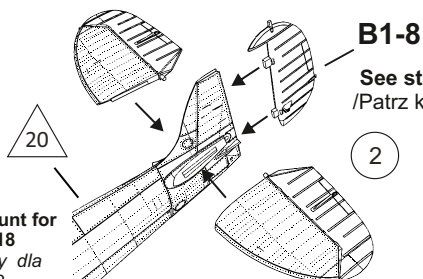


Step 24A Etap 24A

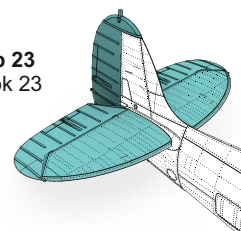
no. 5-18



Remove antenna mount for markings no. 5-18
/Usuń montaż anteny dla malowań nr 5-18



See step 23
/Patrz krok 23



24A

Step 24B Etap 24B

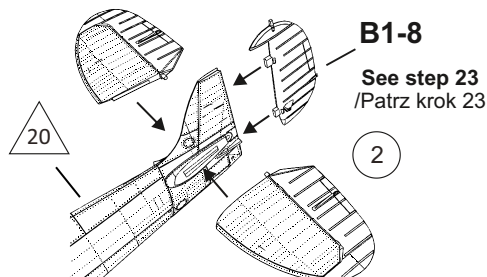
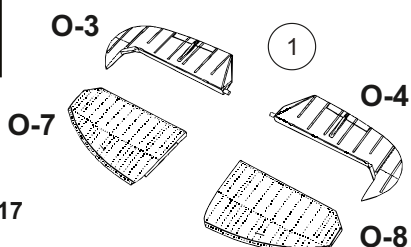
O-3

O-7

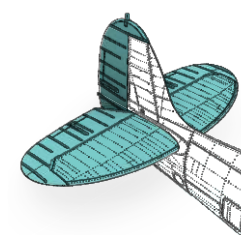
O-4

O-8

Only for marking no. 17
/Tylko dla malowania nr 17

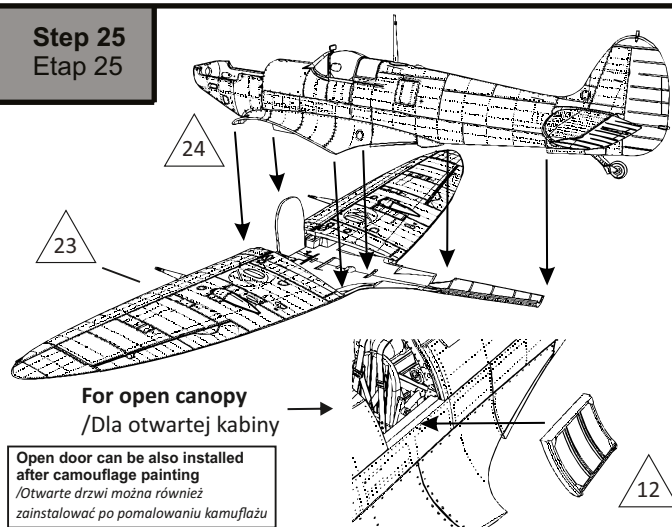


See step 23
/Patrz krok 23



24B

Step 25 Etap 25



For open canopy
/Dla otwartej kabiny

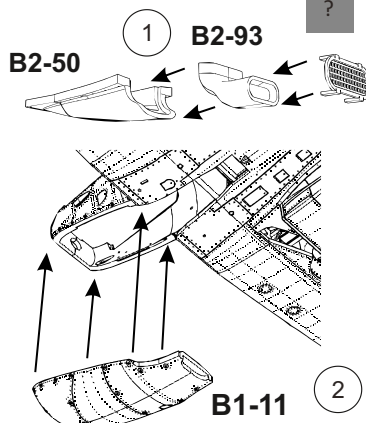
Open door can be also installed after camouflage painting
/Otwarte drzwi można również zainstalować po pomalowaniu kamuflażu

Step 26 Etap 26

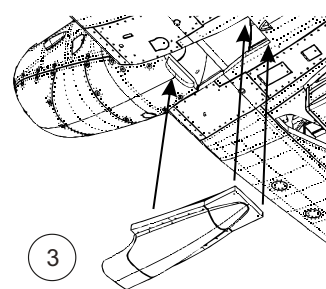
X14



Remove netting for markings no. 6,7,8,10-18
/Usuń siatkę dla malowań nr 6,7,8,10-18



PE-7 If plastic part is used, install intake netting for markings no.1-5,9
/Jeśli używasz części plastikowej, zamontuj siatkę wlotu dla malowań nr 1-5,9



Step 27 Etap 27

B2-48

B2-47

B2-72

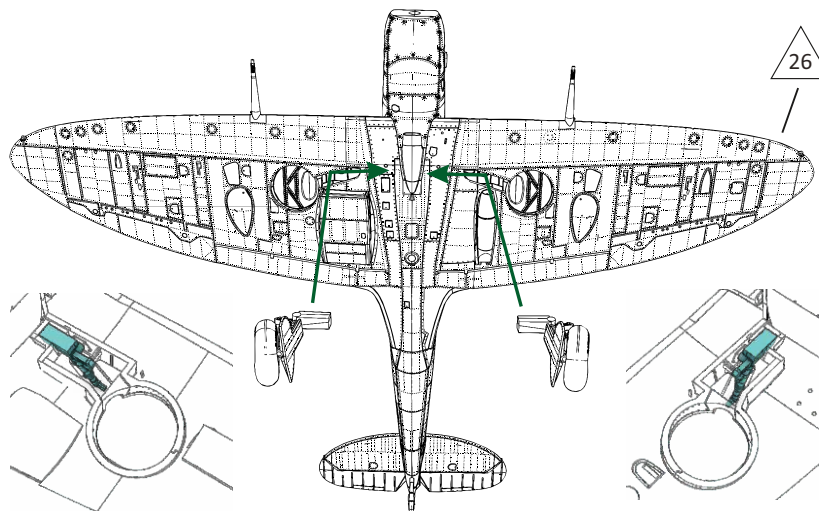
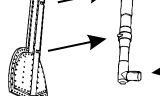
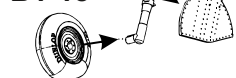
X1L

?

B1-19

B2-73

B1-18



Undercarriage assembly is also possible after camouflage painting
/ Instalacja podwozia jest możliwa również po pomalowaniu kamuflażu

Step 28A Etap 28A

De Havilland DH 5/21 and 5/29 propellers
Śmigła DH 5/21 i 5/29

C-10

C-9

C-3

For markings no. 1,2,5,9,11,14,18
Dla malowań nr 1,2,5,9,11,14,18

Step 28B Etap 28B

De Havilland DH 45 Hydromatic propeller
Śmigło DH 45 Hydromatic

C-11

C-12

C-4

For marking no. 7
Dla malowania nr 7

Step 28C Etap 28C

Roto RX5/10 propeller
Śmigło Roto RX5/10

C-6

X22

?

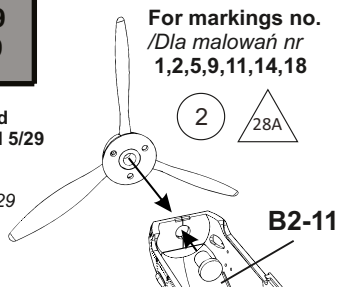
C-7

C-1

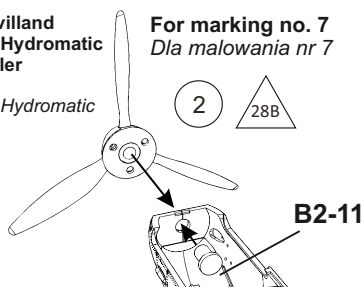
For markings no. 3,4,6,8,10,12,13,15,16,17
Dla malowań nr 3,4,6,8,10,12,13,15,16,17

Step 29 Etap 29

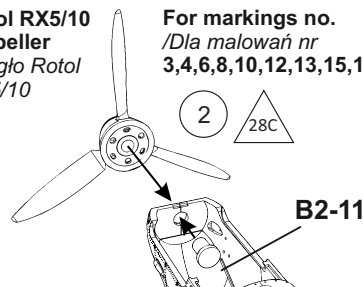
De Havilland
DH 5/21 and 5/29
propellers
Śmigła
DH 5/21 i 5/29



De Havilland
DH 45 Hydromatic
propeller
Śmigło
DH 45 Hydromatic



Rotoł RX5/10
propeller
Śmigło Rotoł
RX5/10



Step 30A Etap 30A

Plastic exhaust
/Plastikowe rury
wydechowe

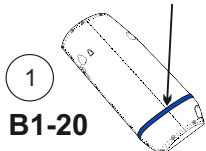
For markings no. 2-15
Dla malowań nr 2-15

For marking no. 16
Dla malowania nr 16

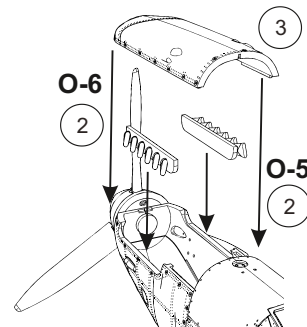
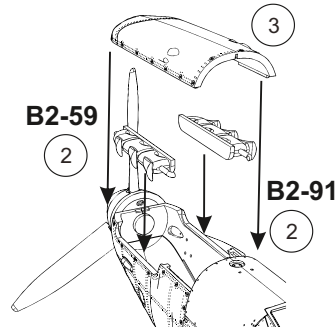
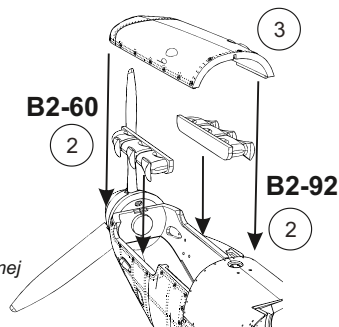
For markings no. 17,18
Dla malowań nr 17,18

Fill in
Zaszpachluj

For markings no. 1,2,5,11,14
/Dla malowań nr 1,2,5,11,14



For marking no. 1
use 3D printed
part (step 30B)
Dla malowania nr 1
użyj części drukowanej
(krok 30B)



Step 30B Etap 30B

Printed exhaust
/Drukowane rury wydechowe

For markings 17,18
Dla malowań nr 17,18

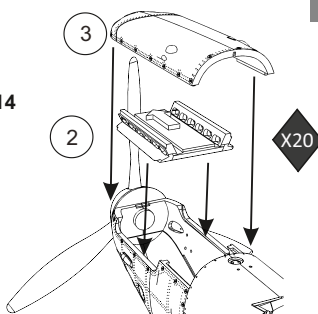
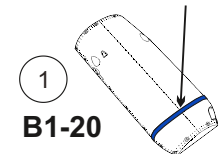
For markings 2-15
Dla malowań nr 2-15

For marking 16
Dla malowania nr 16
See sub-assembly no.4
Patrz dodatkowy krok nr 4

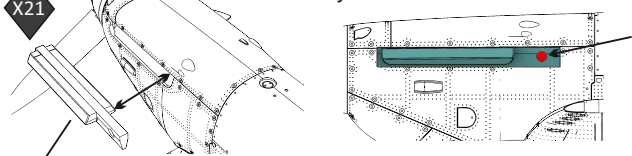
For marking 1
Dla malowania nr 1

Fill in
Zaszpachluj

For markings no. 1,2,5,11,14
/Dla malowań nr 1,2,5,11,14



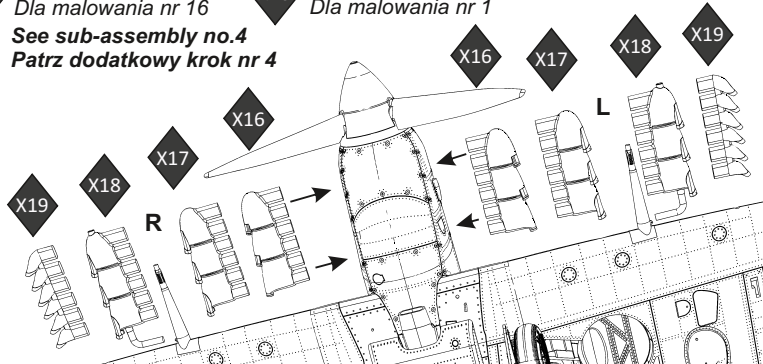
For marking 16 only
Tylko dla malowania nr 16



Using 3D template
drill opening 1,0mm, both sides
Używając szablonu 3D wywierć
otwór 1,0mm, z obu stron

Resin 3d printed exhaust can be also installed
after camouflage painting
/Instalacja drukowanych 3d rur wydechowych
jest możliwa również po pomalowaniu kamuflażu

Do not glue. Temporary 3D template for drilling (dual sided)
Nie przyklejaj. Tymczasowy szablon 3D do wiercenia (dwustronny)



Step 31 Etap 31

For markings no. 1,3,4,6,7,8,10,13
Dla malowań nr 1,3,4,6,7,8,10,13

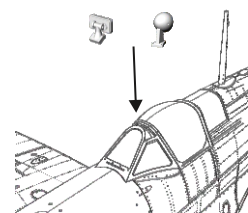
For marking no. 14
Dla malowania nr 14

External mirror
Lusterko zewnętrzne

For markings no. 2,5,9,11,12
Dla malowań nr 2,5,9,11,12

For markings no. 15,16
Dla malowań nr 15,16

For markings no. 17,18
Dla malowań nr 17,18



Step 32 Etap 32

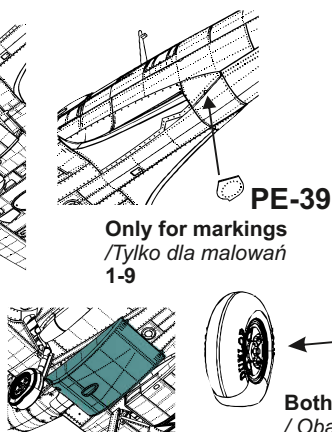
External fuel tank
/Zewnętrzny
zbiornik paliwa



For marking 17
Dla malowania nr 17



For marking 18
Dla malowania nr 18



PE-27

PE-26

PE bend 90°
/ PE zagnij 90°

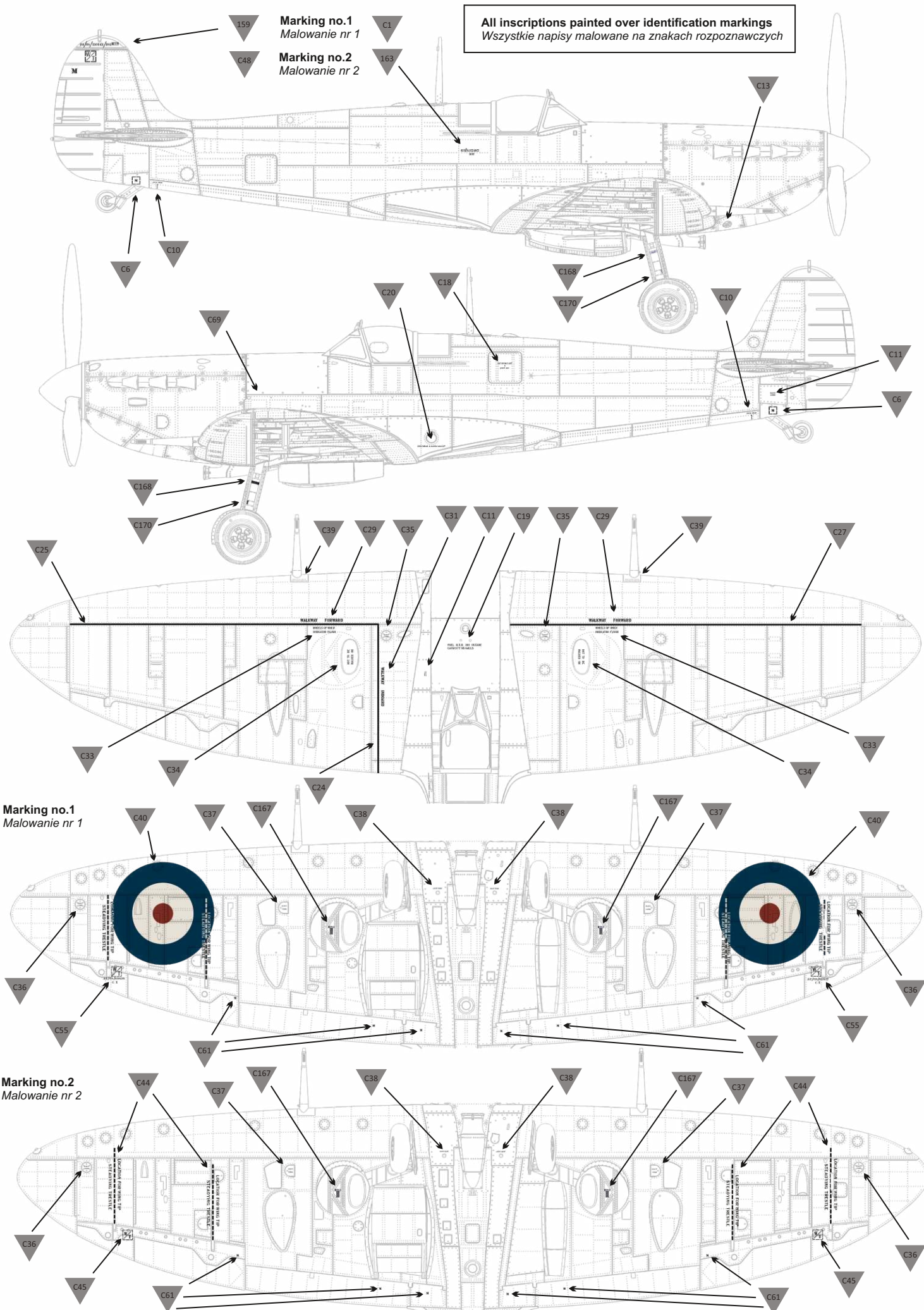
For marking no.4
Dla malowania nr 4
Exhaust-glare screen
/ Osłona
przeciwoślepieniowa

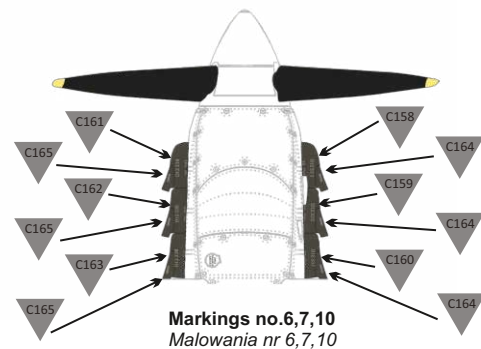
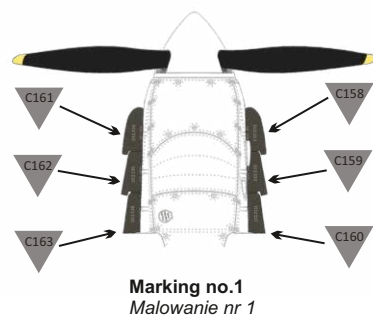
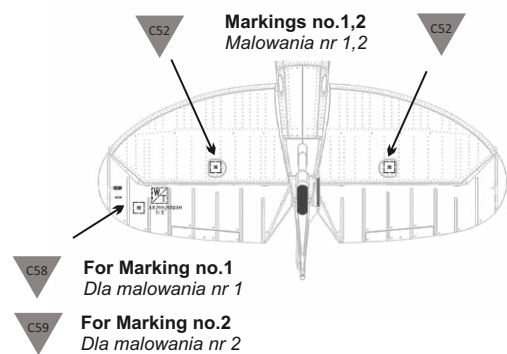
PE-22

Both wheels
/ Oba koła

Rim cover for
markings no. 6,7,12
Pokrywa felgi dla
malowań nr 6,7,12

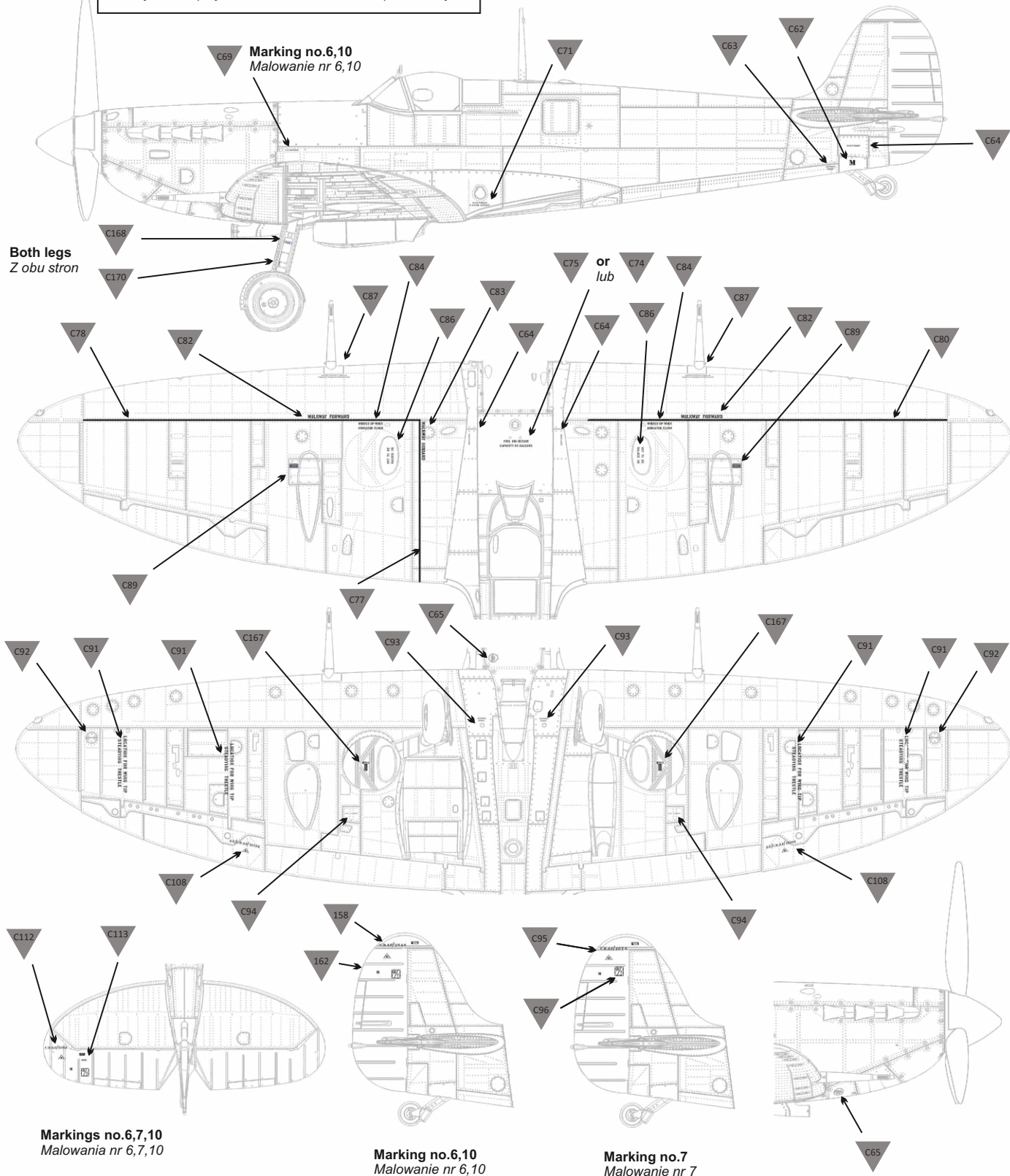
B2-83





Stencil decals for markings 6, 7 and 10 (CBAF factory finish) / Napisy eksploatacyjne dla malowań 6, 7 i 10 (malowanie fabryczne CBAF)

All inscriptions painted over identification markings
Wszystkie napisy malowane na znakach rozpoznawczych



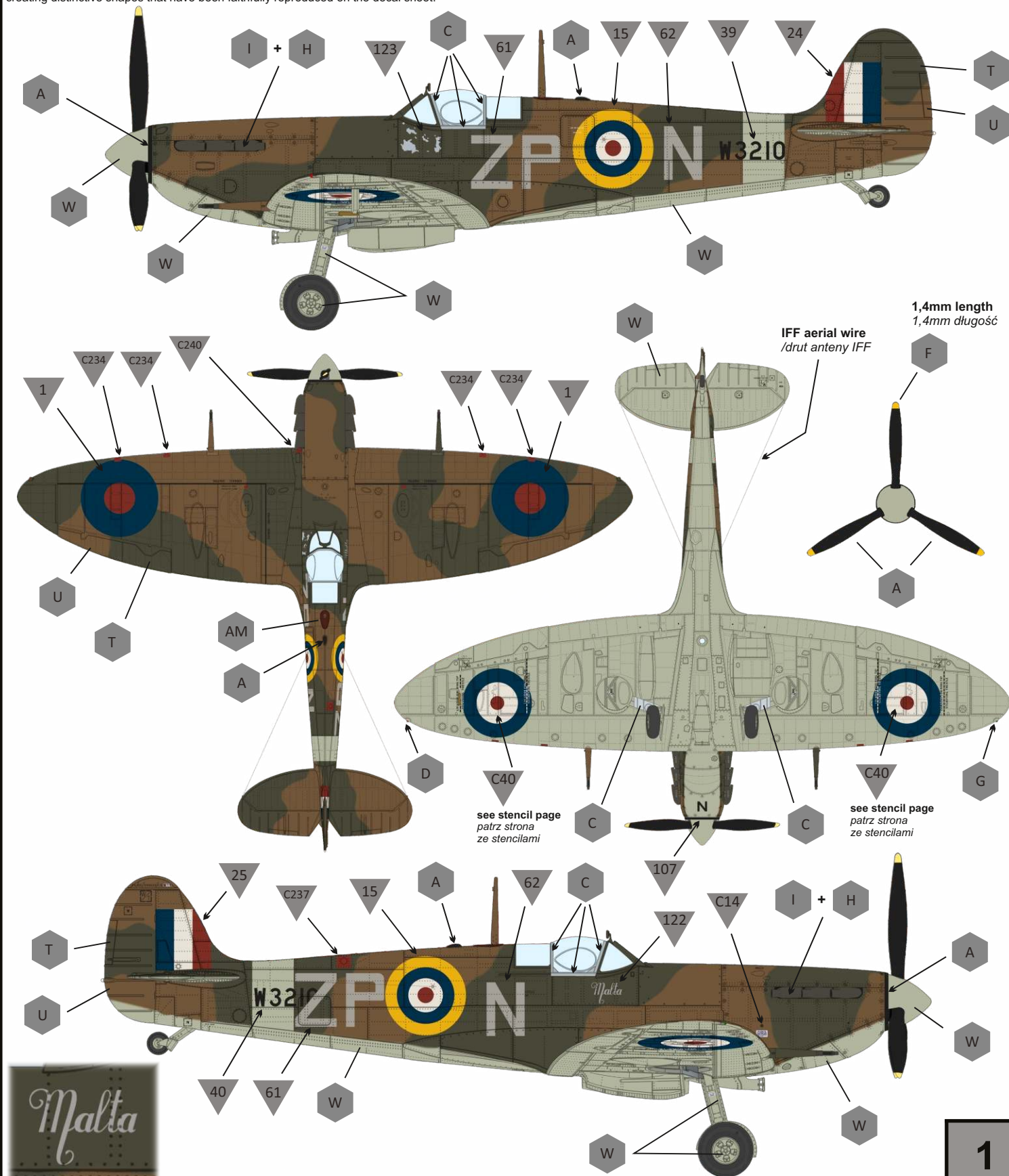
1. Spitfire Mk Vb W3210 (Supermarine production) "Malta", ZP-N, No. 74 "Tiger" Squadron RAF, P/O Warren John "Sandy" Sandman RNZAF, RAF Gravesend / Biggin Hill, June 1941

Born in Auckland, Warren John Sandman enlisted in the RNZAF in June 1940. After completing his training, he was posted to the United Kingdom, joining No. 74 "Tiger" Squadron on 21 April 1941. He quickly emerged as one of the unit's rising stars. *is first "shoot-down" took place on 6 May*, when he shot down a runaway RAF barrage balloon. The following day he claimed a Bf 109 damaged. His real successes began after the squadron re-equipped with the Spitfire Vb in early June. On 9 June he claimed a Bf 109 probable and another damaged; on 16 June he added another probable; and on 22 June he destroyed two Bf 109s. His skill was clearly recognised, as he became a regular wingman to S/Ldr John Mungo-Park, the squadron's commanding officer, and to W/Cdr "Sailor" Malan whenever the latter led the squadron in Mungo-Park's absence.

This run of victories ended abruptly on 27 June. On that day, 24 Blenheims escorted by 19 fighter squadrons carried out "Circus 25". The target was the Fives-Lille Steel and Engineering Works, at the extreme limit of Spitfire endurance, making it the furthest offensive mission flown by Spitfires up to that point. During the approach, No. 74 Squadron became separated from the rest of the Wing during a weaving turn. S/Ldr Mungo-Park applied full throttle to regain position, but the manoeuvre left the pilots strung out across the sky. The Luftwaffe seized the opportunity and launched a devastating attack, shooting down three of the "Tiger" Squadron's Spitfires: those of S/Ldr Mungo-Park, P/O Sandman (flying W3210), and Sgt Hilken. Sandman spent the remainder of the war as a prisoner of war.

Another pilot who flew W3210 was the Polish airman P/O Stanislaw Król, who made at least six flights in the aircraft. He shared Sandman's fate on 2 July, being shot down and sent to Stalag Luft III. He later took part in the "Great Escape," becoming one of six Polish airmen who managed to break out. Captured after 13 days on the run, he was murdered by the Gestapo as one of the fifty escapees executed on Hitler's orders.

W3210 carried the factory-applied camouflage of Dark Green and Dark Earth over Sky, with relatively soft demarcation typical of its production period. The Sky rear fuselage band and spinner were not factory-applied but were almost certainly added at No. 8 Maintenance Unit before the aircraft was issued to the squadron. Notably, the base of the spinner remained in Night/Black W3210 was one of two Spitfires funded by the Anglo-Maltese League and bore the stylised name "Malta" on the starboard side. On the port side, areas of paint had flaked away, creating distinctive shapes that have been faithfully reproduced on the decal sheet.

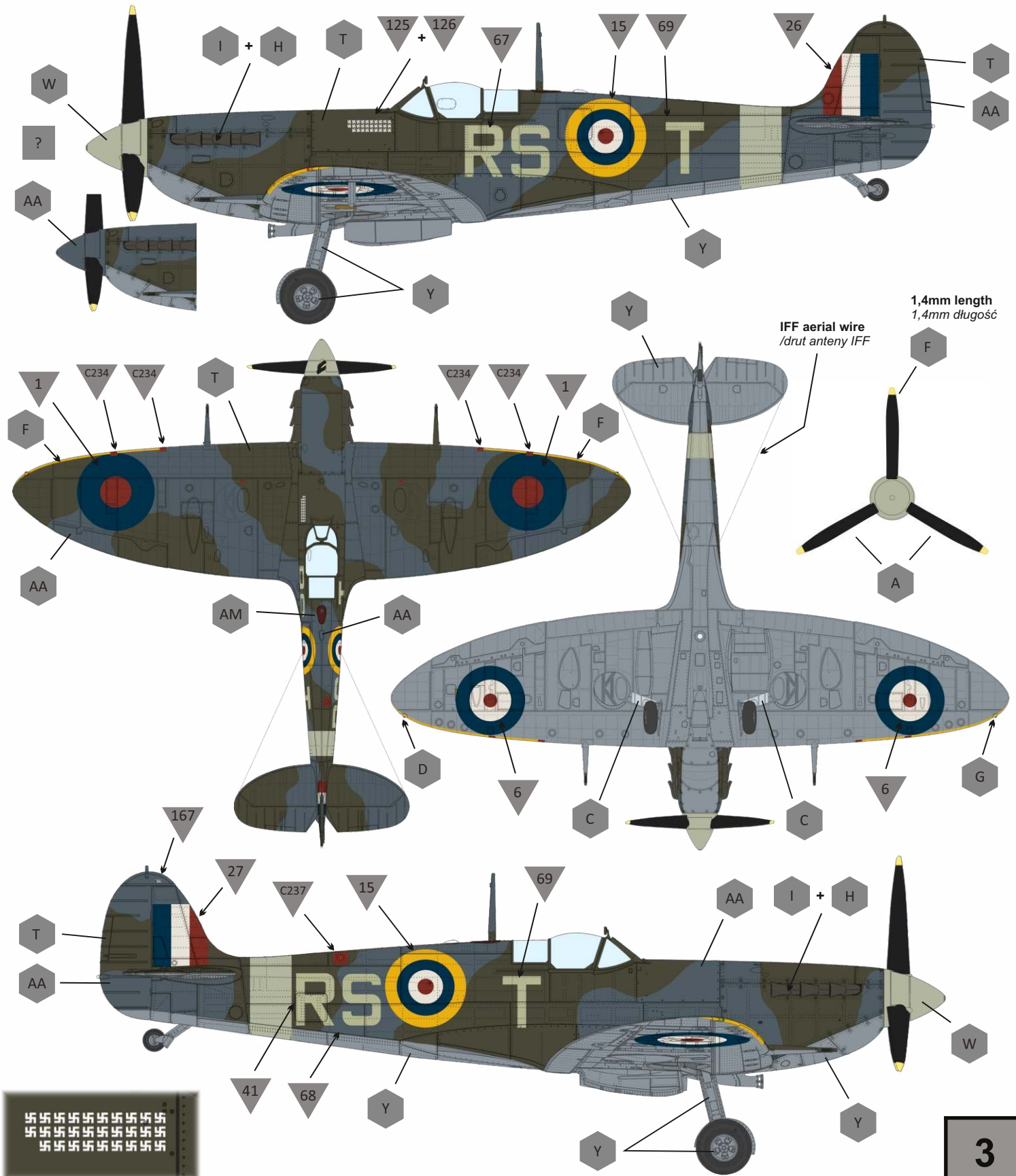


3. Spitfire Mk Vb BL336 (CBAF production), RST, Biggin Hill Wing, W/Cdr Robert Roland Stanford Tuck, RAF Biggin Hill, late January 1942

One of the outstanding fighter leaders of the war - and the first RAF fighter pilot of the Second World War to receive a second Bar to the DFC - Robert Roland Stanford Tuck combined firm discipline with genuine camaraderie, earning deep loyalty from his pilots. Geoffrey Wellum later recalled him vividly: "Bob was very flamboyant. He was a bloody good-looking bloke [...]. A brilliant pilot, absolutely brilliant, and always dashing about." In the beginning of December 1941, Tuck assumed command of the Biggin Hill Wing, choosing BL336 as his personal mount. Flying it on 17 December he scored his final success - scoring hits on a Ju 88 already mortally damaged by S/Ldr Duke-Woolley of No. 124 Squadron, to whom he gave full credit.

On 28 January 1942, frustrated by inactivity caused by poor weather, W/Cdr Tuck undertook a Rhubarb with P/O Al Harley of No. 401 Squadron RCAF. On the return leg they accidentally drifted north and approached Boulogne, with its formidable anti-aircraft defences. Flying through intense fire, "Tuck's Luck" finally faltered - though not entirely. Forced landing in a field where a battery of 20 mm anti-aircraft guns was deployed, he saw one directly ahead still firing at his crippled aircraft. He pressed the trigger one last time, destroying the gun and its crew. This enraged the remaining gunners, and he was at real risk of being lynched - until their mood suddenly shifted. Laughing and slapping him on the back, they exclaimed: "Goot shot, Englander! Goot shot...!" Only then did he notice that one of his cannon shells had travelled straight down the long barrel of the German 20 mm gun and exploded inside, splitting it open into curled strips. At the time of his capture, he was the top-scoring Allied fighter ace in North-West Europe, with 27 individual and 2 shared destroyed, 1 individual and 1 shared unconfirmed destroyed, 6 probables, and 6 individual plus 1 shared damaged.

BL336 carried Tuck's initials as fuselage codes and swastikas marking his victories. Although in service for only two months, the aircraft had already been completely repainted. One possible reason is that winter conditions made paint more prone to flaking, and as Al Harley recalled: "Tuck's aircraft was always in top-notch condition and was just a little faster than the run-of-the-mill Spitfires." The new camouflage had very sharp demarcation lines and, as production Ocean Grey was probably still in short supply, a mixed grey was likely used instead - a shade thought to be slightly more bluish and less greenish than Ocean Grey, and in this case also a little darker. Another personal touch may have been the propeller spinner: some photographs suggest it was repainted in a colour noticeably darker than the mandated Sky. Although impossible to confirm from black-and-white images, mixed grey is one plausible option. Since other photographs make the appearance of the spinner more ambiguous, a Sky interpretation is also presented below.



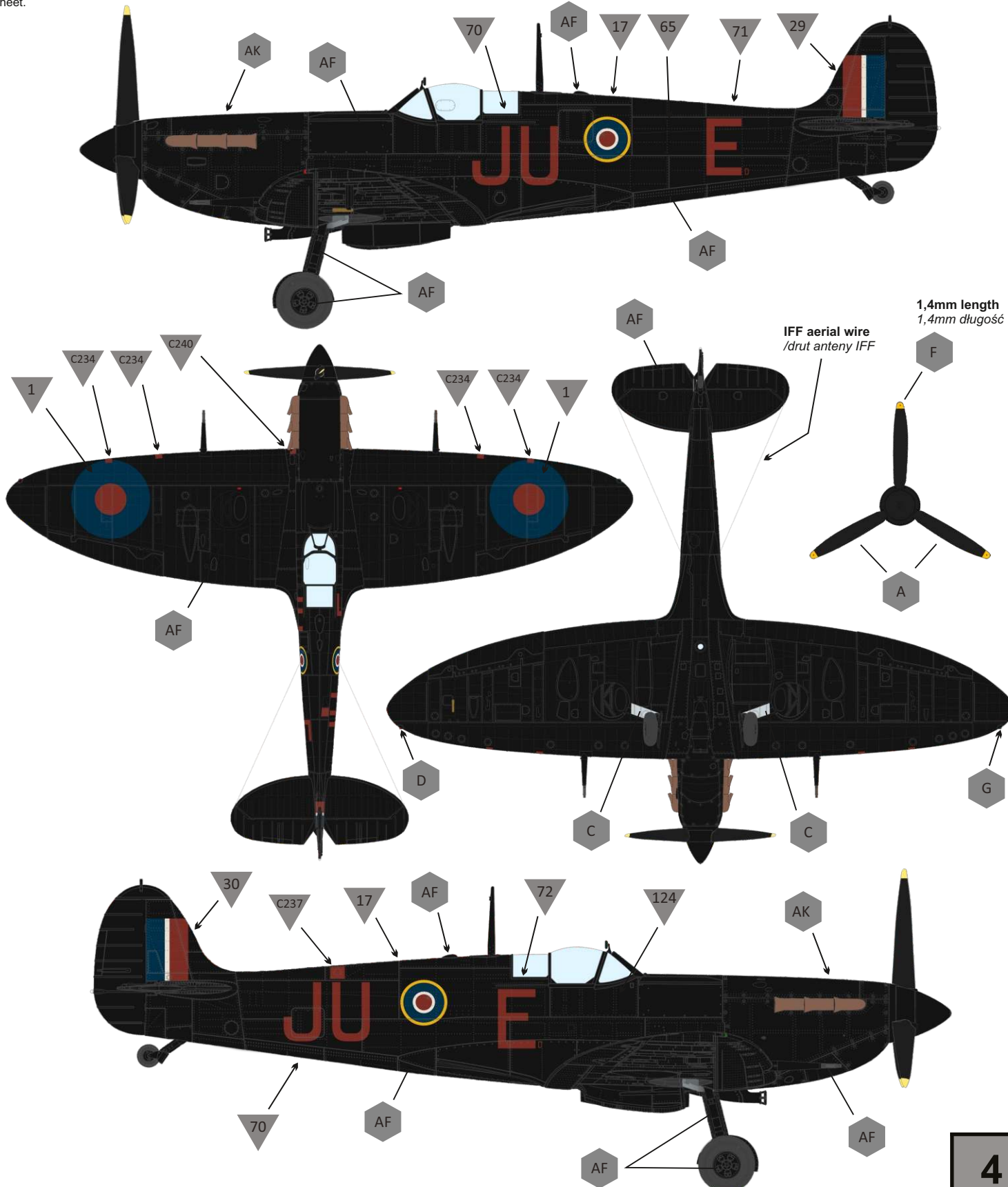
4. Spitfire Mk Vb BL429 (CBAF production). JU-E. No.111 Squadron RAF. S/Ldr George Francis "Wee" Brotchie. RAF Debden. January - February 1942

George Francis Brochie was an experienced pre-war fighter pilot. After the outbreak of war he saw action over France with No. 73 Squadron RAF, flying alongside such notable figures as Edgar "Eddie" "Cobber" Kain. During the Battle of Britain he served as an instructor with No. 7 OTU - yet despite that role he managed to destroy a Dornier on 18 September 1940, believed to be the only Operational Training Unit victory of the Battle of Britain. In April 1941 Brochie joined No. 111 Squadron, taking command on 1 September. Because the unit included many Czechoslovak pilots, some newspapers described him as an honorary member of the Czechoslovak Air Force, though this is difficult to verify and may simply reflect his having been presented with a Czechoslovak Pilot's Badge.

As large-scale night raids were expected over the winter, No. 65 and No. 111 Squadrons were selected for night-fighter conversion, beginning intensive training in November 1941. Pilots learned the "Smack" interception procedure, which relied on searchlight guidance rather than continuous radio control. Night operations began at the end of December 1941, but the Luftwaffe failed to appear. Numerous patrols were flown in January, and with only one minor accident they demonstrated the Spitfire's suitability as a night-fighter. Unfortunately, a very serious accident occurred on 14 March. S/Ldr Brothie in BL429 was leading the third section to take off from RAF Debden. While his aircraft was still on the runway, it was struck by a Spitfire flown by W/O Ladislav Zadrobilek, leader of the fourth section. Brothie's aircraft burst into flames, killing him.

The aircraft of No. 111 Squadron were specially prepared for night operations. Their external surfaces were repainted in a *"matt black finish, which gave the Spitfires a suede-like texture"* - almost certainly a reference to Special Night (R.D.M.2A). Unlike the blue-black Night finish, Special Night was a true, deep black. This distinctive appearance earned the aircraft the nickname "Blackfires." Undersurface roundels were overpainted, and smaller night-fighter roundels were applied to the fuselage sides; on BL429 these were 20 inches in diameter and differed in proportion from the national markings introduced later in 1942. Exhaust glare shields were fitted to the fuel-tank cover ahead of the cockpit, and the exhaust stubs were most likely coated with High Temperature Paint No. 41.

By the time JU-E entered service, the squadron code letters had been changed to dull red and, interestingly, the individual letter had been expanded into a name. Unfortunately, surviving photographs show only the "Ed" portion, and it is reproduced as such in the profiles below. As no reference to a fiancée or girlfriend appears in documents, press reports, or squadron memoirs, one plausible interpretation is that the name was "Eddie," commemorating Brothchie's celebrated friend from No. 73 Squadron - Edgar "Eddie" "Cobber" Kain. This option is included on the decal sheet.



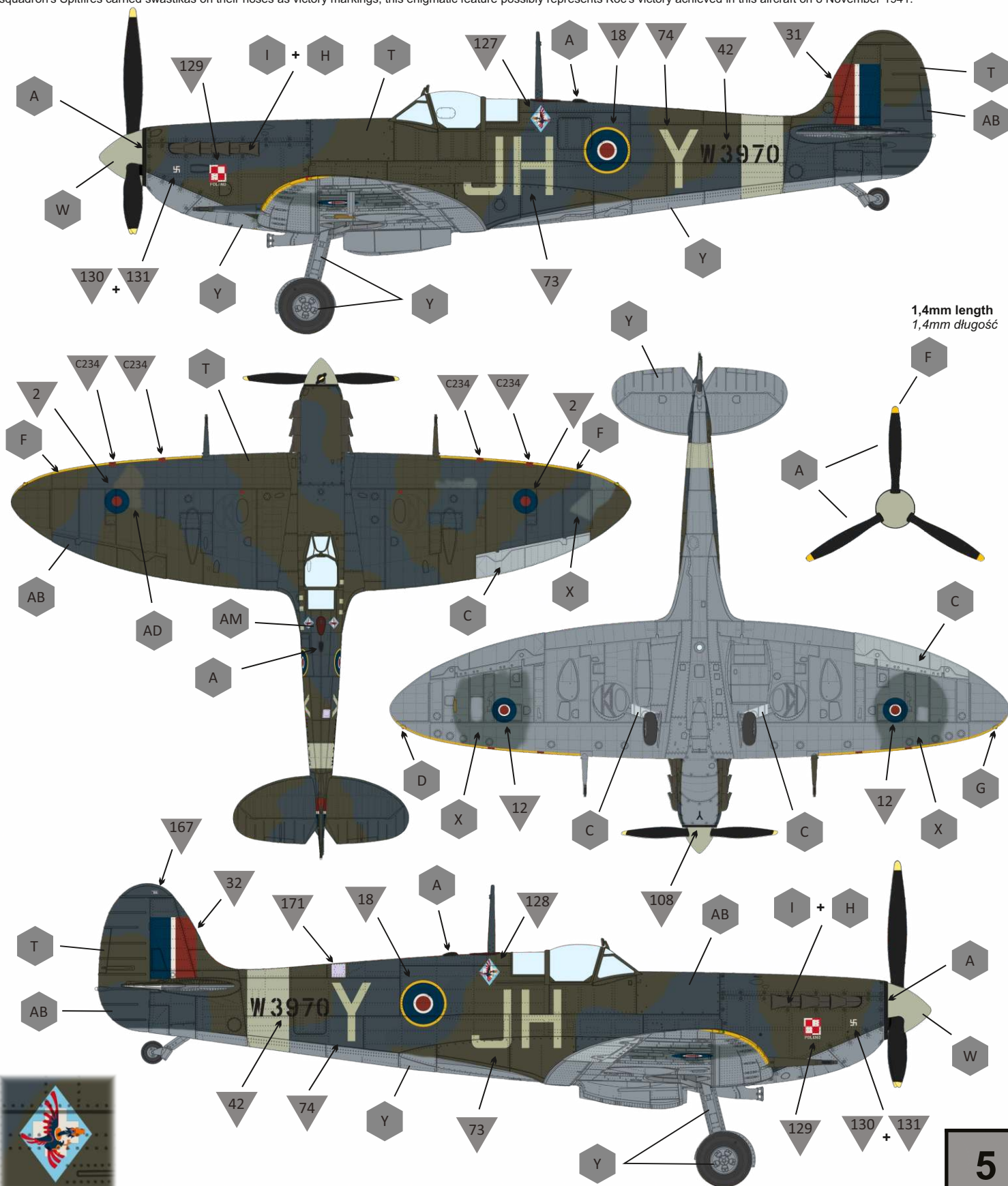
5. Spitfire Mk Vb W3970 (Supermarine production), JH-Y, 317 Dywizjon Myśliwski "Wileński" / No. 317 Polish Fighter Squadron, F/O Tadeusz Koc, RAF Exeter / RAF Northolt, January-April 1942

Tadeusz Koc was one of the most distinctive personalities in the Polish Air Force. During the 1939 campaign he claimed two German aircraft shared destroyed and one Soviet aircraft destroyed individually. After evacuating to Great Britain, he flew with No. 245 Squadron, before being posted in February 1941 as one of the founding members of No. 317 Polish Fighter Squadron. Tadeusz Koc ended the war as an ace with three individual and three shared victories, plus three probables. He also claimed two damaged aircraft that were not officially credited by the Polish Air Force. He published his memoirs in Polish as *Błękitne niebo i prawdziwe kule* (later reprinted as *303. Mój dywizjon*).

W3970 proved especially lucky for F/O Koc. He flew it during "Circus 110" on 8 November, claiming a Bf 109F probably destroyed, and again on 30 December during the Second Polish Fighter Wing's successful escort of Halifax aircraft returning from attack on Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, when the wing claimed seven Bf 109s in five minutes. On 15 March 1942, returning from "Roadstead 12", the squadron encountered dense fog over Exeter and Bolt Head. Koc was one of only two pilots able to land; the others force-landed, with one killed, three injured, and eight Spitfires lost. Once again, W3970 brought him home. His final notable mission in this aircraft came on 10 April during a large "triple Rodeo" involving twenty squadrons, which succeeded in drawing the Luftwaffe into combat. Two pilots of No. 317 Squadron scored, and all returned safely - Koc included, on his last operational flight in W3970.

W3970 is believed to have been produced in the original Dark Green/Dark Earth camouflage with spinner in Night. It was repainted in the Day Fighter Scheme - most likely by No. 39 MU - before its delivery to No. 317 Squadron on 26 October 1941. The "mixed grey" applied over the Dark Earth appeared very dark, rendering the division between it and the Dark Green almost invisible in photographs. When the spinner was repainted in Sky, its base remained in the original Night finish. The light-coloured aileron visible in photographs was most likely a replacement part; its exact finish is uncertain and it may have been left unpainted, as shown below, or covered only with primer.

The small rounds in all six positions were highly unusual and may have been a personal initiative by F/O Koc, as his subsequent aircraft carried the same feature. They should not be mistaken for the reduced-size national markings applied to night-fighter fuselages. W3970 is not known to have flown night operations and, unlike night-fighters, displayed these small rounds in all six positions rather than on the fuselage alone. A small white spot can be seen on the nose in several photographs, making it unlikely to be a flaw in the images themselves. Since the squadron's Spitfires carried swastikas on their noses as victory markings, this enigmatic feature possibly represents Koc's victory achieved in this aircraft on 8 November 1941.



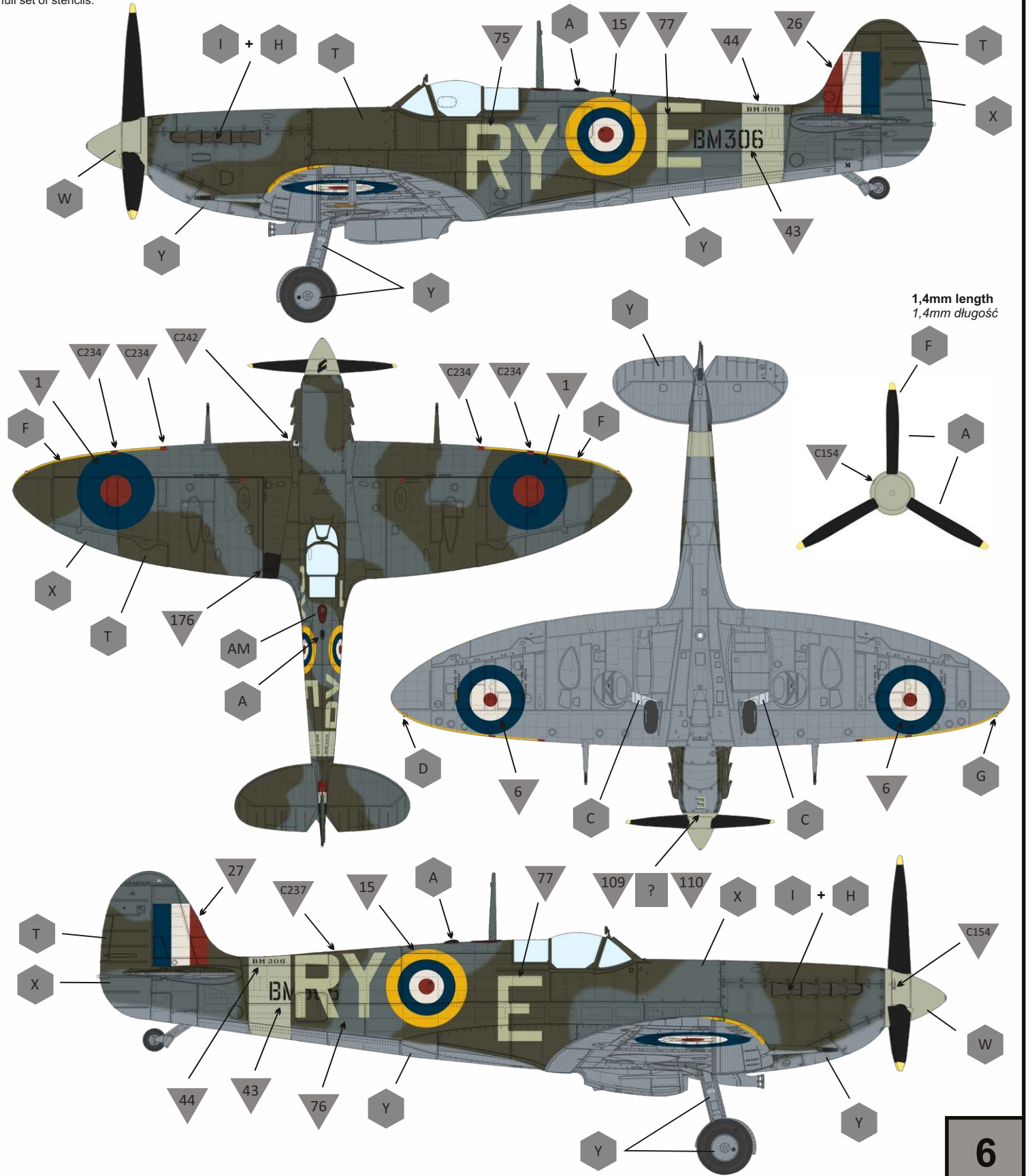
6. Spitfire Mk Vb BM306 (CBAF production), RY-E, No. 313 (Czechoslovak) Squadron RAF, P/O Václav Jícha, RAF Fairlop / Hornchurch, late April–early May 1942

"Venda Jicha was the best Spitfire pilot I ever had at Castle Bromwich. He had been in the Czechoslovak Air Force and was their top aerobatic pilot. He was a well-built boy, dark hair, Slavonic features, blue eyes, a firm mouth and a strong jaw. He looked a fighter and was a fighter: I would rather have had him on my side than against me." These words from the very demanding Alex Henshaw are the best testament to Václav Jícha's skill. Before the war he flew Avia Ba.122 in the aerobatic team led by the "king of the air", František Novák. A veteran of the Battle of France and the Battle of Britain with multiple victories, he was transferred in May 1941 to the No. 313 Squadron, then being formed. On 28 March 1942 Jícha shot down an Fw 190, becoming the first Czechoslovak to do so.

He first flew BM306 on 11 April and it soon became his regular mount. He showed extraordinary resolve on 24 April, diving alone into a numerically superior group of Fw 190s to defend F/Sgt Brazda, repeatedly driving off their attacks and even damaging one of the enemy fighters. On 5 May 1942 he again faced overwhelming odds. Objective of "Circus 157" that day was for six Bostons, escorted by four Spitfire wings, to bomb the power station at Lille-Sequedin. Numerous Fw 190 units rose to meet them, and the resulting action is sometimes referred to as the "Battle of the Nations," reflecting the truly international composition of the RAF wings involved. The brunt of the attack fell on No. 313 Squadron, flying top cover; the unit's ORB described the operation as "possibly the fiercest carried out so far." Jícha was attacked by six Fw 190s and survived only thanks to his aerobatic expertise. His BM306 was hit in the port wing and tailplane, and he had to "exercise skill to bring it safely home."

Jícha completed his operational tour in August 1942 and the following month was awarded DFC for his his combat achievements. In January 1943 he began working as a CBAF test pilot. Alex Henshaw's memoir *Sigh for a Merlin* contains long passages about Jícha. He tested an impressive number of 1,267 Spitfires. On 1 February 1945 he was a passenger in an Anson that crashed in Scotland. He survived the impact but, wounded, died of exposure in deep snow. He remained undefeated in the air to the very end.

BM306 was fitted with the Merlin 46, a high-altitude development of the Merlin 45. With the Fw 190 entering frontline service and outclassing the Spitfire V, Fighter Command made strenuous efforts to lighten and streamline its aircraft. Units were removing the IFF with its aerial wires, Plessey signal discharger, rudder aerial fitting and the hot-air extractor scoops under the outer wings; the radiator flap was to be kept closed whenever temperatures allowed. Surfaces were to be finished as smoothly as possible, preferably with sprayed dope; some units even filled leading-edge irregularities, though it is uncertain whether No. 313 Squadron did so. Otherwise the aircraft carried its original CBAF factory finish, with characteristic soft-sprayed camouflage boundaries and a full set of stencils.



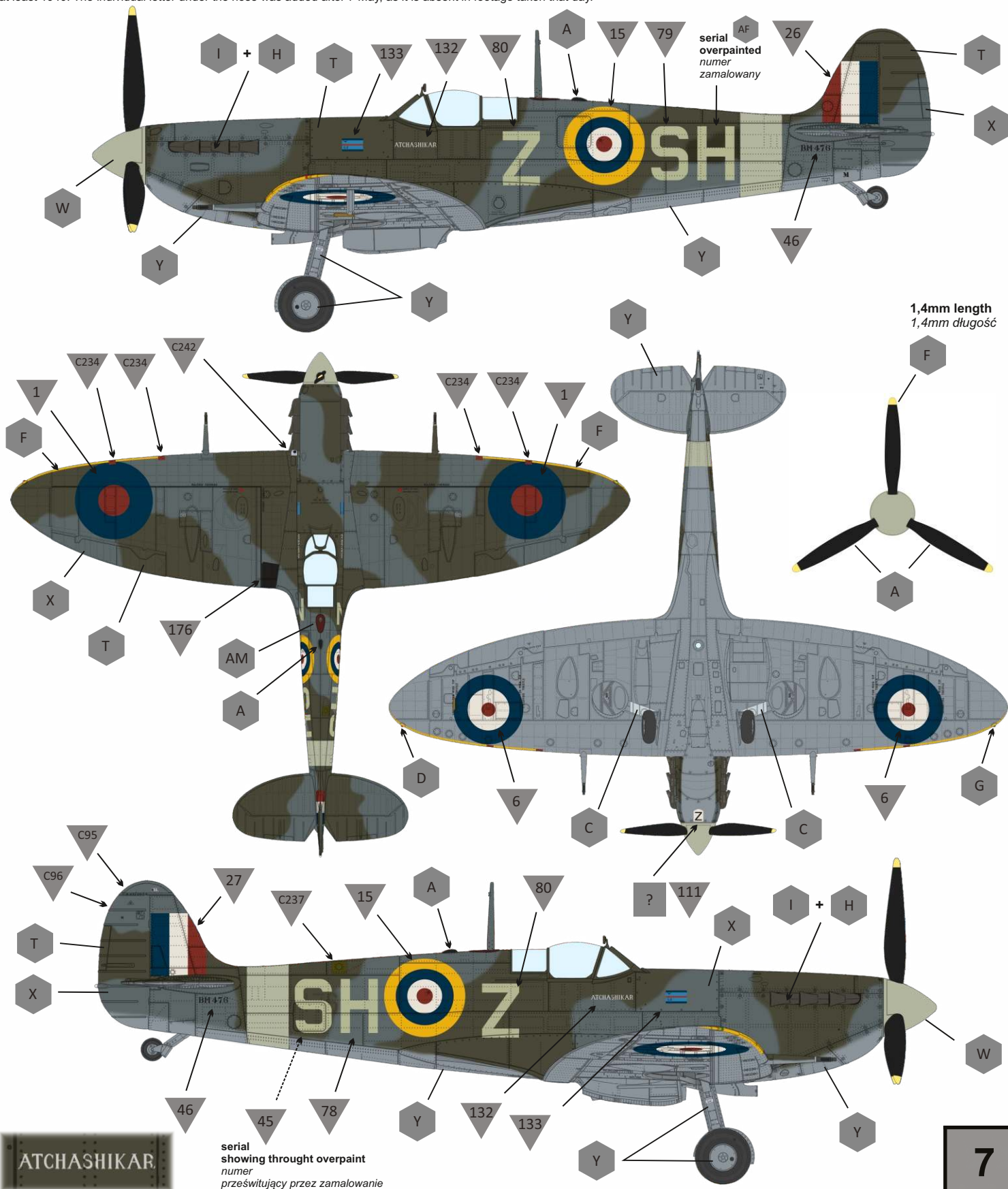
7. Spitfire Mk Vb BM476 (CBAF production) "Atchashikar". SH-Z. No.64 Squadron RAF. S/Ldr Wilfrid George Gerald Duncan Smith. RAF Hornchurch. early May 1942

W. G. G. Duncan Smith was born in Madras, India, where his father was serving, and he joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve at the outbreak of war. After completing training, he was posted to No. 611 Squadron at the end of October 1940, narrowly missing official qualification as a Battle of Britain pilot. His successes came quickly, however, driven by an exceptionally high operational tempo - by December 1942 he had already flown more than 350 sorties, most of them over the hostile skies of occupied France. His score rose just as rapidly, and he ended the war as one of the most accomplished Spitfire aces, with 17 individual and 2 shared confirmed victories, 6 individual and 2 shared probables, and 8 damaged. Remarkably, he was never shot down by an enemy fighter. For his outstanding service he received the Distinguished Flying Cross with two Bars and the Distinguished Service Order with one Bar. He recorded his wartime experiences in the book *Spitfire into Battle*.

On 20 March 1942 Duncan Smith took command of No. 64 Squadron. As he was on seven-day leave when BM476 became operational on 1 May, the aircraft was initially flown by the well-known ace F/Lt Don Kingaby. This changed on 5 May, when Duncan Smith led the squadron into the "Battle of Nations" (see option 6) in BM476. He encountered the enemy on that very sortie, though without result; the ORB noted: "C.O. *had a squirt at a F.W. 190 on the way out, which was snapped from under his nose by 4 Spits from 122 Squadron.*" From that day onward BM476 became his personal aircraft. Flying it, he damaged an Fw 190 on 9 May, destroyed one on 17 May, and claimed another as a probable on 22 June.

BM476 underwent the same "smoothing out" process as BM306 (see option 6), but Duncan Smith further customised it by fitting a de Havilland Type 45 Hydromatic propeller (improving climb rate), removing the ice guard ahead of the carburettor intake (adding roughly 8 mph) and installing the new balloon-type cockpit hood (greatly improving visibility) that at that time was seen mainly on wing and squadron commanders' aircraft. Photographs show a notably smooth and slightly glossy airframe; it is possible that the forward sections of the wing and tailplane leading edges were filled and sanded smooth. Otherwise, BM476 retained its standard factory finish of Dark Green and Ocean Grey over Medium Sea Grey, with very soft camouflage demarcation lines and a full set of factory stencils.

"Atchashikar" was a personal name Duncan Smith applied to at least two of his aircraft. The word (more accurately: "acha shikar") comes from Hindi and means "good hunting". Squadron Leader pennants with the number "64" was added to both sides of the aircraft, and the serial was overpainted and reapplied beneath the horizontal stabiliser - a squadron tradition dating back to at least 1940. The individual letter under the nose was added after 7 May, as it is absent in footage taken that day.



9. Spitfire Mk Vb AR296 (Westland production) "Dorothy", FN-X, No.331 (Norwegian) Squadron RAF, Sgt Martin Gran, RAF North Weald, May 1942

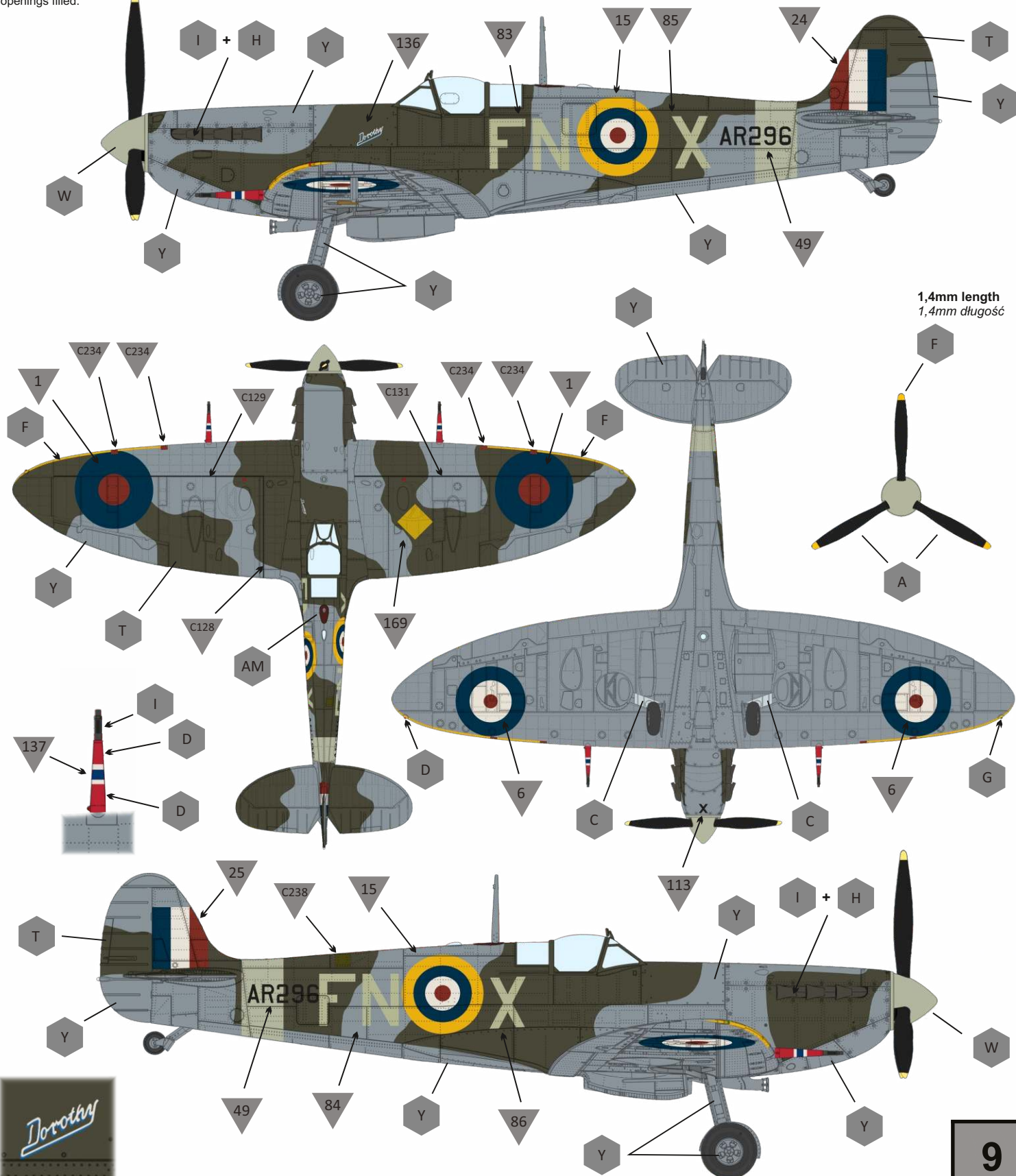
Norwegian squadrons in the RAF played a role far larger than their numbers might suggest. Formed from exiled pilots who escaped German occupation, units such as No. 331 and No. 332 Squadrons quickly earned a reputation for discipline, precision, and aggressive flying. Integrated into the North Weald Wing, they became one of Fighter Command's most effective formations in 1942-43, scoring heavily against the Luftwaffe while maintaining exceptionally low loss rates. Their contribution symbolised Norway's continued resistance and provided the RAF with a cadre of highly motivated, combat-proven pilots.

One of these pilots was Martin Gran, the only Norwegian airman awarded the DFC with two Bars and an ace credited with eight individual and two shared victories, two probables, and five individual plus one shared damaged. His aircraft were usually marked with the individual letter "X", and AR296 was no exception. Sgt Martin Gran flew it during the very first offensive mission carried out by a Norwegian squadron over France - "Rodeo 30" over the Gravelines-Hardelot area on 9 May. He also flew it during the ill-fated "Rodeo 51", the mission in which S/Ldr Jankiewicz was lost (see option 8). On 29 June, flying AR296, Gran scored his second victory - an Fw 190 damaged. By that time the aircraft is believed to have carried the new form of British national markings (also included on the decal sheet).

AR296 went through several stages of external finish. Delivered to No. 331 Squadron on 27 March 1942, it initially retained its factory camouflage with soft demarcation lines and a full set of stencils. The cannon fairings were painted in Norwegian national colours, a popular squadron practice. Around April or very early May, the aircraft was repainted in a new scheme with very sharp demarcation lines and an upper-surface grey so light that it was likely pure Medium Sea Grey. Of the factory stencils, only the walkway lines (carefully painted around) and the gas patch on the starboard wing were retained. It is unclear whether the national colours on the cannon fairings were kept in this version, as the fairings are covered in all surviving photographs, though it is considered likely. A third finish was applied around August 1942, when the upper-surface grey was replaced with a very dark shade - a feature common among North Weald aircraft at the time. Alf R. Bjercke, a mechanic with No. 332 Squadron, noted in his diary that light camouflage colours were overpainted with darker tones required for operations across the Channel.

A distinctive feature of Spitfires produced by Westland was the asymmetrical placement of fuselage roundels, most likely to facilitate the application of squadron codes. This arrangement was retained through all finish variations of AR296.

AR296 was also "smoothed out" in a manner similar to BM306 (see description of option 6), but in this case the IFF wire-aerial outlets on the fuselage were completely removed and the openings filled.

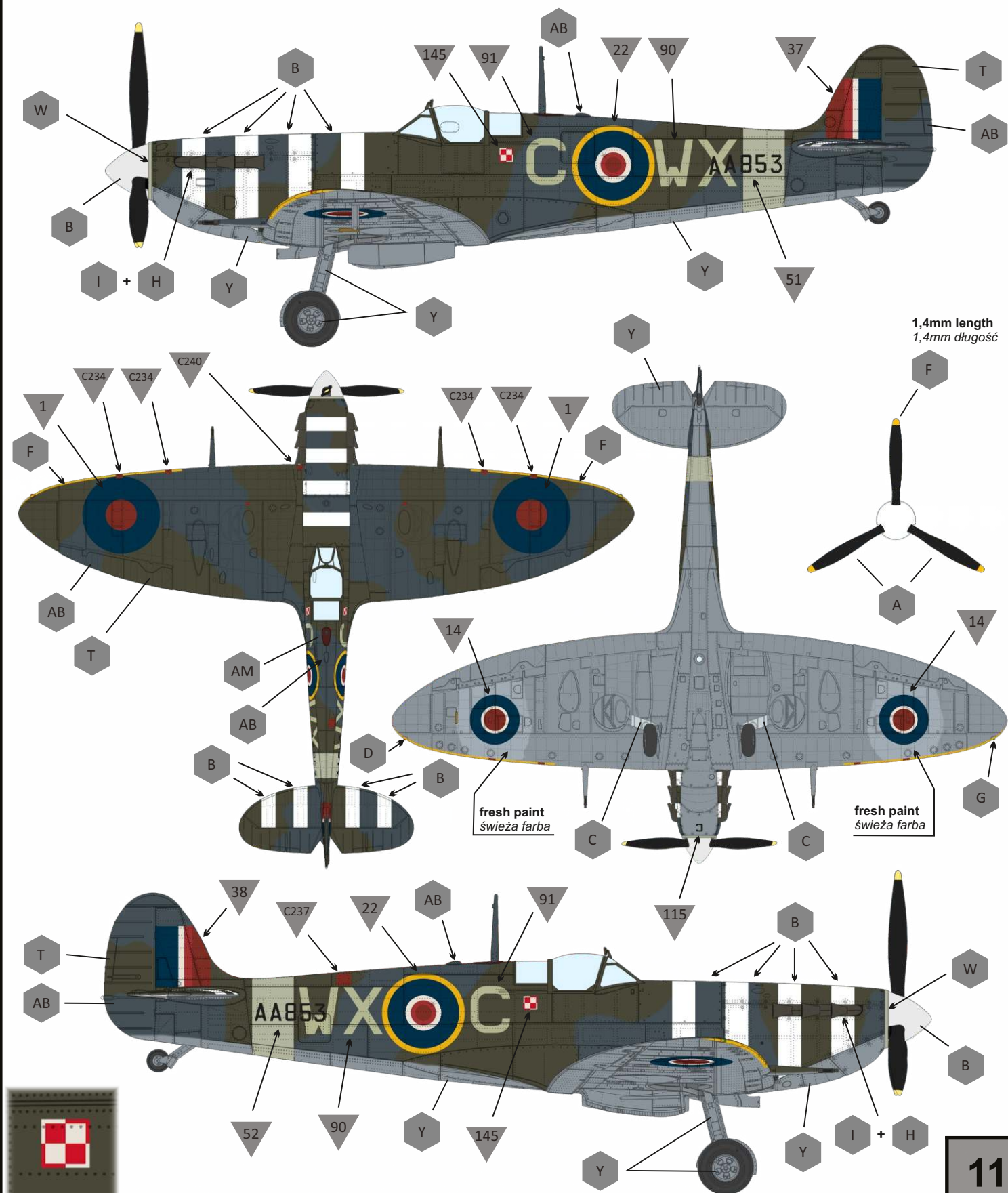


11. Spitfire Mk Vb AA853 (Supermarine production), WX-C, 302 Dywizjon Myśliwski "Poznański" / No. 302 Polish Fighter Squadron, RAF Croydon / RAF Heston, 7-11 July 1942

No. 302 Squadron's ORB does not list operational flights in the first eleven days of July 1942 and contains numerous errors in serial numbers. Even so, it can be stated with reasonable confidence that throughout June and July 1942 AA853 was flown by several pilots of "A" Flight, including one of the Polish aces, P/O Eugeniusz Nowakiewicz. The pilot visible in the cockpit in the well-known photograph of WX-C with the Operation Rutter stripes is, however, most likely P/O Andrzej Beyer, who also flew this aircraft a few times toward the end of June. Although one of the lesser-known Polish pilots, Beyer went on to achieve a string of successes flying Mustangs with No. 306 Polish Fighter Squadron in 1944. On 18 May of that year, he shared in the destruction of a He 111; on 7 June he claimed a Bf 109 destroyed over Normandy; and on 17 June he shared in the destruction of an Fw 190. He also proved highly effective after the squadron switched to anti-diver patrols, claiming three individual and two shared V-1s in July and August 1944.

During Operation "Rutter", AA853 carried somewhat non-standard markings. Despite the orders quoted in the description of option 10, its fuselage stripes began 13 inches behind the spinner, were 10 inches wide, and were separated by a 13-inch gap. As a result, they ended much closer to the windscreen than usual. On the horizontal stabilizer, the outer stripes were placed approximately 13 inches from the tips - again differing noticeably from the arrangement shown in option 10. It should also be noted that only the removable part of the spinner was painted white; the base remained in Sky.

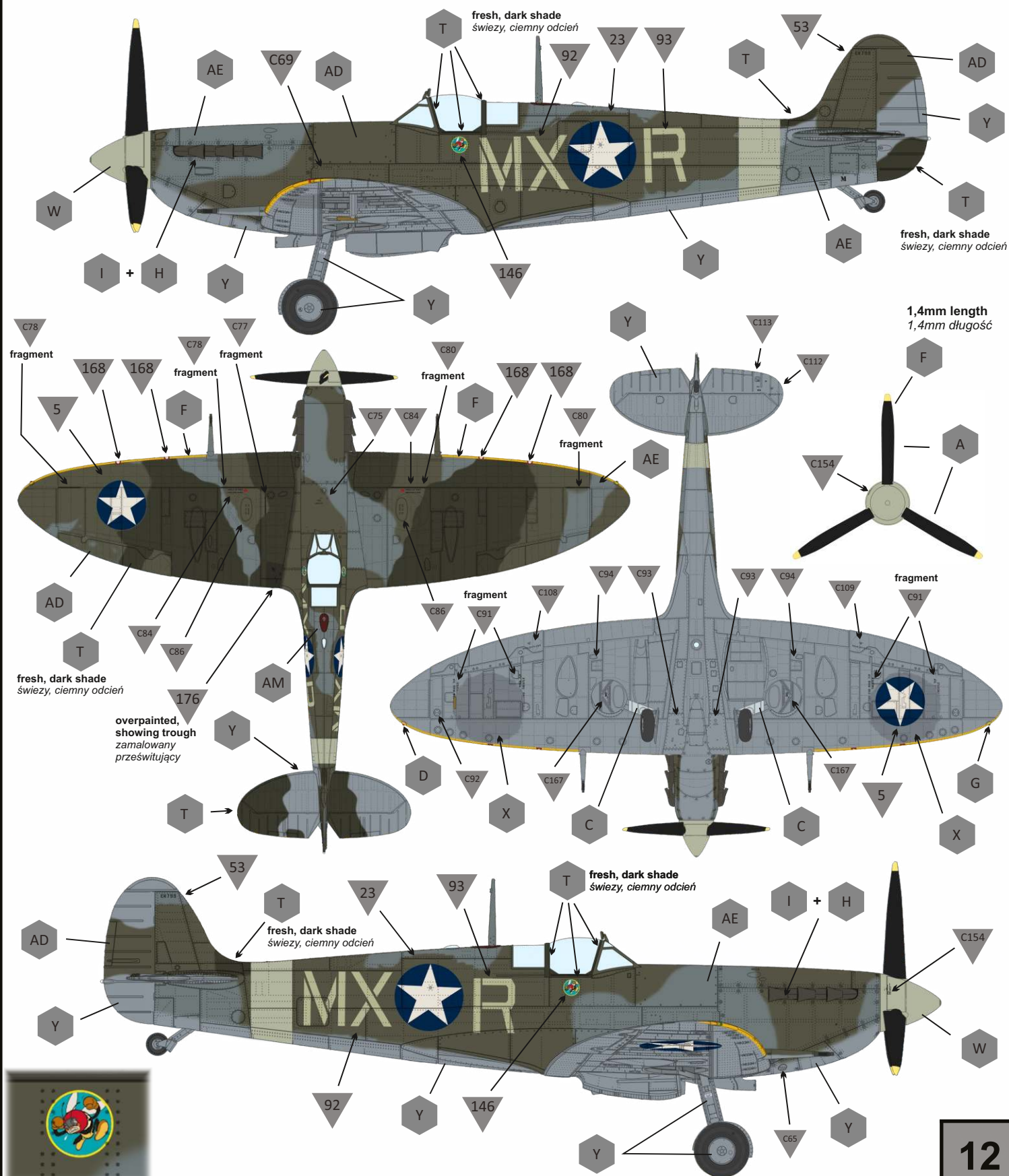
The aircraft was repainted using a dark shade of mixed grey (the camouflage pattern is visible only in orthochromatic photographs, which render the grey areas lighter due to their blue component). The modified fuselage roundels and fin flash show lighter areas where fresh red paint was applied over the former white fields. The earlier, large underwing roundels were completely overpainted and replaced with new ones of distinctly non-standard proportions.



The 31st Fighter Group was the first fighter unit of the 8th Air Force to enter combat. It arrived in Great Britain by sea in June 1942, expecting to receive the P-39 Airacobra, the type it had trained on in the United States. To the pilots' surprise - and ultimately their satisfaction - the Group was instead issued Spitfire Mk Vbs under the reverse Lend-Lease arrangement. Retraining for both pilots and ground crews was intensive, and several Spitfires were "pranged" during the transition. Even so, a number of Group pilots detached to No. 412 Squadron RCAF flew their first operational sorties as early as late July.

The 307th Fighter Squadron made its first cross-Channel operation on 17 August 1942, providing withdrawal escort for the very first 8th Air Force heavy-bomber mission: the 97th Bomb Group's attack on the Rouen-Sotteville marshalling yards. Only two days later, the squadron took part in the famous Operation "Jubilee," flying as part of the Biggin Hill Wing and providing air cover for the Dieppe landings. It carried out four sorties, claiming one Fw 190 destroyed, one probable, and one damaged, at the cost of two pilots. There was little rest; on 20 August the squadron flew a diversionary sweep for "Circus 206," intended to draw the fatigued Luftwaffe into combat - though without success. On 23 August the unit moved to RAF Merston, a satellite of RAF Tangmere, from where it flew daily operations until early October. At that point preparations began for the move that would ultimately take the Group to North Africa.

EN799 was assigned to the 307th Fighter Squadron in June 1942. Its British markings were overpainted - most likely with Dark Green - and U.S. national stars were applied in four positions. The squadron adopted the MX code, and many of its aircraft carried the "Stompin' Bee" emblem on both sides of the fuselage. The original finish appears to have faded rapidly, a feature seen on several Spitfires at the time, and this weathering is reflected in the colour profiles. Areas where the paint had worn away - sections of the wings, tail surfaces, and canopy framing - were touched up with a very dark colour, possibly a richer, glossier Dark Green. However, the use of American paints such as Dark Olive Drab 41 cannot be ruled out. The leading edge is not visible in surviving photographs, but many American-operated Spitfires carried a yellow stripe extending all the way to the cannon fairing, and it is quite possible that EN799 was finished in the same manner.



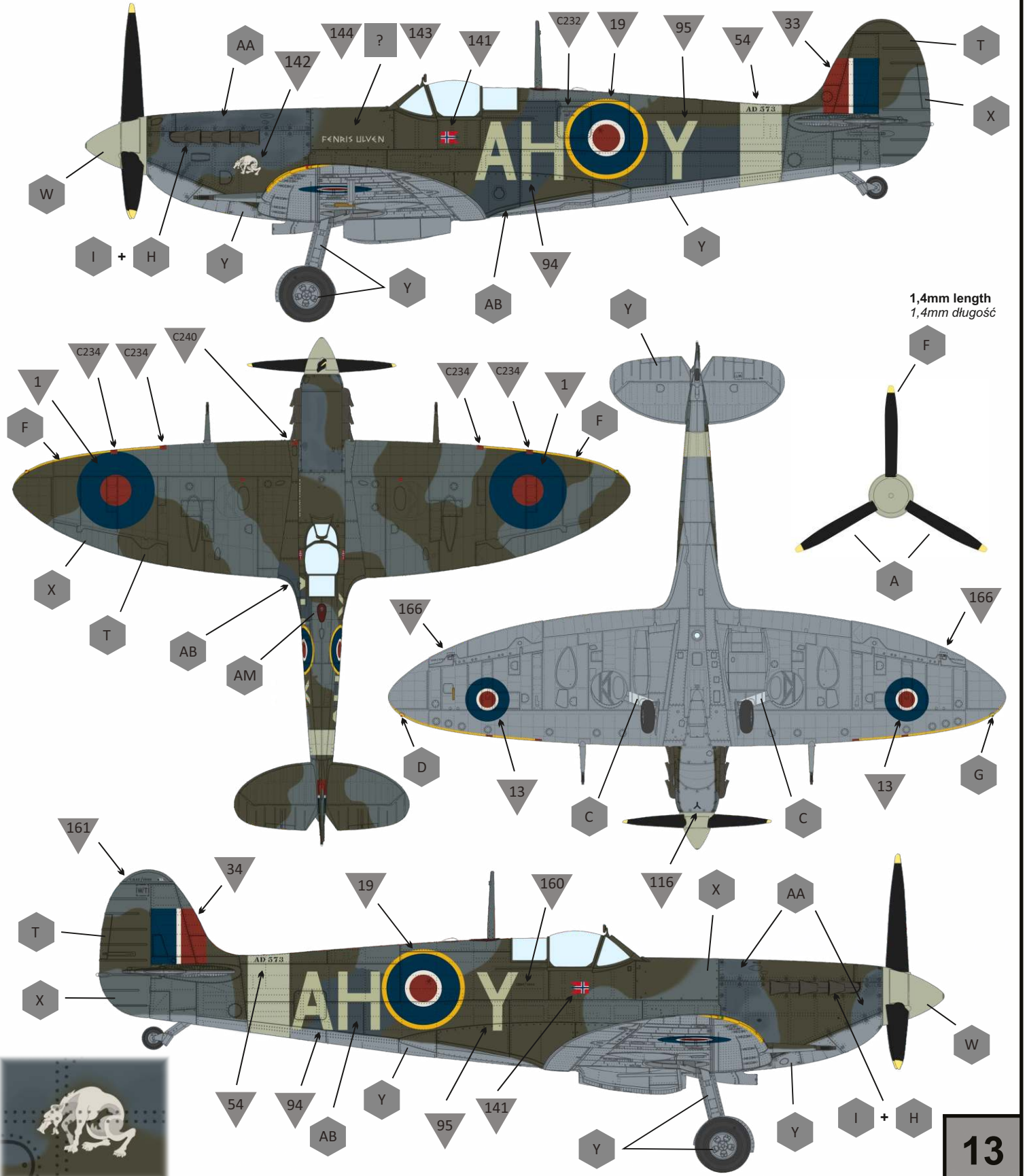
13. Spitfire Mk Vb AD573 (CBAF production) "Fenris Ulven", AH-Y, No.332 (Norwegian) Squadron RAF, F/Sgt Jan Eigil Løfsgaard and Sgt Olav Dønne, RAF North Weald / RAF Manston, September-October 1942

No. 332 (Norwegian) Squadron joined No. 331 Squadron at North Weald (see option 9) on 19 June 1942 and carried out its first offensive mission only three days later. Among its notable pilots was Jan Eigil Løfsgaard, an avid skier and trout fisherman who had served in the Norwegian Royal Guard before the war. As part of a small detachment, he fought successfully at Midskogen on 10–11 April 1940 against German paratroopers attempting to capture the King and Crown Prince. After evacuating across the North Sea to Scotland, he travelled to Canada, where he trained as a fighter pilot at the "Little Norway" camp in Toronto and at Moose Jaw. He joined No. 332 Squadron on 31 March 1942. On 30 July he damaged an Fw 190, and during the Dieppe operation he shot down an Fw 190 and a Do 217.

In September and the first half of October, Løfsgaard was the principal pilot of "Fenris Ulven". At the time he was close friends with the future Norwegian ace Sgt Marius Eriksen; together they famously brought the goat Mads to the squadron as a mascot. The two promised always to watch out for each other in the air. Tragically, on 11 October Eriksen was on leave, and "Rodeo 101" proved fatal for Løfsgaard. Flying another aircraft (W3502), he was shot down over France and became the only known Norwegian fighter pilot to be killed by German soldiers after resisting capture or attempting to escape.

After Løfsgaard's death, AD573 was flown for the remainder of October mainly by Sgt Olav Dønne, a future ace credited with five destroyed enemy aircraft. Missions flown in "Fenris Ulven" included "Circus 217" to Le Havre on 15 October and a Fighter Roadstead off the Belgian coast on 29 October. Shortly afterwards, the squadron re-equipped with Spitfire Mk IXs.

AD573 arrived at No. 332 Squadron on 20 August 1942 after overhaul at AST Hamble and is believed to have carried stencilling characteristic of that facility. The engine cowling, however, appeared worn, with skin patches, overpaints, scratches, and accumulated grime. It may have been finished in "mixed grey" rather than the Ocean Grey used on the rest of the airframe. Additional overpainting included the area of the squadron codes, which appear in a noticeably darker shade - possibly covering previous squadron codes before the AH codes were applied. A distinctive feature of No. 332 Squadron aircraft was the Norwegian national flag painted on both sides of the fuselage, and AD573 is believed to have carried this marking as well. The individual name "Fenris Ulven" (or "Fenrisulven") was inspired by Norse mythology: Fenrir, the monstrous wolf, the ever-growing son of Loki and the giantess Angrboða. Described as an immense and terrifying creature, he was feared by the gods for his strength and the prophecies foretelling the destruction he would one day bring.



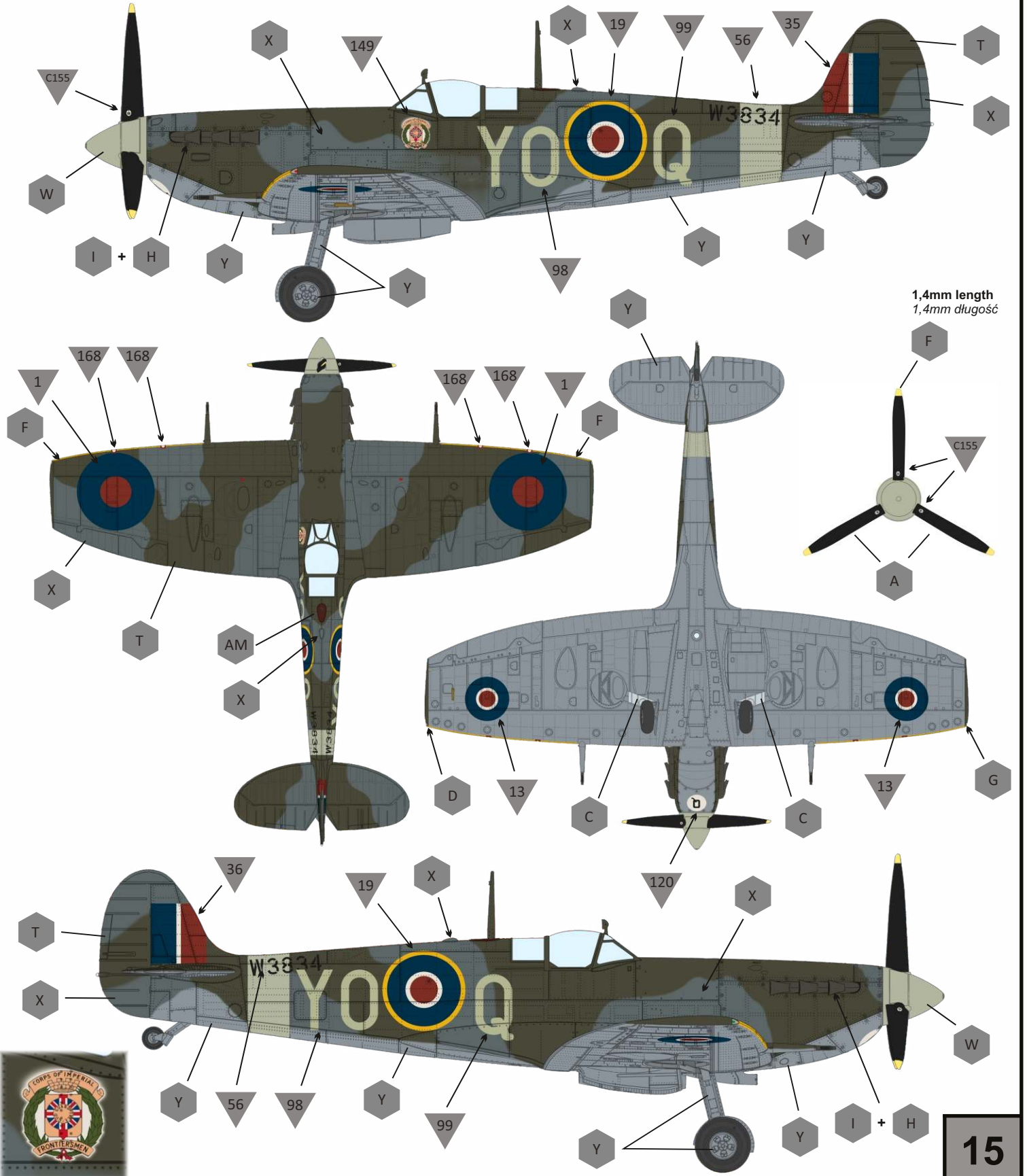
15. Spitfire LF Vb W3834 (Supermarine production) "Corps of Imperial Frontiersmen", YO-Q, No.401 Squadron RCAF, F/Lt Thomas Karl "Ibby" Ibbotson, RAF Redhill, June-July 1943

Originally from Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, Thomas Ibbotson enlisted in the RCAF in August 1940. After completing training, he joined No. 401 Squadron in June 1942, flying offensive operations over France. During the Dieppe landings he attacked an Fw 190, though without visible results. He claimed an Fw 190 as probable on 28 August 1942 and damaged another on 11 December. In July 1943, No. 401 Squadron was assigned to No. 126 Airfield HQ, part of No. 17 (RCAF) Wing within the newly formed 2nd Tactical Air Force. The change in command did not alter the nature of its work: the squadron continued to escort twin-engined bombers on raids over occupied Europe.

Ibbotson flew W3834 intensively throughout June and July 1943, completing no fewer than seventeen missions over France - thirteen Ramrods, three Circuses, and one Rodeo. His operational career ended abruptly on the night of 31 July, when he misjudged a bend on his motorbike and collided head-on with a jeep driven by two Americans attached to the squadron. He died in hospital later that night. The ORB recorded: "The Squadron is shocked and saddened at the loss of this able and popular young Officer".

In June 1943 No. 401 Squadron had its aircraft converted to LF (Low-Altitude Fighter) standard by No. 3501 Servicing Unit at Cranfield. The upgrade was introduced in 1943 to extend the usefulness of the ageing Spitfire Mk V and allow it to keep pace with the Fw 190 - at least at low altitude. It involved fitting the Merlin 45M (alternatively 50M or 55M) engine with a cropped supercharger impeller and increasing maximum boost to +18 lb/sq.in. This produced an impressive top speed of 355 mph at 5,900 ft - over 30 mph faster than the standard Mk V and even exceeding the performance of the Spitfire IX with the Merlin 61 at that altitude - though at the cost of significantly reduced high-altitude capability. Around the same time, the squadron's Spitfires also had their wingtips clipped - a separate modification introduced in spring 1943 to improve rate of roll.

W3834 was one of the presentation Spitfires named "Holt XII", sponsored by "Who's for Britain Fund" of Canada. During its service the airplane was renamed "Corps of Imperial Frontiersmen" and carried the emblem of that organisation - arguably one of the most striking ever carried by a Spitfire. Interestingly, W3834 wore a highly non-standard finish, loosely inspired by the A and B camouflage schemes. Please note the appearance of the right-wing upper surface has been reconstructed solely from the colour division visible along the leading edge. Another unusual feature was the very light colour beneath the horizontal tailplane, believed to be Medium Sea Grey extending up from the undersides. Further distinctive element was the shape of yellow leading edges - narrower than usual and carried all the way to the cannon fairings.



1,4mm length
1,4mm długość

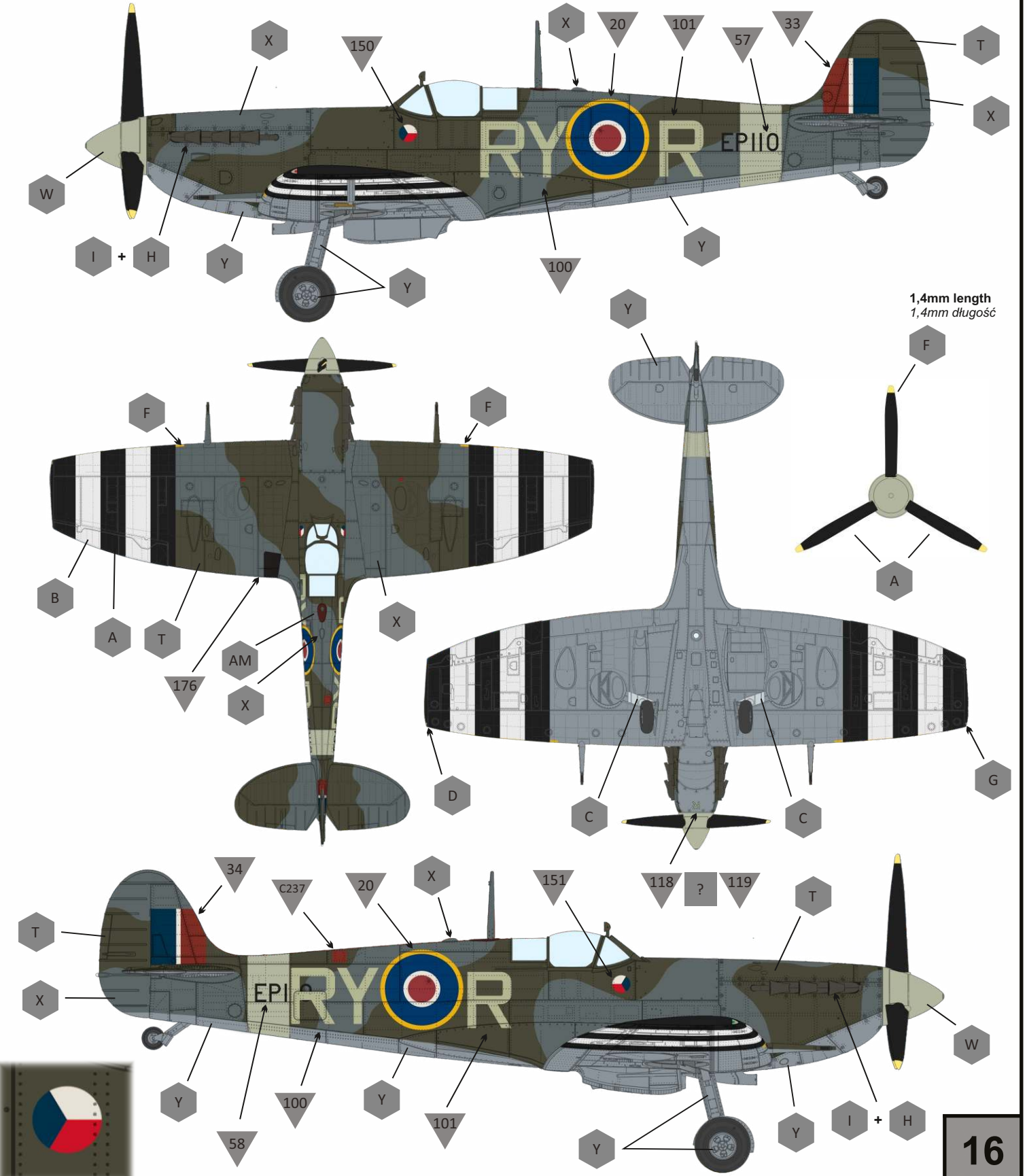
16. Spitfire LF Vb EP110 (CBAF production), RY-R, No.313 (Czechoslovak) Squadron RAF, F/Lt Otmar Kučera, RAF Hawkinge, 9 September 1943

Otmar Kučera was a pre-war fighter pilot of the Czechoslovak Army Air Force, a Battle of Britain veteran, and an ace credited with 5 individual and 2 shared destroyed, one probable, and one damaged. He was posted to No. 313 (Czechoslovak) Squadron RAF in April 1942. Awarded the DFC in September, he was profiled in the Czechoslovak exile weekly "Čechoslovák": "Who is F/Lt. Otmar K.? He is the very type of Czech fighter pilot: knowing no rest in his struggle with Messerschmitts and Focke-Wulfs, an accurate marksman who has already sent to the devil a respectable number of hakenkreuzes with enemy aircraft burning; an experienced pilot whose greatest love is the Spitfire and whose deepest hatred is any German aircraft in sight." He became "B" Flight Commander on 1 September 1943 and soon took part in what was arguably the largest operation in North-West Europe that year.

Operation "Starkey" was conceived as a large-scale mock amphibious assault on the Boulogne area - intended to test some of the invasion procedures, gauge German reactions, and draw the Luftwaffe into attrition battles. It was also hoped that the threat would keep German forces tied down in France and unavailable for deployment against the Allied landings in Italy. The plan unfolded in three phases: Preliminary (16–24 August) with attacks on airfields and transport targets; Preparatory (25 August–8 September) expanding to ammunition and fuel dumps; and Culminating (8–9 September) with heavy bombardment of coastal guns. In total, 4,252 aircraft dropped 7,656 tons of bombs. On 9 September a flotilla of 355 largely empty ships - 50% larger than the Dieppe force - sailed toward Boulogne before turning back as planned. German command was apparently relying on mines and strong coastal defences as Luftwaffe did not respond. This minimal reaction foreshadowed its limited presence on D-Day.

EP110 flew three sorties on the culminating day, 9 September 1943. The morning patrol was flown by Otmar Kučera, with No. 313 Squadron providing a "Beach Patrol" umbrella over the Boulogne area. Around midday, F/O Václav Foglar flew the aircraft on a patrol from Hastings to Beachy Head to cover the return of the "Invasion Fleet." In the afternoon, Kučera again took EP110 aloft, this time escorting eighteen Venturas bombing Merville airfield (part of Ramrod S.43).

During the Culminating Phase of Operation Starkey, RAF aircraft operating at low level, including EP110, carried special markings on the outboard wing sections: the wingtips were painted Night, inboard of which were two 18-inch-wide White stripes alternating with two in Night. A further noteworthy feature of this aircraft is the pronounced tonal difference between the fuselage roundel and the fin flash, clearly visible in photographs. The same contrast appears when the fuselage roundel is compared with those on other aircraft. This has led to the conclusion that the fuselage roundel was possibly repainted using the "bright" red and blue colours.



17. Spitfire L Vb serial unknown, 4X, Air Spotting Pool, flown by U.S. Navy Cruiser Scouting Squadron Seven (VCS-7), RNAS Lee-on-Solent (HMS Daedalus), June 1944

Naval gunfire was the only heavy artillery support available to the Allies on D-Day and was expected to remain crucial in the days that followed. However, achieving the pinpoint accuracy required to hit small, camouflaged targets demanded airborne spotting to correct the artillery fire. As the airspace over the Normandy beachhead was expected to be highly contested, single-seat fighters were selected for this task. Dedicated Air Spotting Pool (ASP) was formed under 2nd TAF and based at RNAS Lee-on-Solent. Its aircraft operated in pairs over the Normandy beachhead: the leader acted as the spotter, maintaining radio contact with the ship's gunnery control centre, while the wingman provided protection against enemy fighters. The standard spotting altitude was 4,000–8,000 ft to remain above light flak, although poor weather often forced operations down into the hazardous 1,500–2,000 ft band, and occasionally even lower. ASP aircraft also undertook tactical reconnaissance and frequently strafed targets of opportunity. Air combat was not uncommon, as the Luftwaffe recognised the importance of the spotters and made determined efforts to intercept them.

Spitfire 4X is well known from numerous photographs showing U.S. Navy VCS-7 pilots sitting in or standing beside the aircraft, including LCDR William Denton Jr. (VCS-7 commander), LT Francis Cayhill, LTJG Charles Zinn, LTJG W. F. Latcrof and ENS Robert Adams and it is likely that some of them flew it. At least some Spitfires carrying codes beginning with "4" are believed to have come from Fleet Air Arm stocks. The low contrast between the upper-surface camouflage colours and the absence of a Sky rear-fuselage band suggest that these aircraft may have been repainted in the FAA Temperate Sea Scheme. "4X" was possibly one of these machines, although this cannot be stated with certainty; for this reason, a low-contrast Dark Green and mixed-grey scheme is also presented as an alternative. For Operation "Overlord", 18-inch-wide White and Night/Black invasion stripes were applied to all Allied single-seat fighters. On 4X, however, the widths vary between 17 and 19 inches, with the inboard White stripe on the starboard wing reaching as much as 20 inches - possibly the result of a wing replacement, suggested by the fact that external stiffeners over the wheel well appear only on the port wing. Ailerons also seem to have been replaced, likely after the D-Day stripes were applied, since a clear "break" in the markings is visible in photographs. The new ailerons are believed to have been finished in a light grey primer.

4X is believed to be LFLR variant (see description of option 18), consistent with other Air Spotting Pool aircraft carrying 30-gallon slipper tanks. It should be noted, however, that the Fleet Air Arm designated all its Spitfire Vbs fitted with low-altitude Merlin as L Vb. One of the most distinctive features of 4X was the installation of the G.G.S. Mk IID gyroscopic gunsight - extremely rare on Spitfire Mk Vbs, but known to have been fitted to Seafire L IIIs of the Air Spotting Pool (at least in 885 Sqn FAA) in May 1944.

