



PROPS FOREVER!

THE A-1H SKYRAIDER IN VIETNAM

Few aircraft have the raw firepower and durability of the Douglas A-1H Skyraider. Derided for being a propeller-driven aircraft in the new Jet Age, the 'Spad' not only demonstrated that it had a mission to accomplish, it proved that there was still a place for 'slow movers'. The Skyraider's legacy paved the way for powerful modern attack aircraft like the venerable A-10 Warthog.



By Mike Haight,



Evan Allen, and
Phil Yates

When I was young I was obsessed with the four-engined B-17 bomber from World War II. I built countless models of the famous bomber, drew doodles of B-17s bombing factories on my school papers, and was mesmerized by getting to see the Commemorative Air Force's B-17G 'Sentimental Journey' up close and personal for the first time. To this day I still love that aircraft. It was rugged, powerful, and had an impressive arsenal. So when my dad told me that the AH-1 Skyraider, a single seat Navy dive bomber, could deliver the same payload as a B-17 (8000lbs or 3600kg of ordnance), I was amazed and instantly made it one of my favourite aircraft.

DEVELOPMENT

During World War II, the US Navy needed to replace its aging Dauntless

dive-bomber. The Douglas Aircraft company went to work developing a replacement. After a few false starts and fierce competition from aircraft-designer rivals such as Boeing and Curtis, Douglas produced the magnificent XBT2D-1, which was quickly nicknamed the Dauntless II.

The Dauntless II first took to the air on 18 March 1945 and its trial flights greatly exceeded the Navy's expectations and blew away all of the competing airframes. It was powerful, rugged, and extremely easy to maintain. The Navy instantly ordered nearly 600 planes and designated the plane as the AD-1 Skyraider in February 1946.

The airframe was incredibly rugged and could carry up to 8000lbs (3600kg) of ordnance, the equivalent or superior to many of its contemporary bombers.

The plane's fuel capacity meant that it could spend up to 10 hours in the air, meaning it could stay on station and help local troops for a very long time. It also had a pair of 20mm cannons, one in each wing to offer additional firepower.

OPERATIONAL HISTORY

The Skyraider entered seamlessly into the Navy's service. A few structural problems were ironed out and the aircraft became a quick favourite for the pilots. The Skyraider's remarkable and versatile payload also appealed to the US Marines who also used the aircraft to support its strike forces.

KOREA

The AD-1's first combat action was over Korea in 1950-1953. The plane's heavy payload far exceeded what the jets of the time could deliver, and so were used as the primary ground-attack aircraft of the Navy and Marines. The AD-1 earned the nickname 'Able Dog' after sterling service in the Korean War.

During the war several new variants were developed, including early-warning, submarine-hunting, and the up-armed AD-4 with two more 20mm cannon added for a total of four.

Over 1050 AD-4 aircraft were built. Following the war, the AD-4 was again updated as the AD-6, which received a more powerful engine, added armour protection for the pilot, and was made capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Over 710 AD-6 Skyraiders were built and saw service in the Navy, Marines, and the Air Force.

In 1962, the AD-6 was renamed the A-1H and soon took on the nickname 'Spad', a derogatory reference to the fact that it was a propeller aircraft in the jet age. However, the Spad was about to prove its worth once more in Southeast Asia.

VIETNAM

In the early days of the US involvement in the Vietnam conflict, the Geneva Convention forbid the US military to use jet aircraft in a military role. Enter the Skyraider! The powerful aircraft served the Air Force and Navy well for those first few months until the restriction was lifted and the more powerful bombers were brought online. However, that was not the end of the Spad's career in Vietnam. It had a lot more still to offer.

As the years wore on, the Skyraider became a ubiquitous weapon in the US military's arsenal. Its 15 hard points under its wings could carry and deliver an assortment of torpedoes, mine dispensers, minigun pods, white phosphorous bombs, high explosive rockets, 500lb bombs, cluster bombs, and napalm. The aircraft's own 20mm cannon could unload a further 800 rounds. Each aircraft was an army unto itself. Its slow speed was an asset because it allowed the aircraft to deliver its weapons on target with excellent accuracy. Jet attack planes were sometimes too fast to deliver accurate strikes, making the Skyraider better suited for close air support.

Skyraider ground attack missions included preparing landing zones for helicopters, supporting friendly infantry, covering rescue operations, disrupting known North Vietnamese supply lines, and whatever else asked of it. If a pilot completed his mission and still had

ordnance left, he would radio the local friendly forces and get a target to spend the last of his payload. Never did a Skyraider return to base or the aircraft carrier with ordnance still remaining! They became a major and vital part of the Vietnam War.

Towards the late 1960s, the Skyraider was slowly (and reluctantly, according to many Spad pilots) replaced by the new A4 Skyhawks and A6 Intruder jet attack aircraft. However, there were always missions that the Skyraider could do best. The aircraft soldiered on in US service until the last one was removed from active duty in 1972. However, a good number of Skyraiders were given to the South Vietnamese air force, which made use of them until the conclusion of the war.

A NEW ERA

The passing of the Skyraider from the US military marked the end of the noble lineage of propeller-driven carrier-based attack aircraft and the full takeover of the jet. However, the transition was not without problems and after years of trying to get attack jets to work, the aircraft designers went back to the Skyraider for inspiration for its next generation of ground support aircraft. The experience of the slow, powerful, and rugged Skyraider would be incorporated into the Republic A-10 Thunderbolt II, blending the best the Skyraider had to offer with modern jet technology.



6-MILLION POUNDS LATER...

In October 1965, the USS Midway was scheduled to deliver the six-millionth pound of ordnance on Vietnam. To mark the occasion, the crew and pilot, Commander Clarence W. Stoddard, arranged for a special bomb to be dropped: a toilet!



The toilet was rigged with a bomb rack, tailfins and nose fuse. It was dropped over a target in South Vietnam and the local Forward Air Controller reported that it whistled all of the way down before crashing into the ground below!

SKYRAIDERS IN FLAMES OF WAR

with Phil Yates

As *Battlefront* ventured deeper into the Vietnam War with the *Tour Of Duty* book, the need for fixed-wing air support for the Free World forces became obvious.

The cavalry have finally arrived in the form of the awesome A-1 Skyraider.

This magnificent aircraft was designed during the Second World War and was still going strong thirty years later. With a bombload as big as a Second World War heavy bomber and an astounding endurance, it is the ideal ground attack aircraft for Vietnam.

Whether from the US Navy or US Air Force, once the reliable Skyraider comes on station, your troops can rely on almost support from whatever weapons system is best against the target. It's not surprising that their support was always in high demand.

AIR SUPPORT OPTION

All Free World nations in Vietnam can add Skyraider support to their force. To do this, you may field Air Support as an additional Support Platoon option in your Company Diagram.

AIRCRAFT



Air Support

A-1H SKYRAIDER SPECIAL RULES

TALL FLIGHT STANDS

Aircraft, such as the A-1H Skyraider, that use the tall flight stand require some adjustments to the rules.

Aircraft on tall flight stands must be placed within 6"/15cm of the target rather than the usual 4"/10cm of the target.

ON STATION

When committed to a battle, Skyriders stayed on station for as long as their fuel and payload lasted, which could be a very long time. This made them an essential weapon that the ground commander could rely on.

If your Air Support is On Station (found in the Air Support list of options), you may re-roll one failed die result to request Ground Attack Aircraft (see page 179 of the rulebook).

US AIR SUPPORT

The excellent communications available in Vietnam enabled extremely close air support. This was particularly true when the aircraft worked with helicopter gunships. In this case, a gunship (usually from a Red team) would control the entire battle and coordinate everyone's attack like an orchestra's conductor.

US Aircraft reduce the Safety Distance between to friendly teams to a minimum of 12"/30cm (see page 184 of the rulebook). In addition, US Aircraft ignore helicopter Gunships (but not Slicks) when determining Safety Distance.

US Aircraft can fly at night. If they do so, all targets are Concealed and need to be Ranged In on. Anti-aircraft Fire at Night uses the Shooting at Night rule on page 272 of the rulebook to determine how far away they can see Aircraft.

A-1H SKYRAIDER ORDNANCE RULES

NAPALM

Napalm was the most terrifying weapon in the Skyraider's arsenal. One successful strike could turn the tide of the battle.

Napalm uses a Double-width Template (12"/30cm by 6"/15cm) instead of the usual Template. Place the Template square to the table edges after removing the aircraft, with the narrow end closest to where the aircraft was positioned.

Teams under the Template are hit on a roll of 6. Only Fully-armoured vehicles have any protection against Napalm. If any other type of vehicle or team is hit by Napalm, it is automatically Destroyed unless it is in a Building, even if it is in Bulletproof Cover. A Fully-armoured vehicle hit by Napalm does not take an Armour Save. Instead, on a roll of 5+ the vehicle is Bailed Out. Otherwise, the crew are fine.

CLUSTER BOMBS

Skyriders often carried CBU-75 Sadeye cluster bomb units holding thousands of small anti-personnel bomblets that scattered over a wide area. They also used an impressive assortment of small bomblets dropped from the Skyraider's SUU-14A/A submunition dispenser, including up to 132 'pineapple', and 'jungle' bomblet types per dispenser.

When attacking with Cluster Bombs, an A-1H Skyraider uses a Devastating Bombardment Template.

WILLIE PETE' BOMB

The excellent communications available in Vietnam enabled extremely close air support.

An M47 'Willie Pete' Bomb uses a Double-width Template (12"/30cm by 6"/15cm) instead of the usual Template. Place the Template square to the table edges after removing the aircraft, with the narrow end closest to where the aircraft was positioned.

Teams under the Template cannot be Hit by this weapon. Instead, place a Smoke Screen (see page 137 of the rulebook) filling the area under the Template.



A-1H SKYRAIDER

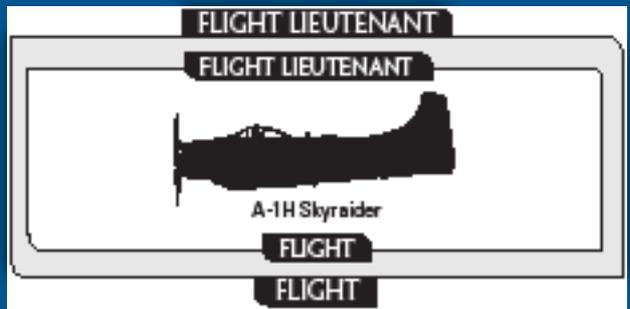
AIR SUPPORT

PRIORITY AIR SUPPORT

A-1H Skyraider 195 points

OPTIONS

- Add On Station Air Support for +25 points.
- Add Rockets for +30 points.
- Add Napalm for +30 points.
- Add M47 'Willie Pete' Bombs for +30 points.
- Add Cluster Bombs for +30 points.



ARSENAL

AIRCRAFT

Aircraft	Weapon	To Hit	Anti-tank	Firepower	Notes
A-1H Skyraider	Cannon	3+	8	5+	Flying tank.
	Bombs	4+	5	1+	
	with Rockets	2+	5	4+	Optional.
	with Napalm	6	-	-	Optional. Napalm.
	with M47 'Willie Pete' Bombs	-	-	-	Optional. Willie Pete.
	with Cluster Bombs	3+	3	5+	Optional. Devastating Bombardment Template



EVAN'S SKYRAIDERS

with Evan Allen

When I started sculpting this aircraft the first thing I did was to have a look at images of the real thing online and in books. They looked so cool that I decided once there was an actual resin model I'd really like to paint one, but couldn't decide which colour scheme I liked best. The only real option was to paint two of them, one in US Navy and Marine colours and one in US Air Force colours!

NAVY COLOURS

The US Navy (USN) and Marines used a pretty basic colour scheme. Not to be confused with the navy blue scheme used in Korea, by the time of Vietnam, the USN used a light grey scheme.

In terms of paint colours, my Navy Skyraider was quite easy to work out. The scheme uses Aircraft White and Light Gull Grey.

The USN used a full gloss finish instead of the usual matt finish. A gloss finish is a lot easier to keep them clean and free from saltwater corrosion on carrier operations.

USAF COLOURS

The US Air Force (USAF) Skyraider was just as easy as I was already familiar with the SE Asia camouflage scheme. I even remember the Federal Standard colour numbers from memory, having applied them to real aircraft in the distant past!

The US Air Force used Light Gull Grey, Tan, Green, and Dark Green. Unlike the Navy and Marines, the USAF used a matt finish.

DECODING PAINT COLOURS

The US military used a Federal Standard colour scheme for all of its vehicles. There is a small trick with decoding federal standard colour numbers. The first digit in the code tells you what kind of finish it is, 3 is matt, 2 is semi gloss and 1 is full gloss.

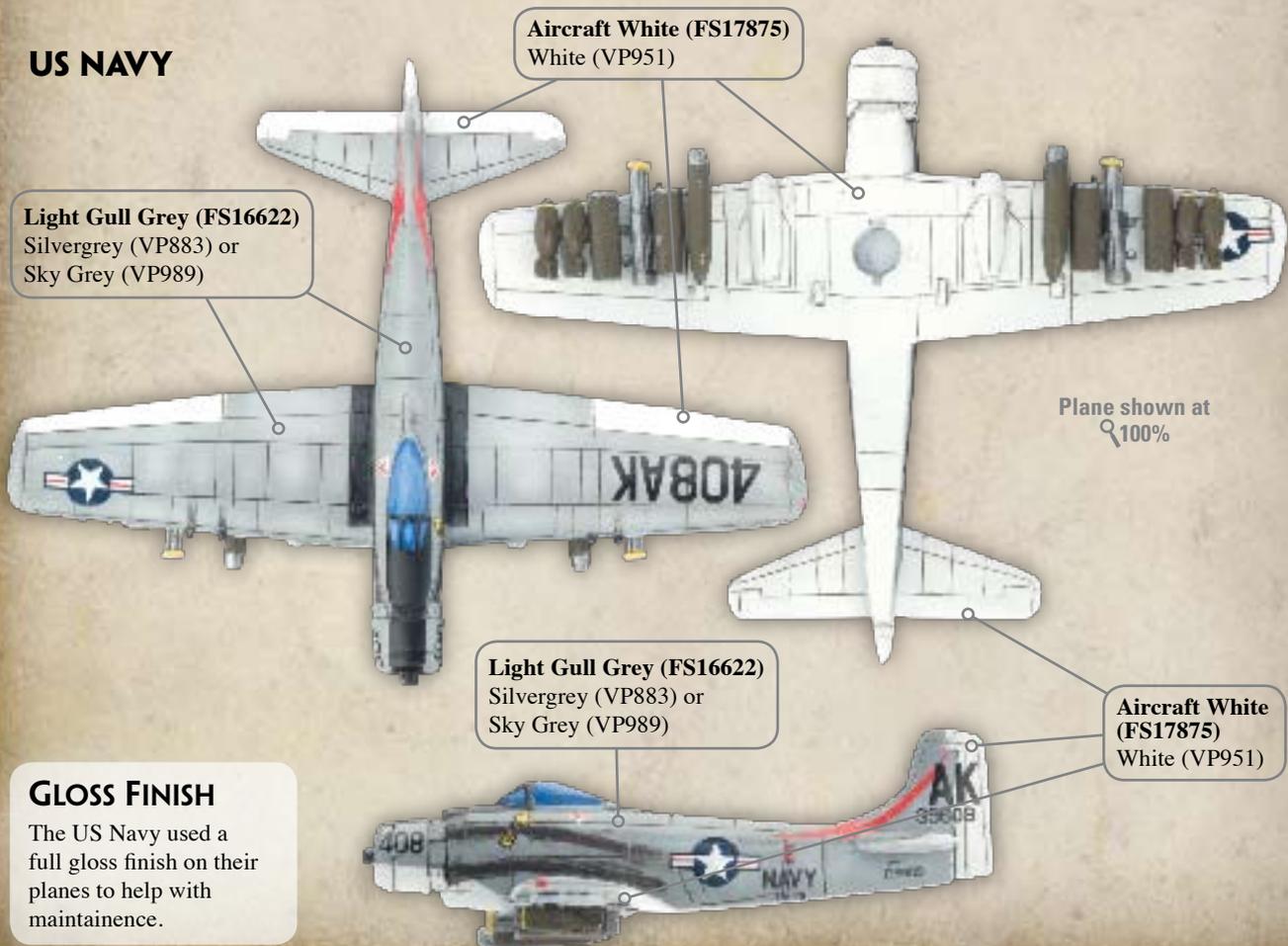
If there are two numbers the same except for the first digit then they are the same colour, they may look slightly different because of the type of finish but they are the same colour.

COLOUR	FS NUMBER	VALLEJO EQUIVALENT
Light Gull Grey	FS16622	Silvergrey (VP883) or Sky Grey (VP989)
Aircraft White	FS17875	White (VP951)
Tan	FS30219	US Tan Earth (VP874)
Green	FS34102	Reflective Green (VP890)
Dark Green	FS34079	USA Dark Green (VP893)

HIGH VISIBILITY

US Navy markings were large to help identify the aircraft against the sea and sky.

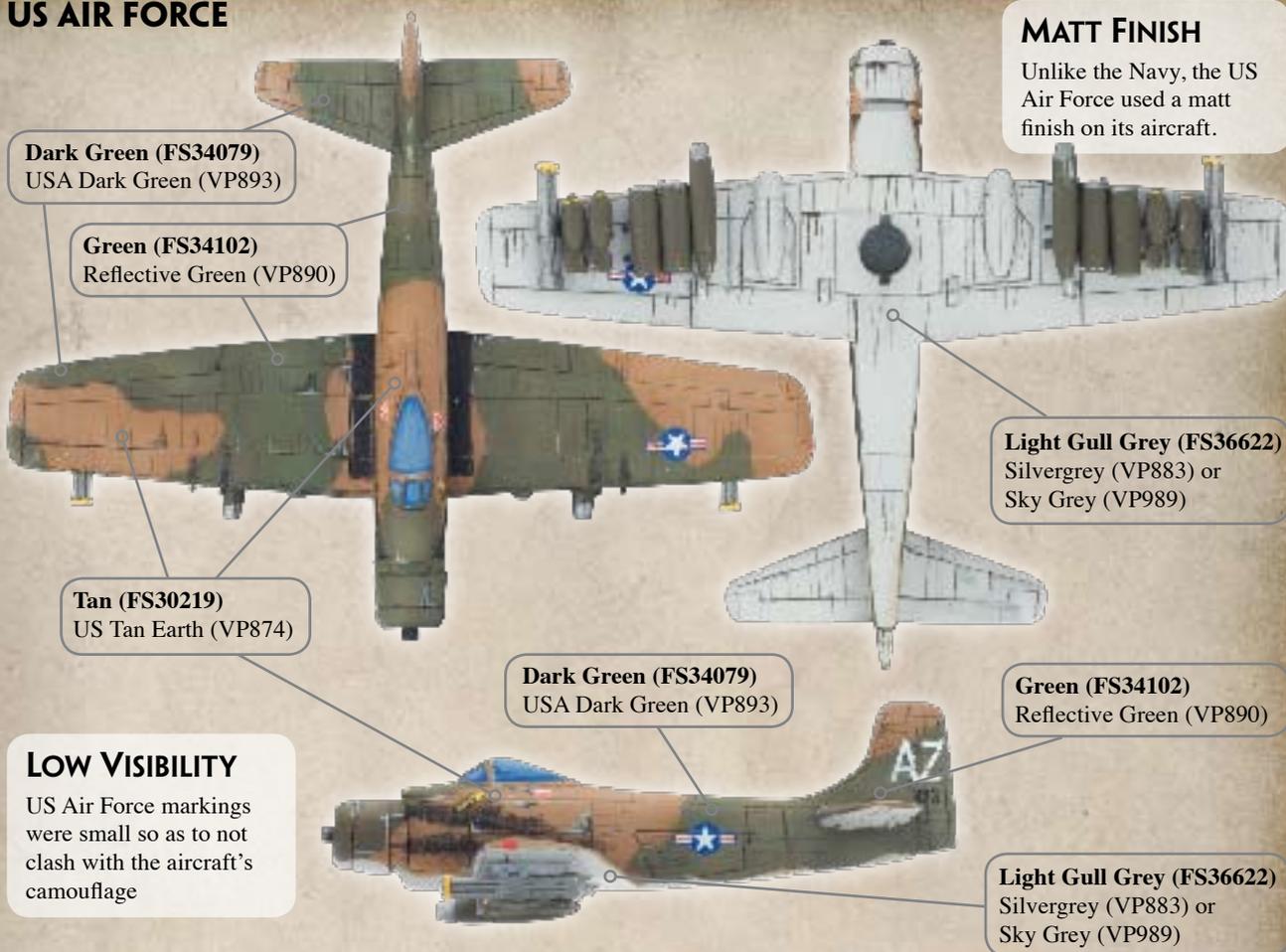
US NAVY



GLOSS FINISH

The US Navy used a full gloss finish on their planes to help with maintenance.

US AIR FORCE



MATT FINISH

Unlike the Navy, the US Air Force used a matt finish on its aircraft.

PAINTING THE SKYRAIDERS

I started both aircraft at the same time. After a light sand with 600 grit paper, cleaning up the castings and gluing on the noses, I primed both with Vallejo Polyurethane Light Grey primer using an airbrush. At this point, I decided that the primer would also make a good match for the Light Gull Grey so I masked it out before the application of the other colours. I used a good quality hobby tape around the edges to get nice fine edging.

USN Plane: Next, I applied Tamiya matt white to the bottom of the aircraft with the airbrush. The masking tape was removed carefully as soon as the white was finished. I then did some panel shading on the grey by adding a little white Tamiya acrylic paint to the Vallejo grey primer, it worked a treat.

USAF Plane: I used a set of colours from Lifecolor series of paints for the USAF aircraft. Lifecolor paints use the FS codes, so that is an easy translation. Alternatively, you can use the Vallejo equivalents (mentioned on the previous page).

I started with an overall coat of Tan (FS30219 or VP874). Then, after it dried thoroughly, I used Bluetack as a mask to create the camouflage pattern for the second colour: Green (FS34102 or VP890). Again once it was thoroughly dry, I added more Bluetack over the

Green and applied Dark Green (FS34079 or VP893) to the last areas left.

The camouflage pattern on aircraft was based on an online image that showed me the complete aircraft from several angles and I used that as a guide.

I carefully removed the bluetack, bit by bit. A small tip is to pull it off almost parallel with the surface – almost as if your pulling it back on itself. It will reduce any paint from peeling off with it. Once it was all off I added some slight panel shading again with the airbrush on each colour.

USN Plane: Next I added the black anti-glare panel to the USN Skyraider by airbrush and masking.

Both aircraft were left to dry for a couple of days then a coat of Tamiya gloss varnish overall was applied.

Markings: The decals were added, the USN decals come with the kit but for the USAF one I used some decals from the WWII range with the smallest US insignia I could find. I did need to add the red centre bar on these though. I also used a tail Squadron code letter set from the WWII decals but these were black and I needed white. I simply painted over the black decals with white paint.

Finishing: Once the decals were dry I added more gloss over the USN bird and matt over the USAF bird.

Next step was to paint the cockpits and other details with Vallejo model colours. I use a graduated blue colour for the cockpit canopy going from dark to light by just using more white added to the same blue each time.

Another important feature was adding the large reddish-black exhaust stains these aircraft all have from the massive Wright Radial engine, these stains should follow the curve of the wing and I add them by mixing a bit of Red Leather (VP818) with Black (VP950) from the Vallejo Model Colour range.

Payload: Almost at the end is adding the weapons. Again, perusing online photos of the aircraft will give you representative load-outs and the colours you need. As a general rule, live weapons are usually green or black in colour with yellow markings. If you see blue weapons you can safely assume they're practise weapons and not live ordnance. You don't want those as you're sure to throw lots of ones on the dice! I used a little bit of bluetack to hold the weapons in place while the glue set.

You can add a coat of matt varnish over the weapons but you'll probably need to do this with a brush so you don't take away the gloss finish of the USN Skyraider.

Ready for action: Lastly the magnet goes in the hole and you're ready to take to the skies in Vietnam!