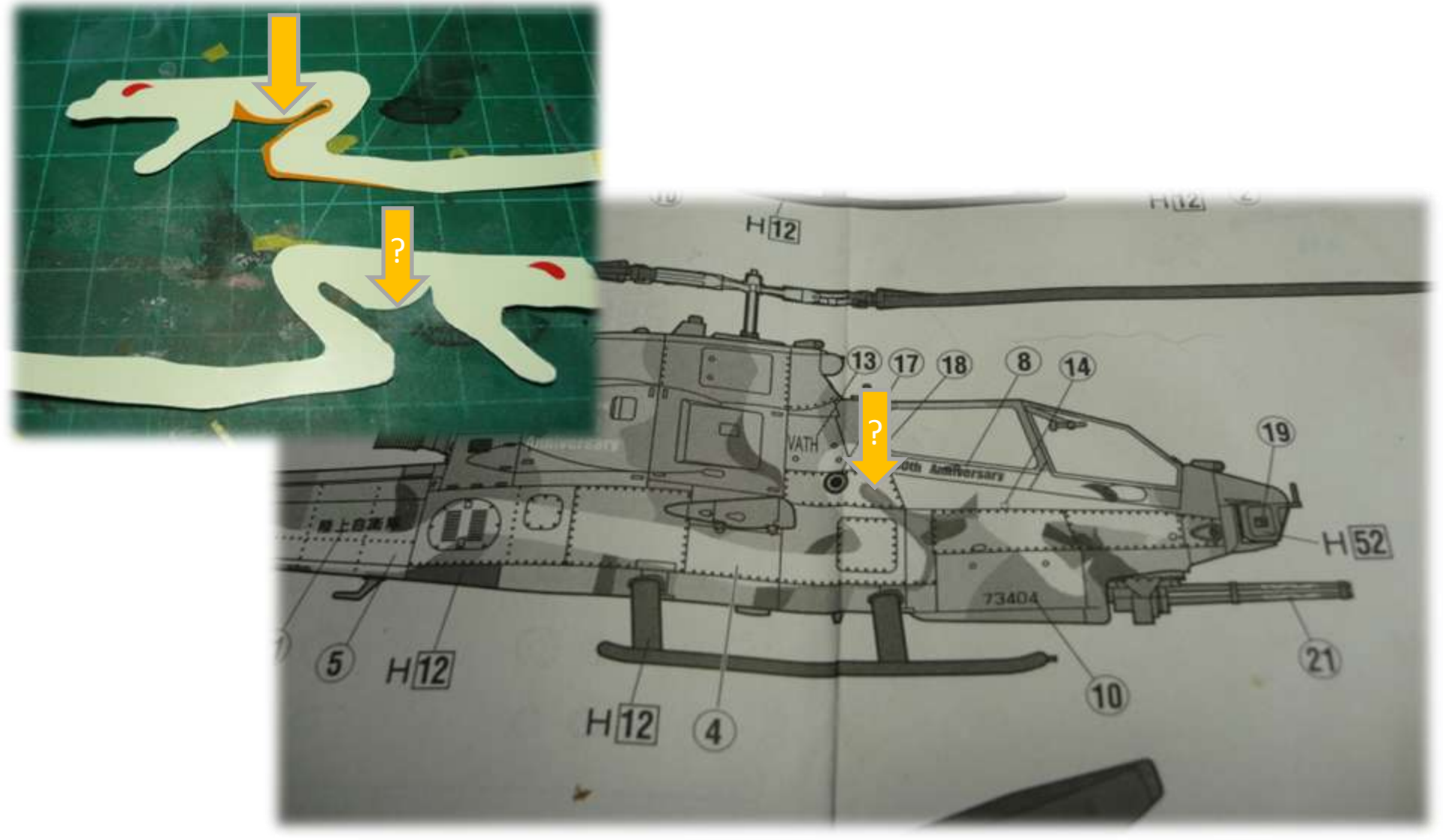
AH-1S Cobra Step III

Build Article Part 7

Welcome back. I ran into a few issues…again. I'll explain in the slides to follow.

I ended the last update with pulling off some of the masking tape. This now extends to the snake as well. Looks like things are generally in good order here. I had a bit of overspray get under the mask in a few sections but it shouldn't be a big deal to touch up.

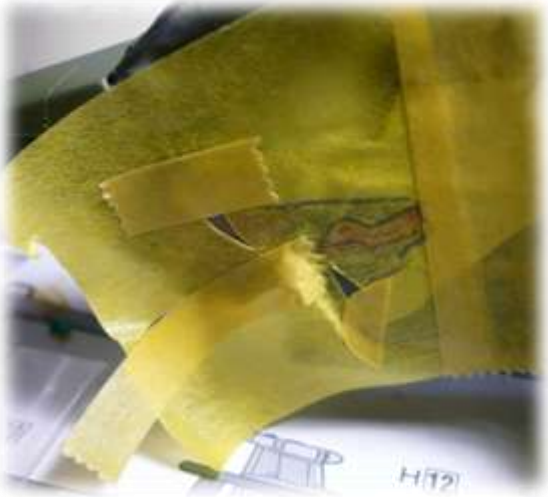
There's additional work required on the snake however, starting with the orange shadow. Strangely Fujimi put the shadow only on the one side but if you look at the instructions they show the shadow on both sides. I only have a picture of the port side, however I'm going to assume that the shadow would have been present on both sides.

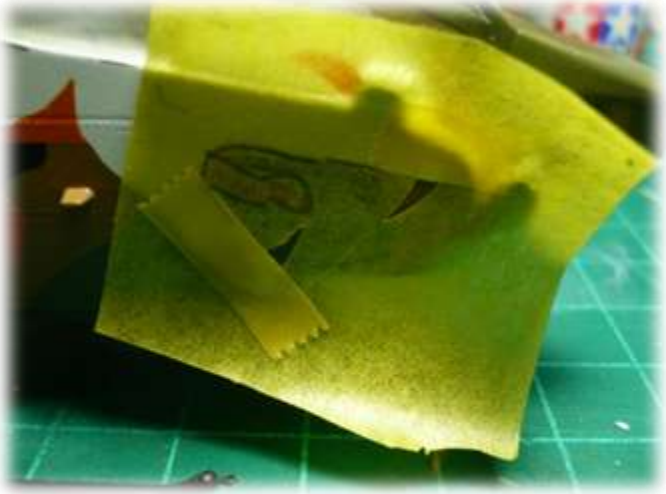


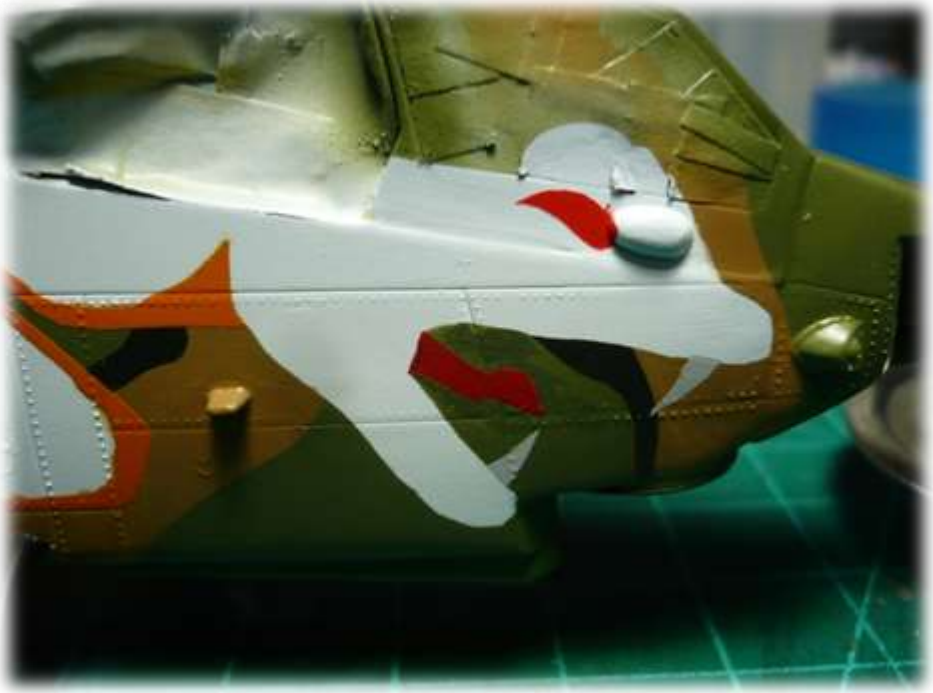
Time to do a little masking. I used the decal cut outs as a guide. I then used Zero Brilliant Orange. I figured this would do a better job of covering the area than Tamiya or Gunze paints. Small touch ups still required here and there.

I decided to use Zero Formula 1 Red for the snake eyes and tongue. For some strange reason I had the red paint peel off as I was removing the mask. Can't figure out the root cause on this one. Some careful stripping was performed and I used Tamiya red the second time around. Am I the only one that runs into these type of problems? WTF!

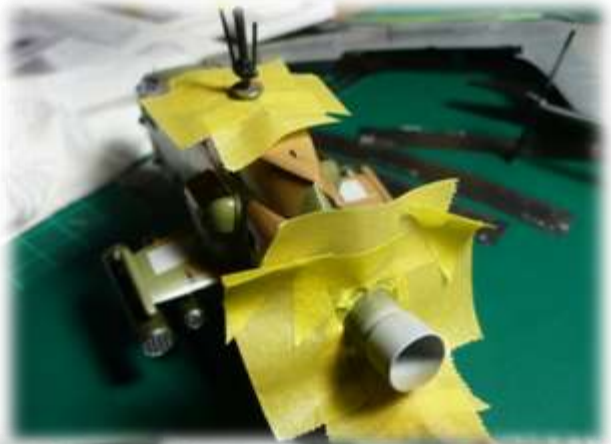
Next it’s the fangs and the wing top surfaces which were masked and painted. No drama this time. Maybe there’s still some hope for this thing.



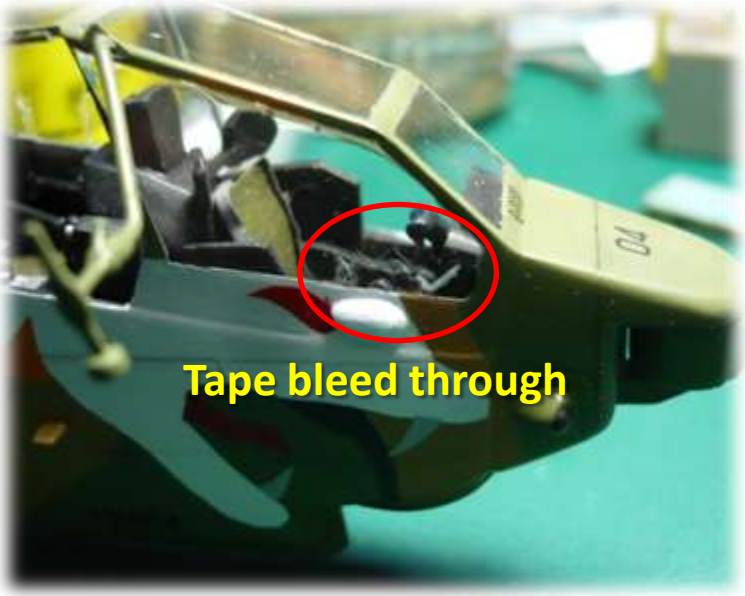




Another coat of Future was applied over the decals and a light wash was applied along panel lines. Then I masked and sprayed the rotor shaft and the exhaust. I used Mr. Color Burnt Iron and curiously found that Mr. Color Thinner really didn't react well. I ended up using lacquer thinner instead to thin. Maybe Mr. Colour Thinner doesn't work on the Mr. Color metallic paints? I wanted to spray these areas last since acrylics don't go well over lacquers. It probably would have still worked out had I painted these areas earlier.

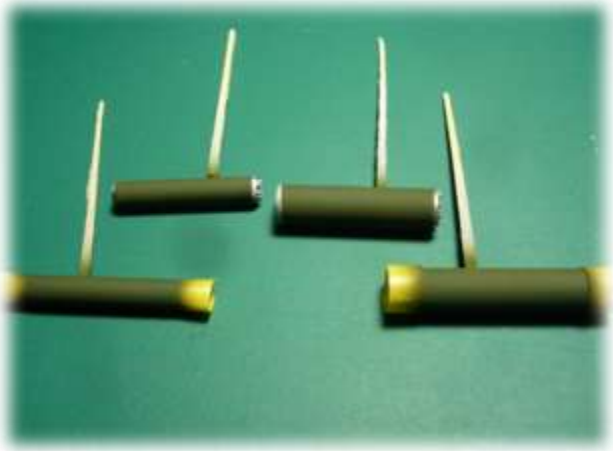


And now to the canopy. I had some bleeding through the masks and there was also residual glue from the masks that I wasn't able to remove. Perhaps the two are related since I didn't have residue on every panel. Perhaps the masks were on too long or received too much heat in Mr. Dry Booth? If anyone has any insights I'd love to hear them. At this point the trash bin is looking mighty attractive.



Considering the time I've put into this and not wanting to end the build article with the helicopter in the trash I decided not to give in yet. Nothing I tried removed the residue. I then made a flat chisel with a toothpick and gently removed any paint on the clear sections. Then I used 3M Microfine sanding cloth to smooth out any bad panels. Using a paintbrush I filled in the clear panels one at a time with a good soaking of Future.

At this point it was finishing touches. Painting of the rocket pods, the rotor, the vision pod and navigation lights and such. The snake decals on the gun barrels didn't want to conform much either. It took multiple soakings to get them decent.



Here's a quick comparison of the box cover to what I managed to put together. Before I reveal the final pictures on the coming slides I'll write down a few of my thoughts…

Happy with…

- Relatively happy with the scratch built cockpit. That was my first attempt at something like that and it turned out reasonably well. The cockpit is fairly visible and so I believe it was worth it.
- The fabrication of the engine intake guards. The ribs were larger than they really are but the paint did help smooth this out.
- Although not as smooth and clear as I had wanted, the recovery of the canopy was somewhat pleasing. More effort on prevention required on my part.
- Painting of the snake, although not perfect was still the right decision especially considering the problems with the decals I encountered.
- Other scratch building and small detail enhancements I did. They weren't terribly difficult and added to the overall look of the model.

Not so happy with…

- Cracking paint. Could be a result of mixing Tamiya clear with the Gunze paint or the Future shrinking. I had to apply way too much Future than I liked.
- Thick paint along canopy frames. Started with spraying Mr. Surfacer instead of black. My bad.
- Decals. I know this one already. It pays to use good aftermarket decals, but in this case it wasn't an option as none were available. Shame on Fujimi for the poor quality decals.
- The errors I made on the canopy, placement and masking. I know better. I'll show the technique I should have used for masking in my next build article. Beats me why I didn't use it here. (Education is expensive, and you'll learn this over and over again)
- Inaccurate version of the helicopter presented on the box. Fujimi should have included the intake guards.
- Poor quality cockpit included by Fujimi. They should have really upgraded that sprue.
- The shade of brown that I mixed was still lighter than I wished. The Future didn't darken the shade as much as I had anticipated.

And some final pictures…

And some final pictures…

Final Thoughts

I'm sure we all have accumulated kits that aren't the typical Tamiagawa standard. The kit initially was interesting as the paint scheme drew me to the subject. Since it was a helicopter and had a little bit over 100 parts (excluding weapons) I had actually thought that this would have been a good 12 hour build subject. That might well have been true but I chose this opportunity to test several concepts instead. The first concept was regarding available reference material. I found the Airliners.net site quite helpful. Again I'm sure we've all accumulated reference material with great intentions, but it was nice to see what you can obtain from the internet. Secondly I took the opportunity to try some scratch building. The cockpit and the engine intake guards were fun to do. And after all isn't that what the hobby is supposed to be about? I was also careful not to go too overboard on obtaining 100% accuracy. The work I've put into this is representative enough of the subject in my opinion. Additionally it was nice to see what was possible without spending extra on the aftermarket products. Incidentally in this case I couldn't find any aftermarket products for this version. As usual I also experimented with the paint, whether it was the type, the additives or the masking. And as usual I ran into problems with the paint. Time to do more analysis of what happened and take steps to correct them. Again there were frustrations and difficulties to overcome, but hopefully I can learn from my experience and improve the overall outcome of future projects. In the end though it seemed more like a race towards abandonment rather than completion. It didn't turn out quite how I had hoped. It's not horrible but it may not see a contest table either. It's also not going in the trash…well not any time soon. If you look at the next page I think you'll find that I certainly followed the last 2 items of the club theorem.

Modellers Theorem

Guelph Plastic Modellers Group

Build Often - Build as ferquently as you can. The more you practice something, the better you will get

Build Quality Kits - Choose good quality kits. There is little sense in wasting time, money and effort building low grade kits. They will only serve to stall and frustrate your modelling experience.

Build Out-of-the-Box - Adding all kinds of conversions, after-market parts, etc, will significantly impact your ability to complete the kit. Reference material can be the worst enemy!

Try Something New - Update your techiques by trying something different or new. Don't become stagnant using the same old methods. "If it's not broke, break it!" There is always a better way.

Be Open - Share your techiques with your peers. Thaere is no greater form of respect than when someone wants to learn how you created you last masterpeice.

Remember, this is supposed to be fun!

Hope you enjoyed the build report. I already have my next subject picked out and will be doing a build report on it as well. Hopefully I can prove that I was able to learn something and make the next one better than the one before.