

Building and improving ICM's **INVADER**



Fixing a few inaccuracies and modification for this Korean War attacker

BY CHUCK DAVIS

Given all of the subtle and not-so-subtle changes among the 2,500 Invaders, ICM would have had to produce something like 500 separate boxings of its 1/48 scale kit to have the possibility of getting each individual Invader right. However, the kit captures the look of the Invader and corrects the glaringly too-wide fuselage that plagued Monogram's kit. To give Monogram its due, however, many of the details in that 1993 kit surpass the efforts of ICM.

In the July 2020 FSM, I painted ICM's 1/48 scale B-26B to match photos of a 13th Bomb Squadron Invader from the Korean War. But accurately re-creating that aircraft necessitated a few other changes.

One of the photos I found, shows that lower turret had been removed from BC-372, not an uncommon modification. So, I needed to scratchbuild a cover for the lower turret opening.

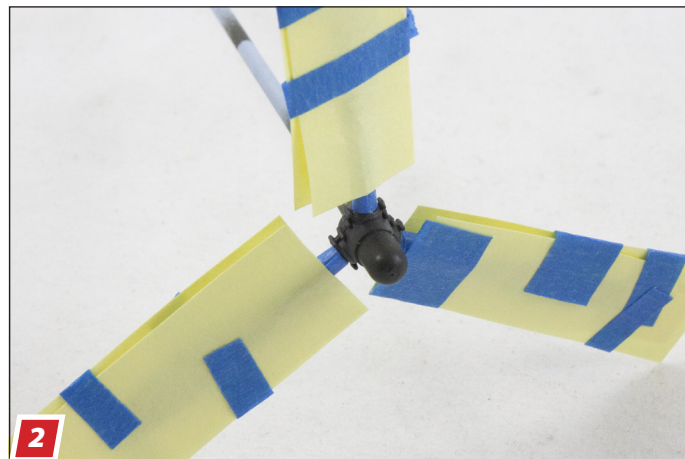
Studying another photo, I was convinced that it wasn't fitted with all six wing guns. The angle makes it difficult, but it

looks as if only the inboard gun of each wing is there.

Those were the biggest conversion steps, but there are a few other areas that can be improved; the props aren't quite right, the cockpit lacks details, the wheels are too narrow, and I had to find the right weapons for a Korean War Invader. The 5-inch HVAR rockets can be sourced from the newly released Eduard P-51 kit, since the early version of the Mustang depicted seldom carried them.



1 One of the simplest ways to improve ICM's B-26 is to swap the props as the kit parts are too plump and the hub lacks detail (left). The props in Monogram kit look much better and I happened to have one of them in my stash.



2 To avoid damaging the painted and decaled blades, I used Post-it note pieces as masks when I painted the hubs with metallic shades.



7 The kit wheels (right) aren't perfectly usable, but there are more detailed options. I replaced the ICM nose wheel with the Monogram Invader equivalent (top left), and used a set of P-61 wheels leftover from a Great Wall Black Widow build which I had used resin wheels on.



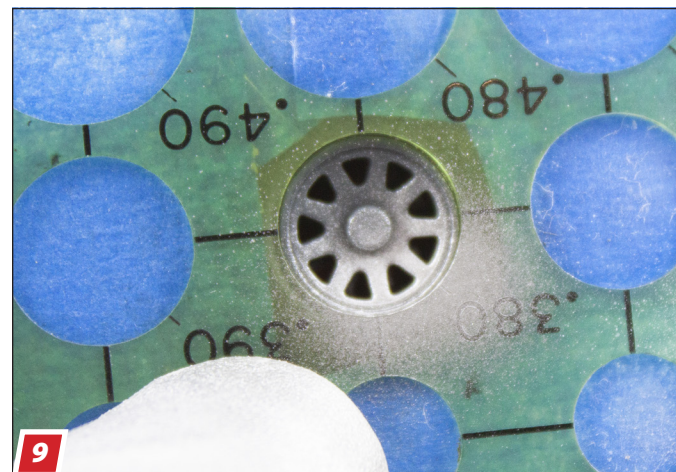
8 I always look for quick ways to mask. Here, I used a circle template to mask the tire while I paint the hub. Simply select the appropriately sized circle and surround it with tape to prevent overspray...



3 One area where the ICM kit really shines is the engines with two full sets of detailed cylinders, pushrods, intake manifold, exhausts, crankcase, and cowl mounting frames for each engine make for accurate R-2800s.



4 Unfortunately, the ignition ring has the incorrect number of points, so I decided I couldn't add an ignition harness. But the engines still looked great after painting.



9 ... spray the hub color of your choice...



10 ... and voila! A perfectly painted hub.



5 The individual subassemblies were painted and washed separately, then brought together with the finished props to complete the engines.



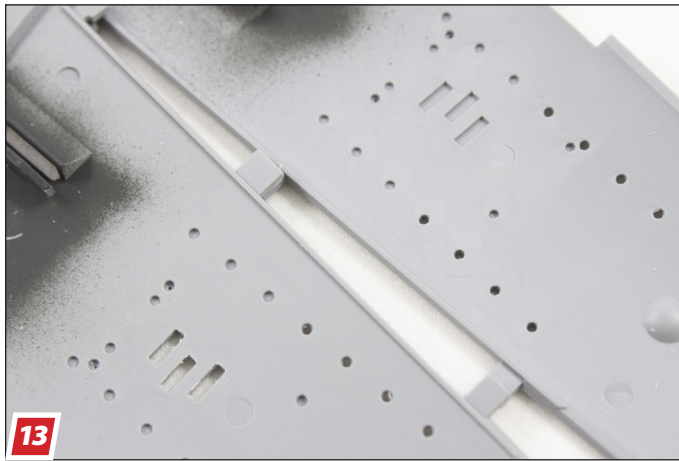
6 ICM included a brilliant jig that makes placing the individual exhaust stacks at the correct angle and orientation a snap. The jig is in place on the left engine along with a handful of stacks; the completed engine on the right shows the stacks with the correct buck-toothed appearance.



11 The ICM landing gear legs are nicely detailed and robust. I had to drill out the hubs on the replacement wheels to fit the axles.

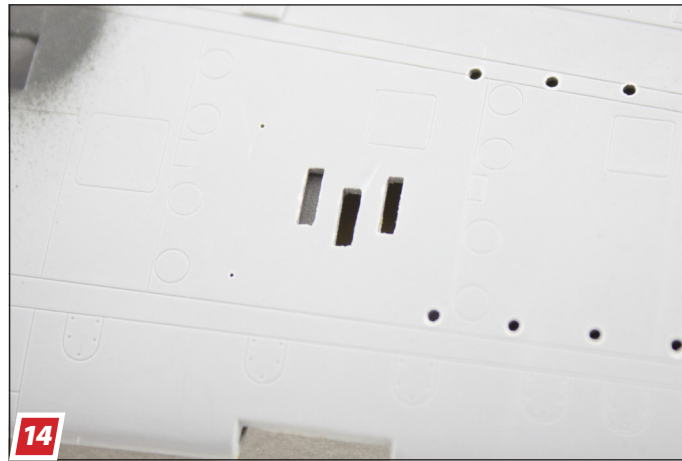


12 The Invader I was modeling, and many other Korean War B-26s, was armed with napalm tanks, which were usually modified large drop tanks. But, the ICM kit includes the smaller, 75-gallon tanks. Luckily, I had a spare set of the large tanks left from a Monogram P-61. The simple modifications seen on the right include removing the centerline stiffening ridge and adding a filler spout made from styrene rod.



13

The ICM wings include a number of holes prepared for various ordnance options, most of which are not included in this kit boxing. Luckily, I found out that the spare 5-inch rockets from Eduard's new P-51D-5 kit fit this kit perfectly. (They were seldom carried on early Mustangs anyway.). So, I drilled open the corresponding holes out and cut out the shell-ejection ports for added detail.



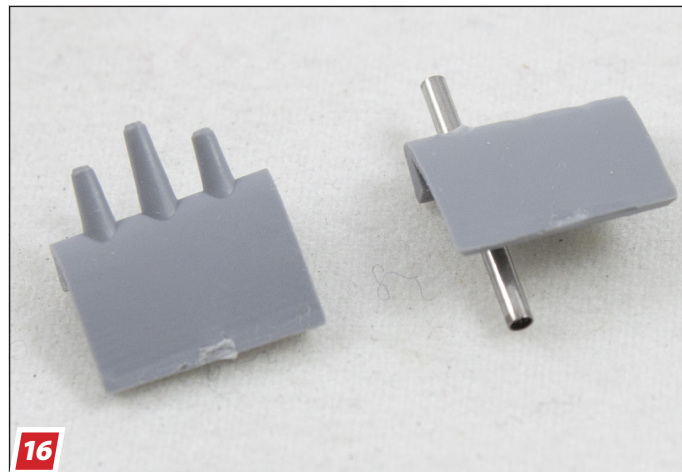
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Modeling the aircraft with only the inboard gun mounted, I simulated it by gluing a piece of plastic behind the inboard ejection slot.



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If you look closely, you can see the slab of plastic in place. The two empty ejector ports were left open to the wings' interior to add depth.



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I'm not sure what ICM was trying to portray with the wing gun inserts; on the real thing the protrusions are cylindrical blast tubes rather than the odd finger-shaped thing shown here. I cut off the fingers, drilled holes, and replaced the inner blast tube with a metal cannula.



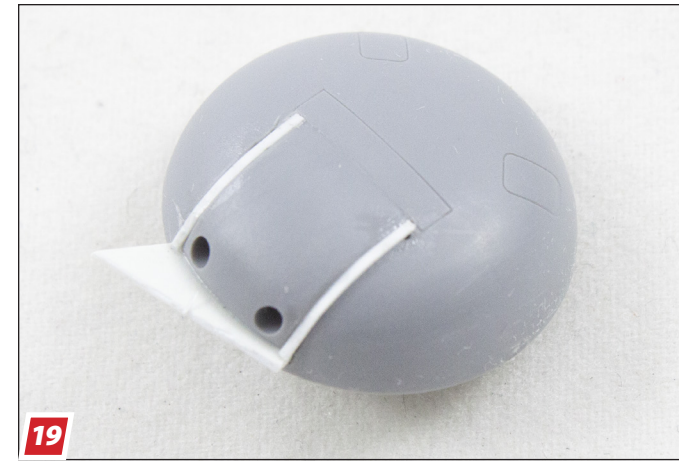
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Once the guns were on the wings, I added rough covers over the unused gun ports using white glue to mimic the rough covers I saw in the photos.



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The upper turret needed a bit of help as well because it looked a bit too gap-toothed for my taste.



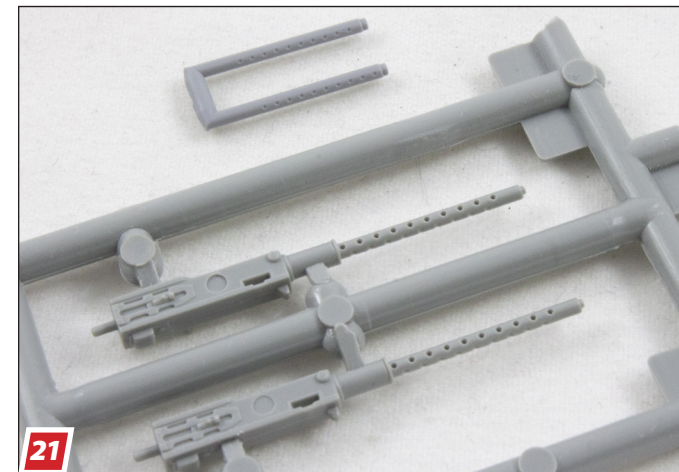
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I glued strip styrene around the sides and a scrap of plastic at the base.



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Once all of that was trimmed, sanded, and filled the gaps were gone.



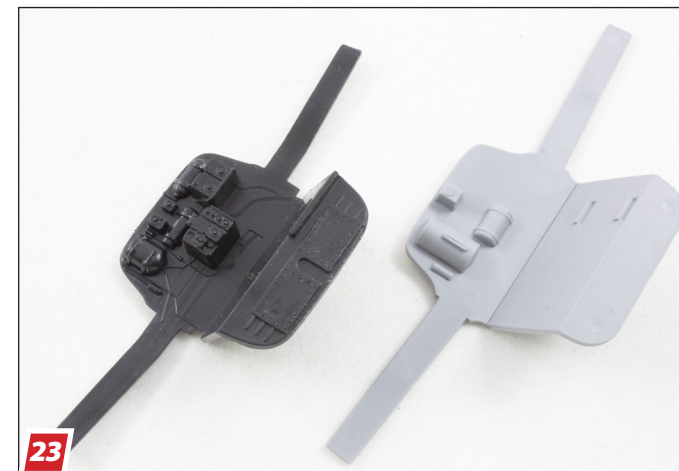
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I replaced the turret gun barrels (top) with spares from the Great Wall P-61 kit (bottom) trimming them to fit the mount.



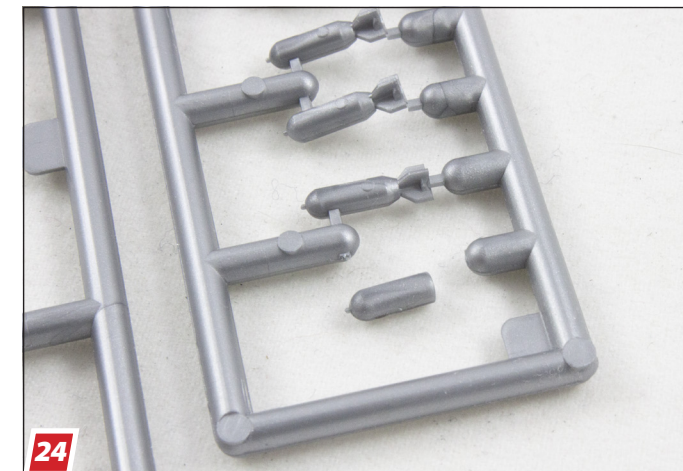
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The kit seat is a bit plain, so I added some detail based on references, including a styrene-strip brace and an arm rest from made from styrene strip and C-channel.



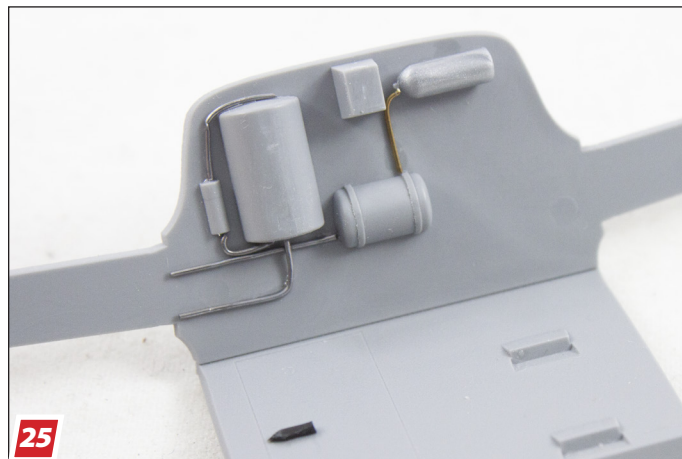
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Monogram's kit included many details on the cockpit's rear bulkhead (left). Although ICM moved the radios to a stack mounted near the bulkhead, its bulkhead was still a bit plain (right).



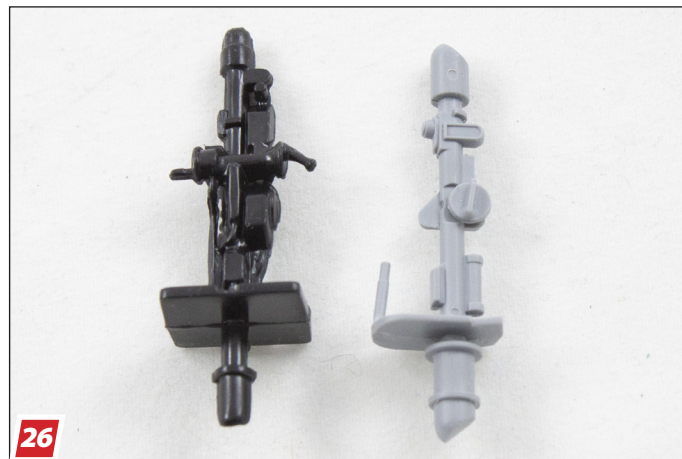
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I wanted to add a gas bottle to the bulkhead, so I looked through my spares for a good option and found the bomb! No, really, a bomb from Fujimi's 1/144 scale B-29 was modified to make a nice 1/48 scale cylinder.



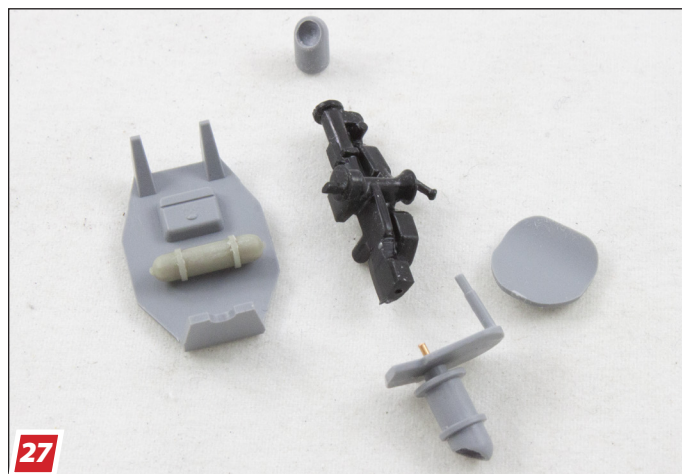
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I placed the cylinder on the bulkhead and added some piping with solder and copper wire. I also added a tiny handle to the door that leads to the bomb bay.



26

Moving to the rear crew compartment, I the ICM gunsight seemed a bit anemic. Once again, the old Monogram kit includes detail that more closely matches diagrams from the maintenance manual. But, because of the dimensional errors of the Monogram kit, it is too tall for the ICM kit.



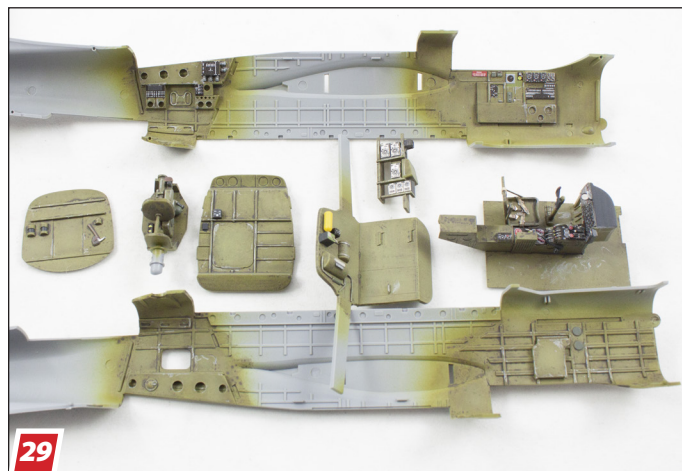
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I kept the upper and lower sighting portions of the sight and replaced the middle with the Monogram part; a wire pin kept things aligned. I added a missing cylinder using a left over Quickboost oxygen tank designed for the Great Wall P-61.



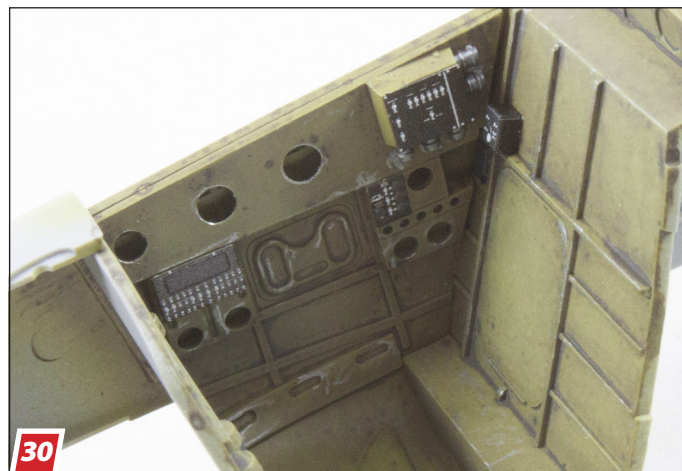
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Using parts from both kits, the gunsight assembly now looks closer to the real thing yet still fits the ICM kit.



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I used Eduard's Zoom colored photo-etched metal (PE) set (FE1055) to enhance the cockpit along with seat belts left over from ... dare I say it? ... the Great Wall P-61. The various components were airbrushed with Mission Models U.S. interior green (MMP-059), the perfect shade to my eye.



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ICM supplies nice bulkhead and sidewall detail and a bit of Eduard PE adds a lift.



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Careful detail painting and washes spice up the interior.



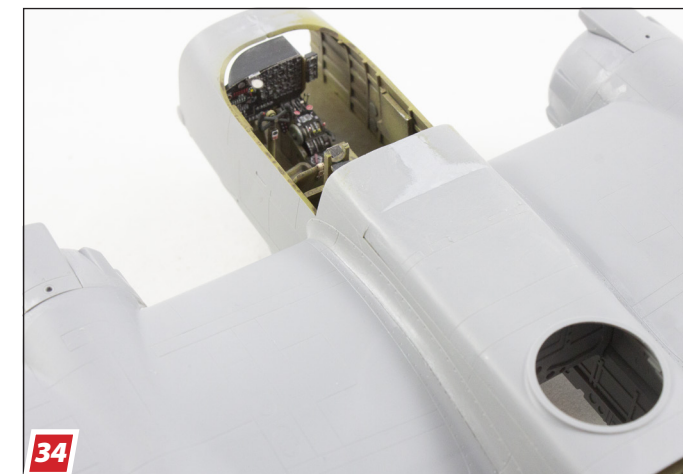
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The kit includes a good instrument panel, but the Eduard version is just that much nicer.



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The engine nacelles require that the main gear doors be installed during assembly rather than after painting, and the joint runs through a series of lightening holes molded on both the nacelle and gear door parts. I worried this would cause a big headache for fit and filling, but ICM did a great job and careful placement meant I needed no filler.



34

After assembly, the nacelles fit perfectly to the wings, with no filler needed. And look at that wing-root joint — outstanding job, ICM!



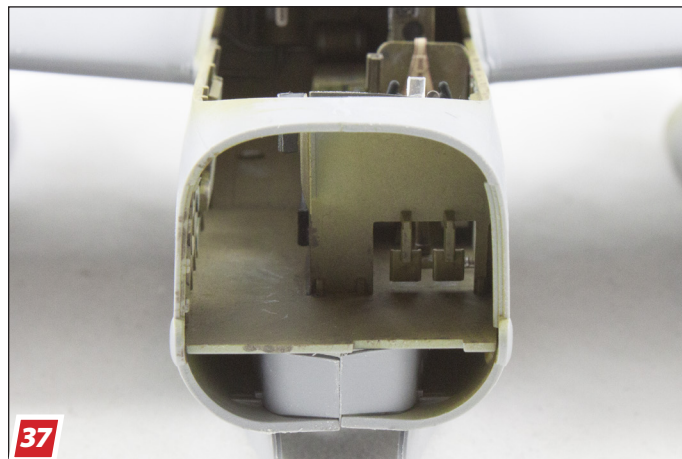
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The fit of the horizontal stabilizers was outstanding as well.



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I know this is getting old, but a leftover nose weight designed for the Great Wall P-61 fits perfectly in the nose of the B-26.



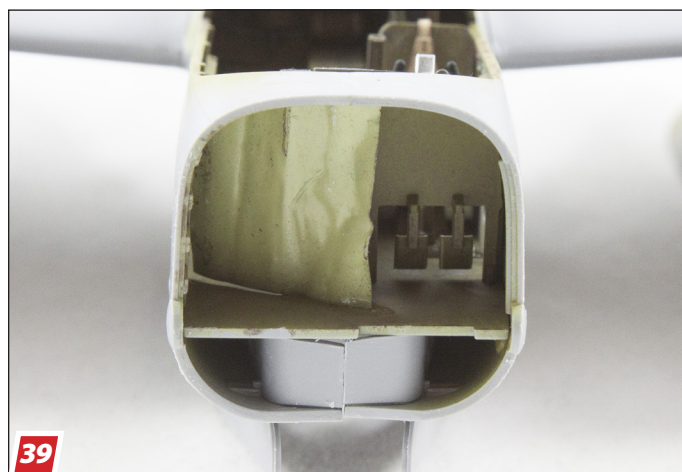
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While I was checking the fit of the nose assembly, I thought to myself, I need to make sure that nose weight is really secure, since there's nothing to stop it from entering the cockpit if it breaks loose. Hey, wait a minute — I can see straight into the empty nose of the Invader, so there must be a missing bulkhead.



38

Going back to my references I realized there is a missing curtain not a bulkhead. I quickly cut a piece of lead sheet to fit using a paper towel as a template. A few wrinkles, a touch of green paint, and a weathering wash, and it was ready.



39

I carefully placed the lead-sheet curtain into the nose and gently bent it to shape, gluing it in place from behind.



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Now the view into the nose is blocked off. I cannot imagine how loud it must have been in the cockpit when all eight .50-caliber machine guns opened up with nothing between them and you but a canvas curtain!



41

The last major correction for the kit was the most involved: removing the lower turret. Modelers can relax, since my having done this from scratch should result in a resin replacement from someone in the near future. A 3/4-inch diameter clear acrylic rod provided the bulk of the conversion.



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I started by cutting away the lip around the circumference of the turret opening.



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Then, I carefully removed the raised fairing around edge on the outer surface.



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After inserting the acrylic rod into the opening, I sprayed paint on the exposed portion to reveal the profile ...



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... of the rod to be removed to fill the hole.



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To speed the removal, I cut away the majority of the exposed rod with a hacksaw.



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Next, I used a rotary tool to carefully carve away the remaining material, constantly checking the fit in the fuselage's lower plate.



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Once I had it close, I mounted the rod to the plate and attached it to the model. Putty and sanding finished the job for a smooth underside.



49

A final detail: Photos showed that the wingtip light have chromate yellow housings color with colored bulbs. ICM molded a shallow hole to represent the bulbs, so I added a drop of Tamiya clear red to one and clear green to the other and backed them with a drop of chrome silver to simulate the bulbs.