

Fighting Colors

F-86 Sabre

in Color

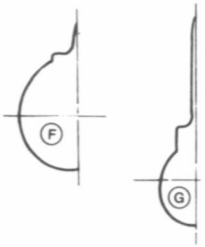
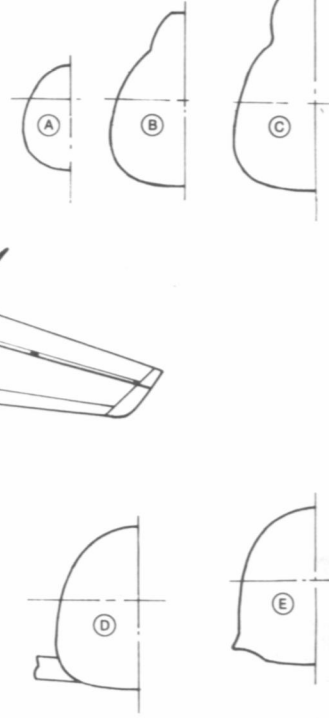
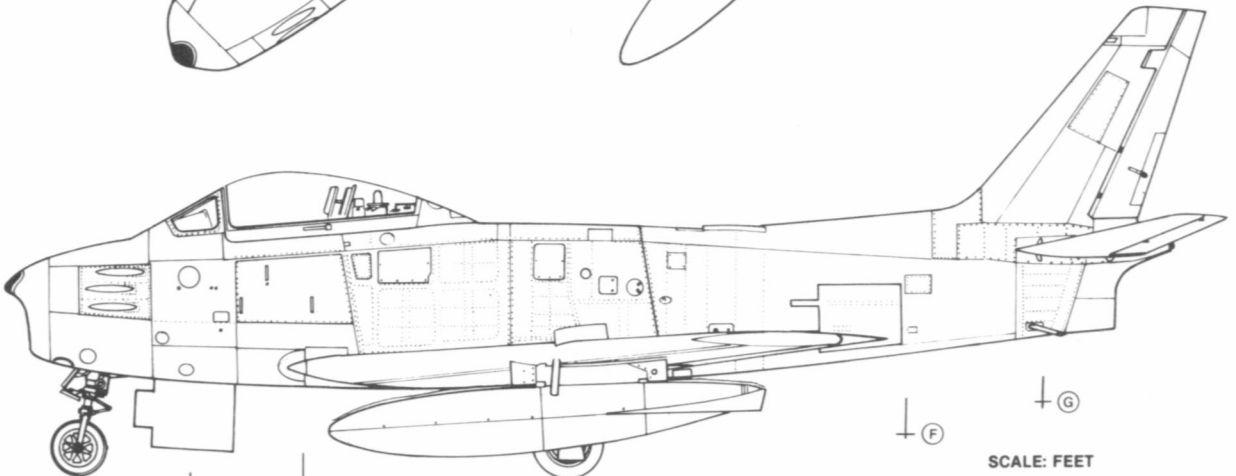
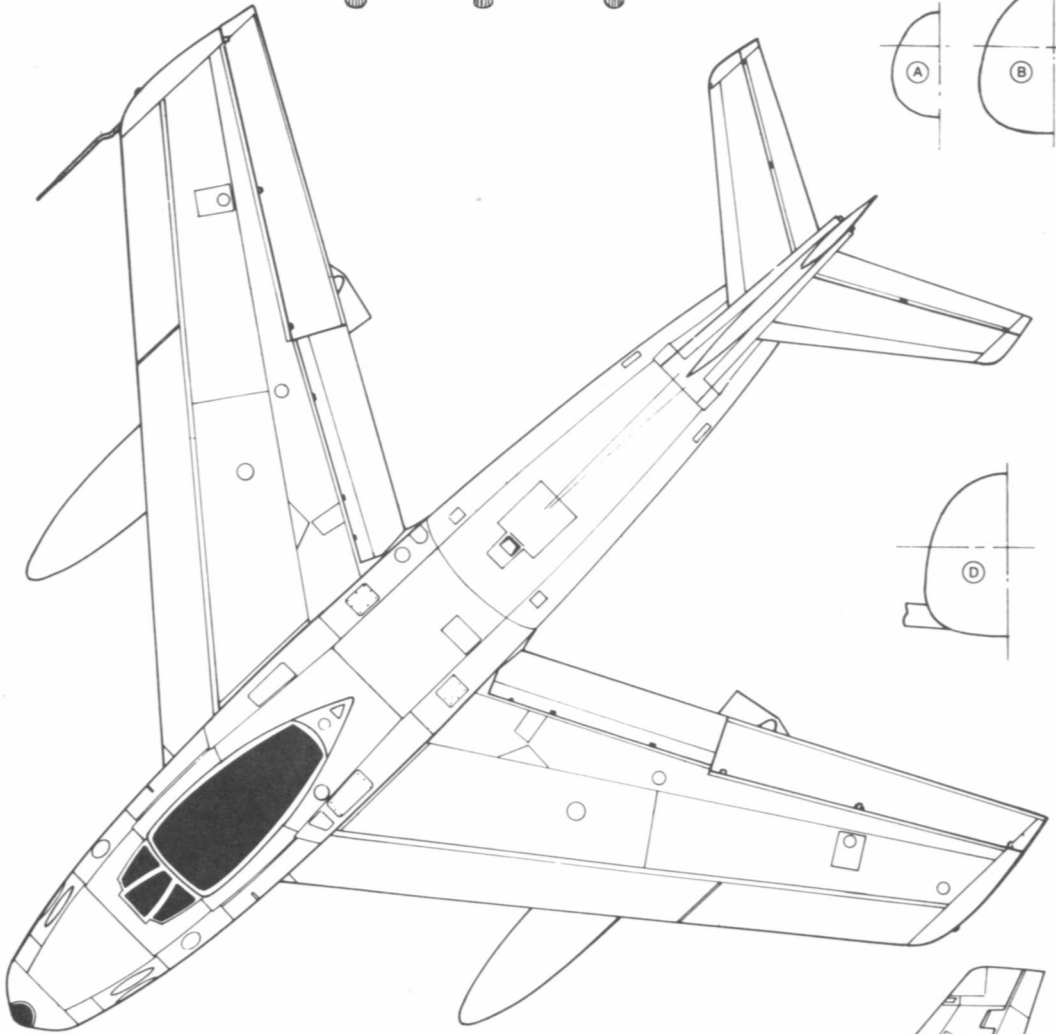
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F-86F

1:72nd Scale



↑ A ↑ B ↑ C ↑ D ↑ E

↑ F ↑ G

SCALE: FEET

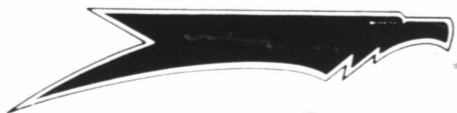


Fighting Colors

F-86 Sabre **in Color**

by Larry Davis

illustrated by Don Greer
& Rob Stern



squadron/signal publications

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List of Contributors

Air Force Museum
G. Knox Bishop
Gene Boswell
Capt. Rick DuCharme, USAF
Bob Esposito
Don Garrett
T/Sgt. Marty Isham, USAF
Bill Larkins
Dave Menard

Joe Michaels
North American Aviation
Merle Olmsted
Mick Roth
Dick Starinchak
Warren Thompson
United States Air Force
Dent Williams

Dedication:

To aviation historians throughout the world.

A factory-fresh F-86F-5 shows absolutely standard markings and stripings. Note the anodized wing spar panel. (NAA)





Sabre in Color

The service of the Sabre and Fury spanned possibly the most exciting period in the history of US aircraft development. From the original straight-wing FJ-1, which was little more than a jet-powered Mustang, to the radar-guided, rocket-equipped F-86D interceptor, the Sabre neatly spanned jet aircraft evolution from its earliest days to the introduction of supersonic interceptors. This period may also have been the most colorful in the history of US military aviation. Still untarnished by defeat (in the air, at least, the Korean War was a clear-cut US victory), the USAF and US Navy Sabres and Furies showed off their youthful exuberance with gaudy squadron insignia. Markings were aimed at high visibility. The US wanted everyone to know that Sabres were in the air.

The basic exterior finish for the F-86 series was natural metal. The gun bay interior was painted silver. All other bay interiors were chromate yellow including the inside of the engine compartment. Landing gear wells and dive brake bays were the only other exceptions, being chromate green. The inner sides of landing gear doors and dive brakes were painted silver. The landing gear itself was natural metal, as were the interiors of the leading edge slats. Certain of the exterior panels, particularly the wing spar panels, were anodized aluminum, which had a very dull appearance. **F-86As** had a number of external parts formed out of fiberglass. These included the intake, wing tips, wing trailing edge fillet, vertical fin fillet, fin antenna panel and fin cap. These were often left unpainted, being a 'natural' fiberglass, off-white color. On a few F-86As these parts had a red-brown color.

The standard F-86 cockpit was all flat black including floor, walls, instrument panels and consoles. The seat was all black except for a red headrest.

All lettering on an F-86 was black. On F-86As all major lettering was in the North American rounded style. National insignia were carried in four locations; 25" insignia on either side of the fuselage and 40" insignia on the upper right and lower left wing surfaces. The service designator, USAF, appeared on the other two wing surfaces in 30" letters. The 'buzz number', in the FU series for the F-86, appeared on either side of the aft fuselage in 18" letters. The serial number appeared on the vertical tail in 9" letters with U.S. AIR FORCE above it 4" high.

2" black stripes marked the wing walks; 2" red stripes marked the NO STEP on the wing flaps. A 1" black stripe ran vertically from the canopy break to the stop kick-plate on the aircraft's left side. A 2"-wide red stripe encircled the aft fuselage as a turbine warning. Other common markings included red circles around fuel filler caps, red fuel dump tube and four 2"-wide black stripes under the rear fuselage for trestle alignment. All stencilling was in black except WARNING which was larger and in red.

In most **F-86Es** and **Fs**, all the fiberglass pieces, except for the fin

An FJ-1 of VF-5A on the ramp at NAS North Island, 1948. The pilot's name is in yellow, the anti-glare panel is flat black and the squadron crest is white, yellow and blue. All markings are in white. Note the five 'angle of attack' stripes on the lower nose. (Plog)

All 30 FJ-1s had been relegated to Naval Air Reserve duty by 1949. The reserve band around the fuselage and the narrow stripe on the wings are international orange. (Esposito)



tip, were replaced by aluminum. The cockpit colors remained the same until mid-1953 when gray (36231) was standardized as the background color. Seat and instrument panels remained black. At the same time, U.S. AIR FORCE in 15" square stencil lettering was added to the forward fuselage. The same lettering often replaced USAF on the wings. F-86Hs, for unknown reasons, had two red turbine warning stripes.

The **F-86D** series was similarly painted and marked with few notable exceptions. The large radome was unpainted fiberglass. Most often this was gloss black in color, but red-brown examples have been seen, this color often fading to a dirty tan. Almost all Ds had anti-glare panels, these being painted green (34087) or dull black. Some late Ds and all **F-86Ls** had the underside painted gloss gray (16440) as an anti-corrosion measure.

In similar fashion to F-86 day fighters, the D's cockpit was all black until mid-1953 when walls and floor became gray (36231).

A 24" national insignia was most often carried on the aft fuselage, though some Ds carried it further forward. The 18" buzz number was



The XP-86, with George Welch of Pearl Harbor fame at the controls, is in the gloss white, otherwise nearly standard. (NAA)

carried on the nose until mid-1953 when the 15" U.S. AIR FORCE was placed there. The buzz number was then most often moved aft of the national insignia. Lettering was in either the rounded NAA style or block stencil.

The only exception to the rule that all USAF Sabres were natural metal in finish was with the very earliest and latest 'birds' and a few

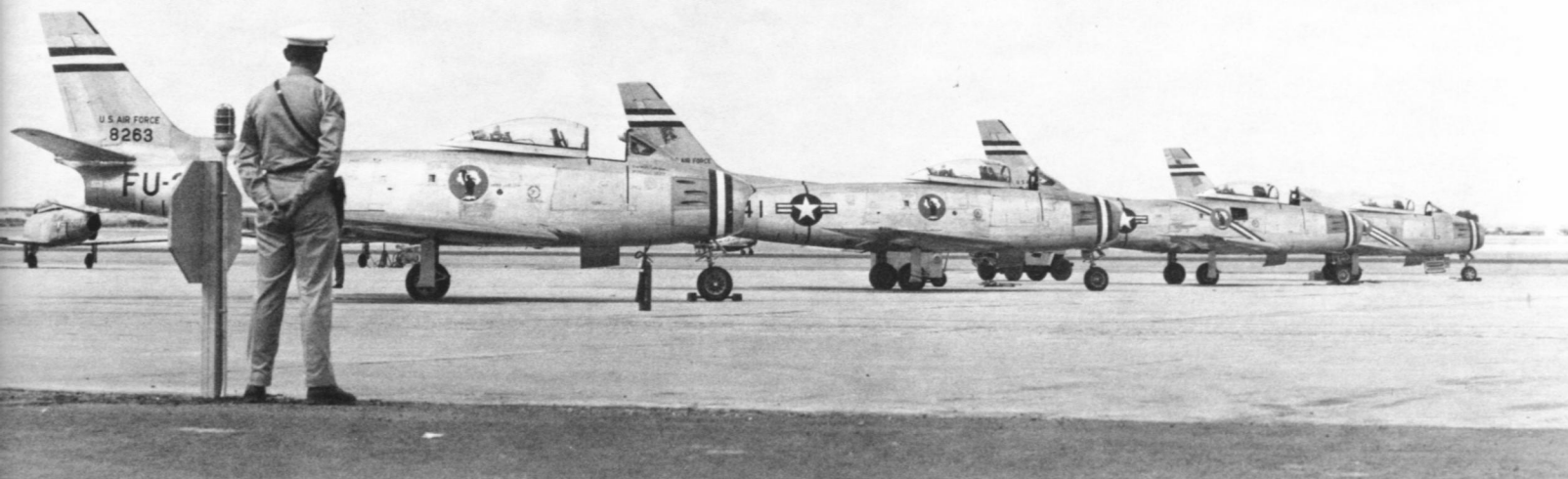
The 1st Fighter Group received the first F-86As in February 1949. Note the numerous 'natural' fiberglass areas. The lower tail stripe was blue, designating the flight. The upper stripe and fuselage flash were red, designating the squadron. The insignia is that of the 71st FIS. (NAA)

experimental examples. The XP-86 was painted gloss white, while some of the last flying Sabres, QF-86 drones, have carried Vietnam-style camouflage (Dark Green, 34079; Green, 34102; Tan, 30219; Gray, 36622). A few Sabres stationed in Europe in 1955-6 as part of USAFE were given experimental camouflage using RAF colors, to no set pattern or color combination. The only other 'standard' color marking was the Arctic scheme which called for the tail and wing tips to be painted international orange (12197). This was liberally interpreted. Colors ranging from the brightest fluorescent orange (38903) to insignia red (11136) were seen.

The main combat use of USAF Sabres came in Korea. There FEAF decreed a theatre marking for all its F-86s, a yellow band, 28" wide on the fuselage and 36" wide on the wings, bordered by a 4" black stripe.

A tremendous variety of squadron and group markings were carried by F-86s throughout their career. While a few used subtle color





combinations, most were applied in a standard range of red, white, blue, yellow and black. While a color photo is the only sure check of these colors, intelligent interpretation of black and white photos will most often give correct results.

FJ-2 Furies were colored and marked nearly identically to USAF Sabre day fighters. Among the few differences were the coloring of the inner face of landing gear and dive brake doors, which were red.

The few **FJ-1s** and all **FJ-3s** were painted overall gloss sea blue (15042). All compartment interiors were chromate green inside with operating door inner surfaces red. The wing fold 'interior' was also red. Slat inner surfaces were the same color as the adjoining wing area. The tail hook and barrier probe were black and white 1" stripes, the bays being red. The leading edges of all flying surfaces were CorroGard, a very glossy, silvery corrosion coating. Landing gear were painted silver. The cockpit coloring differed as well, being gray (36231) from the beginning of production with a dark gray (36118) or black seat. All lettering and stencilling was white on blue aircraft.

On 1 July 1955, BuAer ordered the changing of all sea blue aircraft to a two-tone scheme of gull gray (36440) with gloss white undersides. The top side of all moving horizontal control surfaces was also white. The CorroGard was retained. All lettering and stencilling now became black. **FJ-4s** were delivered in this scheme and carried it throughout their careers.

Note: The reference numbers following color designations in this book refer to the National Bureau of Standards publication FS 595a. Please note that color designations in the above text apply only to factory fresh aircraft. Once an aircraft entered service, variations from standard appeared on every aircraft.

A Kirtland AFB air policeman watches over the 'alert birds' of the 93rd FIS. The red and white striped 93rd FIS was responsible for protecting the atom bomb plant at Los Alamos. The three-striped bird was a flight commander's. The five-striper belonged to the squadron CO. (NAA)

The 81st Fighter Wing became the first US Air Force unit stationed in England since World War II when they brought F-86As to RAF Bentwaters in August 1951. The tail is blue with yellow lightning bolts. Fuselage lightning bolt was in the squadron color, in this case blue for the 91st FIS. (USAF)



A pair of Arizona ANG F-86As are seen over Phoenix. The stylized snake and tail band are metallic gold with black trim. The trailing Sabre has a red and white ejection seat triangle. (Menard)





Kathy, an RF-86A of the 67th TRW shows off FEAF stripes. The black fin tip and rudder stripe were a Wing markings. All lettering is black, the tiger is yellow and black. (Coffey)



(Above Left) LtCol. Bruce Hinton's Sabre sits alone in the snow at Kimpo. The black and white stripes were a 4th FIG recognition marking before the FEAF bands came into use. The tail stripe is black, as is the aircraft name. The nose stripe is insignia blue. (LaPean)

When *Mach One Mac* was seen here at Suwon in September 1951, the yellow and black bands were a 51st FIW marking. (USAF)

This F-86E ended up with the 199th FIS, Hawaii ANG. The fuselage stripes are red and white. (Isham)





Col. Royal 'King' Baker flew *The King*, one of the more colorful Sabres, here with one red star. Baker went on to shoot down 13 MIGs. The black panel aft of the gun troughs was for the crew chief's name. The 36" yellow tail band with black border was the 4th FIW marking after the introduction of the FEAF bands. (Shaw)

An F-86E of the 25th FIS at Suwon in the Summer of 1952. By this time the black and yellow ID bands had been standardized for all F-86 units in Korea, causing the 51st FIW to adopt black checks on the tail as their individual unit marking. The tail stripe and wing shape under the windscreen are red. The nose is 'natural' fiberglass. (Crowley)

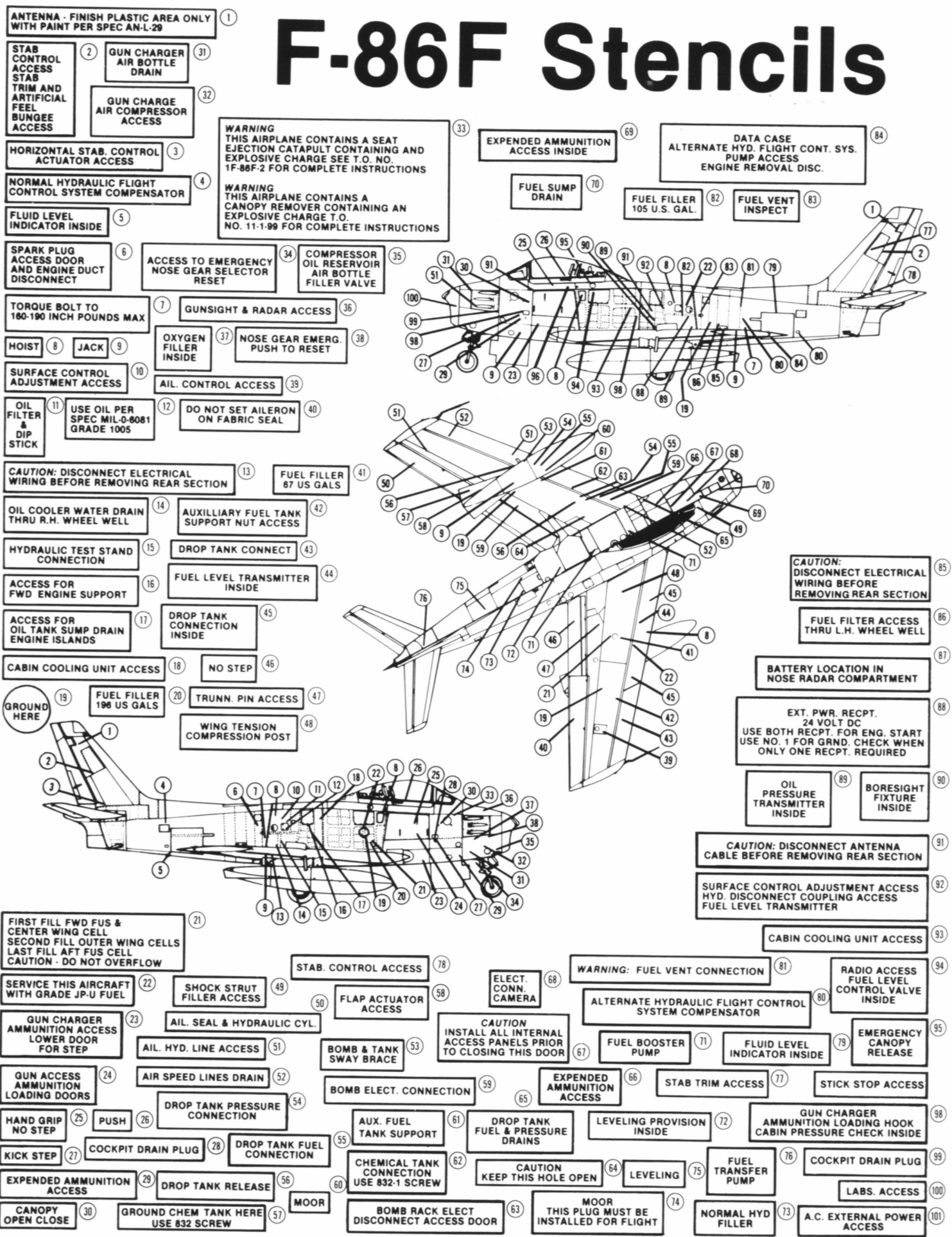


The black and white checkerboard on this F-86D indicates the 51st FIW, based at Taipei, Formosa in 1955. Nose and tail stripes are medium blue, indicating the 16th FIS.

A beautifully maintained F-86D of the 85th FIS at Scott AFB. The rudder has red and white stripes with a blue vertical band carrying yellow stars. Drop tanks are all white with blue nose and fins plus a red scallop. Note the blue 'A' pennant on the intake, an ADC award for gunnery excellence. The lettering is white. The red and white panel under the buzz number (which wasn't moved aft when the U.S. AIR FORCE was added) indicated rocket load. (Ostrowski via Isham)



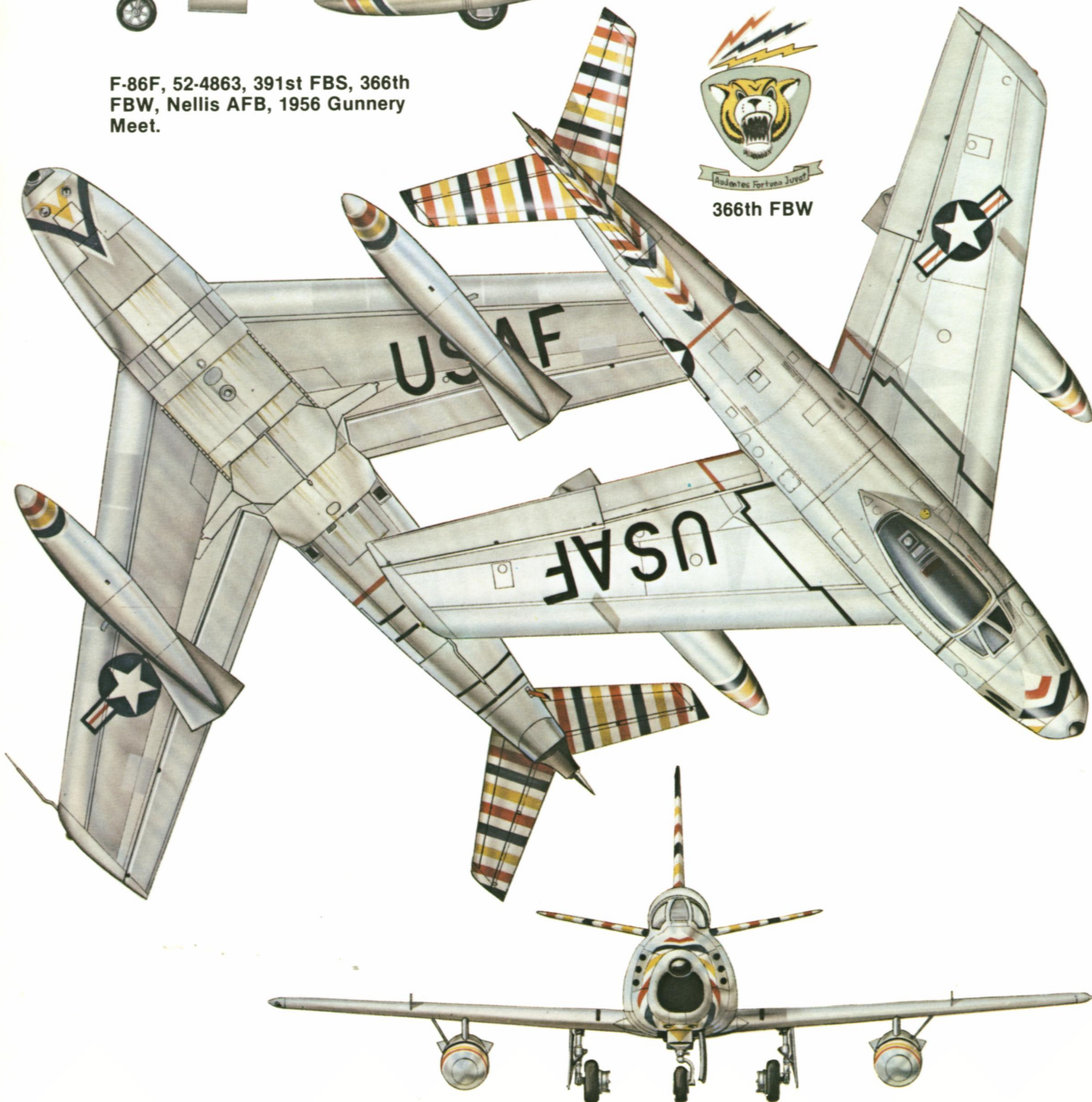
F-86F Stencils



F-86F Sabre



F-86F, 52-4863, 391st FBS, 366th FBW, Nellis AFB, 1956 Gunnery Meet.



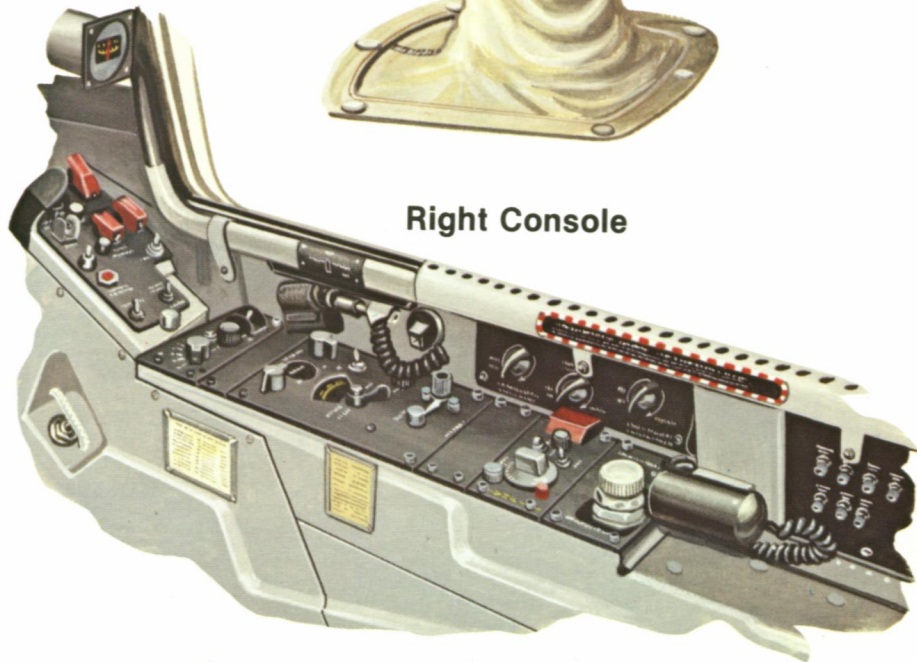
F-86F Details



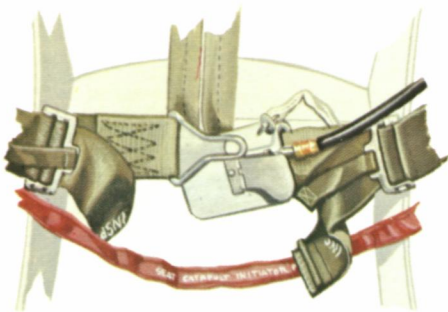
F-86F
Main
Instrument
Panel



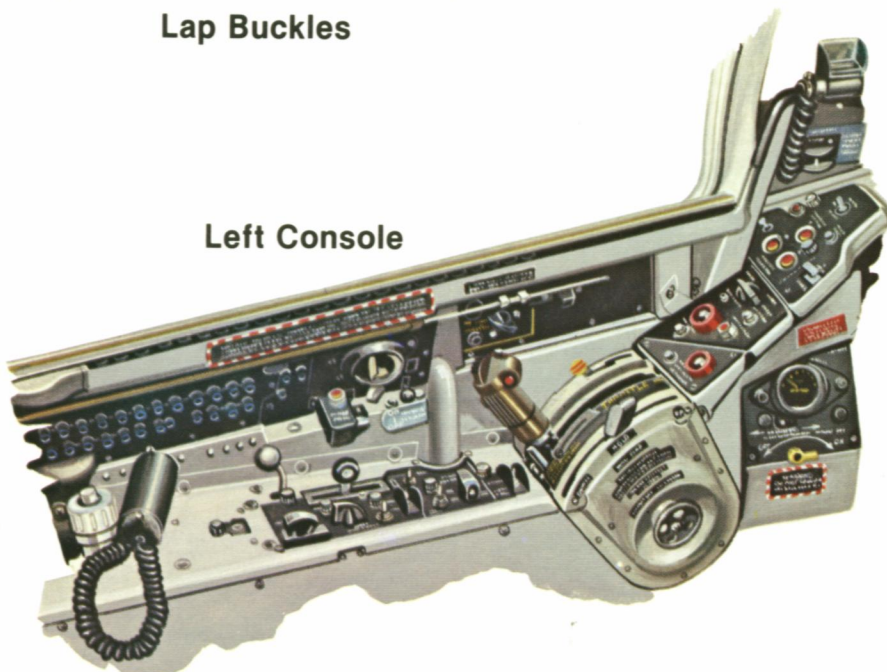
Control
Stick



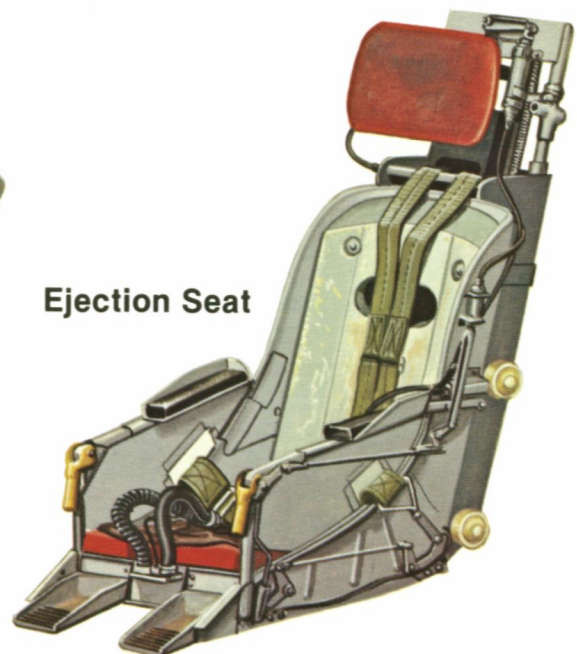
Right Console



Lap Buckles



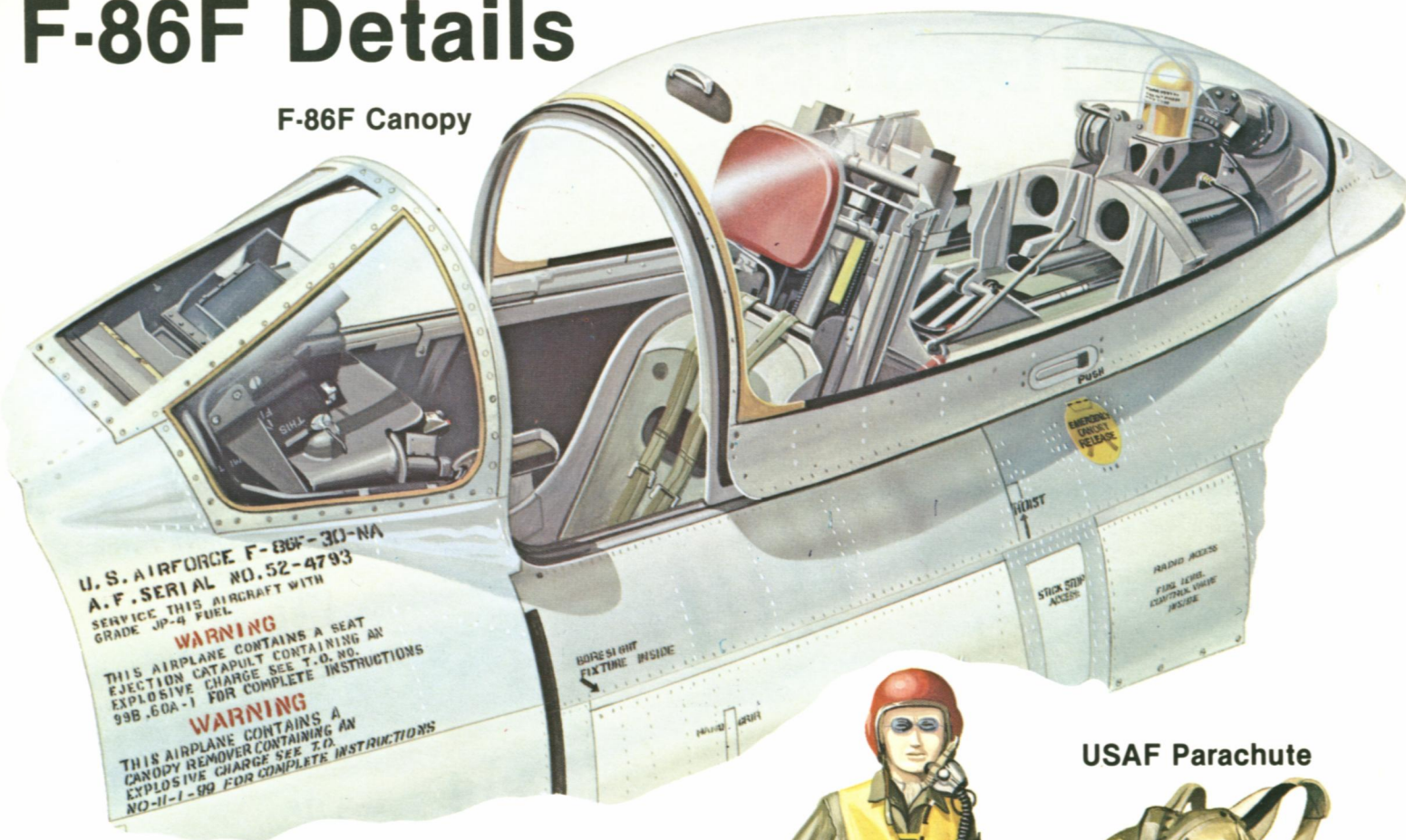
Left Console



Ejection Seat

F-86F Details

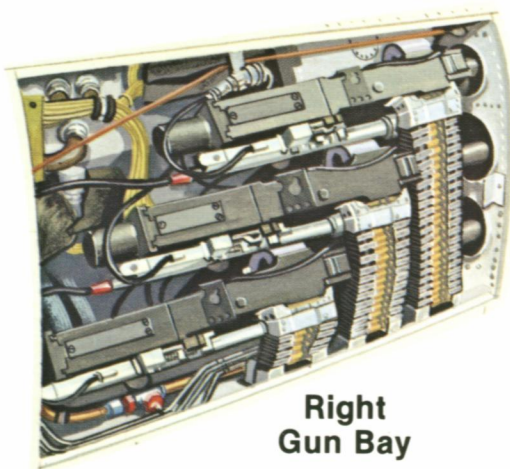
F-86F Canopy



USAF Parachute

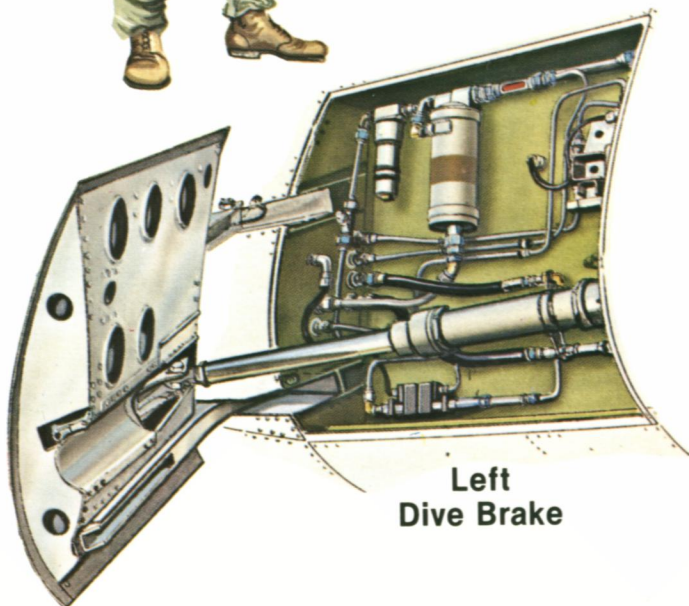
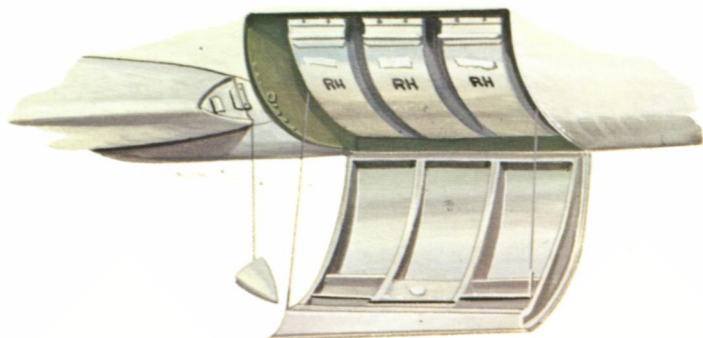


Sabre Pilot,
Korea



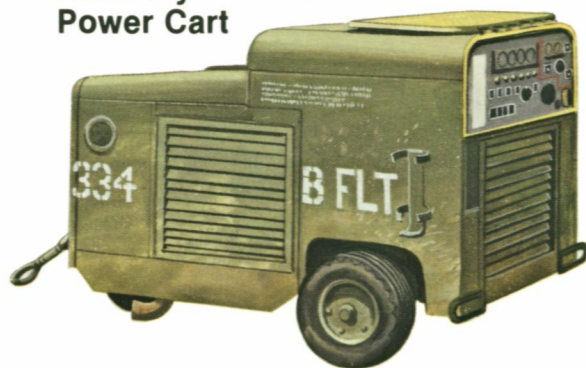
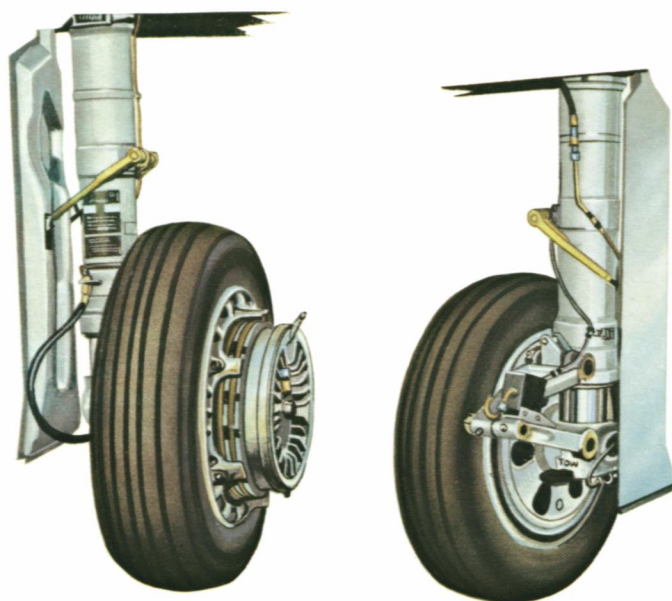
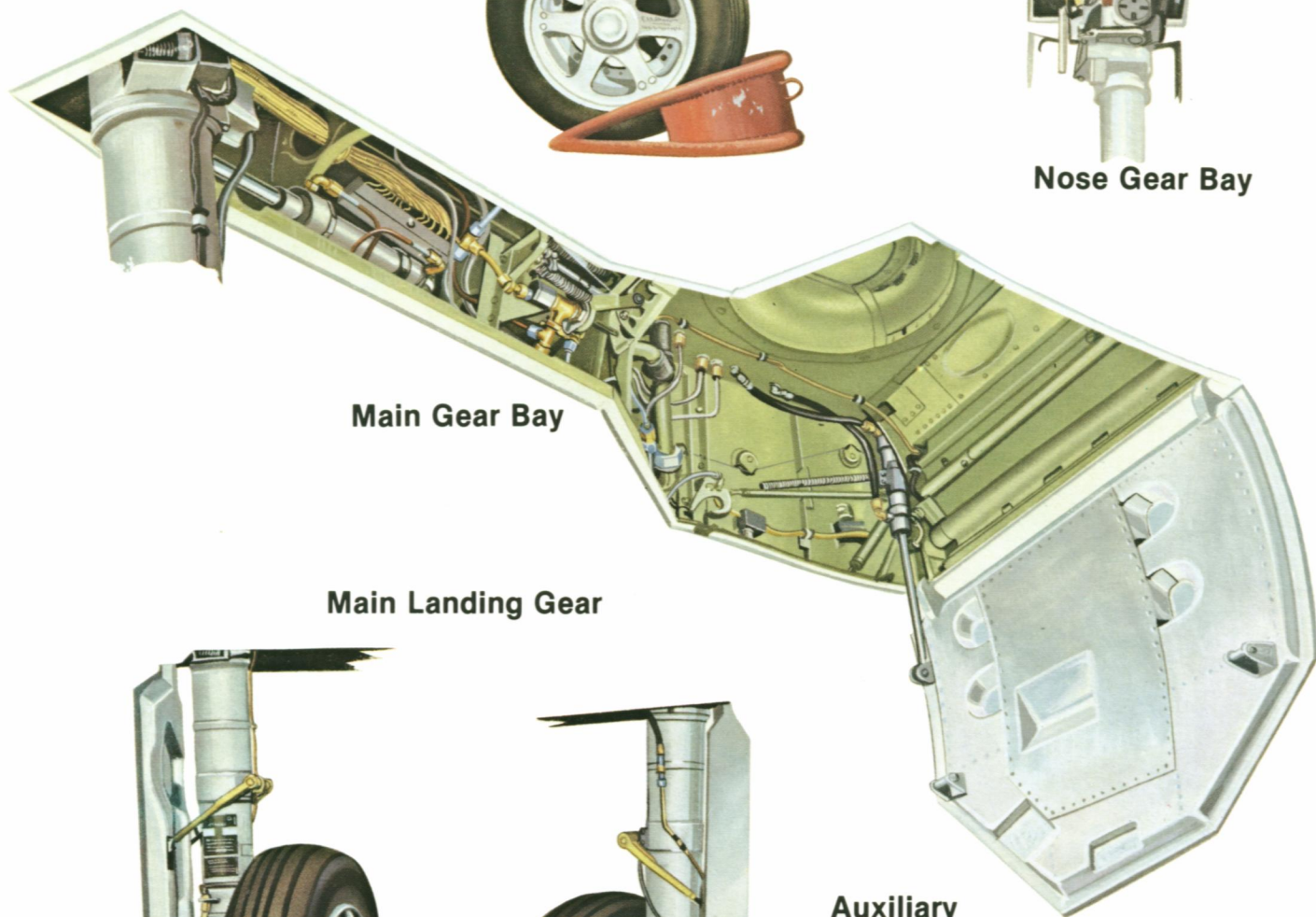
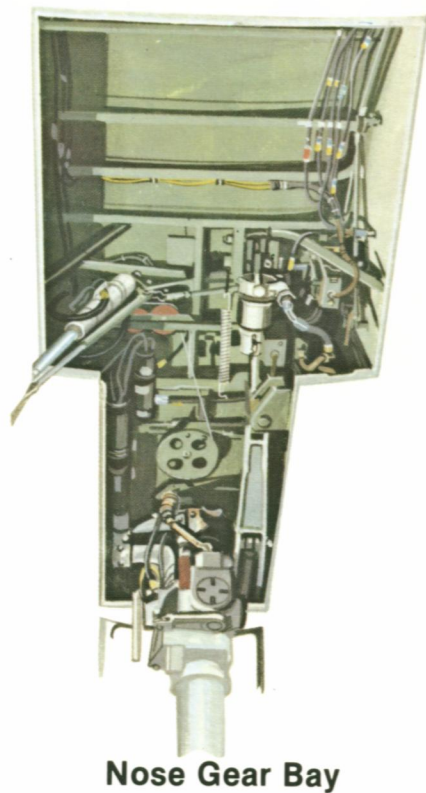
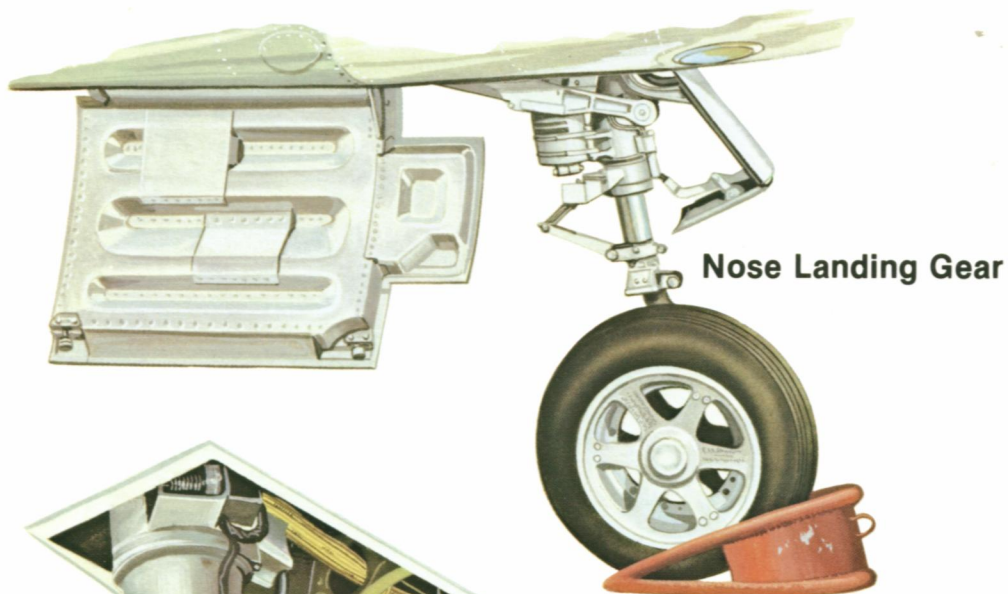
Right
Gun Bay

Right
Ammunition Bay

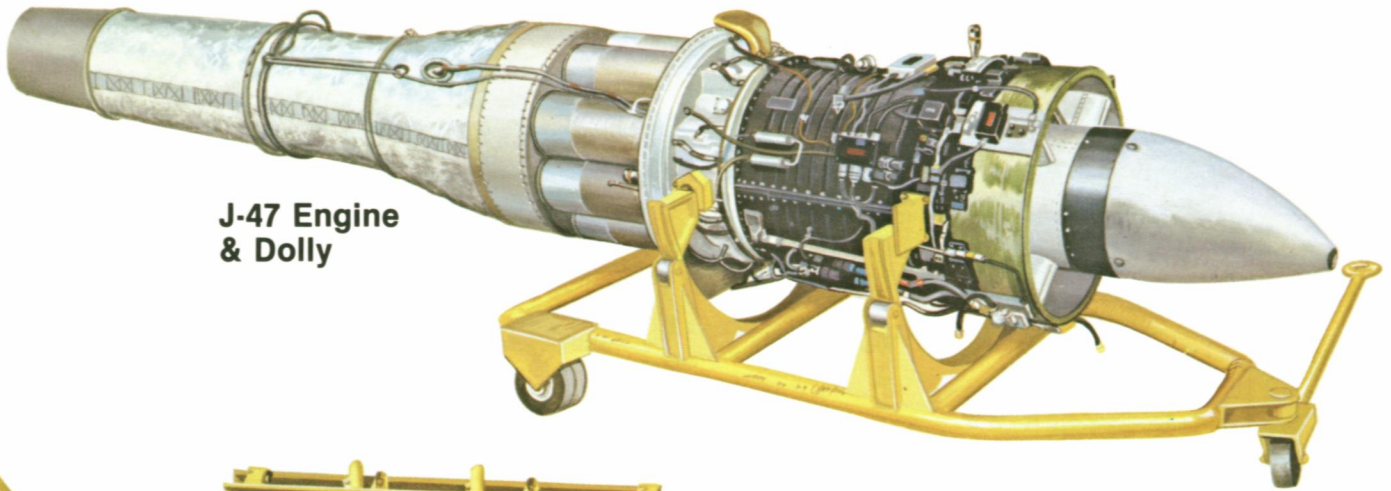


Left
Dive Brake

F-86F Details



F-86F Details



**J-47 Engine
& Dolly**



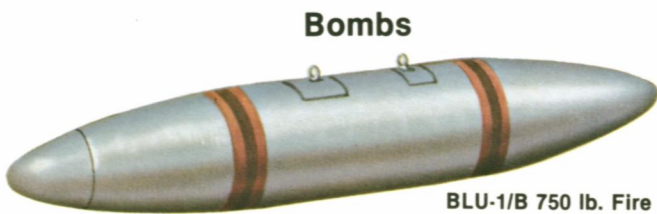
**Aft Fuselage
Dolly**



**Missile Pylon & Launcher
& AIM 9B Sidewinder**



HVAR
High Velocity Artillery Rocket



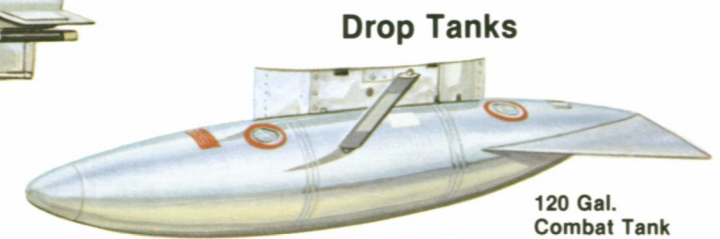
Bombs
BLU-1/B 750 lb. Fire Bomb



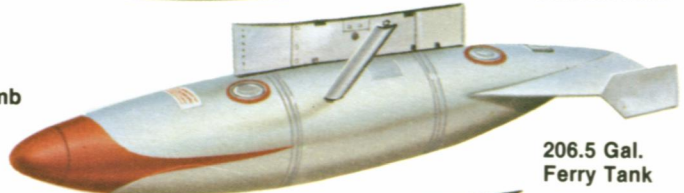
AN-M43 500 lb. GP Bomb



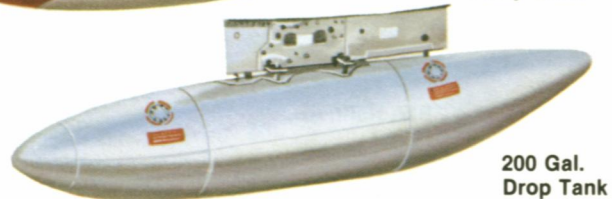
AN-M65A1 1000 lb. GP Bomb



**120 Gal.
Combat Tank**



**206.5 Gal.
Ferry Tank**



**200 Gal.
Drop Tank**



**200 Gal.
Misawa Tank**



No. 2 Sqdn.
SAAF

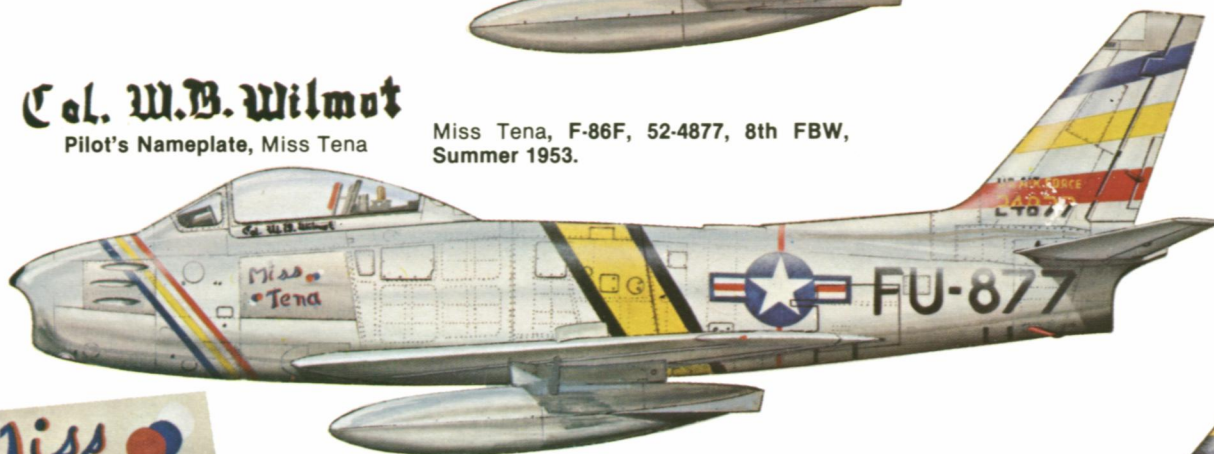
Glow Worm, F-86F, 610, No. 2 Sqdn.
SAAF, Osan AB, Korea, Spring 1953.



Col. W.B. Wilmot

Pilot's Nameplate, Miss Tena

Miss Tena, F-86F, 52-4877, 8th FBW,
Summer 1953.

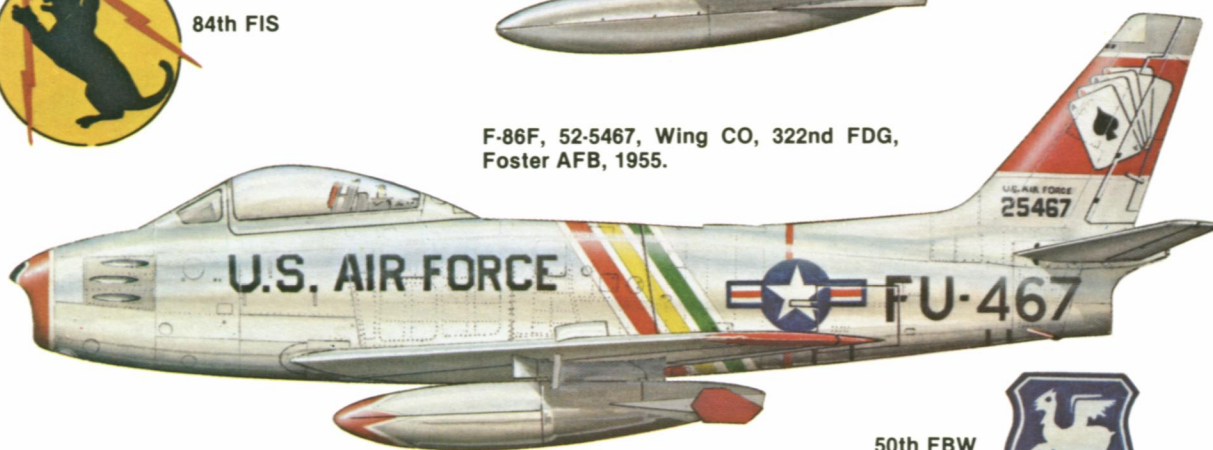


F-86F, Lt. John Birt, 51-13086, 84th FIS,
Hamilton AFB, 1954.



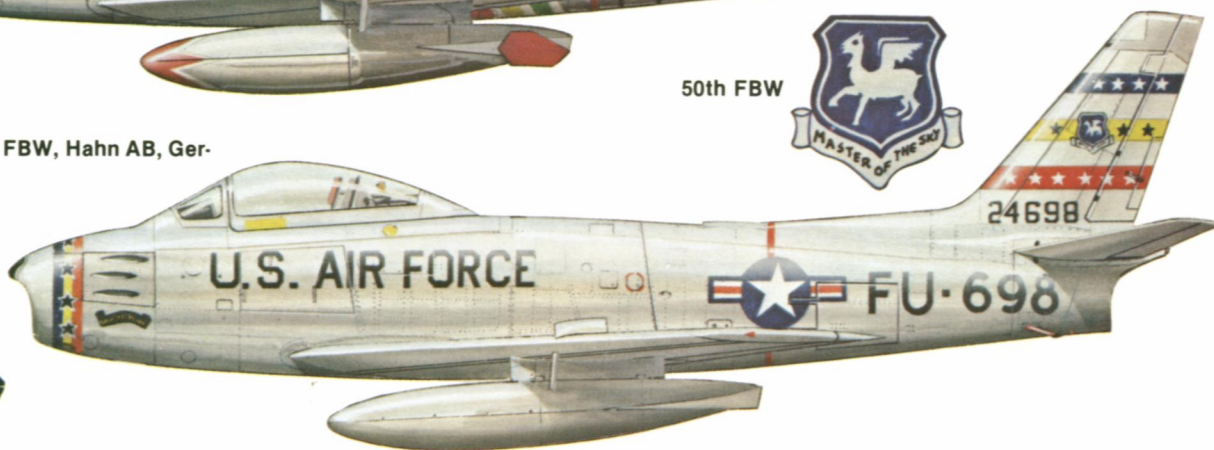
84th FIS

F-86F, 52-5467, Wing CO, 322nd FDG,
Foster AFB, 1955.

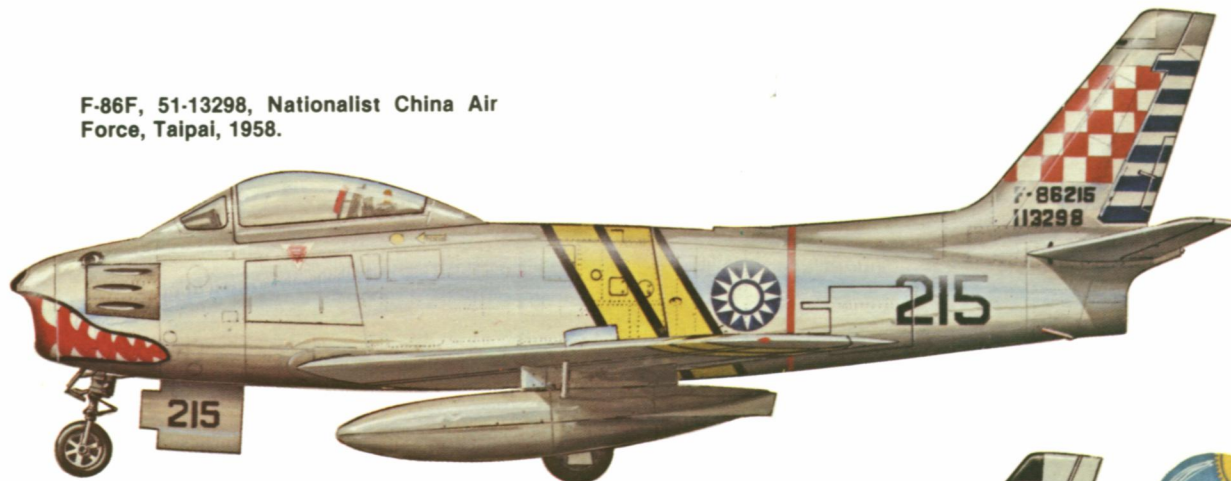


F-86F, 52-4698, 50th FBW, Hahn AB, Ger-
many, 1956.

50th FBW



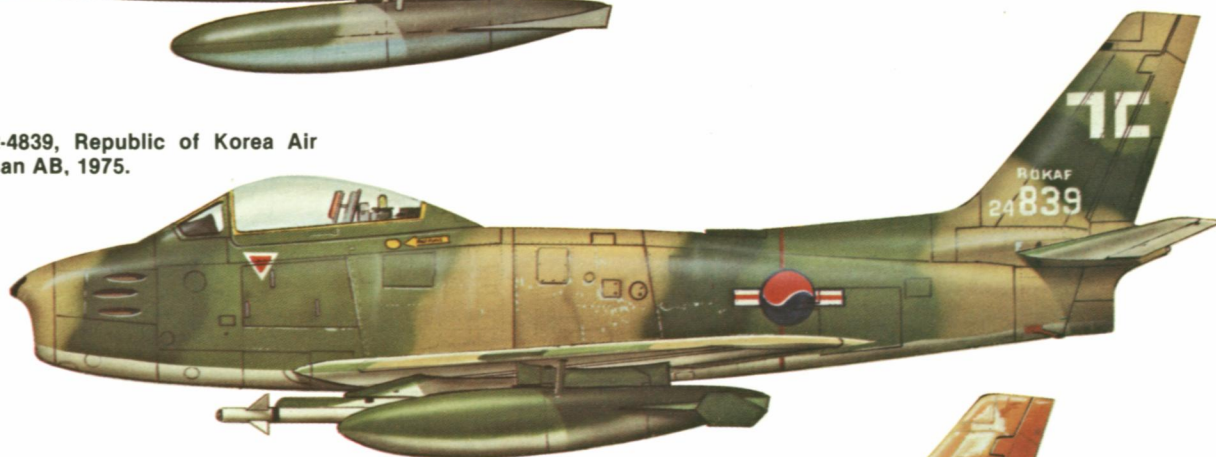
F-86F, 51-13298, Nationalist China Air Force, Taipai, 1958.



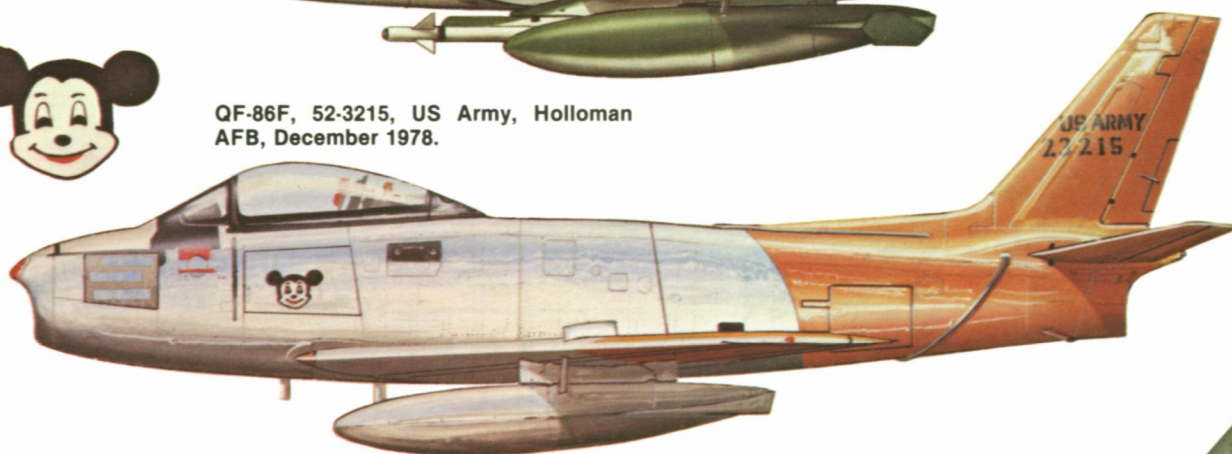
F-86F, 52-5423, 461st FBS, USAF, 1955-6.



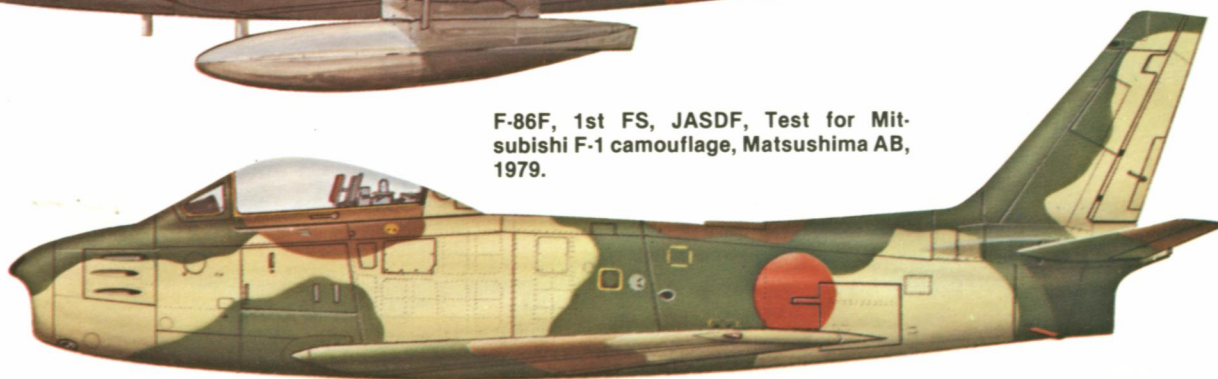
F-86F, 52-4839, Republic of Korea Air Force, Osan AB, 1975.



QF-86F, 52-3215, US Army, Holloman AFB, December 1978.



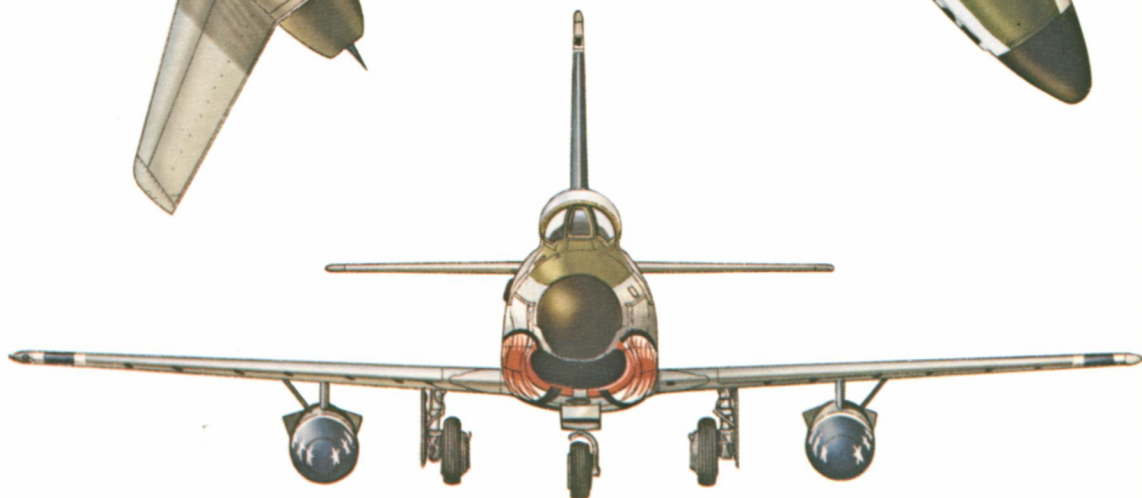
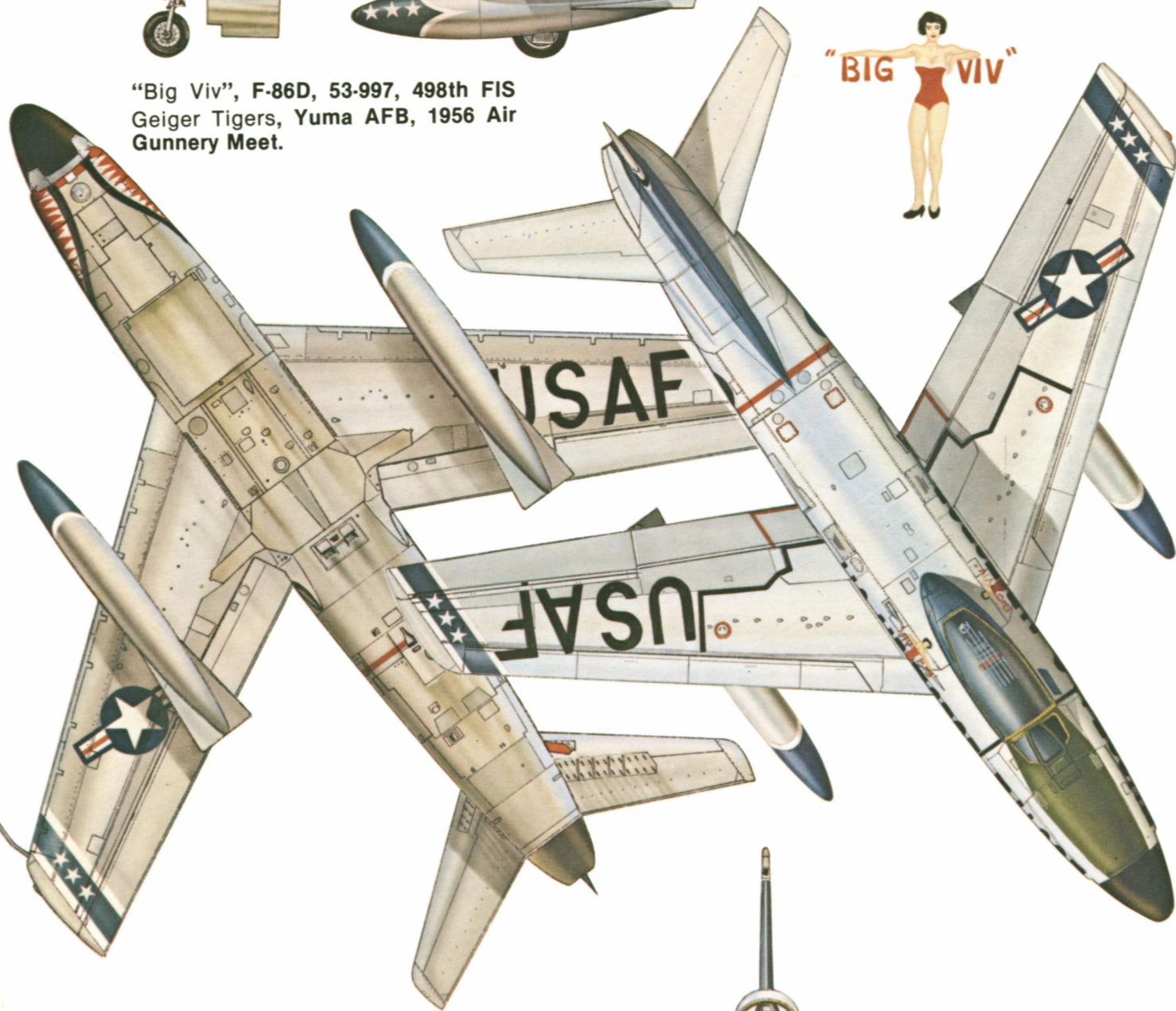
F-86F, 1st FS, JASDF, Test for Mitsubishi F-1 camouflage, Matsushima AB, 1979.



F-86D Sabre Dog

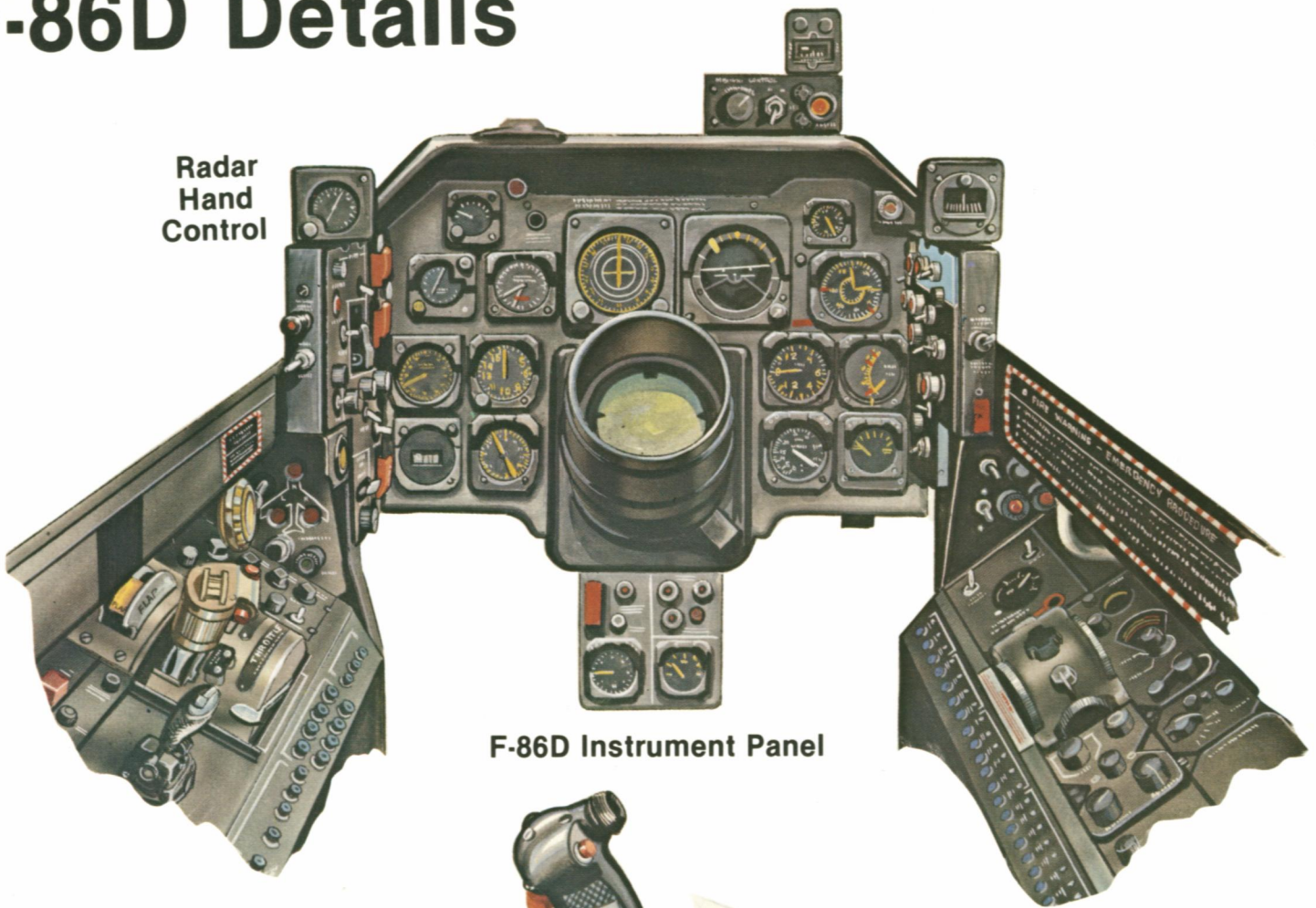


"Big Viv", F-86D, 53-997, 498th FIS
Geiger Tigers, Yuma AFB, 1956 Air
Gunnery Meet.



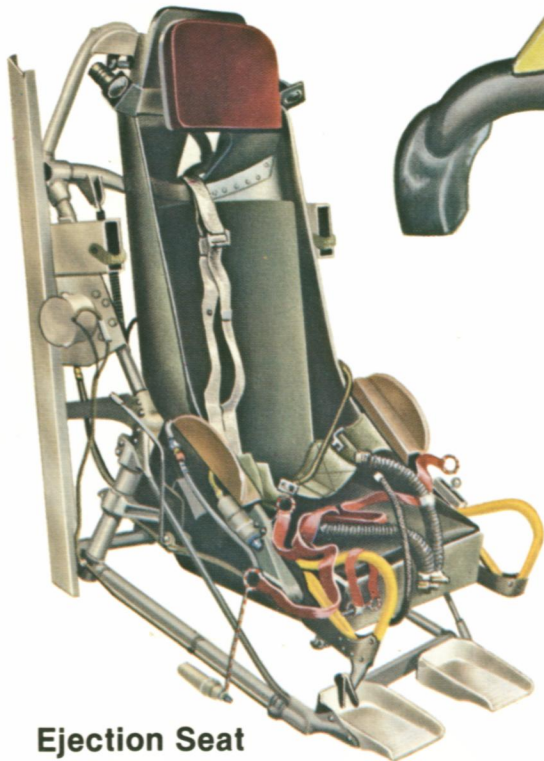
F-86D Details

Radar
Hand
Control



F-86D Instrument Panel

Control Stick

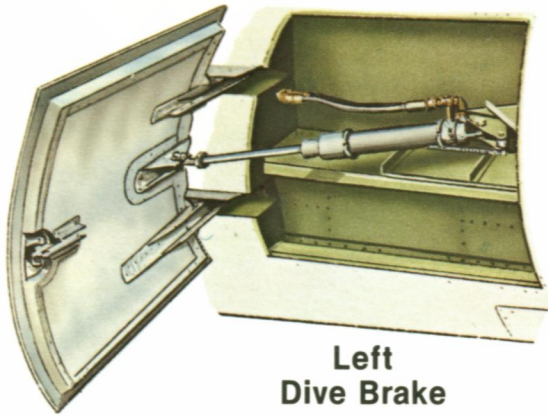


Ejection Seat

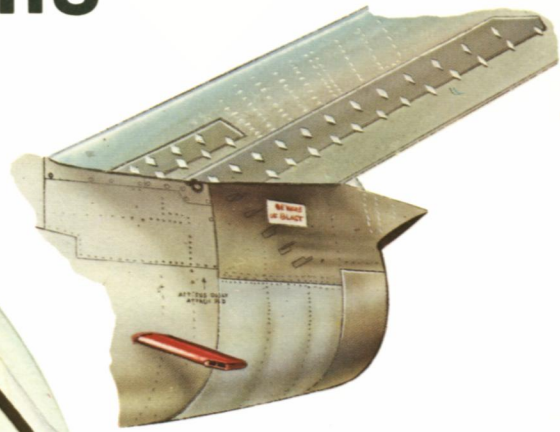


Sabre Dog Pilot
& Boarding
Ladder

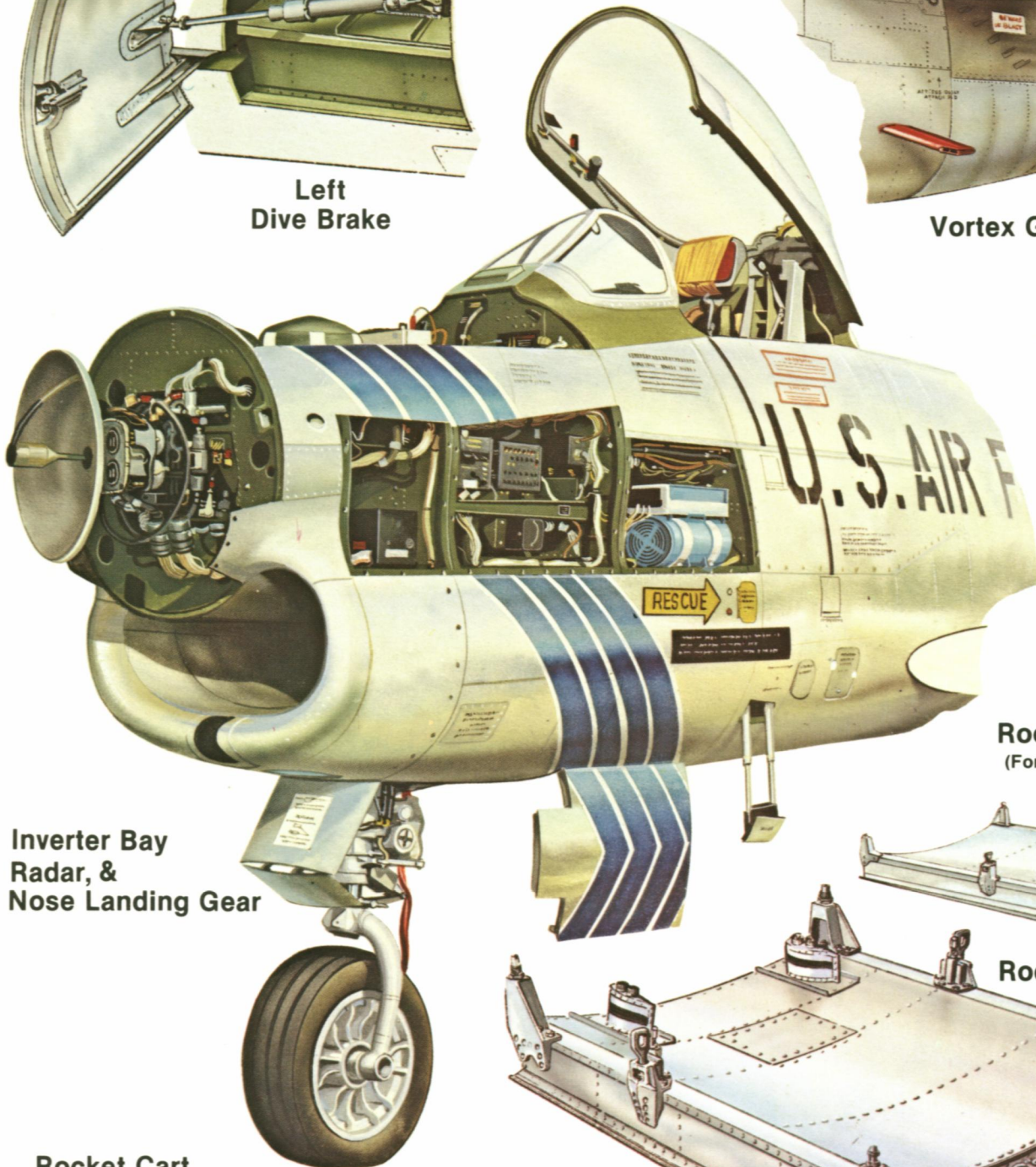
F-86D Details



Left
Dive Brake

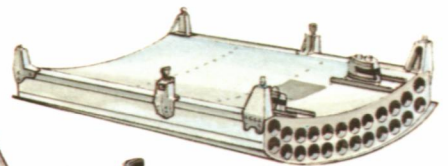


Vortex Generators

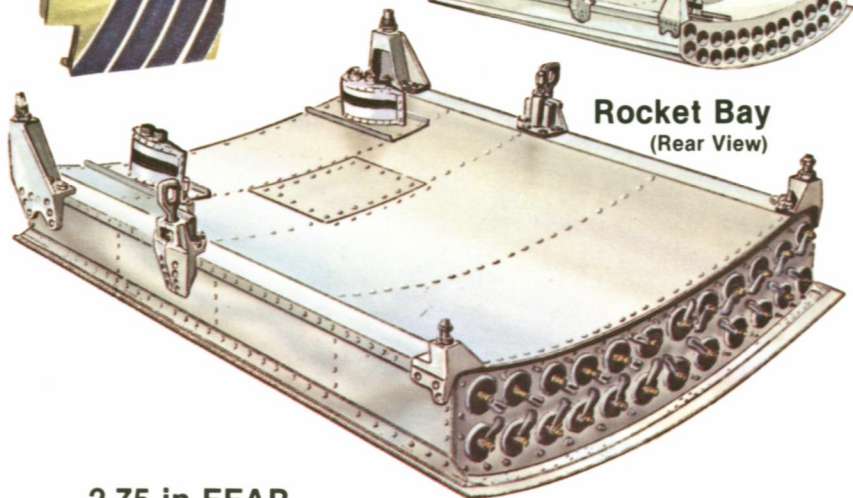


Inverter Bay
Radar, &
Nose Landing Gear

Rocket Bay
(Forward View)



Rocket Bay
(Rear View)



Rocket Cart



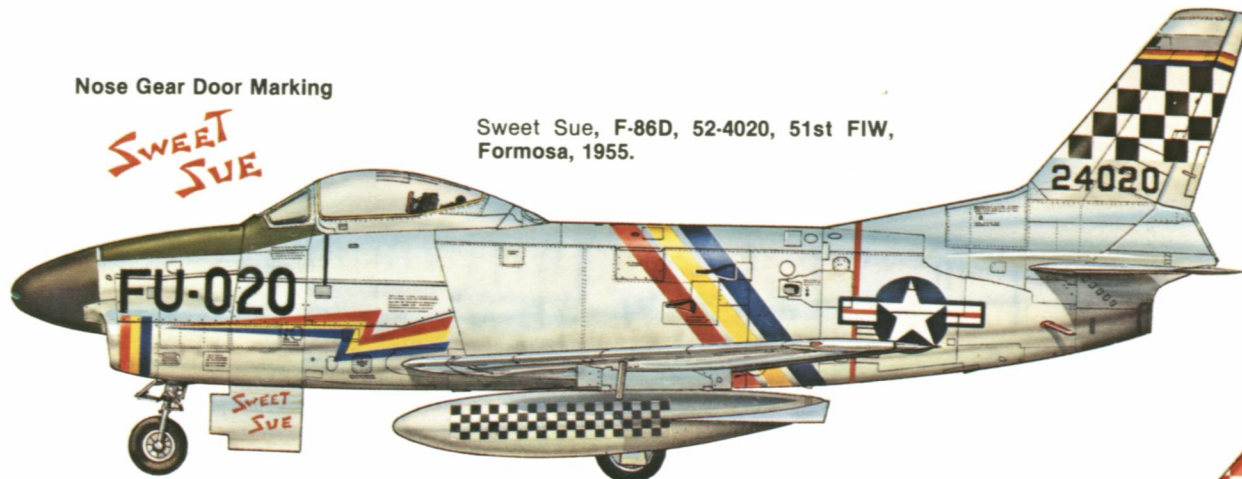
2.75 in FFAR
(Folding Fin Artillery Rocket)



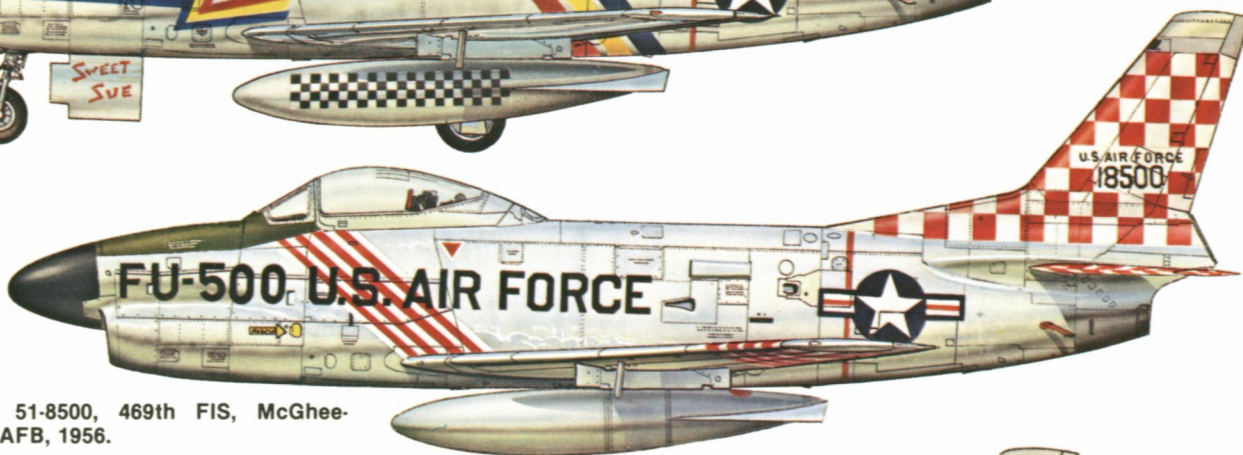
Nose Gear Door Marking

SWEET SUE

Sweet Sue, F-86D, 52-4020, 51st FIW, Formosa, 1955.



F-86D, 51-8500, 469th FIS, McGhee-Tyson AFB, 1956.

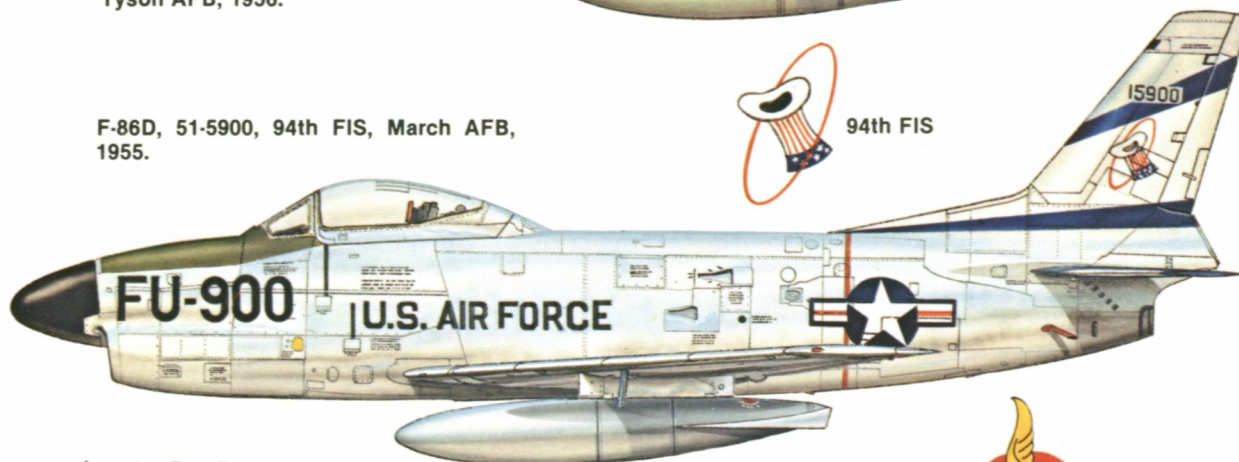


F-86D, 51-5900, 94th FIS, March AFB, 1955.



94th FIS

Stabilizer Markings



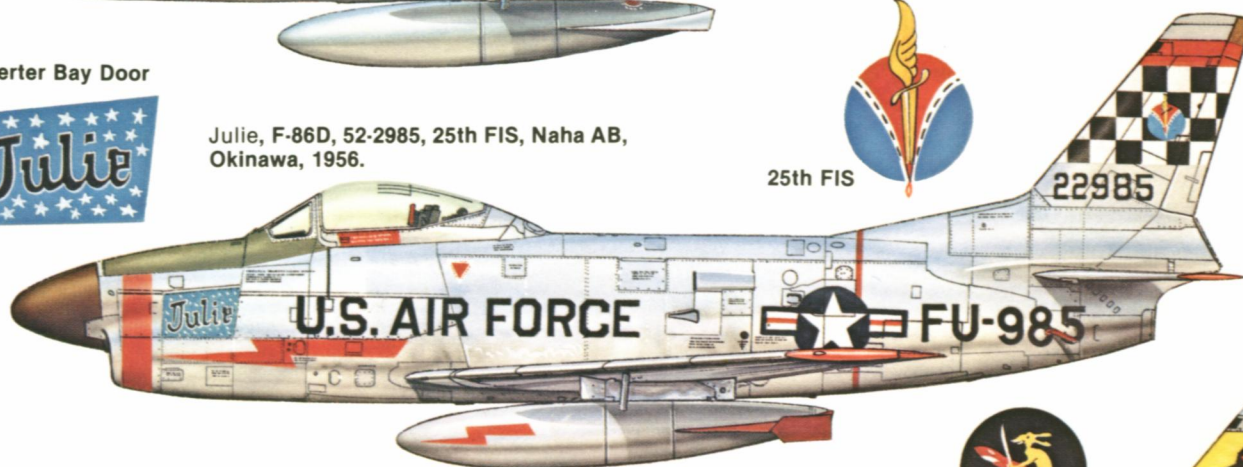
Inverter Bay Door



Julie, F-86D, 52-2985, 25th FIS, Naha AB, Okinawa, 1956.

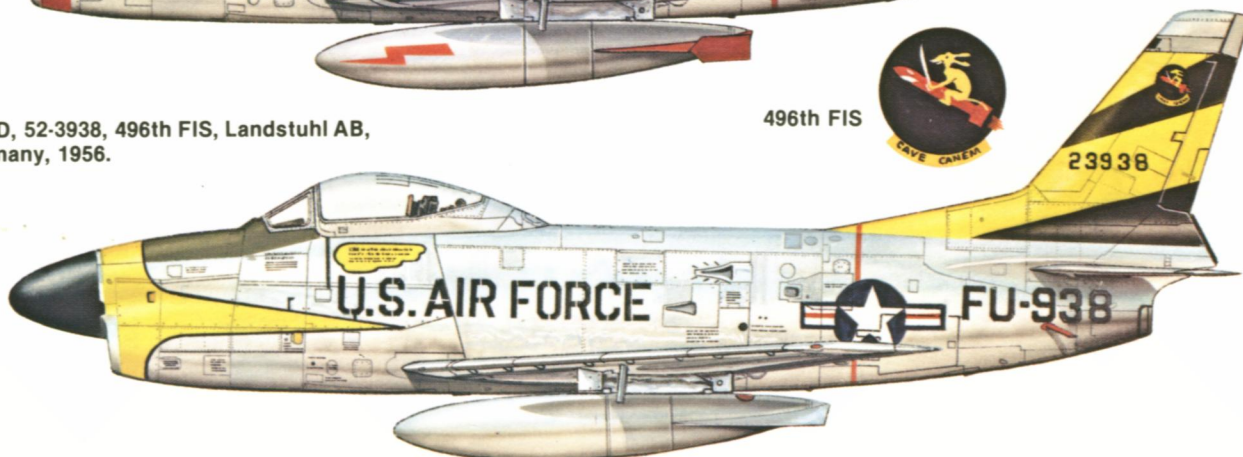


25th FIS

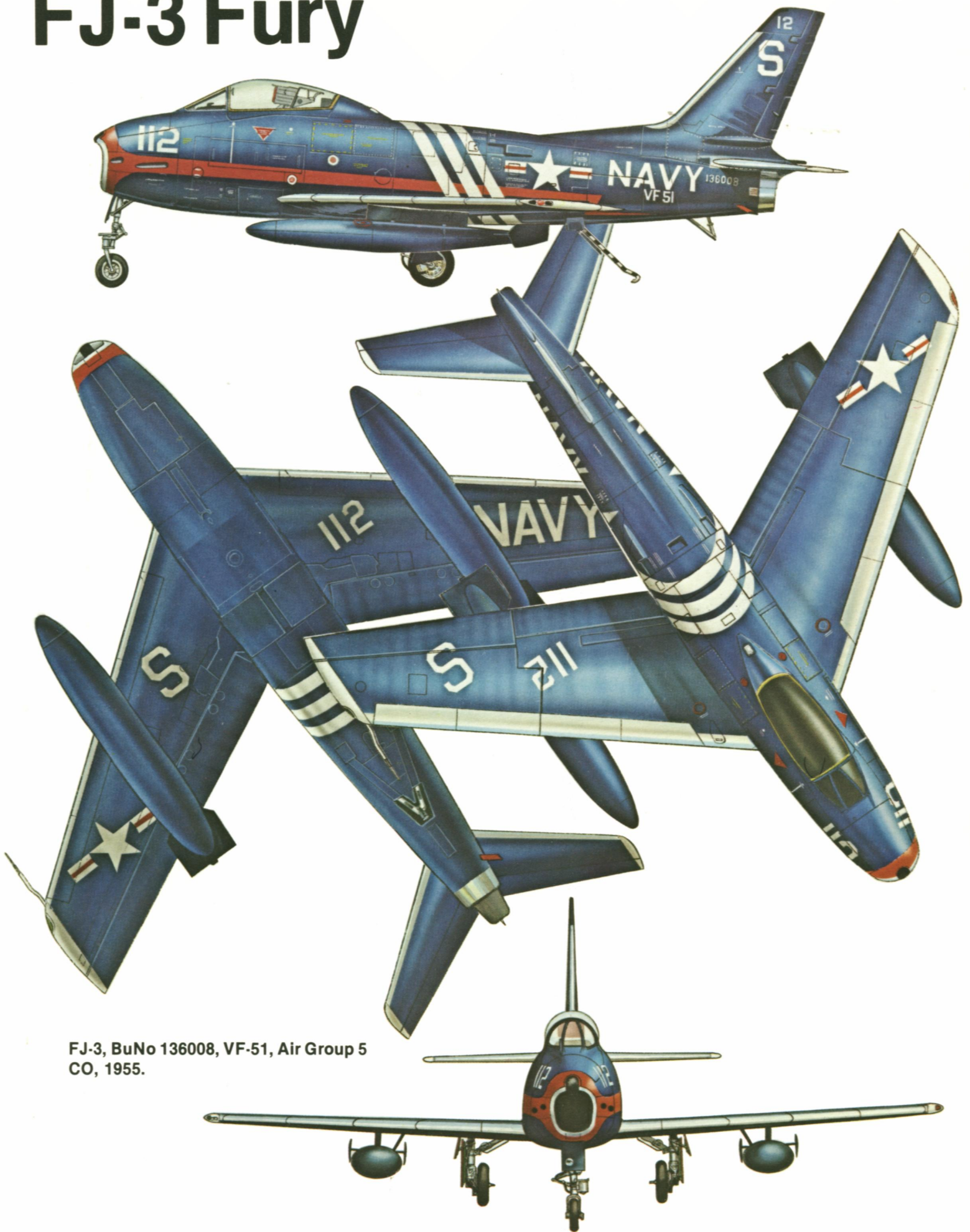


F-86D, 52-3938, 496th FIS, Landstuhl AB, Germany, 1956.

496th FIS

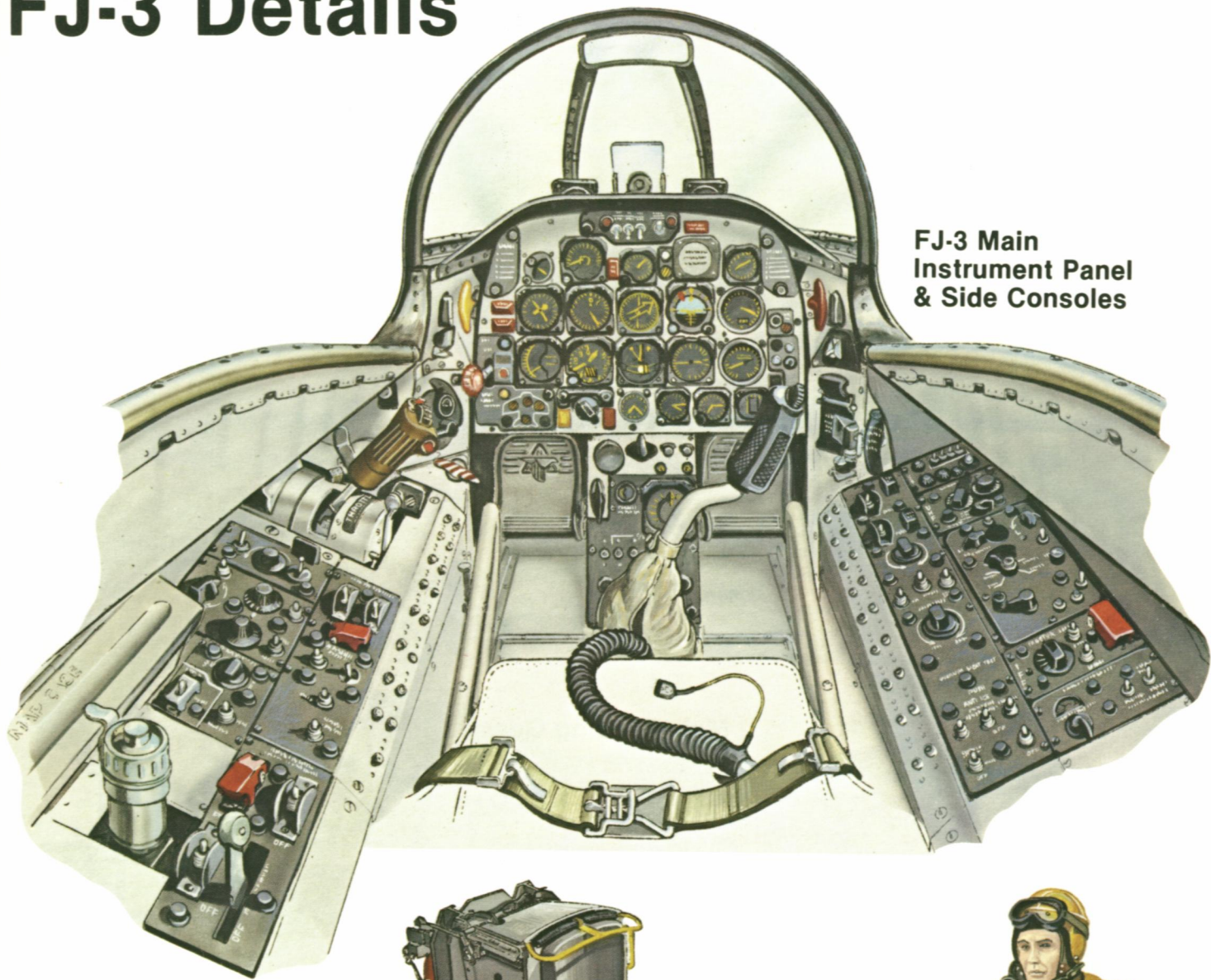


FJ-3 Fury

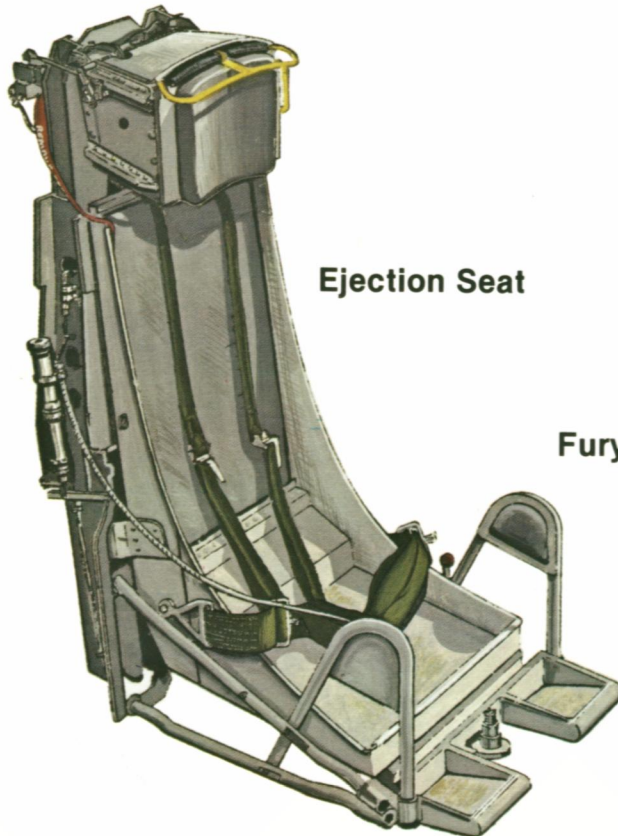


FJ-3, BuNo 136008, VF-51, Air Group 5
CO, 1955.

FJ-3 Details



**FJ-3 Main
Instrument Panel
& Side Consoles**



Ejection Seat

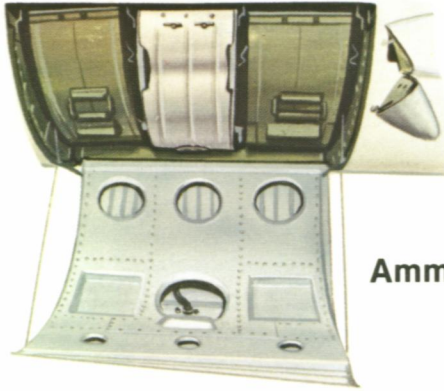


**Mk 11 Mod 1 Gunsight
& Range Meter**



Fury Pilot

FJ-3 Details



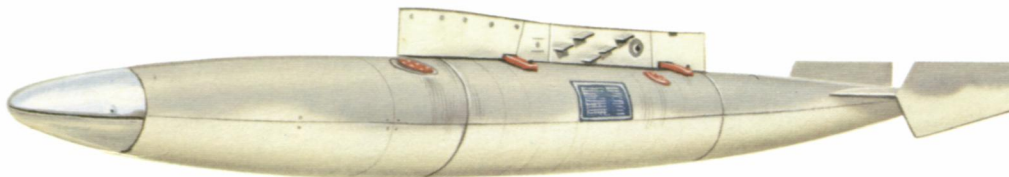
Left
Ammunition Bay



Arrestor Hook
& Retractable
Tail Bumper

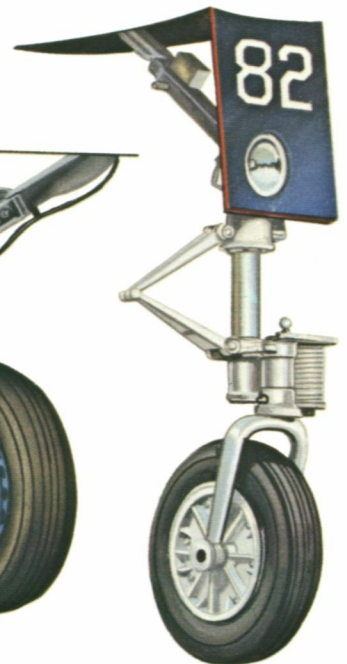


Refuelling Probe

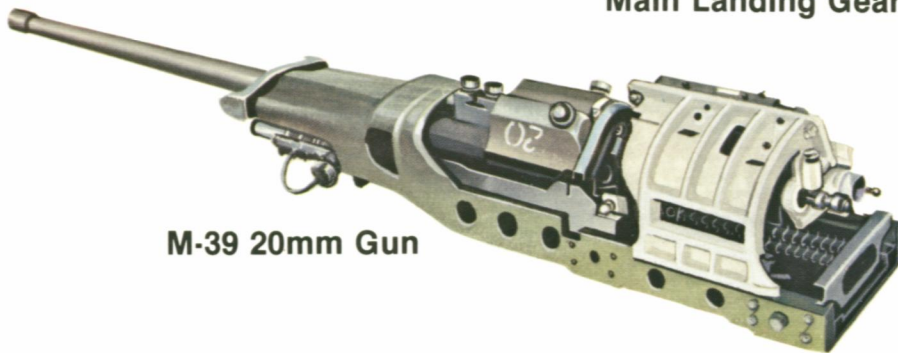


Drop Tank

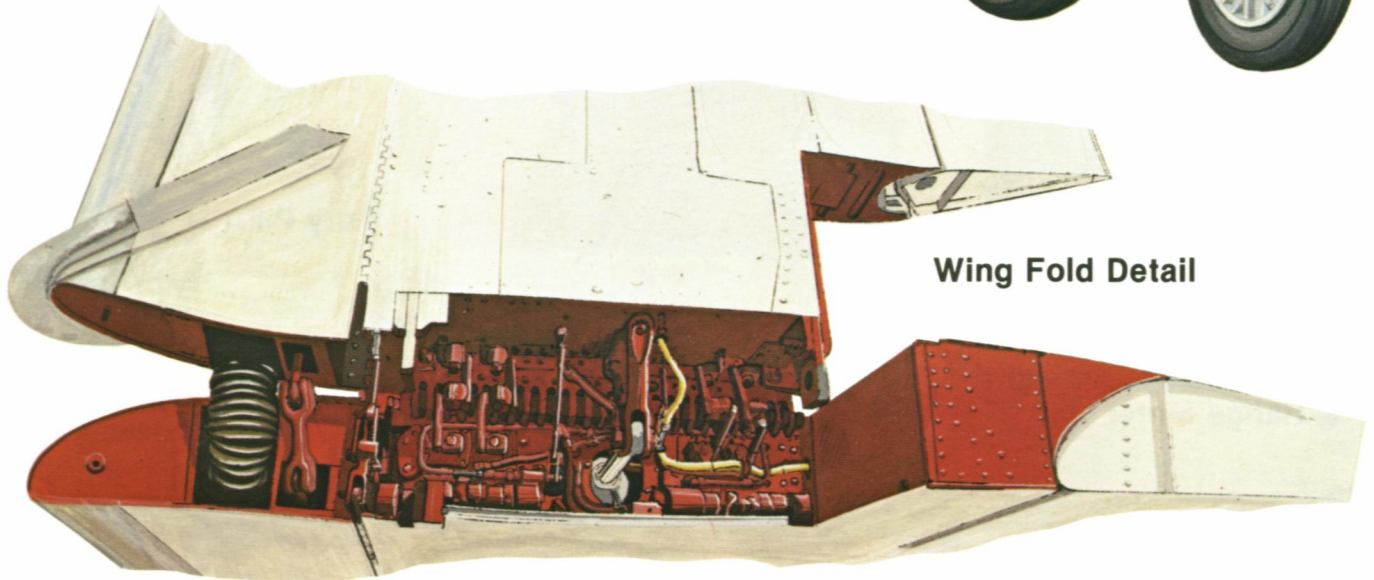
Nose Landing Gear



Main Landing Gear

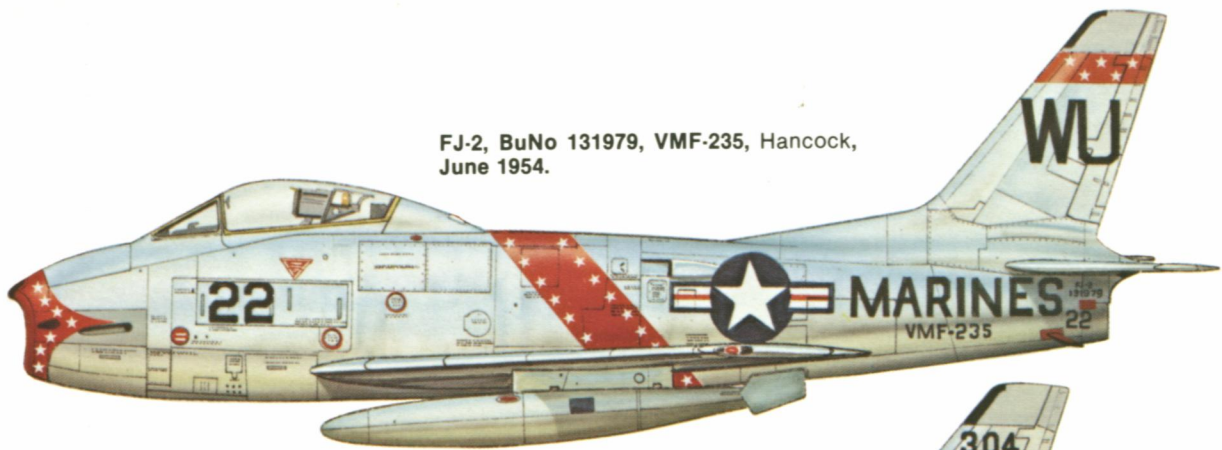


M-39 20mm Gun

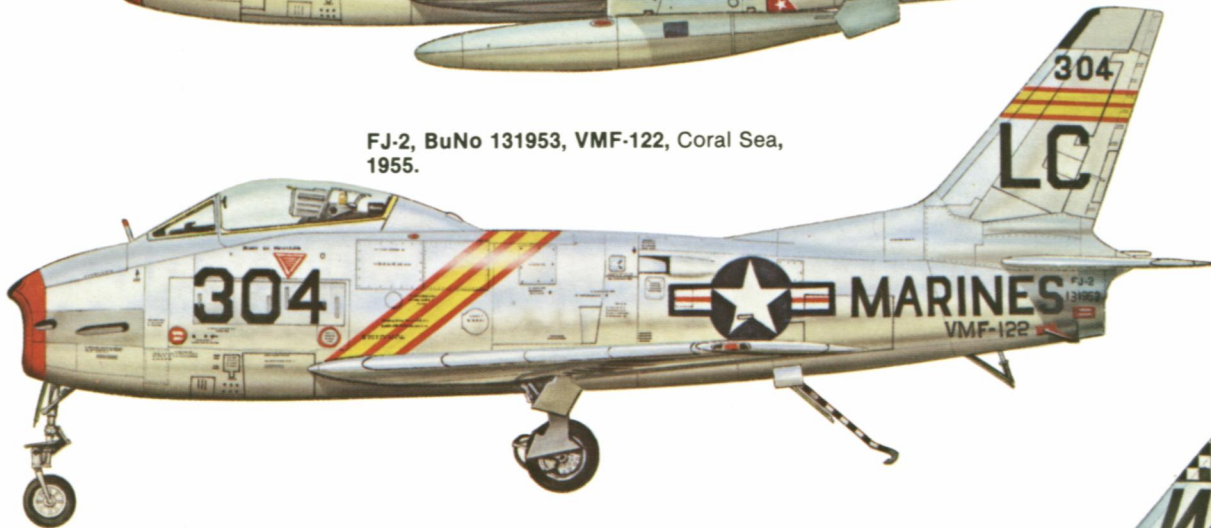


Wing Fold Detail

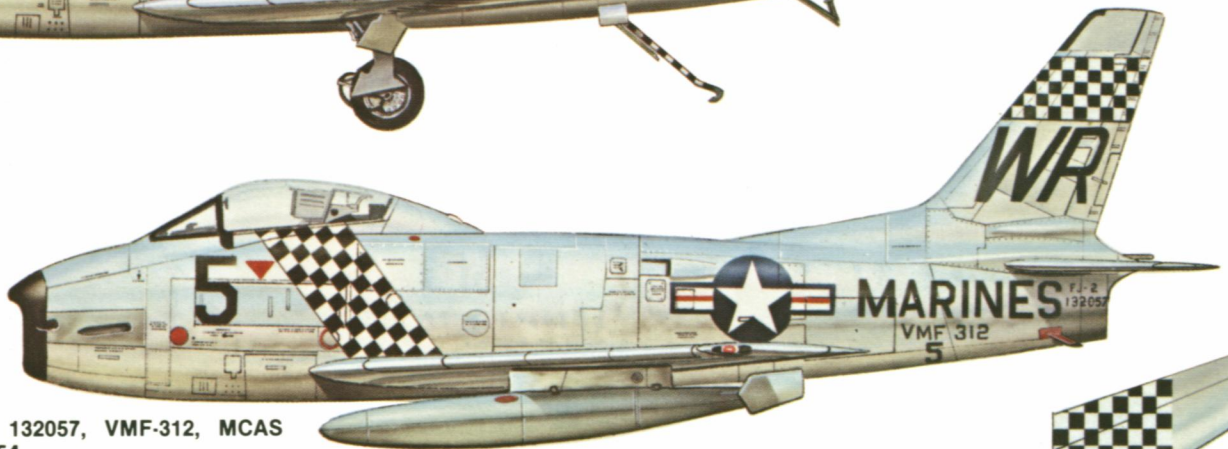
FJ-2, BuNo 131979, VMF-235, Hancock,
June 1954.



FJ-2, BuNo 131953, VMF-122, Coral Sea,
1955.



FJ-2, BuNo 132057, VMF-312, MCAS
Quantico, 1954.

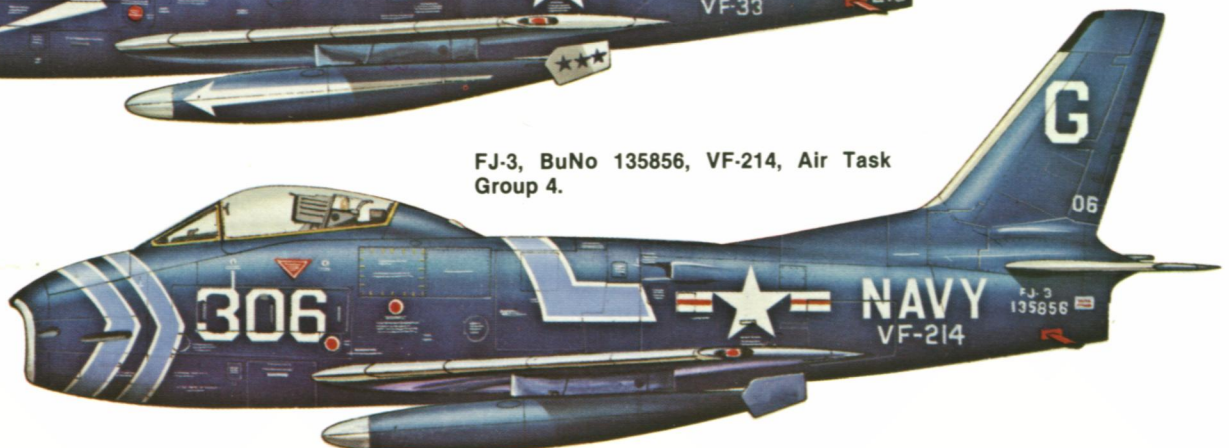


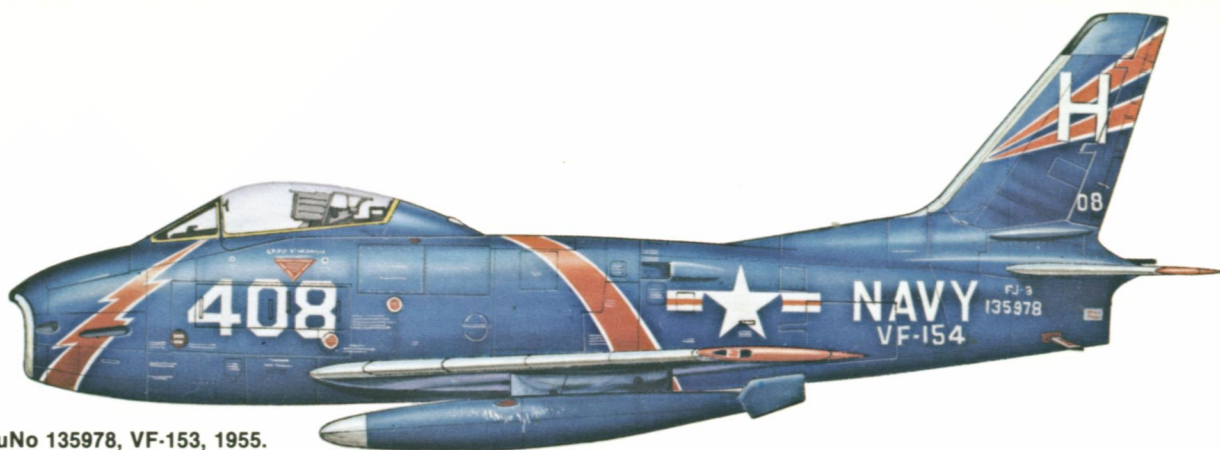
VMF-312 stabilizer

FJ-3, BuNo 135841, VF-33, Lake
Champlain, May 1955.



FJ-3, BuNo 135856, VF-214, Air Task
Group 4.

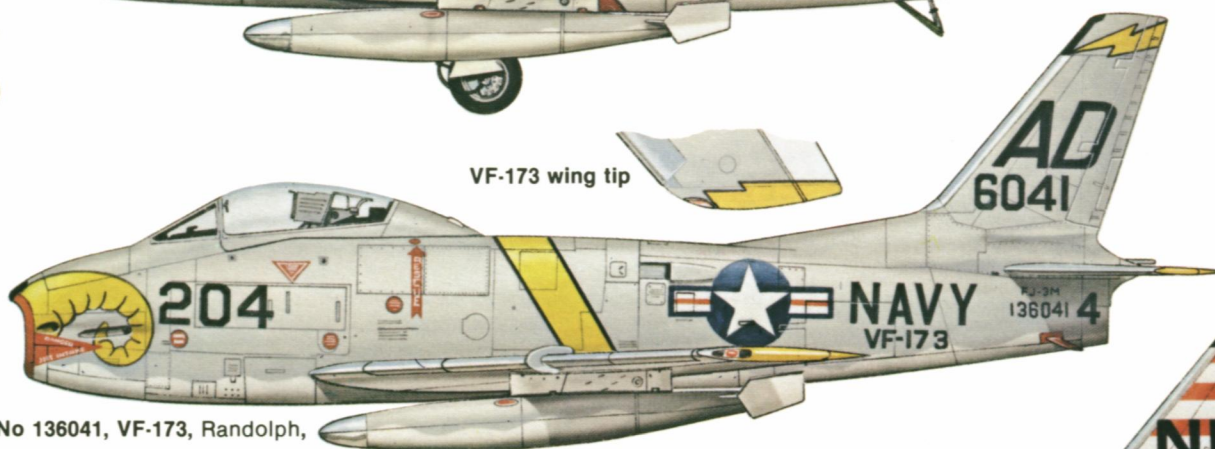




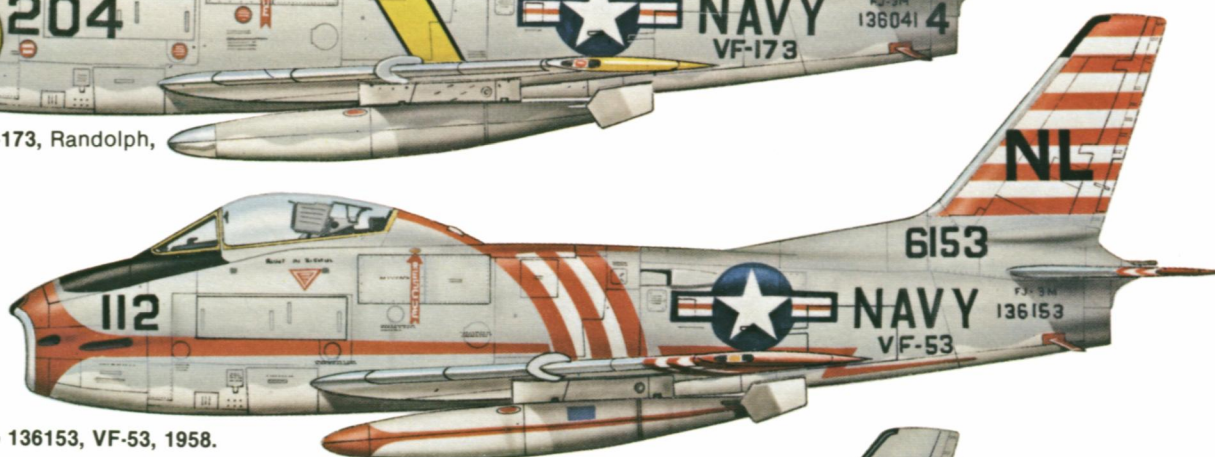
FJ-3, BuNo 135978, VF-153, 1955.



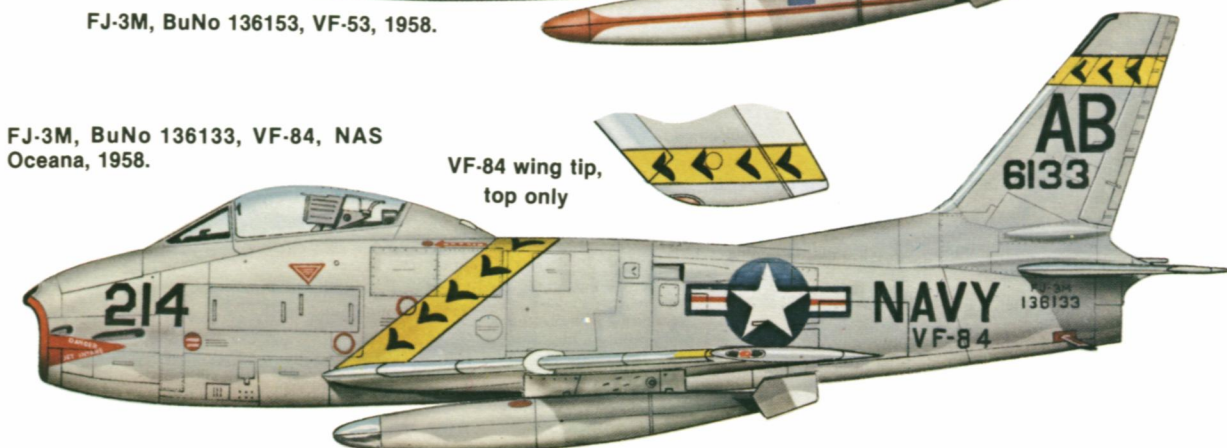
FJ-3M, BuNo 139266, Cdr Alex Vraciu,
VF-51, Bon Homme Richard, 1957.



FJ-3M, BuNo 136041, VF-173, Randolph,
1958.



FJ-3M, BuNo 136153, VF-53, 1958.



FJ-3M, BuNo 136133, VF-84, NAS
Oceana, 1958.

VF-84 wing tip,
top only



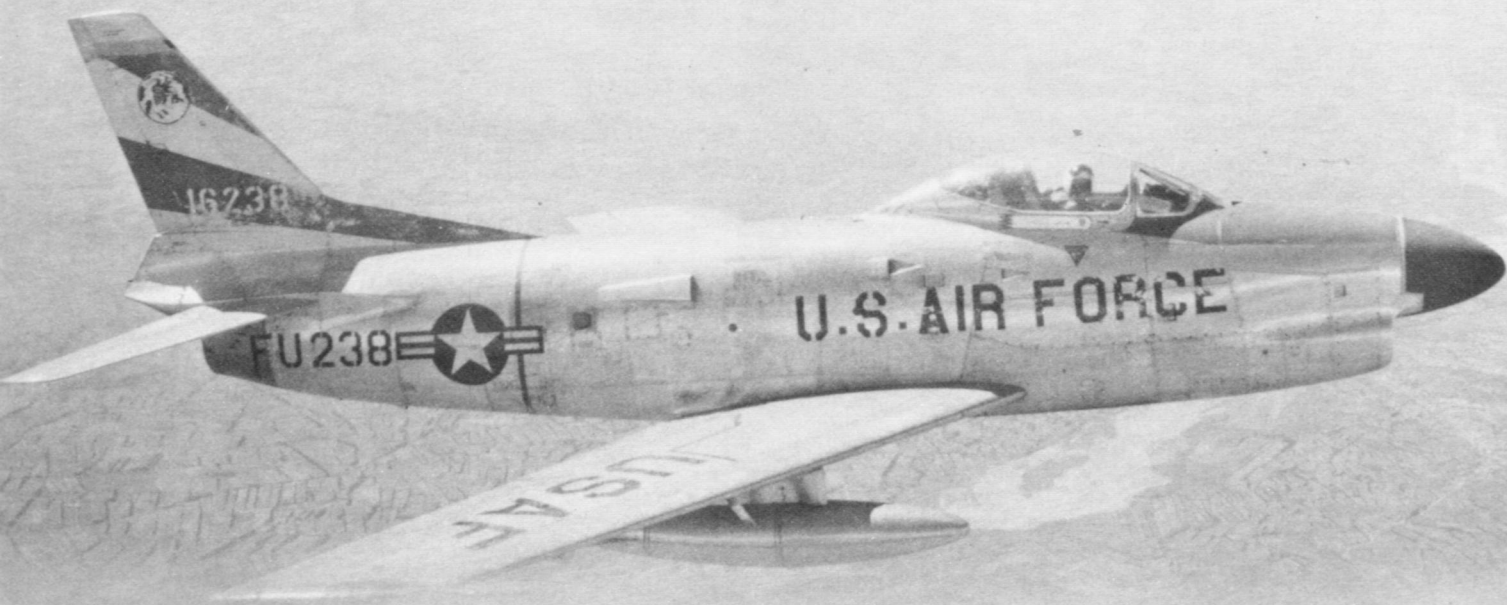
A 465th FIS F-86D on the ramp at McChord AFB, Washington. Tail colors are red with white trim and lightning bolt. (USAF)

A 512th FIS F-86D at RAF Burtonwood in 1958. Sabre Dogs were deployed throughout Europe in the late 1950s. Canopy rail, fuselage stripes and flash are yellow with black trim, while tail bands are blue, yellow and red (from the top). Note the gloss gray and dark gray panels under the belly. (Menard)



This 324th FIS F-86D seen at Sidi Slimane, Morocco in 1957 has the red-brown radome which is fading very unevenly. Tail stripes, fuselage stripes and drop tanks are white with red. (Fairbrother)

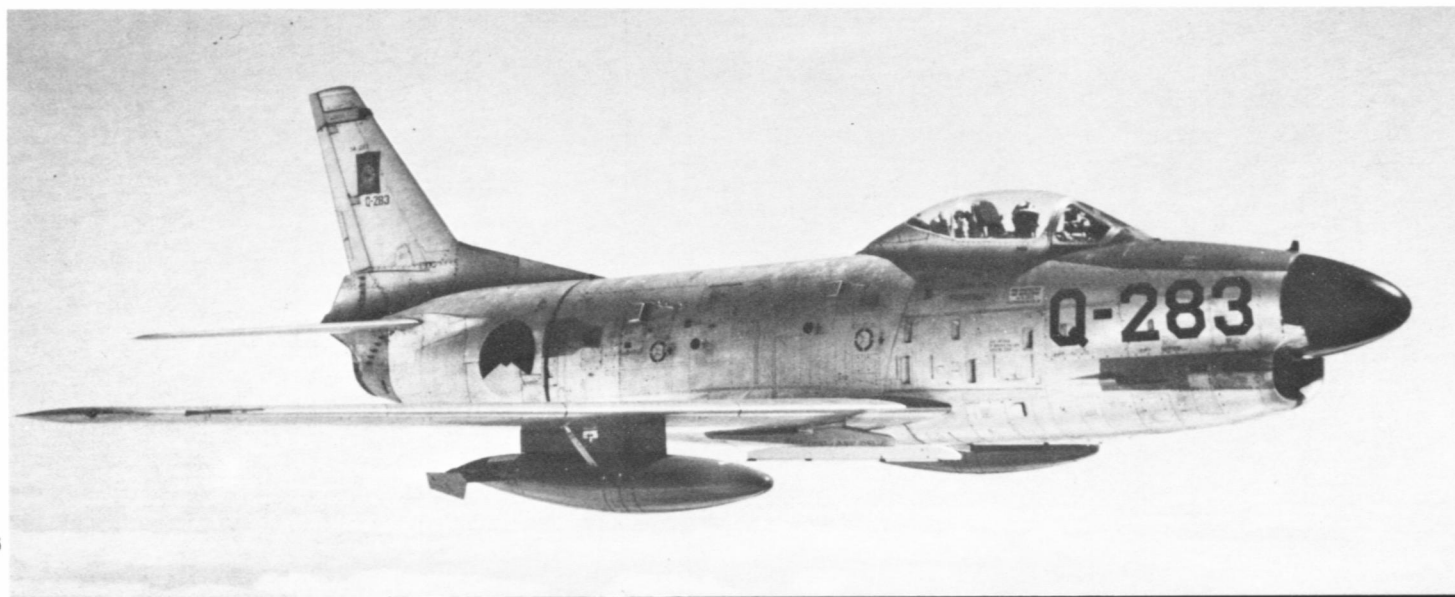




Fine inflight study of a red and white tailed F-86D from the 526th FIS based at Landstuhl, Germany in 1957. (Isham)



This JG 74 F-86K of the West German Air Force was camouflaged in Nato gray and green with light gray underside. (Franzke)



A Dutch F-86K from No. 700 Squadron. Note the addition of Sidewinder launch rails and TACAN antenna just aft of the radome. The drop tanks are gloss olive drab. (Netherlands Air Force)



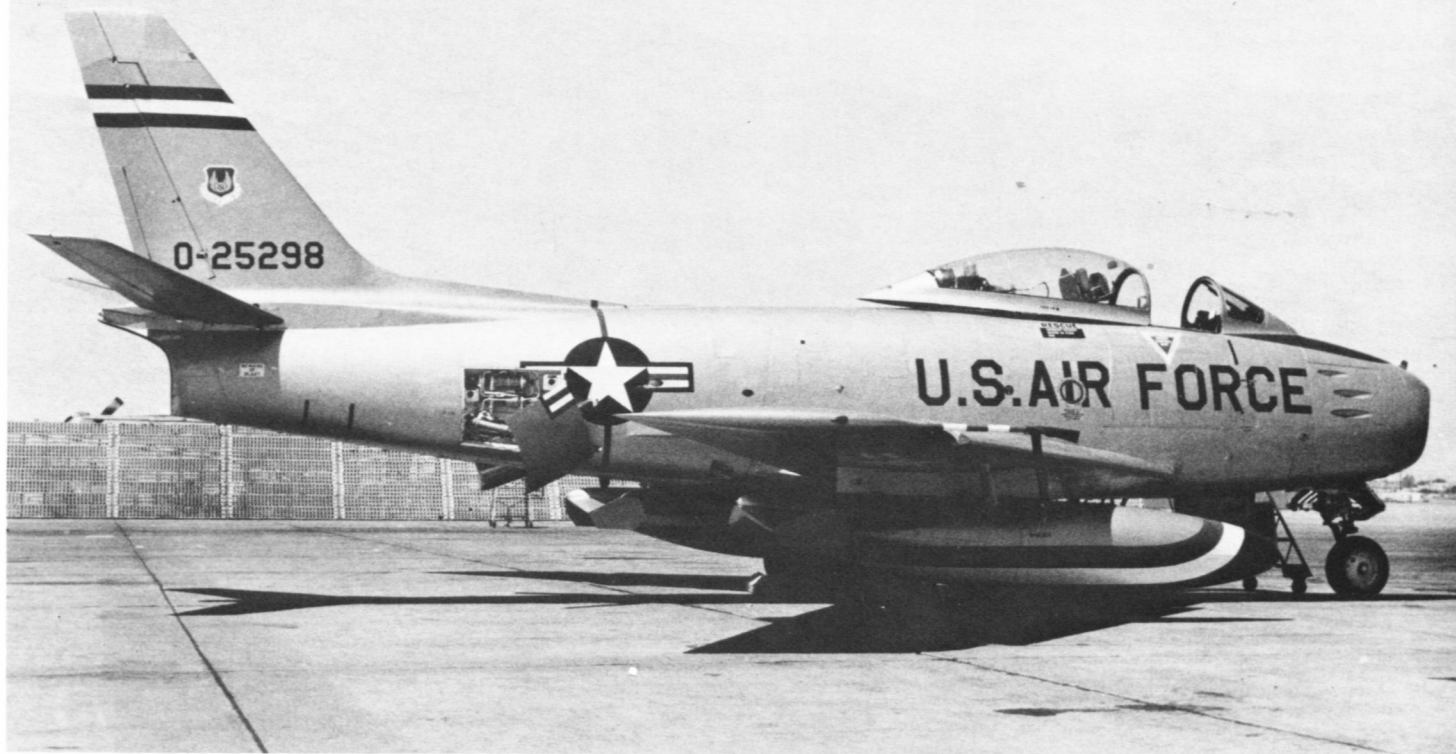
One of the F-86Fs illustrated in the color section, this Sabre was from the 84th FIS of Hamilton AFB, CA, one of the few units assigned to ADC to operate the F. Note that this aircraft retains the leading edge slats instead of the normal '6-3' wing with fences. (NAA)



In 1955-56, the US Air Force experimented in Europe with various camouflage schemes. Here are a trio of 527th FBS F-86Fs, two in green and grey camouflage. Note that full US Air Force markings are still carried on the painted aircraft. (Menard)

This highly polished F-86F is part of the 50th FBW gunnery team based at Landstuhl, Germany. Note the large 200 gallon underwing tanks. This is another 'bird' that shows up in the color section. (Menard)





One of the last F-86s on active duty, this F was assigned to HQ USAF. Note the aluminum-painted surface, used as an anti-corrosion measure. The tail and drop tank stripes are red, white and blue. The pitot tube is red and white. (Menard)



The famous "Beauteous Butch II", personal aircraft of the top scoring ace in Korea - Capt. Joseph McConnell. Note that the blue nose scallop is peeling badly due to sustained high Mach numbers. The tail stripe is yellow; the aircraft name is red. (NAA)

Lt. Freddie Frederick's "Glory"-Us carried standard 4th FIW markings. The three victory stars and the aircraft's name are in red. (NAA)





The black and white 'tulip' pattern on nose and tail identify this Canadair Sabre Mk6 as being from JG 71 *Richtofen*. The red nose and tail stripe indicate the 1st *staffel*. (Menard)

This Sabre Mk6 of the RCAF's No. 422 Tomahawk Squadron is in RAF gray and green with PRU blue underside. The tail stripe is white with red border and symbol. (Baker)

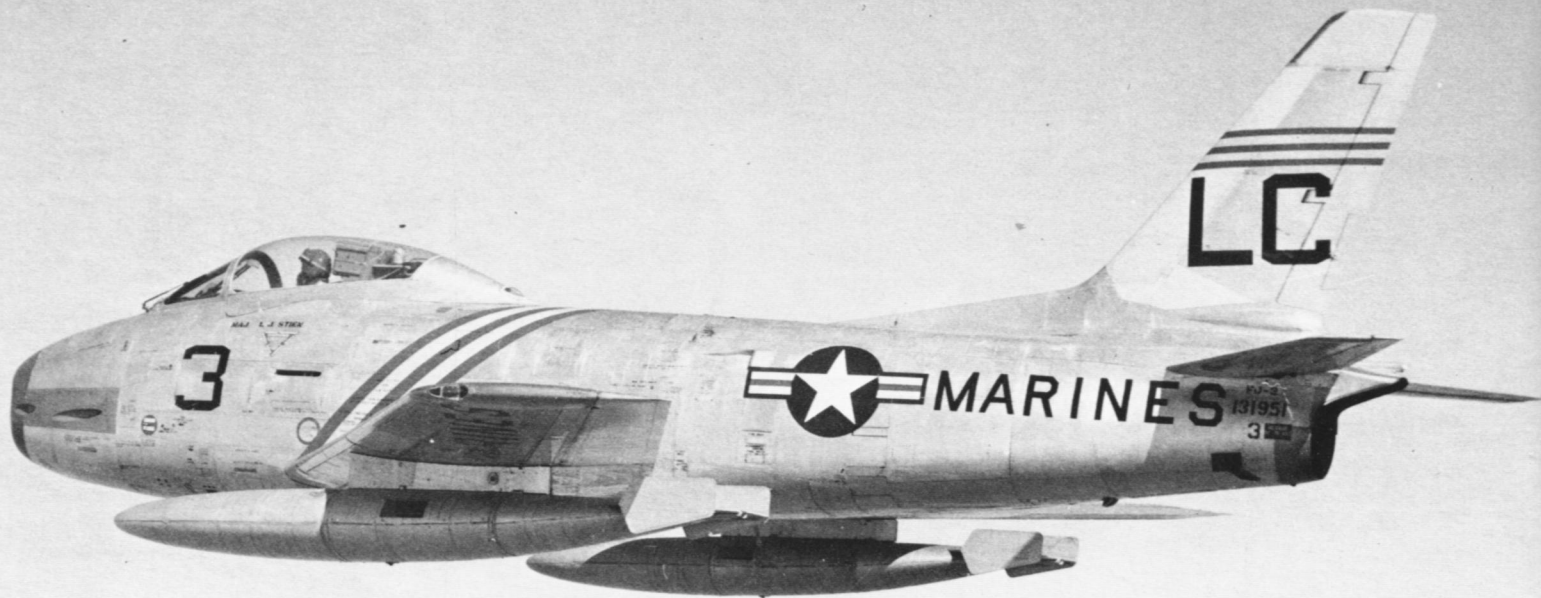


Only five Air Force Wings operated the F-86H, these are from the 474th FBW at Clovis AFB, New Mexico. The yellow and black 'barberpole' tail indicates that these aircraft are from 429th FBS. (NAA)



The red and white checks on the tail and stabilizer of this F-86H denote the 34th FDS, part of Col. George Laven's colorful 413th Fighter Day Wing at George AFB. (NAA)





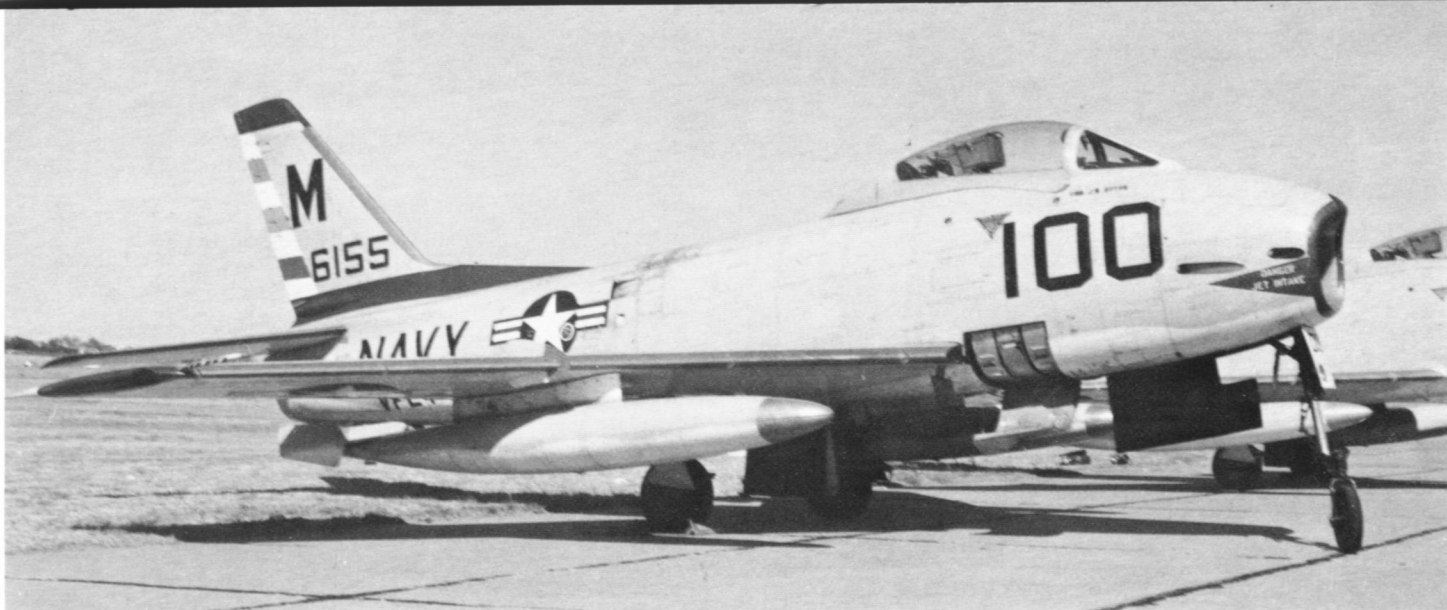
An FJ-2 of VMF-122 operating from USS Coral Sea in 1955. Red nose and red and yellow fuselage and tail stripes. Note the non-standard windshield wiper. (NAA)



VMF-312 was famous for its black and white checker boards. This FJ-2 also had a black nose. (Balogh)

This FJ-3, the squadron CO's bird of VF-51, is in the color section of this book. (Olmsted)





When Furies were repainted gray and white, a red lip and intake warning triangle appeared on most aircraft. This CAG FJ-3M has red wing tips and tail stripes with green, yellow and blue rudder bands alternating with white.

Except for the red nose markings, rescue arrow and ejection seat triangle, and black lettering, the remaining markings are medium blue on white. This FJ-3M is from VF-124. (Larkins)

White stars on a blue field with a red border on the fin tip and canopy of this FJ-4B denote VX-4. Wing tips and stab tips are blue. (NAA)

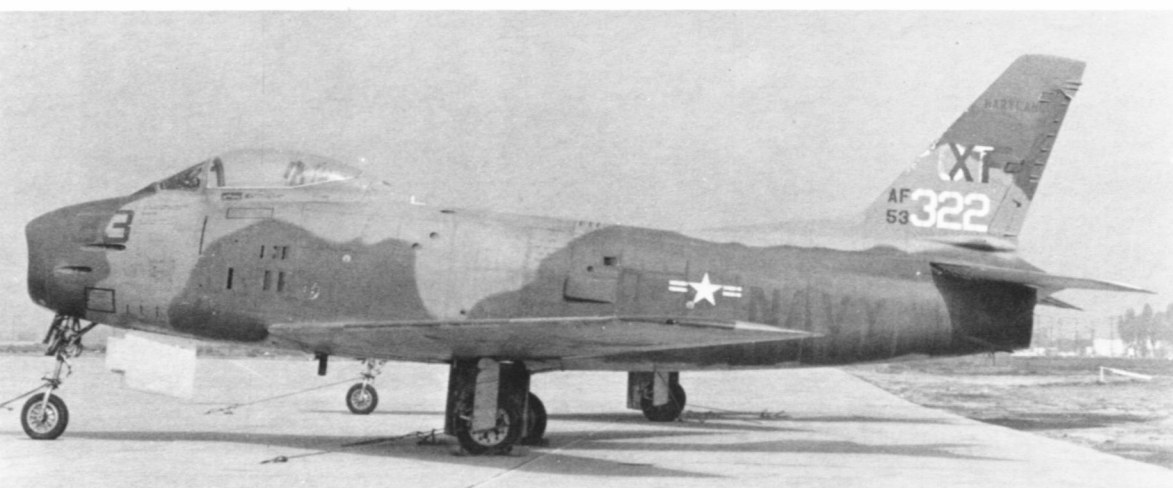




The Fleet Air Gunnery Unit operated very colorful FJ-4Bs from Miramar in 1957. The intake lip is red, the stripes are black and white and the checks are red and white. The lightning bolt is red with white trim. (Olmsted)



Cdr. Davey Crockett flew this VA-151 FJ-4B when he was CAG of ATG-1 on Ticonderoga. The star is white with an (from the inside) orange, red, maroon and green border. The green border is replaced with blue on the under part of the star. The numeral '1' is in medium blue. The four small stars are (counter-clockwise from the front) maroon, yellow gold, red and blue. On the opposite side, under the windscreen there is a 'coonskin' cap. (Larkins)



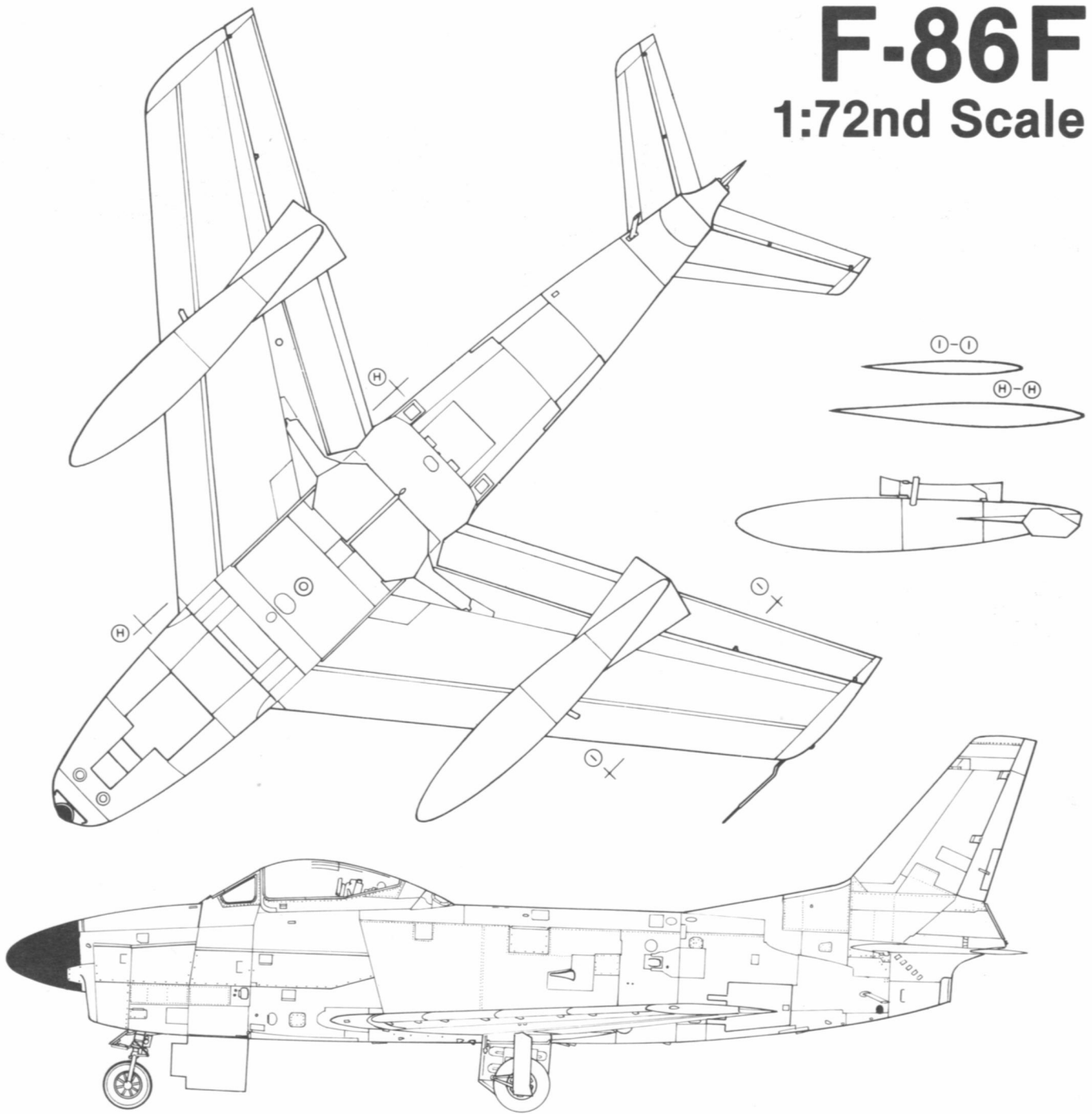
In 1969 the first F-86Hs were transferred to the Navy for use as aggressor and drone aircraft. XF-322, ex-Maryland Air Guard, was the first aircraft sent to VX-4 at Miramar NAS. The camouflage is Vietnam-style. (NAA)

Several Sabres are operated by Flight Test Research at Mojave, CA. N186F is an ex-RCAF Golden Hawks bird. It is overall metallic gold with a red flash and tail band, white trim and lettering. Leading edges and tail pipe panels are natural aluminum. (FSI)

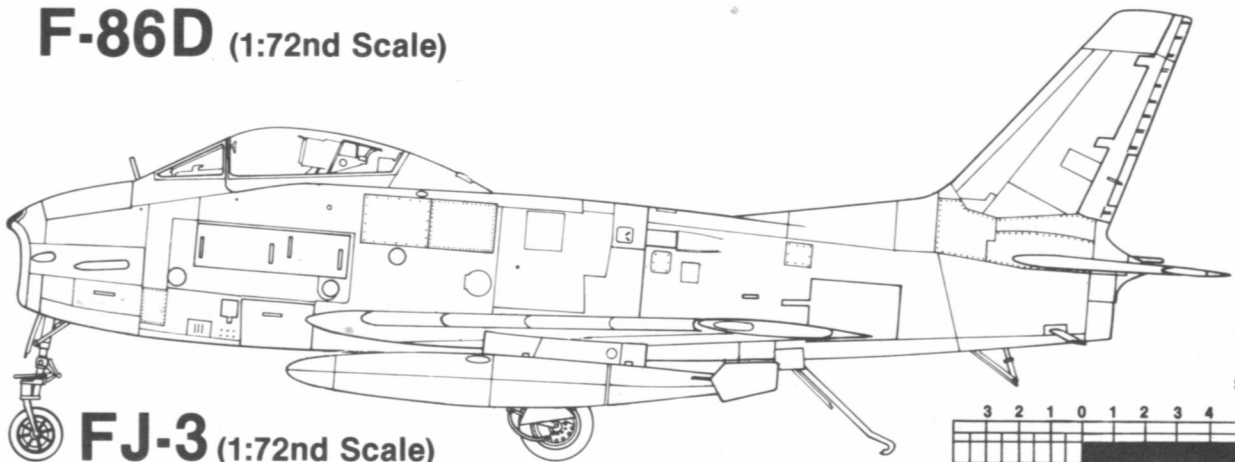


F-86F

1:72nd Scale



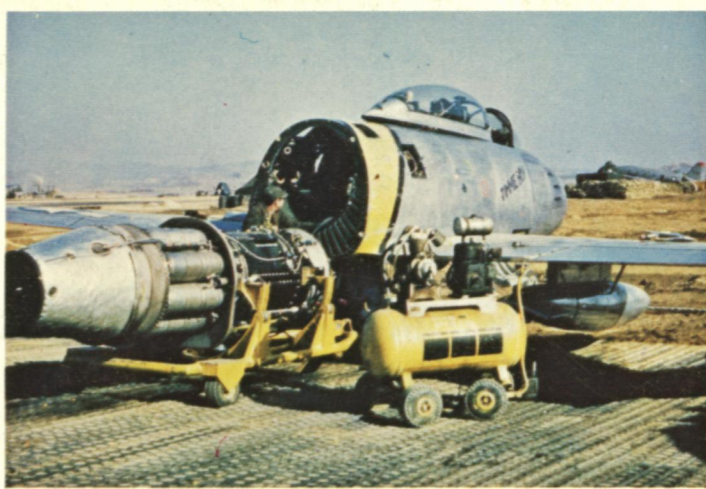
F-86D (1:72nd Scale)



FJ-3 (1:72nd Scale)

SCALE: FEET





The 366th FBW at Alexandria AFB flew these striped F-86Fs—red was the 389th FBS' color. (Isham)



(Above Left) Jimmie Boy has just had its engine pulled. Note the dark chromate green of the interior. (USAF)

Puddy Tat, 52-4330, being serviced under crude conditions, Korea. (Kempthorne)

A 25th FIS F-86E on the Suwon ramp in 1952. (Crowley)



F-86Ds of the 512th FIS at RAF Bentwaters in 1955. (McLain)

Sweet Mudder was the 329th FIS CO's F-86D at George AFB, California. (Isham)

An FJ-3 from VF-21, the first squadron on board the USS Forrestal. (Menard)

