

# Supermarine Spitfire Mk.Vb Trop - over North Africa 1942-43



Cat. No. 72592

Scale 1/72



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## Supermarine Spitfire

The Supermarine Spitfire is without doubt one of the most iconic and recognisable aircraft of the Second World War. While its history 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 more powerful engines and heavier armament, while retaining the Spitfire's hallmark manoeuvrability and flying pleasure. 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.

## Spitfire in North Africa

The arrival of Messerschmitt Bf 109F-equipped II./JG 27 in North Africa in September 1941, followed by additional Luftwaffe fighter Gruppen, shifted the balance of air power in the Axis favour. In response, RAF Middle East Command urgently requested Spitfire reinforcements, and it was decided to deploy two squadrons—No. 92 and No. 145 Squadrons RAF—to Egypt. The tropicalisation of the Spitfire Mk V, however, caused significant delays. The first aircraft were not shipped until February 1942. Tropical modifications included the distinctive Vokes dust filter and enlarged oil tank housed in a deeper engine cowl beneath the nose, a revised oil cooler and radiator installation, desert survival equipment stowage, and numerous smaller adaptations intended to improve reliability in harsh desert conditions.

To accelerate delivery, it was decided that fifty tropicalised Spitfires would be shipped to Takoradi on the Gold Coast (modern Ghana), assembled there, and flown across Africa to Egypt via the established Takoradi ferry route. At the same time, a further fifty non-tropicalised airframes were dispatched by sea around the Cape of Good Hope to Port Sudan. The first shipment arrived at Takoradi aboard the SS Lagosian on 3 April 1942. After assembly and test flying, the aircraft began the long ferry flight to Egypt later that month. Allocated initially to No. 145 Squadron, the first Spitfires entered combat on 1 June 1942. Although their numbers were initially too small to alter the air situation decisively, their impact grew steadily as additional aircraft and trained pilots became available. By the time of the Second Battle of El Alamein in October–November 1942—one of the decisive Allied victories of the North African campaign—the Western Desert Air Force fielded three Spitfire squadrons in Egypt: No. 92, No. 145 and No. 601 Squadrons. Operating primarily in the air-superiority role, they increasingly challenged the Luftwaffe and helped erode the effectiveness of Axis air operations over the battlefield.

Following the victory at El Alamein, Spitfires accompanied the Allied advance across Libya into Tunisia, while further RAF units converted from Hurricanes and Kittyhawks to the type. Their growing presence provided the Western Desert Air Force with a modern fighter capable of matching the Bf 109 on more equal terms. After the Allied landings in French North Africa during Operation Torch in November 1942, additional Spitfire units were deployed from Gibraltar and the United Kingdom to Algeria and Morocco. Together with rapidly expanding USAAF fighter and bomber formations, these reinforcements enabled the Allies to achieve increasing air superiority over Tunisia. Throughout the winter and spring of 1942–43, Allied fighters and bombers conducted relentless attacks against Axis airfields, ports, shipping and supply lines, gradually overwhelming German and Italian air forces in the theatre.

By the time the Tunisian campaign ended in May 1943, Allied air power had become a decisive factor in the destruction of Axis forces in North Africa. The Spitfire, which had arrived in Egypt only a year earlier in small numbers, had become one of the principal fighters of the Allied air offensive, contributing significantly to the campaign that ended with the surrender of more than 250,000 Axis troops in Tunisia.



**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

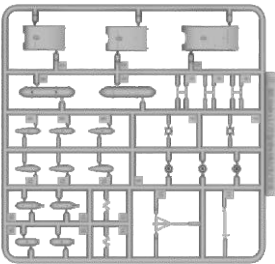
**Please read instructions before assembly. Follow the sequence of assembly presented in instructions. Glue and paint not included.**  
Przed montażem przeczytać instrukcję. Przestrzegać kolejności montażu podanego w instrukcji. Klej i farby nie wchodzą w skład zestawu.

**IBG Models**  
ul. Benedykta Hertza 2  
04-603 Warszawa  
Poland

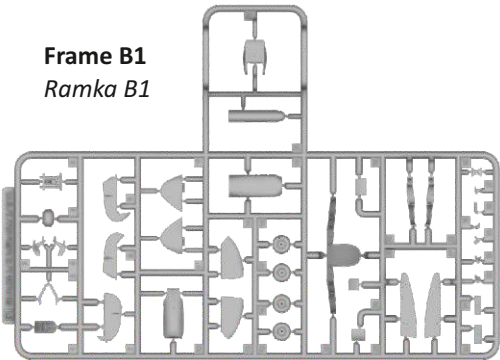
tel +48 22 8159150  
ibgsc@ibg.com.pl  
www.ibg.com.pl  
www.ibgmodels.com

**Elements of the kit**  
*Elementy modelu*

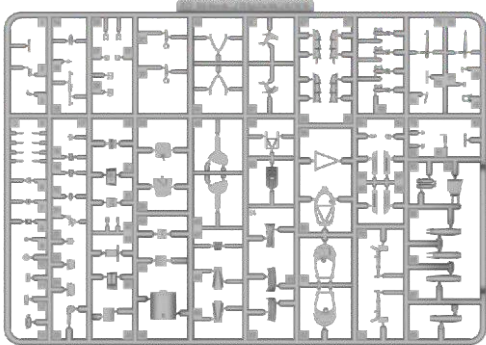
**Frame E /Ramka E**



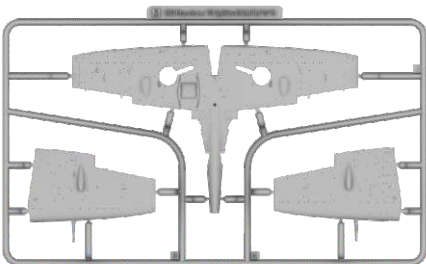
**Frame B1  
Ramka B1**



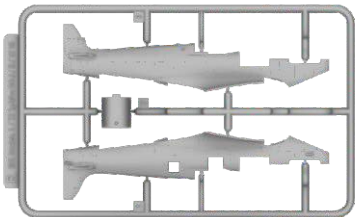
**Frame B2 /Ramka B2**



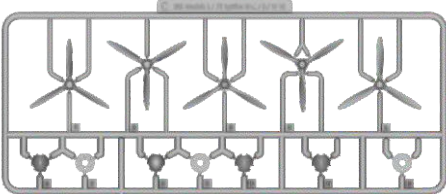
**Frame M /Ramka M**



**Frame R /Ramka R**



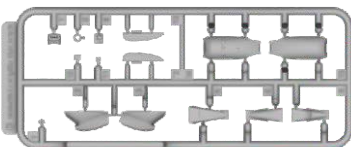
**Frame C /Ramka C**



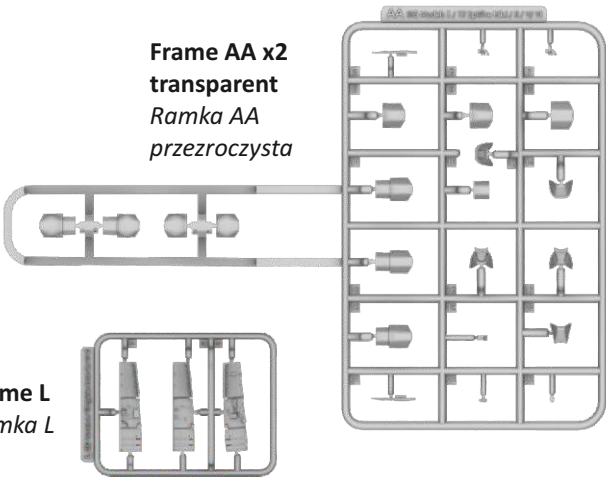
**Photo-etched parts  
Elementy fototrawione**



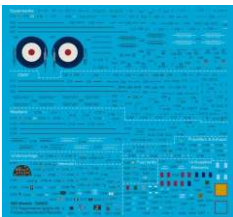
**Frame D / Ramka D**



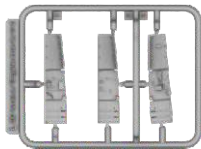
**Frame AA x2  
transparent  
Ramka AA  
przezroczysta**



**Decals / Kalkomanie**



**Frame L  
Ramka L**



**3D printed parts „X”  
Części drukowane 3D „X”**

**X1R**



**X1L**

**seamless intake  
for Vokes filter**

**X2**



**X3**



**X4**



**detailed external mirrors**

**Color table /Tabela kolorów**

| Colour        | # | Hataka  | Vallejo | Mr Hobby | AKInteractive |
|---------------|---|---------|---------|----------|---------------|
| Night         | A | HTK_041 | 71.057  | H012     | AK11895       |
| White         | B | HTK_101 | 71.001  | H021     | AK11002       |
| Aluminium     | C | HTK_078 | 71.062  | SM08     | 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       |

| Colour              | #  | Hataka                                       | Vallejo                  | Mr Hobby                      | AKInteractive              |
|---------------------|----|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Seatbelt Grey-Brown | M  | HTK_074                                      | 71.075                   | H321                          | AK11009                    |
| Interior Grey Green | N  | HTK_025                                      | 71.305                   | C364                          | AK11847                    |
| Dark Earth          | U  | HTK_009                                      | 71.323                   | C369                          | AK11841                    |
| Sky                 | W  | HTK_026                                      | 71.302                   | C368                          | AK11844                    |
| Middle Stone        | Z  | HTK_013                                      | 71.031                   | C021                          | AK11846                    |
| Azure Blue          | AB | HTK_028                                      | 71.108                   | C370                          | AK11845                    |
| RAF Sky Blue        | AC | HTK_346                                      | 71.306                   | -                             | -                          |
| Light Mediter. Blue | AD | HTK_345                                      | 71.113                   | -                             | -                          |
| Linatex colour      | AJ | 20% HTK-D013<br>50% HTK-A148<br>30% HTK-A101 | 90% 70.802<br>10% 70.817 | 40% C81<br>20% C79<br>40% C62 | 90% AK11084<br>10% AK11087 |
| Resin Red-Brown     | AM | HTK_098                                      | 71.084                   | H047                          | AK11434                    |
| Dull Red            | DR | -                                            | 71.105                   | 50% H13<br>50% H7             | 60% AK11087<br>40% AK11328 |

# Interior painting & decalling

## Malowanie i kalkomanie wnętrza

Interior painting, unless otherwise noted:

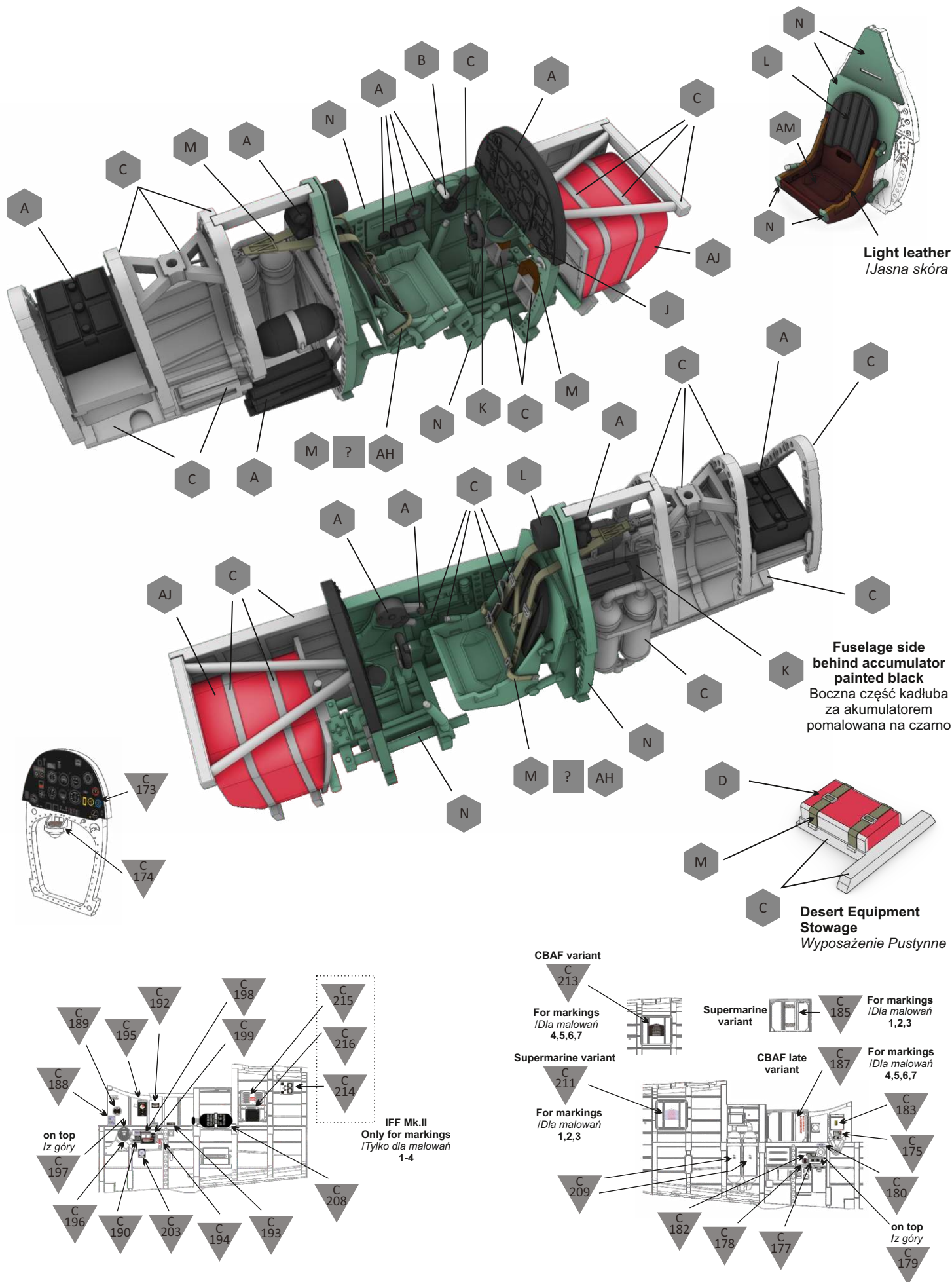
Interior grey green - cockpit from instrument panel to the frame behind the seat

Natural metal - all other areas

Malowanie wnętrza, o ile nie zaznaczono inaczej:

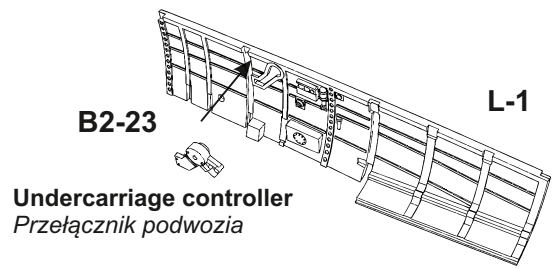
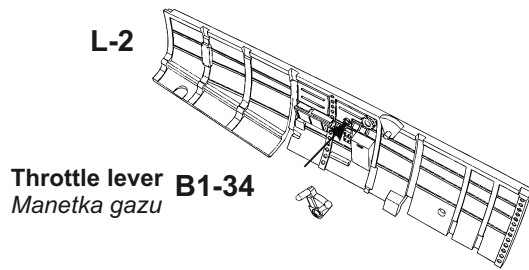
Interior Green - kokpit między tablicą przyrządów a wręgą za fotelem

Naturalny metal - wszystkie pozostałe powierzchnie

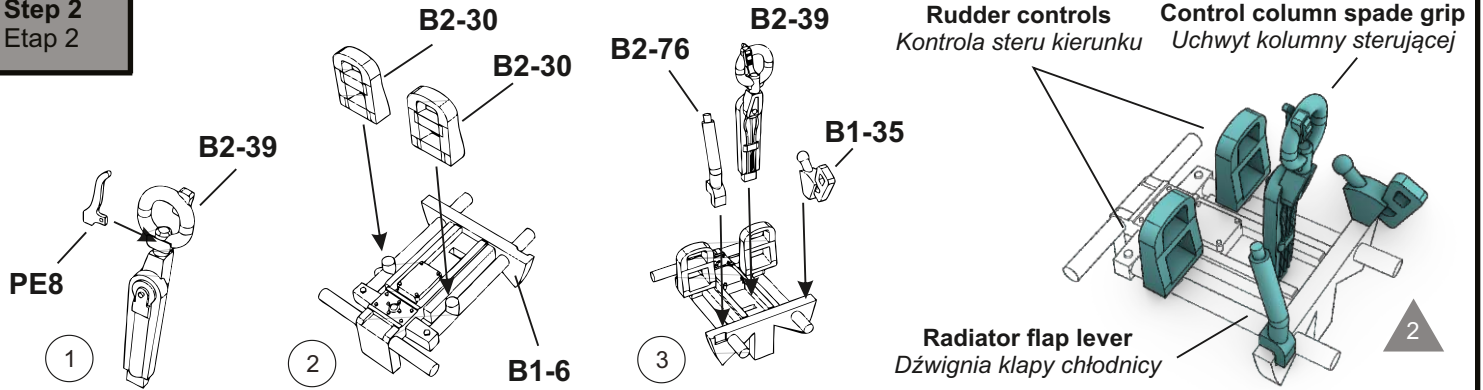




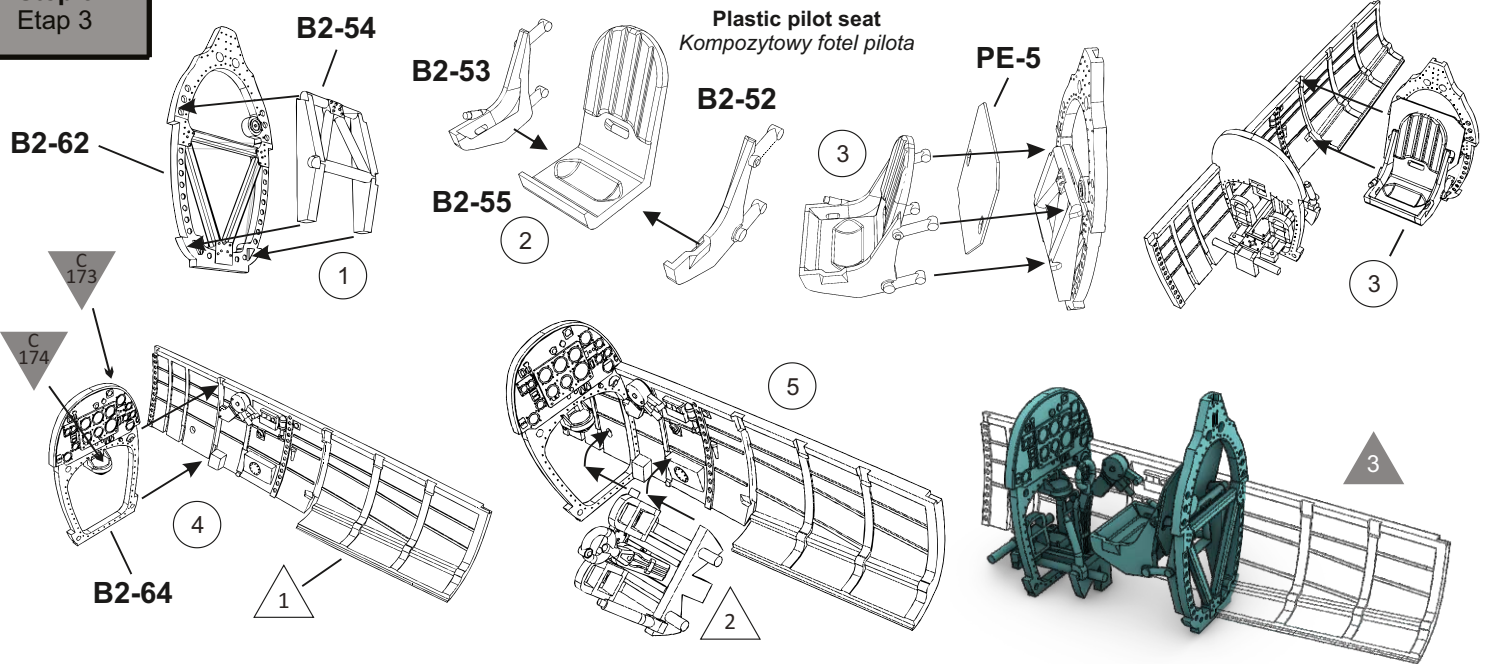
**Step 1**  
Etap 1



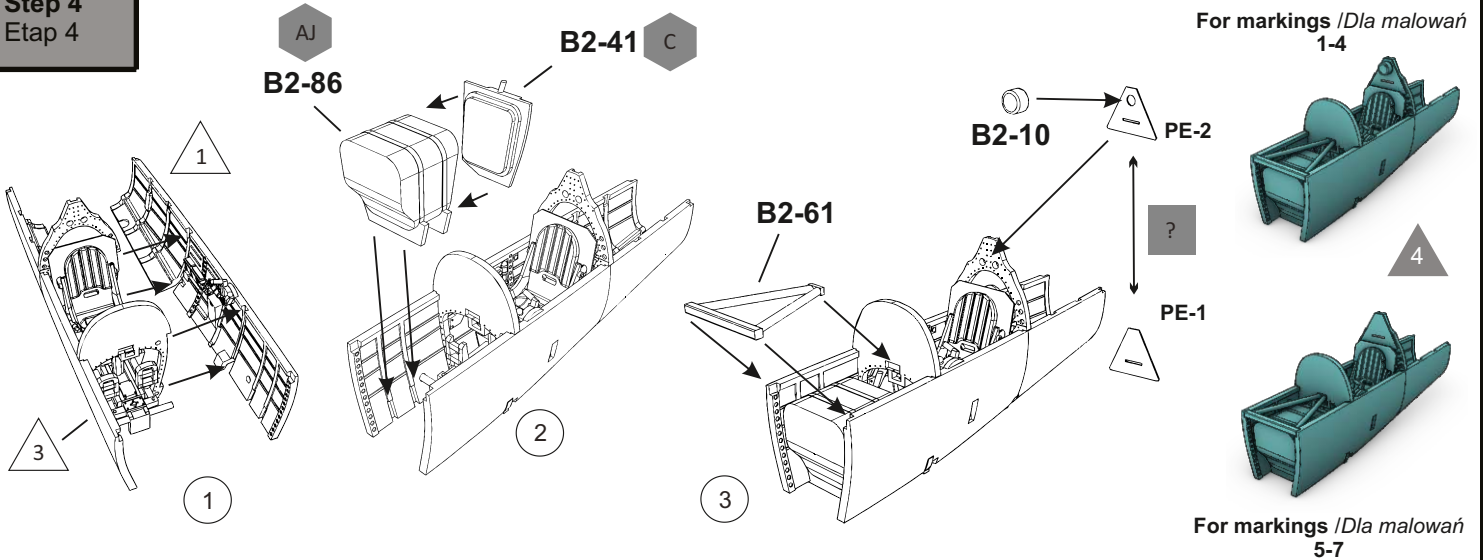
**Step 2**  
Etap 2



**Step 3**  
Etap 3

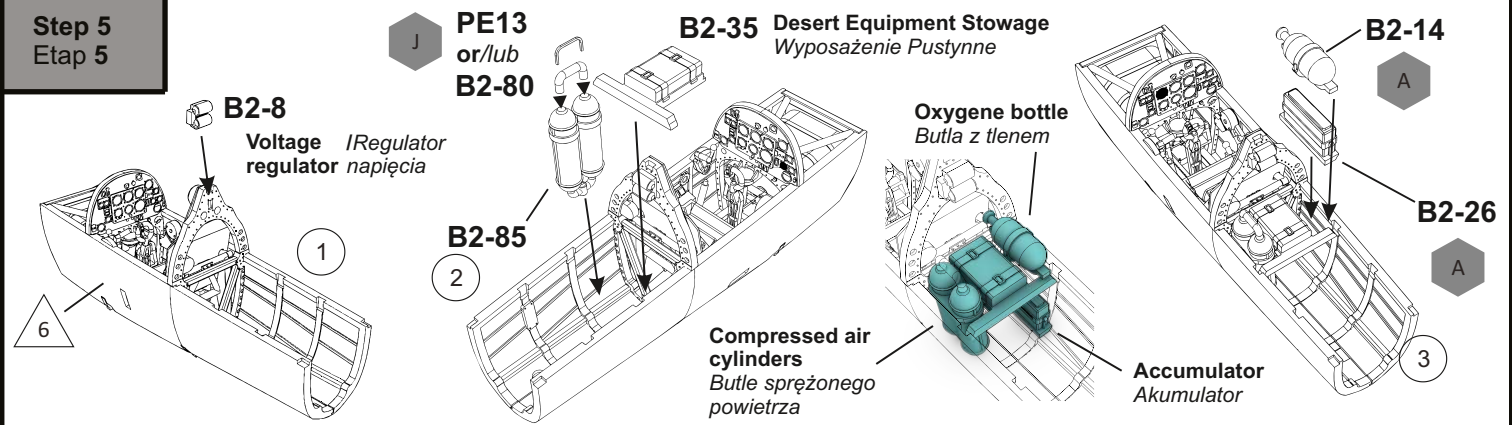


**Step 4**  
Etap 4

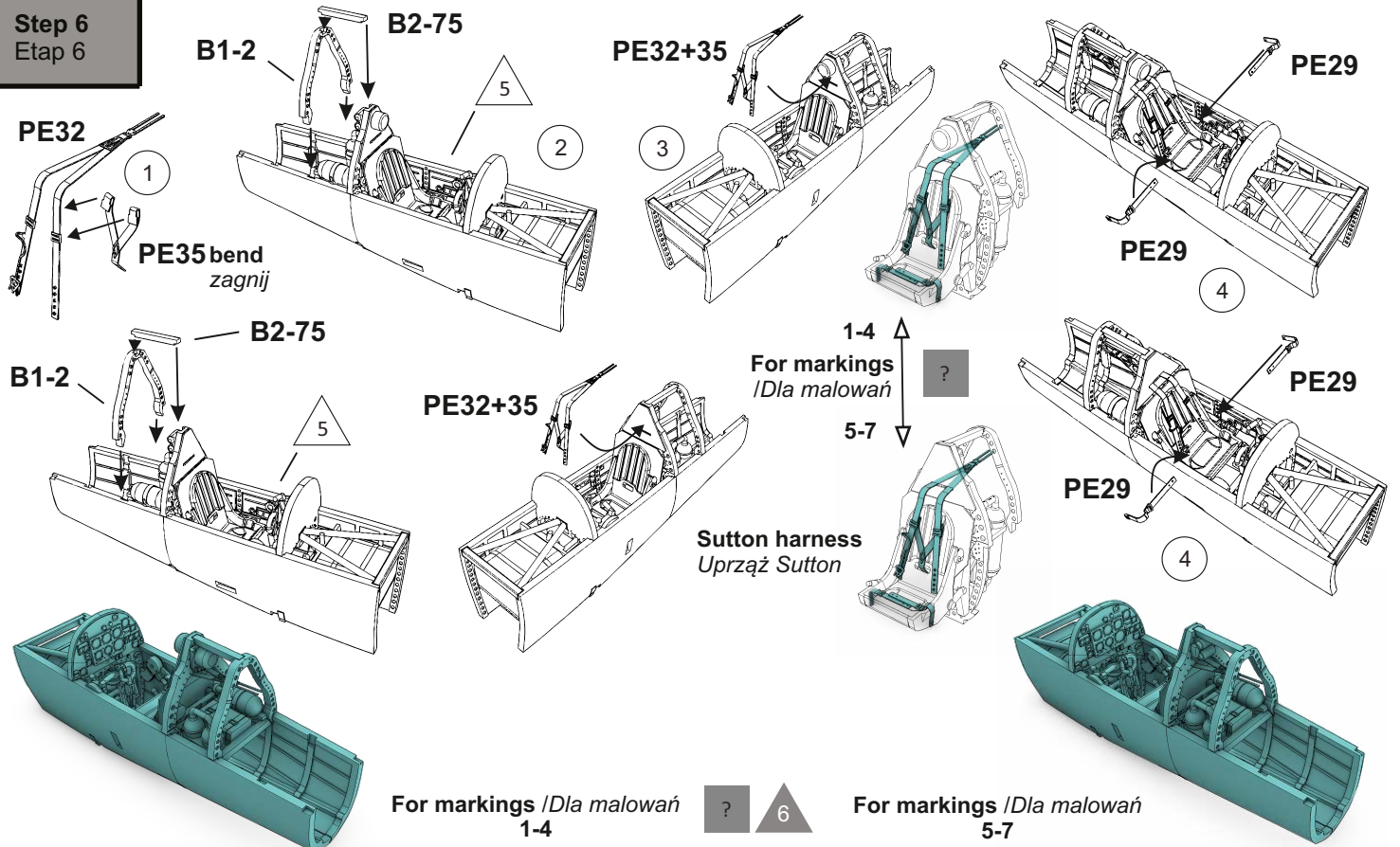




**Step 5**  
Etap 5

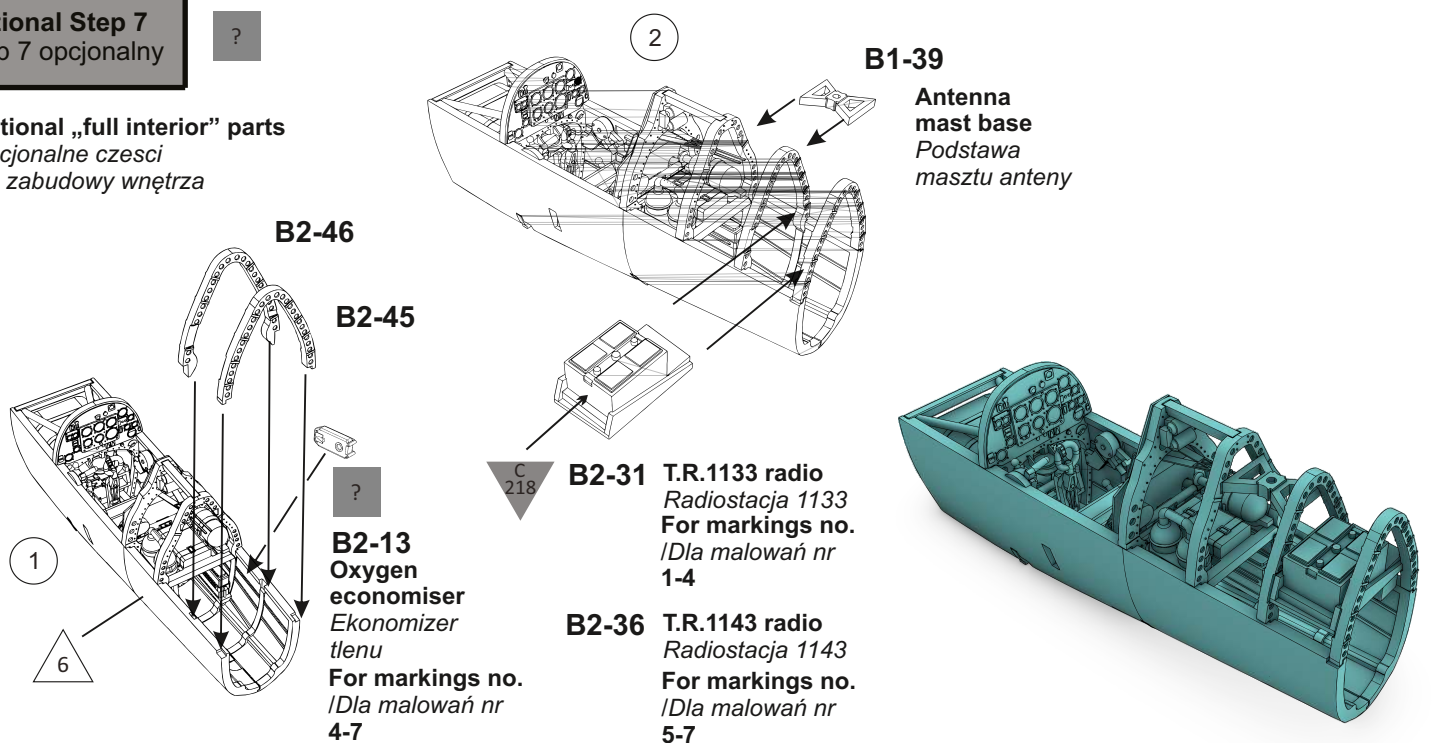


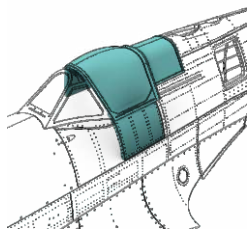
**Step 6**  
Etap 6



**Optional Step 7**  
Etap 7 opcjonalny

Optional „full interior” parts  
Opcjonalne części  
dla zabudowy wnętrza





## Preliminary Step - canopy - choose your path

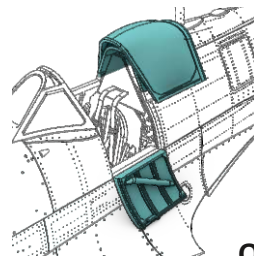
### Krok wstępny - osłona kabiny - wybierz swoją ścieżkę

**Closed**  
**Zamknięta**

It requires initial preparation - see step 10 and 11.  
Wymaga wstępnego przygotowania - patrz krok 10 oraz 11.

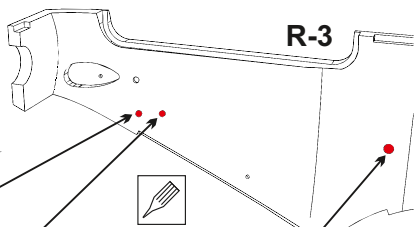


The fuselage is prepared for an open cockpit  
(skip steps 10 and 11 and go to step 12).  
Kadłub jest przygotowany do otwartej kabiny  
(pomiń kroki 10 oraz 11 i przejdź do kroku 12).



**Open**  
**Otwarta**

#### Step 8 Etap 8



Drill 0,35mm  
Wywierć 0,35mm  
For markings no.  
/Dla malowań nr  
1,2,3 (Supermarine)

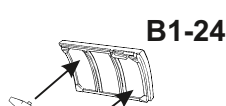
Drill 0,35mm  
Wywierć 0,35mm  
For markings no.  
/Dla malowań nr  
4,5,6,7 (CBAF)

Drill a hole 0,5mm  
Wywierć otwór 0,5mm  
For markings no.  
/Dla malowań nr  
1,2,3

#### Step 9 Etap 9



#### Canopy door Drzwi kabiny

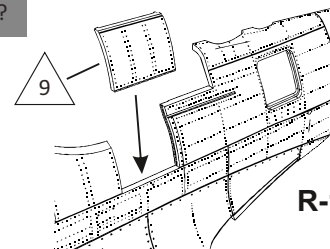


**B2-1**  
Only for markings no.  
/Tylko dla malowań nr  
4,6,7

#### Step 10 Etap 10



#### Closed canopy Kabina zamknięta

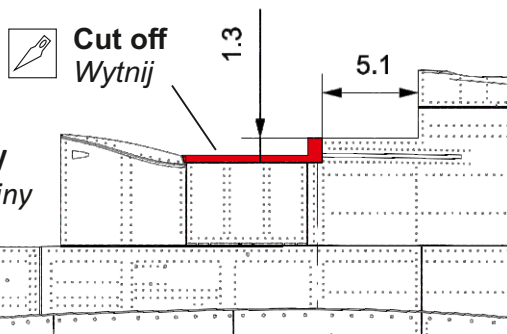


#### Step 11 Etap 11

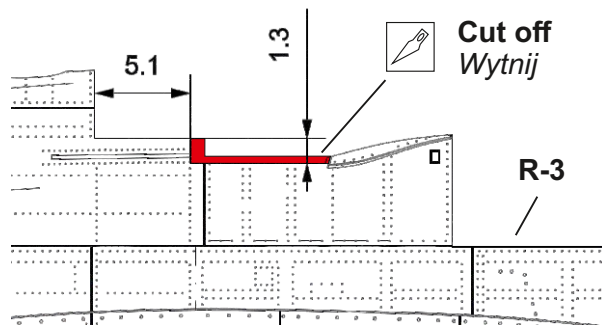


Only for closed canopy  
Tylko dla zamkniętej kabiny

R-1



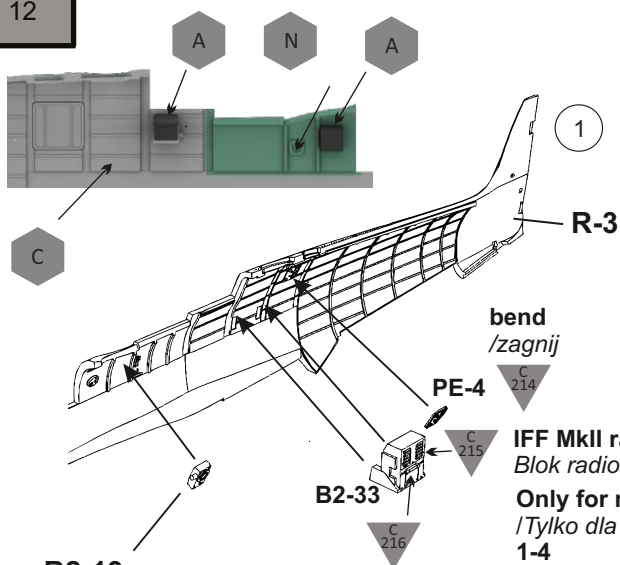
Cut off  
Wytnij



Cut off  
Wytnij

R-3

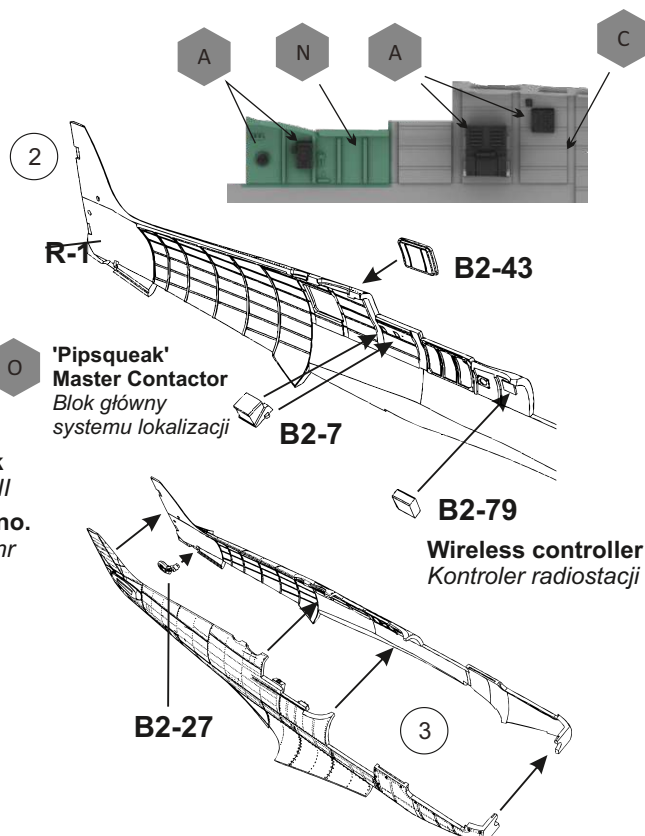
#### Step 12 Etap 12



**B2-19**  
'Pipsqueak'  
Remote Contactor  
Zdalny stycznik  
systemu lokalizacji

For markings no.  
/Dla malowań nr  
1-16

Optional „full interior”  
parts  
Opcjonalne części  
dla zabudowy wnętrza

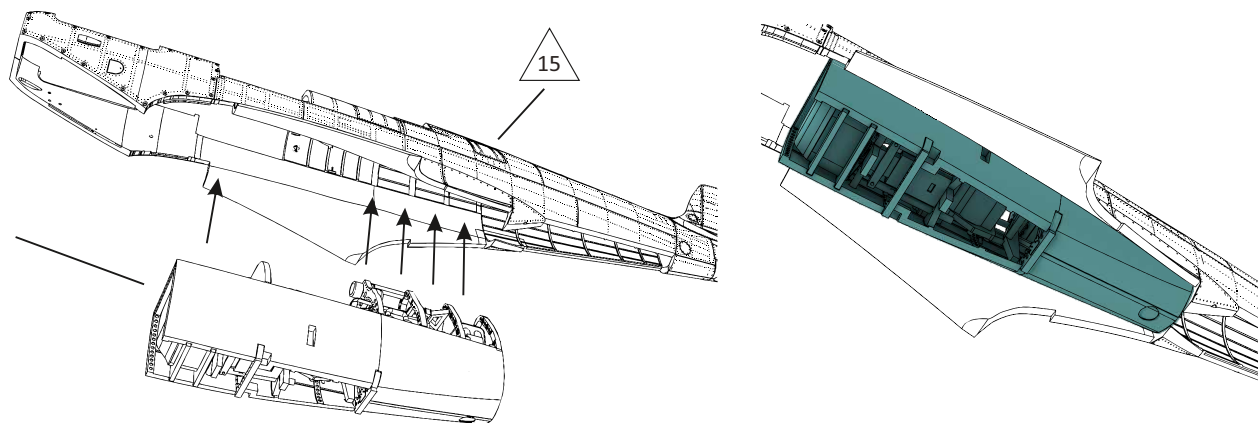


**'Pipsqueak'**  
Master Contactor  
Blok główny  
systemu lokalizacji

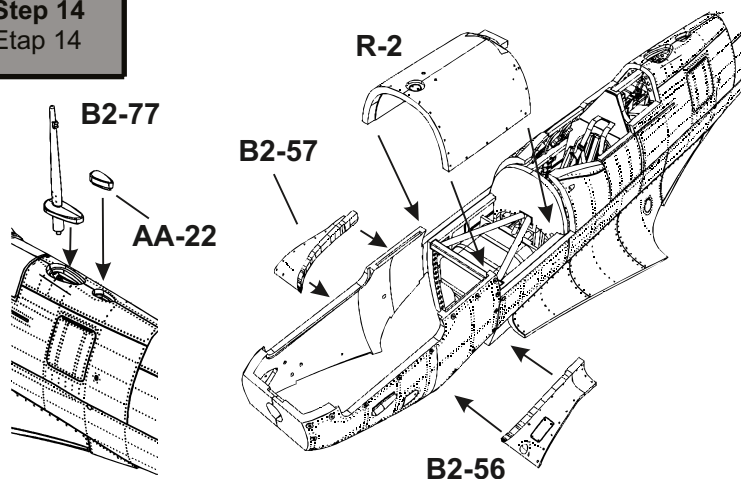
**B2-79**  
Wireless controller  
Kontroler radiostacji

**Step 13**  
Etap 13

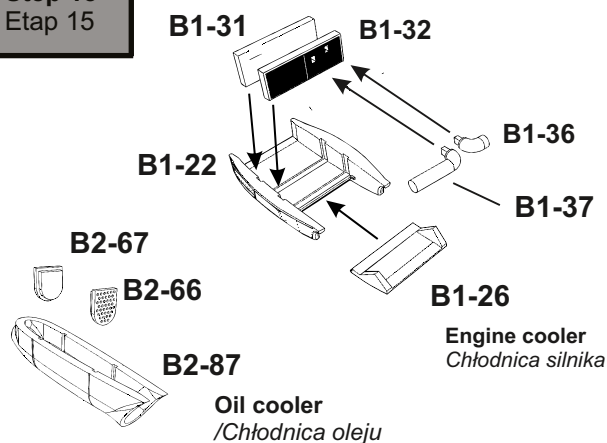
? 6  
Or  
Lub 7



**Step 14**  
Etap 14



**Step 15**  
Etap 15

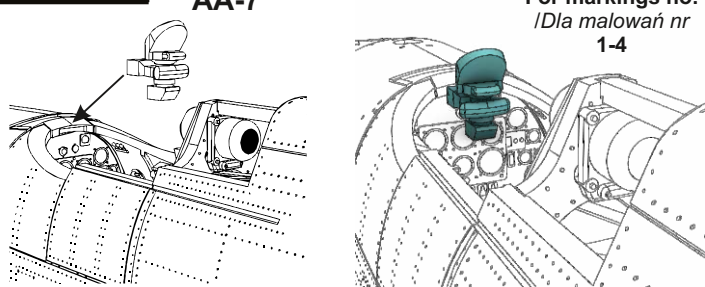


**Step 16**  
Etap 16

**Reflector Sight Mk.II**  
*Celownik odblaskowy Mk.II*

AA-7

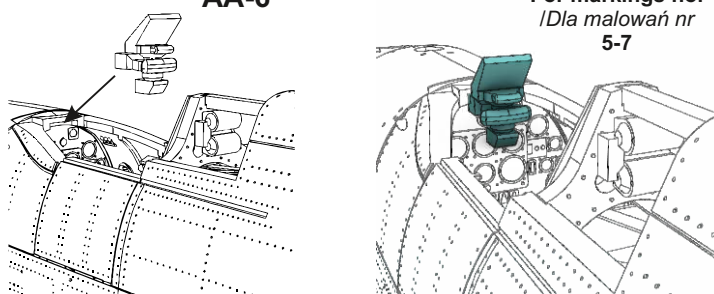
For markings no.  
IDla malowań nr  
1-4



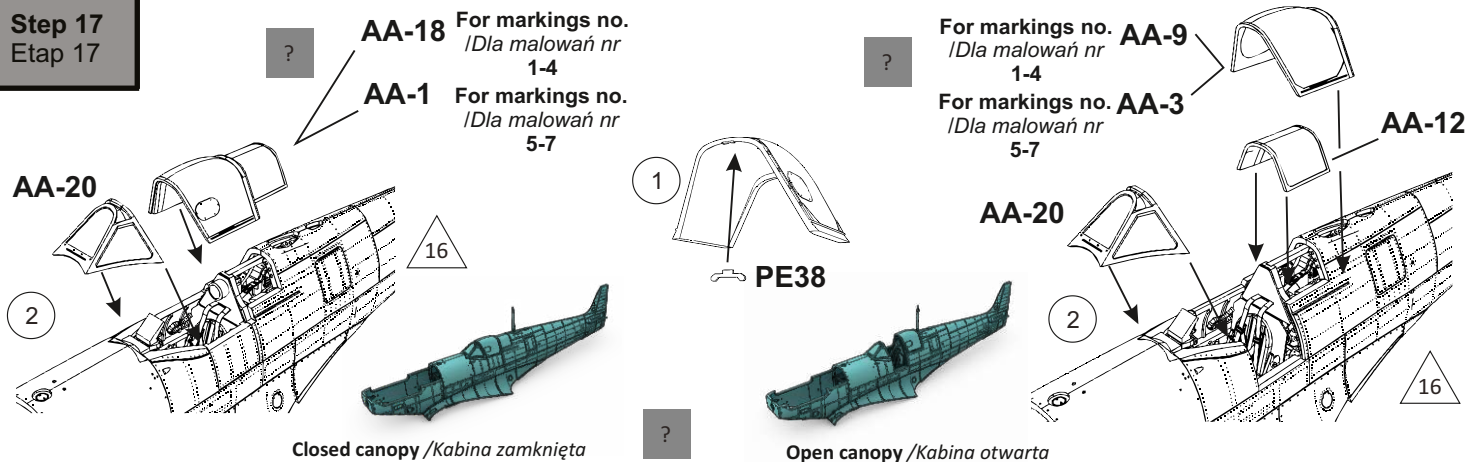
**Reflector Sight Mk.II\***  
*Celownik odblaskowy Mk.II\**

AA-6

For markings no.  
IDla malowań nr  
5-7



**Step 17**  
Etap 17



**Step 18**  
Etap 18

**External mirror**  
*Lusterko zewnętrzne*

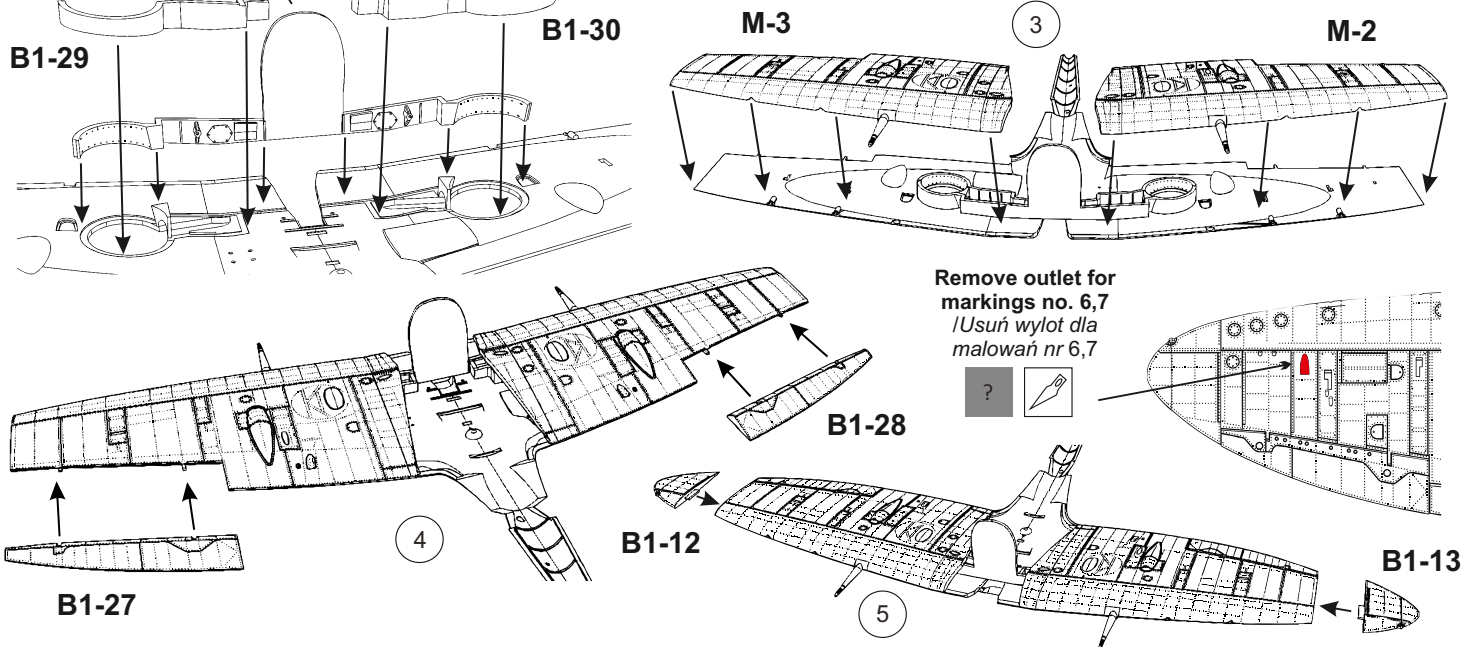
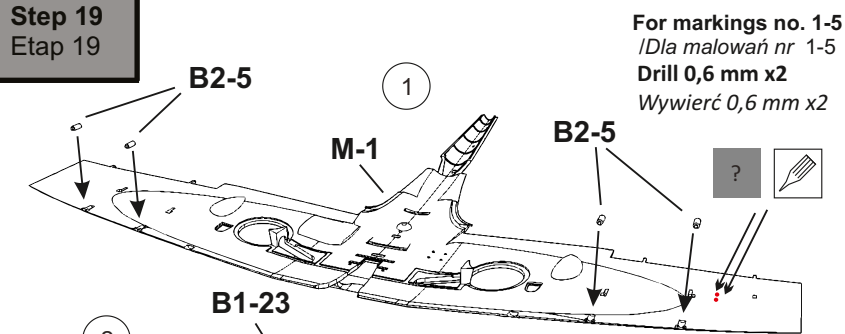


For markings no. 1,2,3,4,5,7  
Dla malowań nr 1,2,3,4,5,7

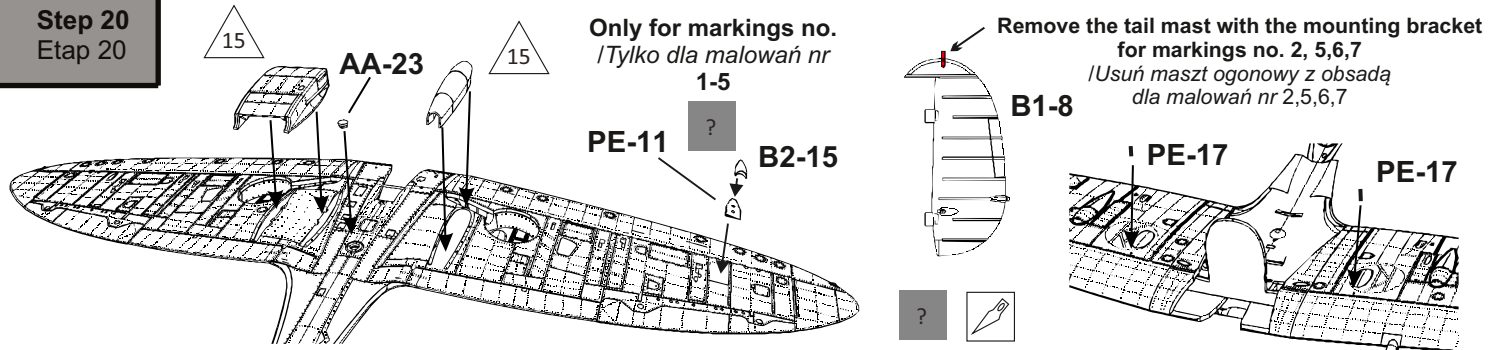
For marking no. 6  
Dla malowania nr 6



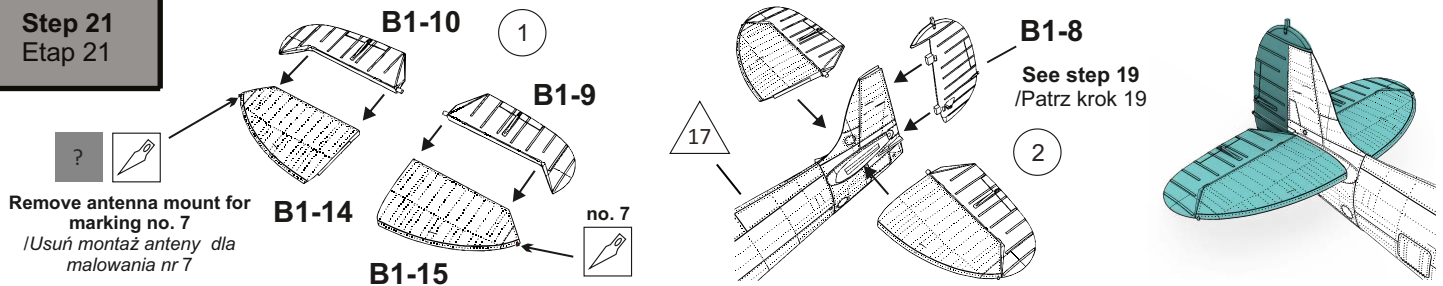
## Step 19 Etap 19



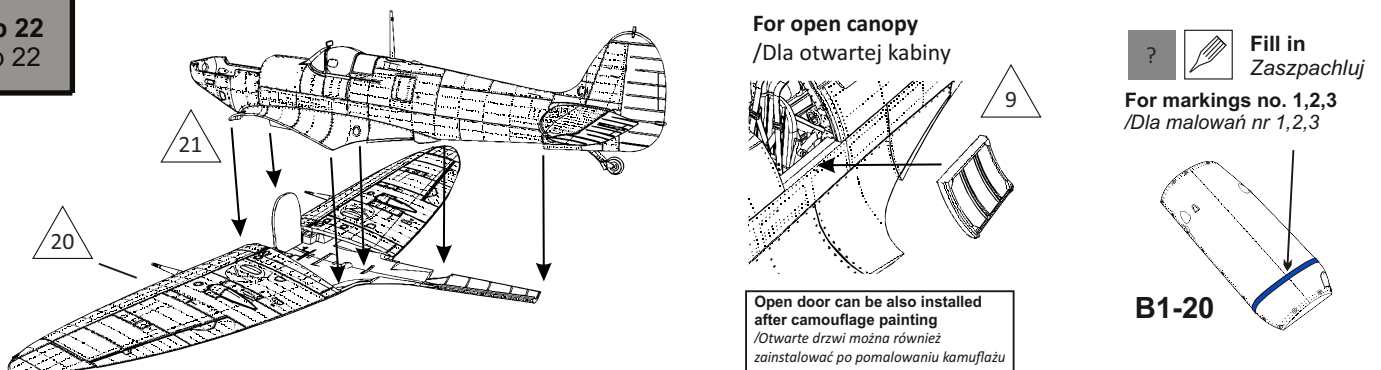
## Step 20 Etap 20



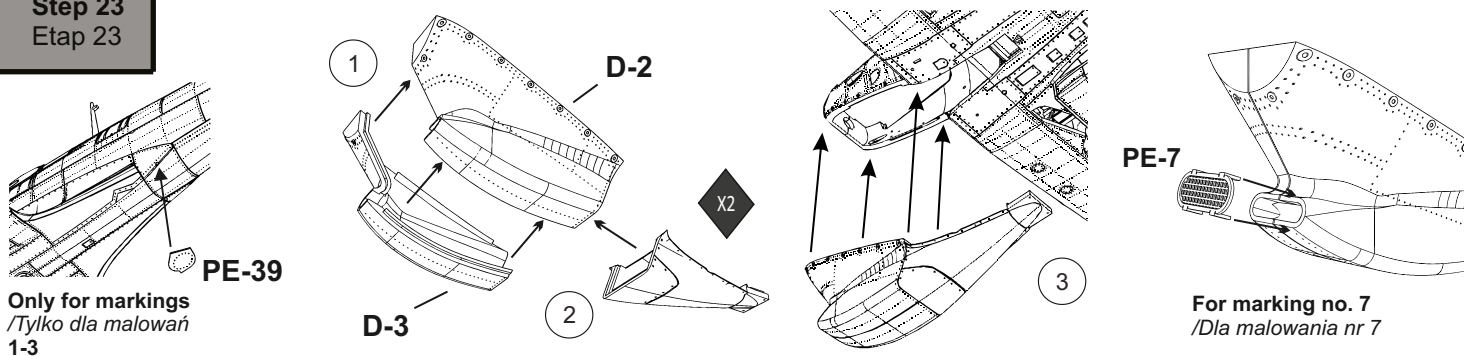
## Step 21 Etap 21



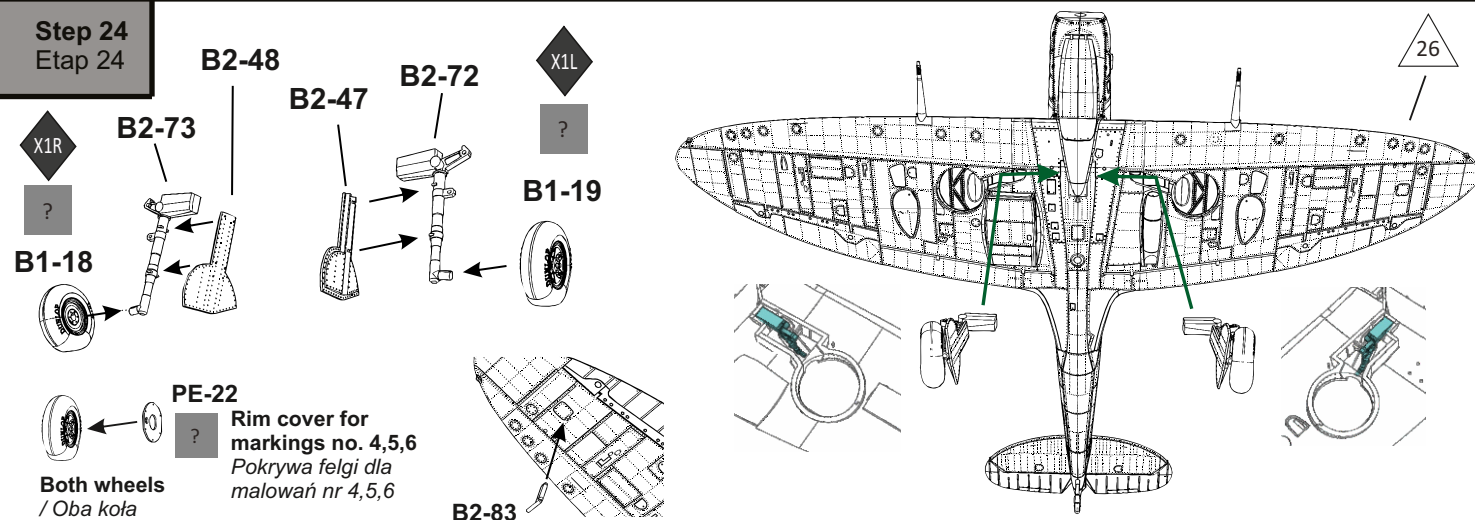
## Step 22 Etap 22



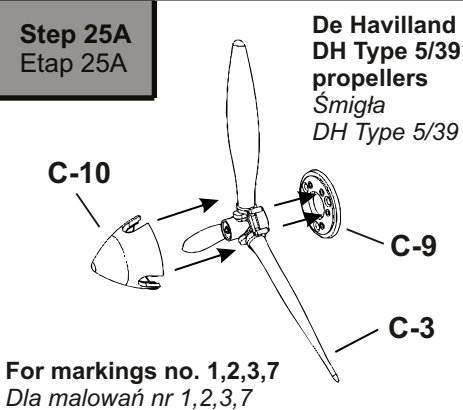
### Step 23 Etap 23



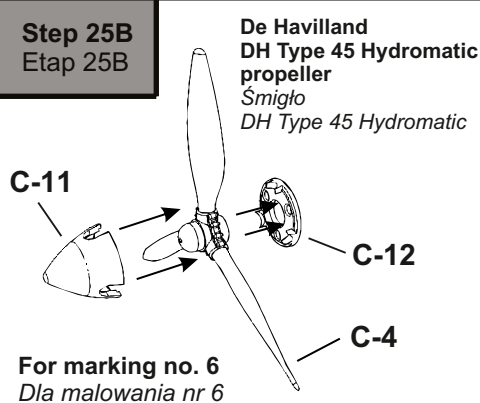
### Step 24 Etap 24



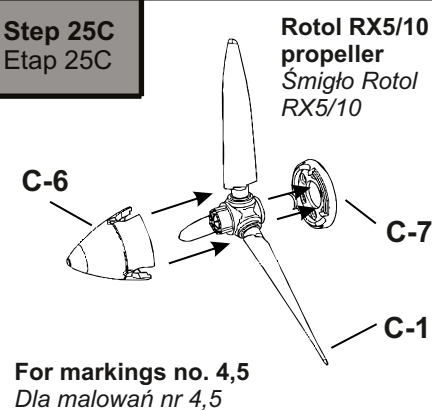
### Step 25A Etap 25A



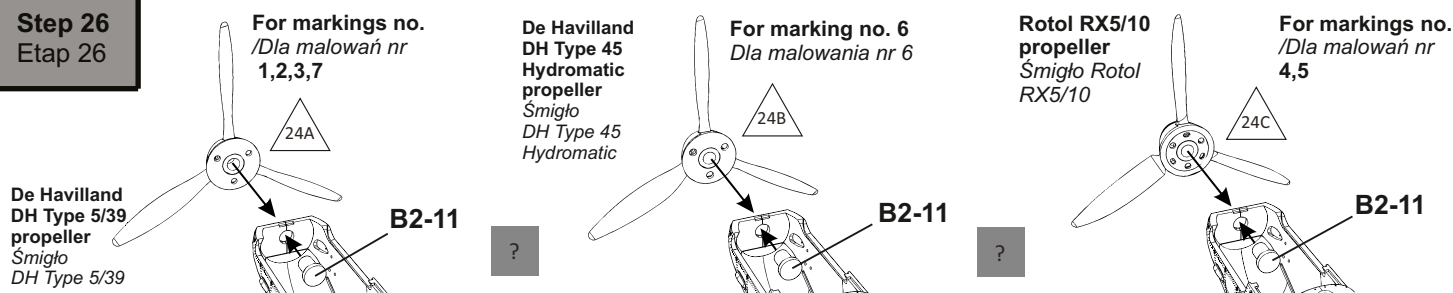
### Step 25B Etap 25B



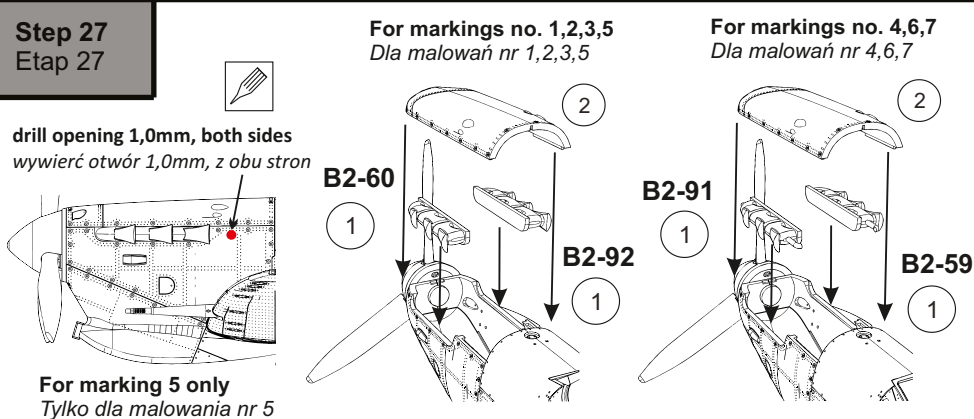
### Step 25C Etap 25C



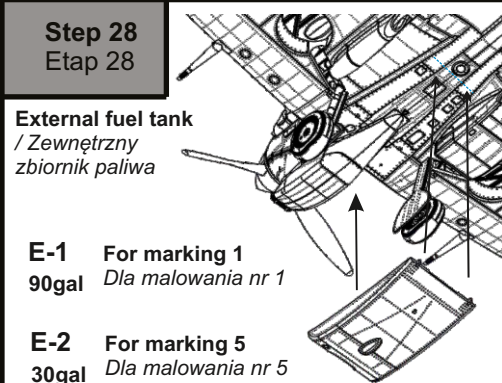
### Step 26 Etap 26



### Step 27 Etap 27

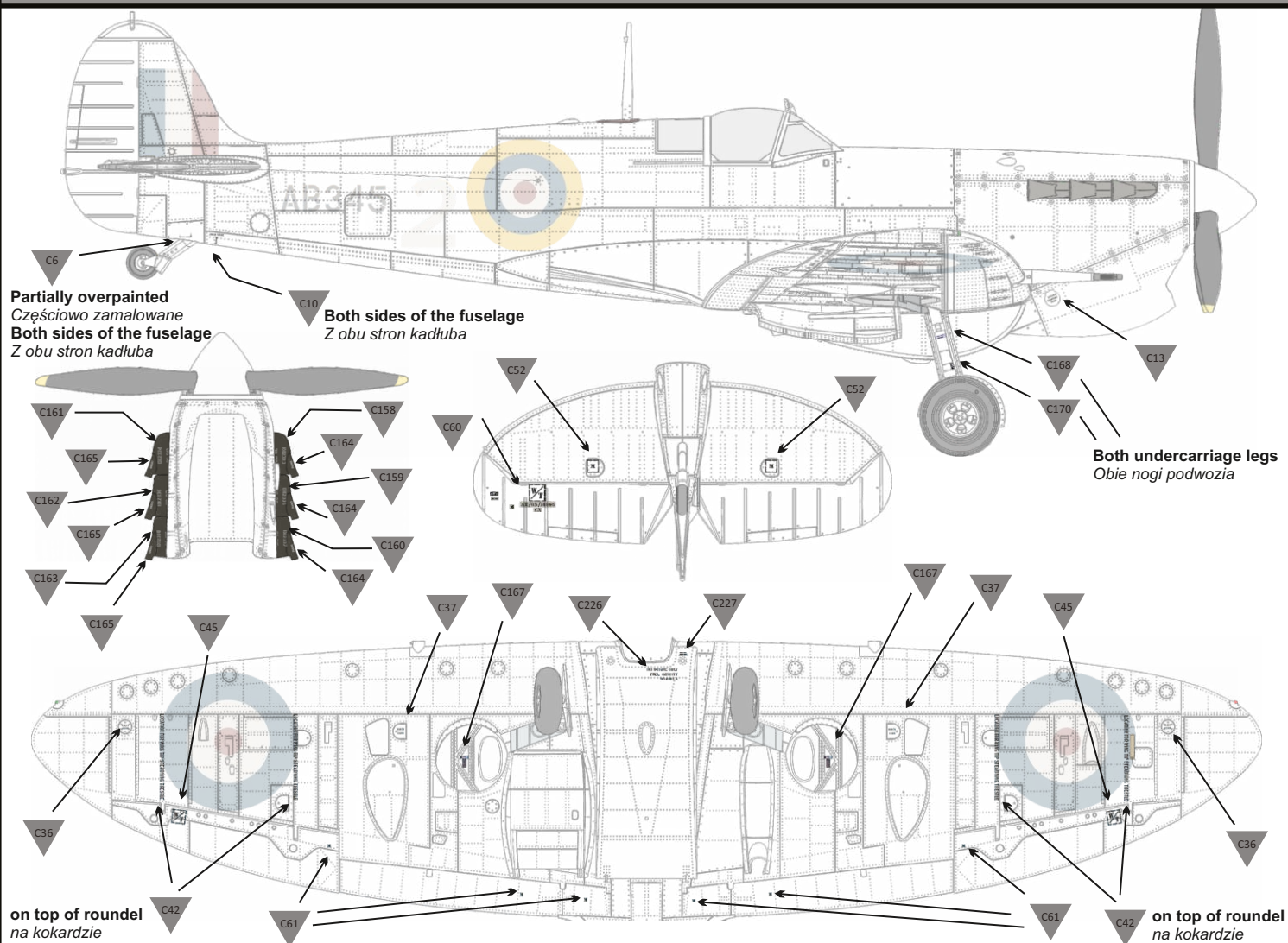


### Step 28 Etap 28

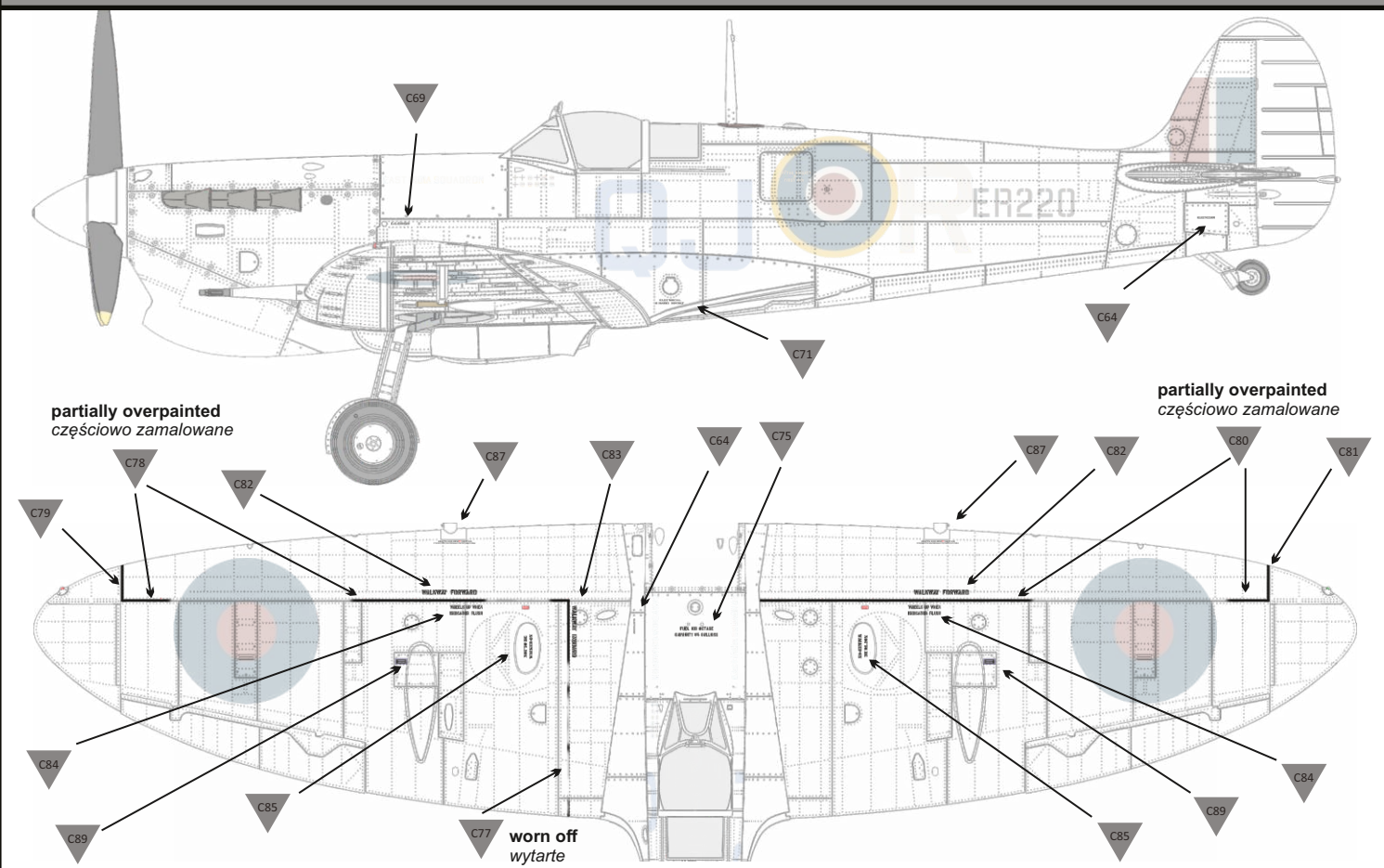




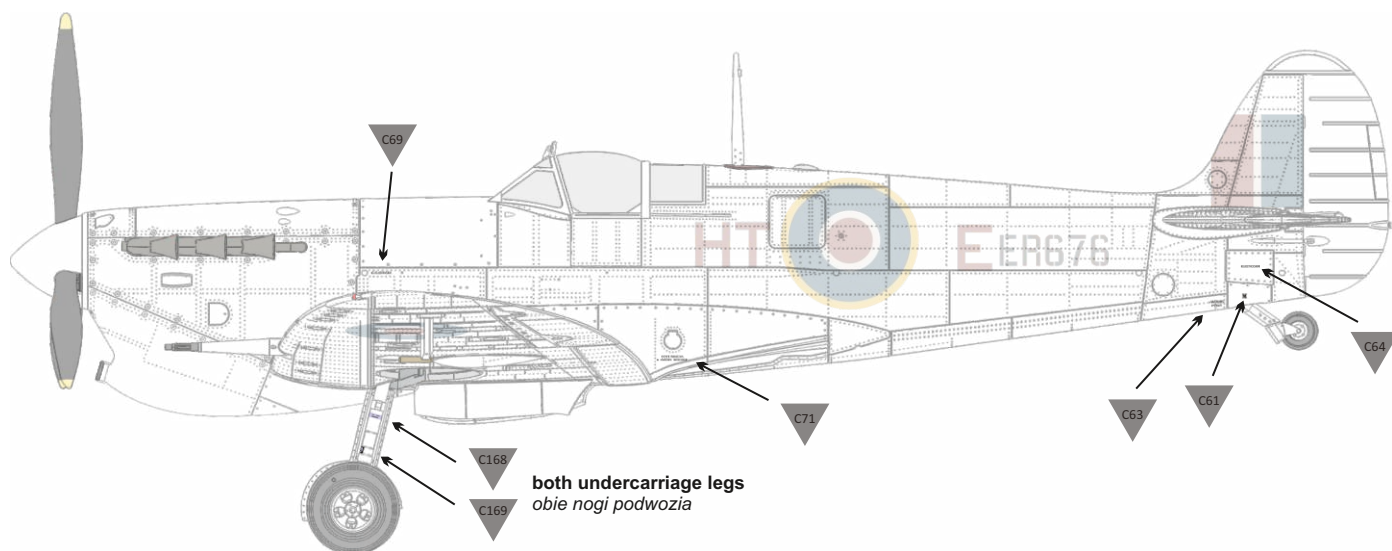
## Stencil decals for marking 1 / Napisy eksploatacyjne dla malowania 1



## Stencil decals for marking 5 / Napisy eksploatacyjne dla malowania 5



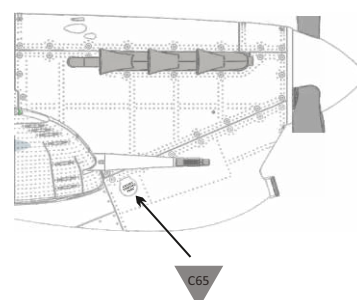
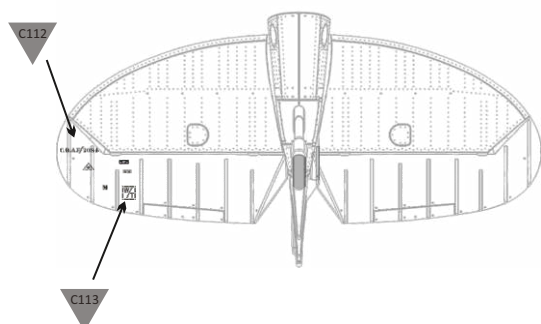
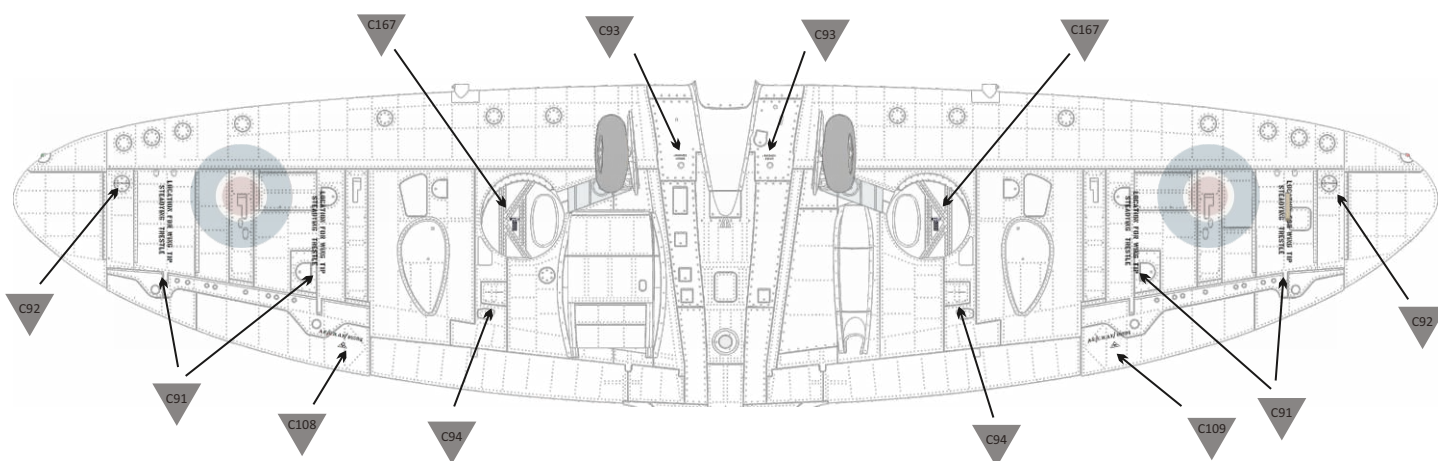
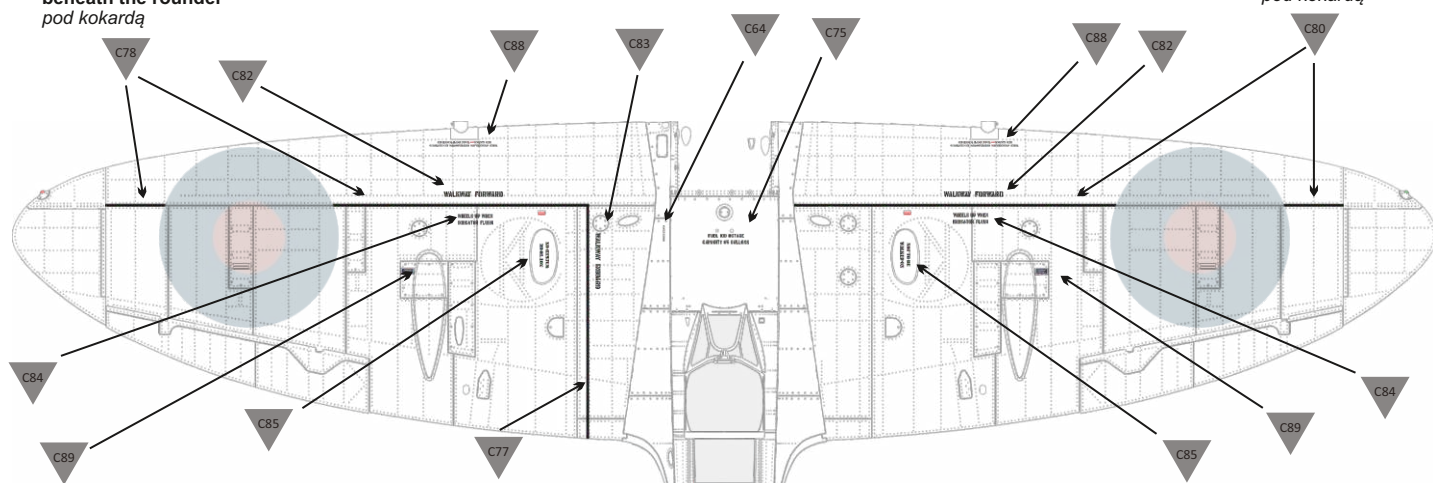




both undercarriage legs  
obie nogi podwozia

beneath the roundel  
pod kokardą

beneath the roundel  
pod kokardą



The first request for two Spitfire squadrons to be sent to the Middle East was made in September 1941. However, delays in tropicalisation meant that the first deliveries did not leave British ports until February 1942. In the meantime, it was decided that the units selected would be No. 92 and No. 145 Squadrons, with the former providing pilots to ferry the initial aircraft along the Takoradi Route. The first group of six Spitfires departed Takoradi for Egypt on 26 April 1942 and included AB326 (see Option 2) and AB322 (see Option 3). AB345 was delivered in the second group of six aircraft, which left on 8 May. The pilots were P/O Samouelle, P/O Ryder, F/Sgt Kenwood, Sgt Hempstead, Sgt Clapson and Sgt Groom, although it has not yet been possible to determine which of them flew AB345. Ironically, upon arrival in Egypt, the aircraft were reassigned to No. 145 Squadron, which became the first unit to enter operational service with the type (see Option 2).

Early tropicalised Spitfires left the Supermarine factory finished in the Temperate Land Scheme of Dark Green and Dark Earth, with undersurfaces often described as Sky. Aircraft from the earliest shipments delivered to Malta and the Middle East are believed to have retained this camouflage until reaching their final destinations. Spitfire Vb (T) aircraft from subsequent batches were, however, repainted at maintenance units before leaving the United Kingdom, until Supermarine introduced the Desert Scheme on its production lines. AB345 was one such aircraft and almost certainly had its upper surfaces repainted in the Desert Scheme at No. 8 Maintenance Unit, while retaining its original factory-finished undersurfaces, most likely in Sky, together with the original stencil markings. Particularly noteworthy was the method used to apply the new camouflage. The darker colour of the Temperate Land Scheme, Dark Green, was replaced by the darker colour of the Desert Scheme, Dark Earth. This differed from the approach later adopted by Supermarine, where Middle Stone simply replaced Dark Green.

1

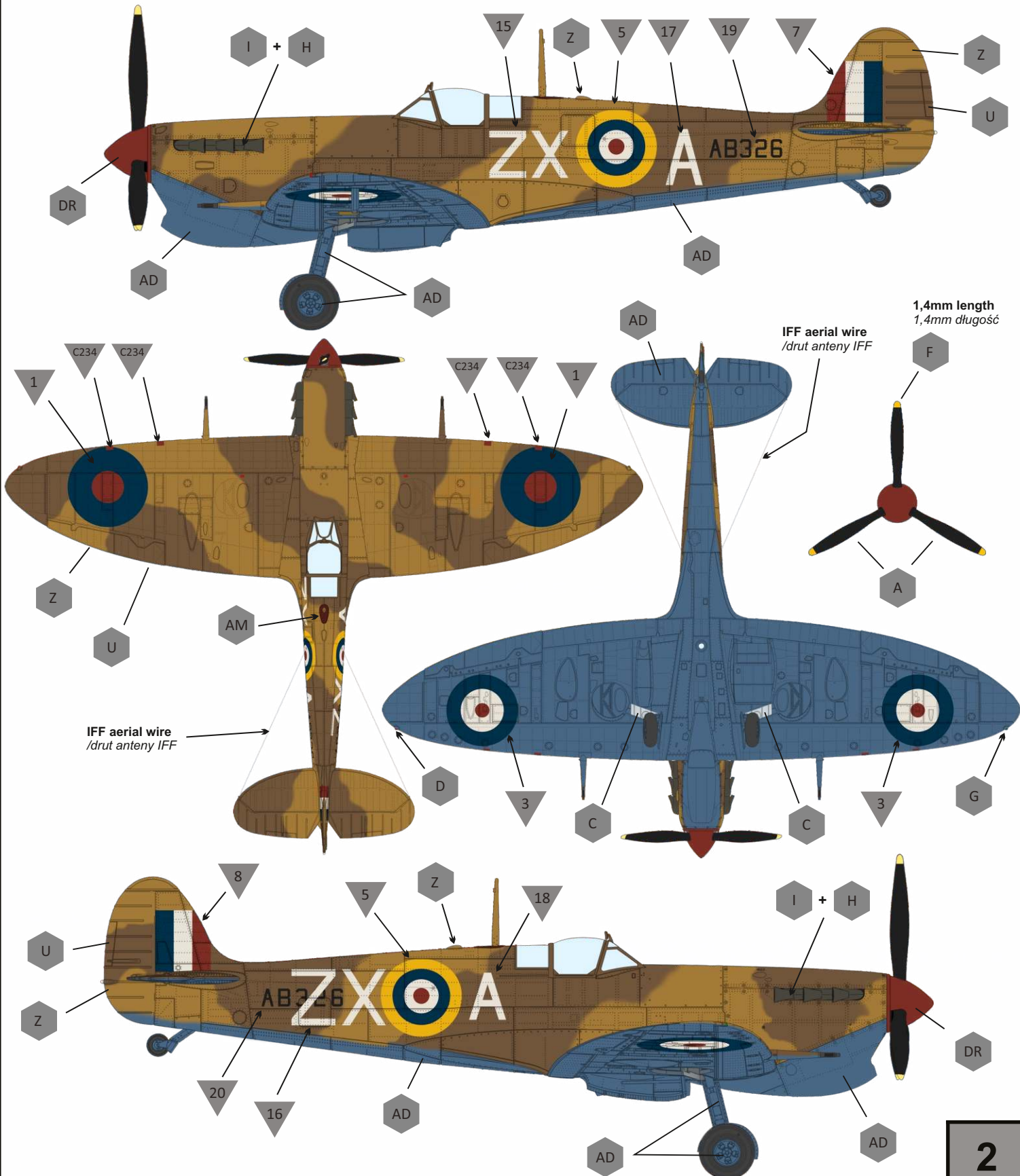


2. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) AB326 (Supermarine production), ZX-A, No.145 Squadron RAF, F/Lt Joseph Jean Paul Sabourin DFC, RAF Gambut, 1 June 1942 (The first operational flight and first combat success of Spitfire fighter in North Africa)

AB326 was a truly unique aircraft, associated with several important milestones in the history of the Spitfire. It was among the first four Spitfires dispatched to the Middle East via the Takoradi Route, having been loaded aboard the SS Lagosian, which departed Hull on 25 February 1942 and arrived at Takoradi on 3 April. The Takoradi Route, stretching thousands of miles across Africa, enabled fighter aircraft to reach the Middle East without risking passage through the heavily contested Mediterranean. AB326 was also part of the first group of six Spitfires to complete the Takoradi–Egypt ferry flight in April 1942.

Taken on charge by No. 145 Squadron as ZX-A, AB326 made the first operational flight by a fighter Spitfire in the skies of North Africa on the morning of 1 June 1942. The aircraft was flown by F/Lt Sabourin, a Canadian pilot, commander of "B" Flight, and a future ace credited with six individual and one shared aerial victory, as well as four damaged enemy aircraft. The arrival of the Spitfire marked the beginning of RAF efforts to challenge Luftwaffe fighter superiority over the Western Desert. Later that same afternoon, again flying AB326, Sabourin achieved the first combat success by a Spitfire in North Africa when he damaged a Ju 88.

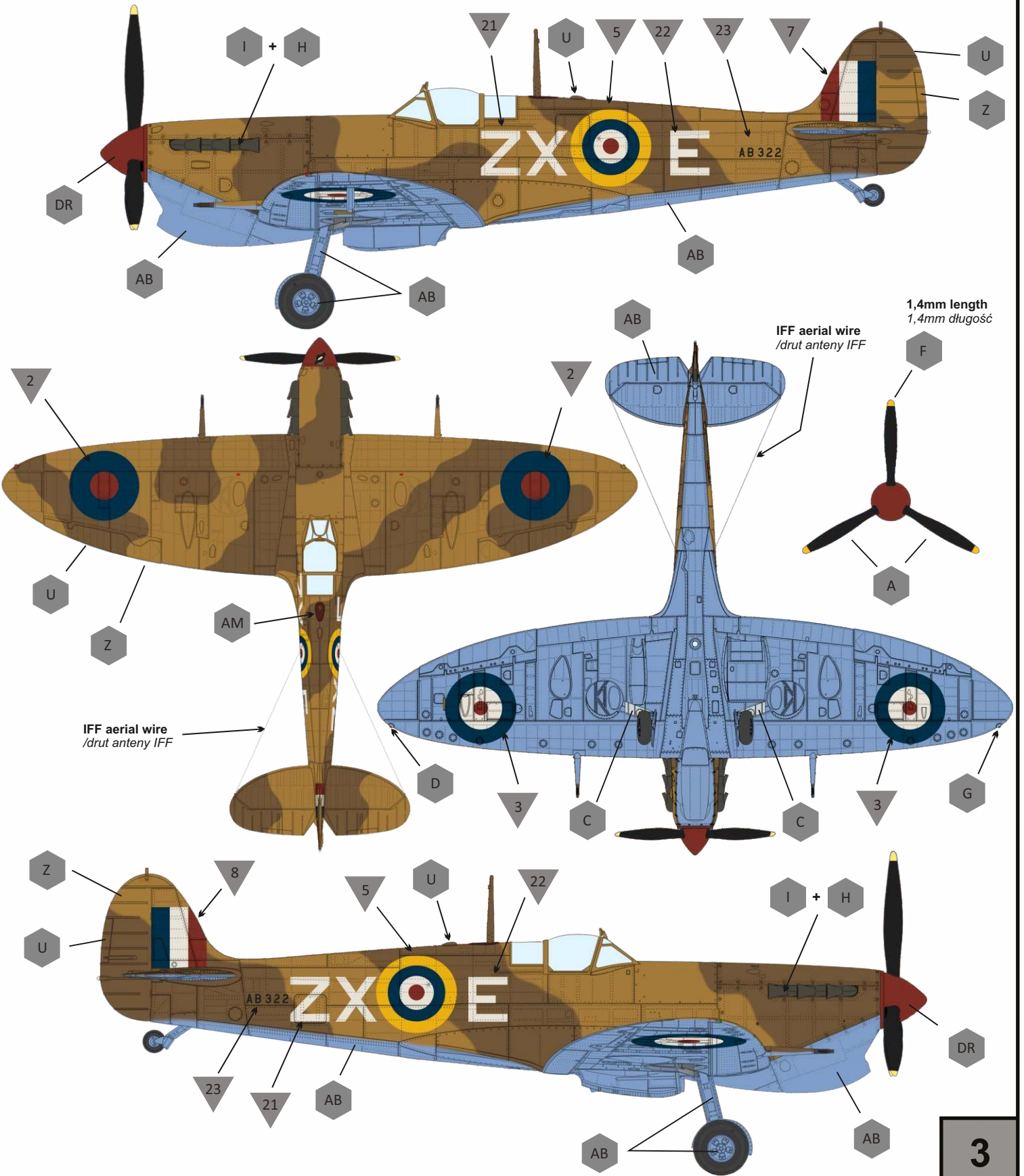
It is believed that the earliest tropicalised Spitfires were shipped to the Middle East in the factory-applied Temperate Land Scheme of Dark Green and Dark Earth, with undersurfaces often described as Sky. This may explain why AB326 was completely repainted in the Desert Scheme upon arrival at RAF Helwan. During this process, Dark Green was replaced by Dark Earth, while Middle Stone was applied in place of the lighter camouflage colour. The colour of the undersurfaces remains uncertain. However, available photographs show them to be relatively dark, and as the aircraft was intended to operate at higher altitudes, where Light Mediterranean Blue was preferred over Azure Blue, the former is considered the more likely choice. No stencil markings were reapplied during the repainting process. As one of the first, if not the very first, Spitfires delivered to the Middle East and repainted locally in the Desert Scheme, AB326 occupies a special place in the operational history of the type.



3. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) AB322 (Supermarine production), ZX-E, No.145 Squadron RAF, RAF Gambut / LG 155 / LG 76 / LG 07 / LG 13 (Sidi Haneish), 17-26 June 1942 (Battle of Gazala)

AB322, like the aircraft featured in Option 2 (AB326), was among the first four Spitfires sent to the Middle East via the Takoradi Route and part of the first group of six aircraft ferried from Takoradi to Egypt in April 1942. Unlike AB326, however, it was less fortunate. At one of the staging airfields along the route, the aircraft ran into soft sand and overturned onto its nose. Sent to No. 103 Maintenance Unit at Aboukir for repairs, it is believed to have been the first Spitfire processed by (and repainted at) that well-known facility. Delivered to No. 145 Squadron on 17 June by Sgt John Campbell, an Australian pilot, AB322 entered operations within hours of its arrival. The urgent need for serviceable fighters reflected the critical Allied situation both in the air and on the ground, as Axis forces pressed their advance during the retreat later known as the "Gazala Gallop". Over the following days, AB322 flew an intensive operational schedule and was flown by several different pilots.

AB322 was finished in a Desert Scheme applied at Aboukir. In this case, the camouflage followed the rarely seen B-pattern, which had largely disappeared from front-line use after being phased out in Europe during the first half of 1941. In addition to the unusual mirror-image pattern, the shape of the camouflage demarcation lines differed noticeably from standard factory-applied finishes, although the correct order of colours was retained, unlike on the aircraft presented in Options 1 and 2. The wing roundels were also unusual for a Spitfire, being the smaller 49-inch type more commonly associated with Hurricanes. It is believed that at this early stage No. 103 Maintenance Unit had not yet begun reapplying stencil markings to Spitfires, and none appear to have been carried by AB322.



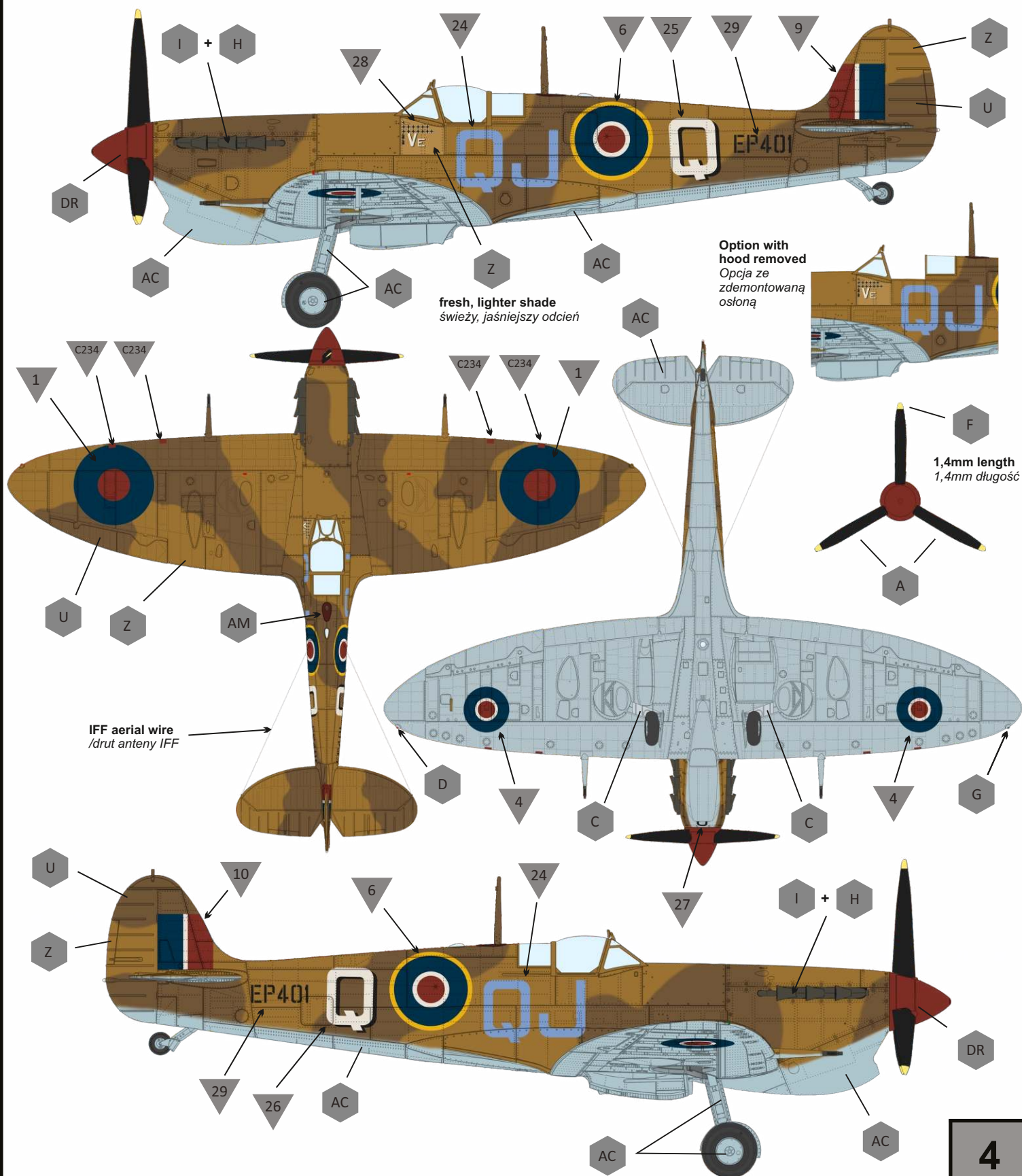


#### 4. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) EP401 (CBAF production), QJ-Q, No.92 Squadron RAF, F/O John Lloyd Waddy DFC, LG 173, late October 1942 (Second Battle of El Alamein)

John Lloyd Waddy of the Royal Australian Air Force was one of the leading Allied fighter aces of the North African campaign. After flying Tomahawks and Kittyhawks with several Desert Air Force units, he joined No. 92 Squadron RAF on 3 October 1942 and converted to the Spitfire Mk Vb. During his brief service with the squadron, he claimed three German fighters destroyed and two damaged, including a Bf 109F destroyed on 26 October and another damaged the following day while flying EP401 during the Second Battle of El Alamein, one of the decisive Allied victories of the North African campaign. By the end of his North African tour, Waddy had been credited with 15 individual and one shared aerial victory, as well as seven probable and six damaged enemy aircraft, making him one of the highest-scoring Australian fighter pilots of the Second World War. For his achievements he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the citation noting: "This officer has displayed masterly airmanship as a fighter pilot [...] He has at all times shown great courage and devotion to duty."

EP401 was one of the early Castle Bromwich-produced Spitfire Mk Vb (T) aircraft, a little-studied and still not fully understood chapter in Spitfire production history. Although these aircraft are believed to have left the factory already finished in the Desert Scheme, available evidence suggests that stencil markings were not applied. The upper-surface camouflage followed the standard pattern, with Middle Stone replacing Dark Green, unlike the aircraft presented in Options 1 and 2. The undersurfaces of Castle Bromwich-built aircraft were finished in Sky Blue, although this factory-applied colour was frequently overpainted soon after arrival in North Africa with darker shades such as Azure Blue or Light Mediterranean Blue. In the case of EP401, however, the original Sky Blue appears to have been retained, at least for a time.

At some point, most likely in early November 1942, the aircraft had its sliding cockpit hood removed, a common modification among Spitfires operating in North Africa. It remains uncertain whether the undersurfaces were still in Sky Blue at that time or had already been repainted in a darker colour. Close examination of contemporary film footage also reveals that one of the machine-gun access panels was painted in a noticeably different shade, suggesting that it had been taken from another aircraft and fitted as a replacement.

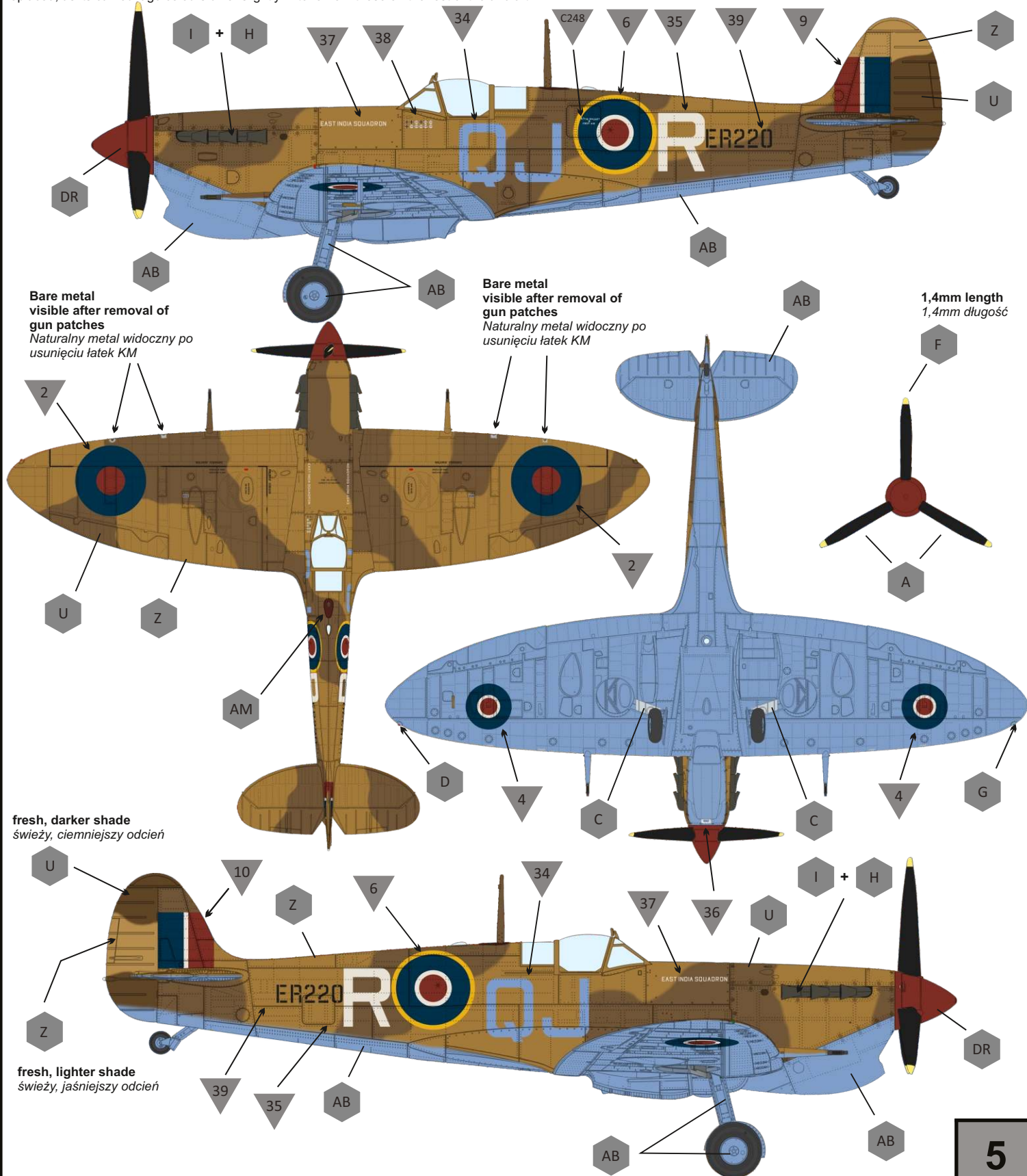


# 5. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) ER220 (CBAF production), QJ-R, No.92 Squadron RAF, F/Lt Neville Frederick Duke DFC and Two Bars, Castel Benito, first days of February 1943

Neville Duke was one of the legends of the Royal Air Force. Credited with 27 individual and two shared aerial victories, one probable, and six damaged enemy aircraft, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and two Bars, a distinction achieved by only twenty-three RAF day-fighter pilots during the Second World War (see also IBG 72591 – Supermarine Spitfire Mk Vb North West Europe 1941–44 – Black Box Edition for other pilots so decorated). After the war, Duke became Chief Test Pilot for Hawker Aircraft and, on 7 September 1953, set a new World Air Speed Record in the all-red Hawker Hunter WB188. In recognition of his pioneering contribution to high-speed and supersonic flight, he was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE).

Duke's first operational posting was to No. 92 Squadron RAF at Biggin Hill in February 1941. In October of the same year, he joined the famous No. 112 "Shark" Squadron RAF in North Africa, where his victory tally began to rise rapidly. His second tour with his favourite No. 92 Squadron, which by that time relocated to Africa, began on 18 November 1942. His first Spitfire victory in North Africa was achieved while flying ER220, when he shot down a Macchi C.202 on 8 January 1943. Another victory in the same aircraft followed on 21 January, this time against a Ju 87. Believing the latter to have been flown by an Italian crew, Duke added a fasces emblem to the victory scoreboard beneath the cockpit. In early February 1943, No. 92 Squadron used the recently captured Castel Benito airfield near Tripoli as a forward operating base. The long distances involved made the use of 30-gallon auxiliary fuel tanks necessary, a relatively uncommon practice in the North African theatre. On 4 February, Duke, flying ER220 together with F/O McMahon, was assigned to escort the aircraft carrying Winston Churchill from Castel Benito, although the mission was ultimately cancelled.

ER220 joined No. 92 Squadron on 17 November 1942, and the months of intensive operations that followed significantly altered the aircraft's appearance. The undersurfaces were repainted, most likely in Azure Blue, although the colour of the 30-gallon drop tank remains uncertain. Several components, including the upper engine cowling, appear to have been replaced with parts originating from an aircraft repainted at Aboukir. The upper-wing roundels were reduced to the distinctive 49-inch diameter commonly associated with Aboukir-overhauled aircraft, although most of the airframe appears to have retained its original Castle Bromwich-applied camouflage. The rudder also appears to have been repainted or replaced, as its camouflage colours differ slightly in tone from those on the rest of the aircraft.



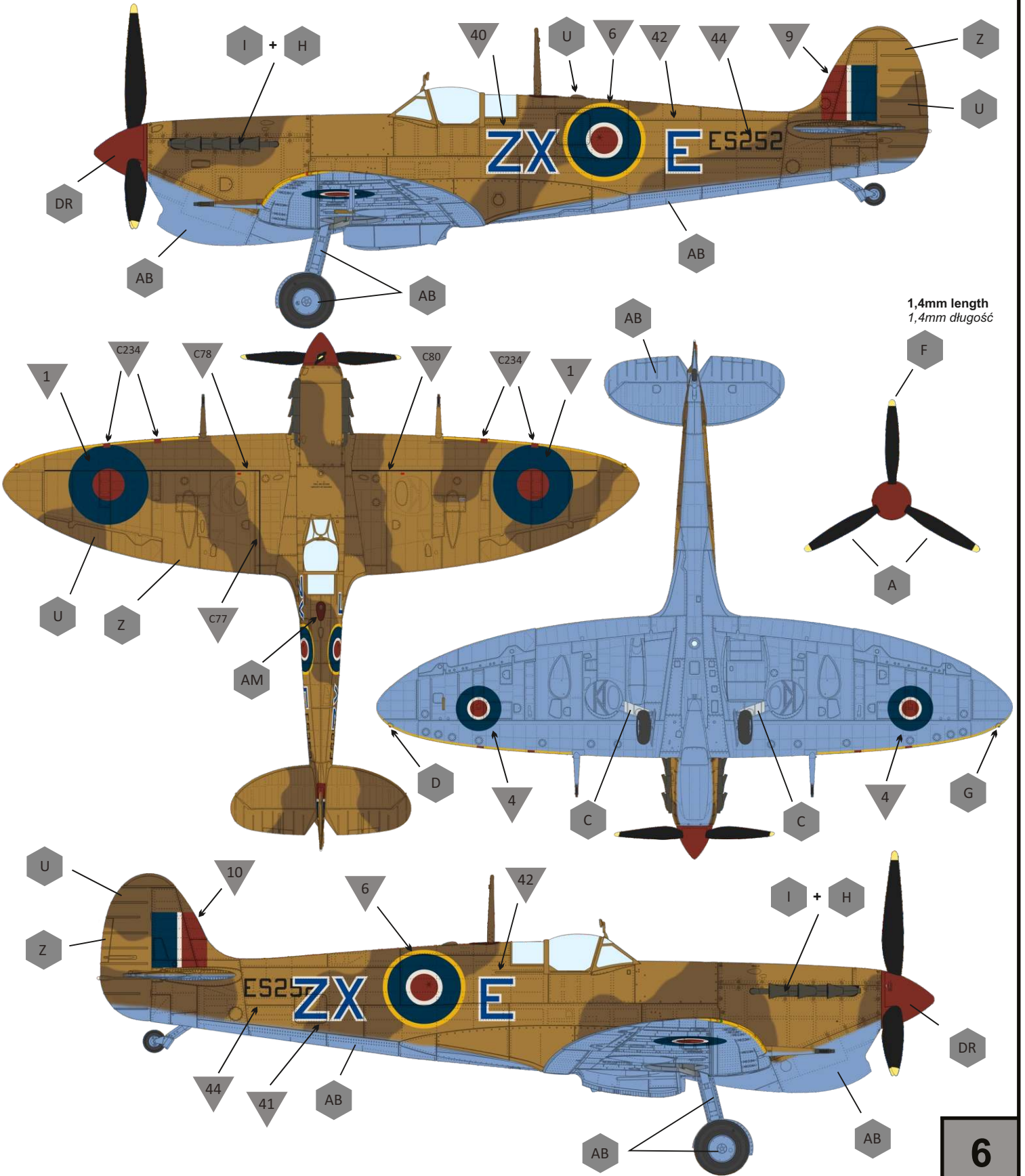


6. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) ES252 (CBAF production), ZX-E, No.145 Squadron RAF, S/Ldr Lance Cleo "Wildcat" Wade DFC and Two Bars, Ben Gardane / Bu Grara, March 1943 (Battle of the Mareth Line)

Another member of the elite group of fighter pilots awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and two Bars (see also Option 5) was the American volunteer Lance Cleo "Wildcat" Wade. Credited with 23 individual and two shared aerial victories, one probable, and 13 damaged enemy aircraft, he achieved the vast majority of his successes during the North African campaign, making him one of the leading Allied aces of that theatre. Wade flew Hurricanes during his first operational tour, but upon returning to North Africa in January 1943 he joined No. 145 Squadron RAF, then equipped with Spitfires. Initially appointed as a flight commander, he soon took command of the entire squadron. During the Battle of the Mareth Line, No. 145 Squadron was heavily engaged in combat with German and Italian aircraft. ES252 served as Wade's personal aircraft during this period. Flying this machine, he damaged a Bf 109 on 8 March, claimed another as a probable on 21 March, and destroyed a third on 22 March 1943. On 27 April he was awarded a Second Bar to his Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation stated: "This officer is a leader of a squadron which has achieved much success in recent operations. During March, 1943, the squadron destroyed twenty-one enemy aircraft, four of which were shot down by Sqn Ldr Wade. By his great skill and daring, this officer has contributed materially to the high standard of operational efficiency of the squadron he commands."

Interestingly, ZX-E also appears in the well-known photograph featuring pilots of the Polish Fighting Team attached to No. 145 Squadron. However, no evidence has yet emerged to suggest that any Polish pilot flew any sorties in this particular aircraft.

ES252 was delivered to the squadron on 5 March 1943 from No. 59 Repair & Salvage Unit and was most likely repainted there, as suggested by the style and placement of its serial number. The camouflage pattern broadly followed the original Castle Bromwich layout, differing mainly in detail (compare with Option 7). The original Sky Blue undersurfaces were repainted in a darker colour, most likely Azure Blue. By this stage of the campaign, a number of fighter units in North Africa had introduced yellow leading edges similar to those used by Fighter Command, although no surviving order authorising this modification has yet been identified. Of particular interest is the elongated rear-view mirror visible in one of the photographs of ES252. Similar modifications can also be seen on aircraft of the Polish Fighting Team attached to No. 145 Squadron. An almost identical arrangement had earlier appeared on Spitfires of No. 303 Polish Fighter Squadron (see Option 14 in IBG 72591 – Supermarine Spitfire Mk Vb North West Europe 1941–44 – Black Box Edition), raising the intriguing possibility that the idea may have been brought from Britain by one of the Polish pilots. Another noteworthy feature of ES252 was its De Havilland Type 45 Hydromatic propeller. This may have been fitted either in Gibraltar, if the aircraft had originally been destined for Malta, or later by No. 59 RSU or No. 145 Squadron, possibly at Wade's own request.

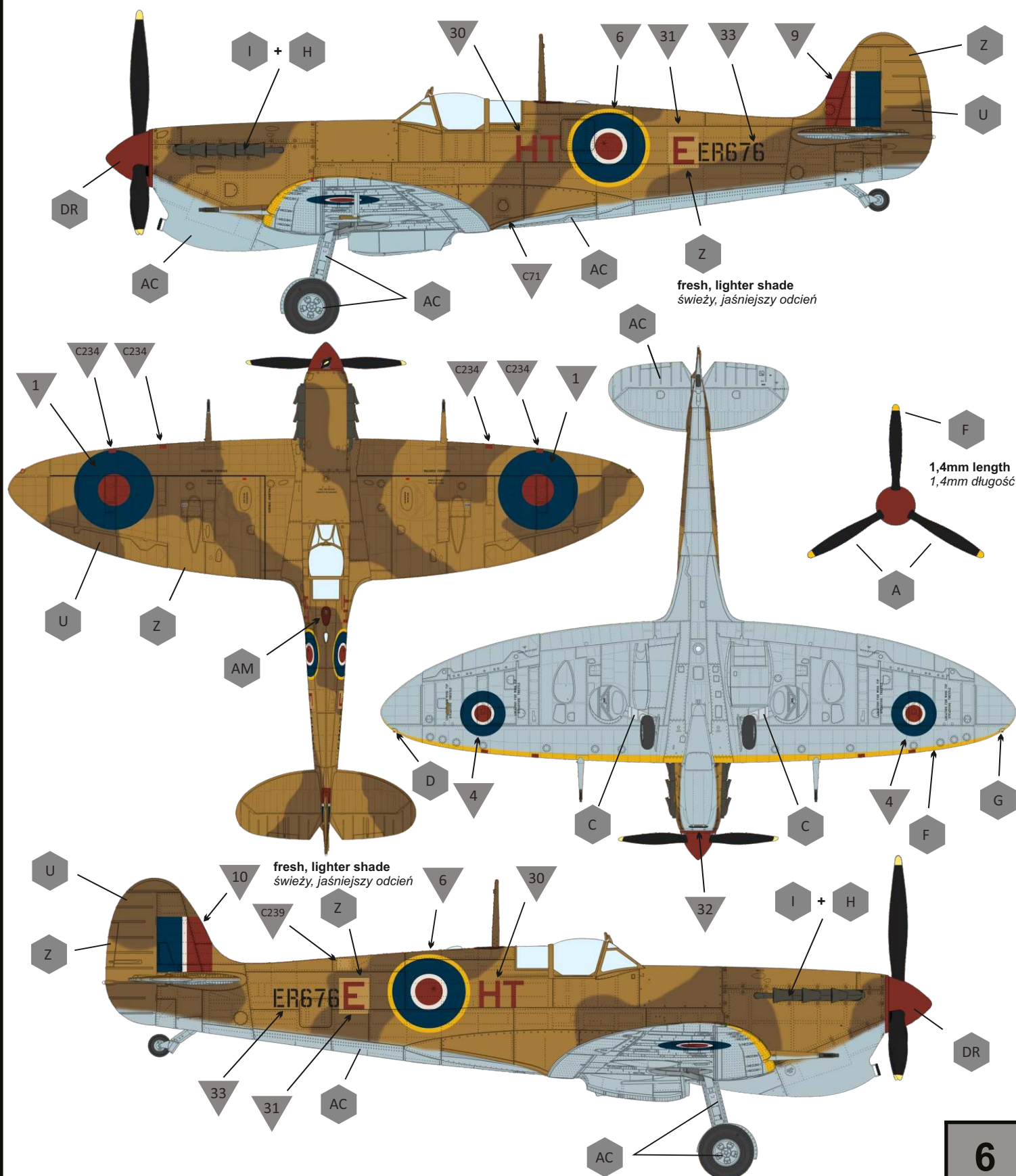


**7. Spitfire Mk Vb (T) ER676 (CBAF production), HT-E, No.154 Squadron RAF, F/O Douglas William Marshall, RAF Souk-el-Khemis (RAF Victoria), 21-25 April 1943 (Battle of Longstop Hill, part of Operation Vulcan)**

Following the Allied landings in North Africa during Operation Torch, numerous Spitfire units were redeployed to the theatre. Among them was No. 154 Squadron RAF, which flew from Gibraltar to Maison Blanche, near Algiers, on 10 November 1942. On 21 April 1943, troops of the British First Army launched Operation Vulcan, the final offensive aimed at breaking through the German defensive positions in northern Tunisia and capturing Tunis. One of the key objectives was Longstop Hill and the surrounding heights, which dominated the approaches to the city. After several days of fierce fighting, British forces finally overcame German resistance, aided by the ability of Churchill tanks to negotiate the steep terrain and by overwhelming Allied air superiority. No. 154 Squadron contributed to this effort by flying fighter sweeps over the battlefield and escorting Boston bombers attacking German positions.

ER676 retained its original Castle Bromwich-applied camouflage and appears to have carried the factory-finished Sky Blue undersurfaces. The aircraft displayed a nearly complete set of stencil markings, with the notable exception of the rudder, suggesting that it had either been repainted or replaced with one taken from another aircraft. The squadron codes also appear to have been altered during the aircraft's service life, with the original individual letter overpainted, most likely in Middle Stone.

Of particular interest are the light-coloured leading edges visible in photographs of the aircraft. These were most likely yellow (see Option 6), but unlike the more familiar Fighter Command style, they extended along the entire wing span and were applied only on the undersurfaces. Despite being a Castle Bromwich-built aircraft, ER676 was fitted with a De Havilland Type 5/39 propeller, a modification that may have been carried out either during assembly at Gibraltar or later while in squadron service.





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**1:72**  
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**Gotha Go 242A-1 - German Medium Cargo Glider**

**1:72**  
72573



**Gotha Go 244B-1 German Transport Aircraft**

**1:72**  
72577



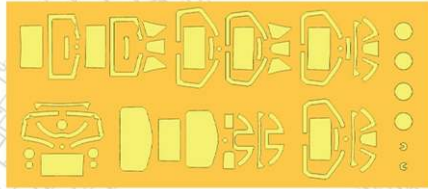
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