

Kit Review

(August, 2005)

Italeri Hughes OH-6A kit number 028, 1/72 scale

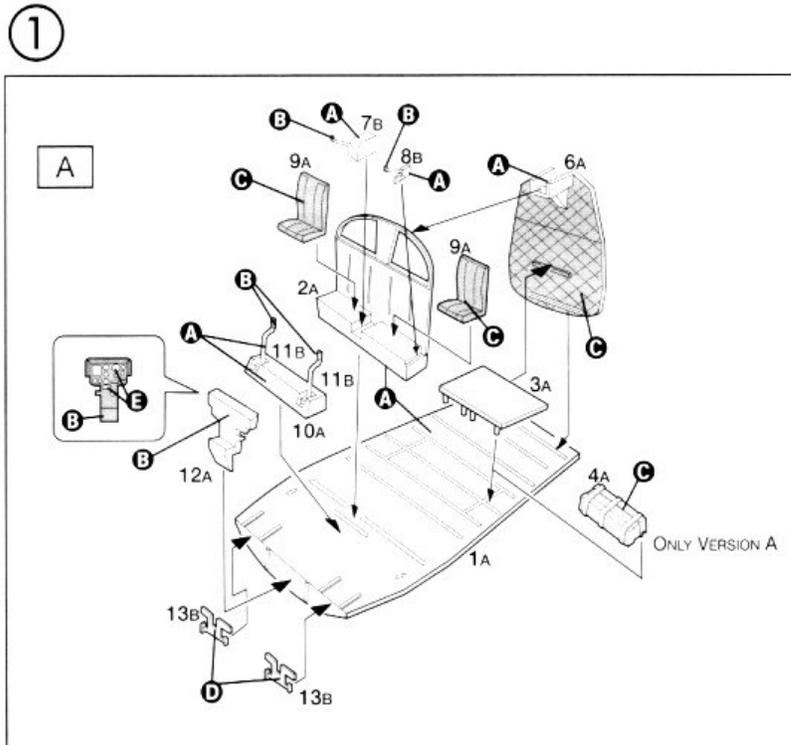
The Kit:

The kit comes in the familiar Italeri box made of thin cardboard which opens from either end. Inside you will find 54 dark green parts on two sprues and one clear sprue with another 7 parts. The decal sheet contains markings for three versions:

1. OH-56A, US Army, "Miss Clawd IV", serial number 17340, in overall Olive Drab with a shark's mouth on the bottom of the fuselage. No further identification is given for this version but web searches reveal that these markings are for an OH-6A flown by Cpt. Hugh Mills in Vietnam, circa 1971.
2. OH-6A, Spanish Navy, coded 01 602, in overall Dark Blue camouflage.
3. HN-500, Italian Customs Police, coded 90, in green and yellow livery.

Unfortunately no decals are provided for the instrument cluster.

The parts are well molded with raised panel lines and some very fine rivet detail, though I do not like the dark green plastic. The instructions identify some parts on the sprues that are not needed for this version (a fifth rotor blade and pieces for a couple of rocket launchers) which can be removed and added to the spare parts box.



Seat belts were fashioned from thin plastic sheet and super glued to the seats.

I then test fit the interior between the two fuselage halves to check that it did not prevent the fuselage parts from joining. No problems were encountered.

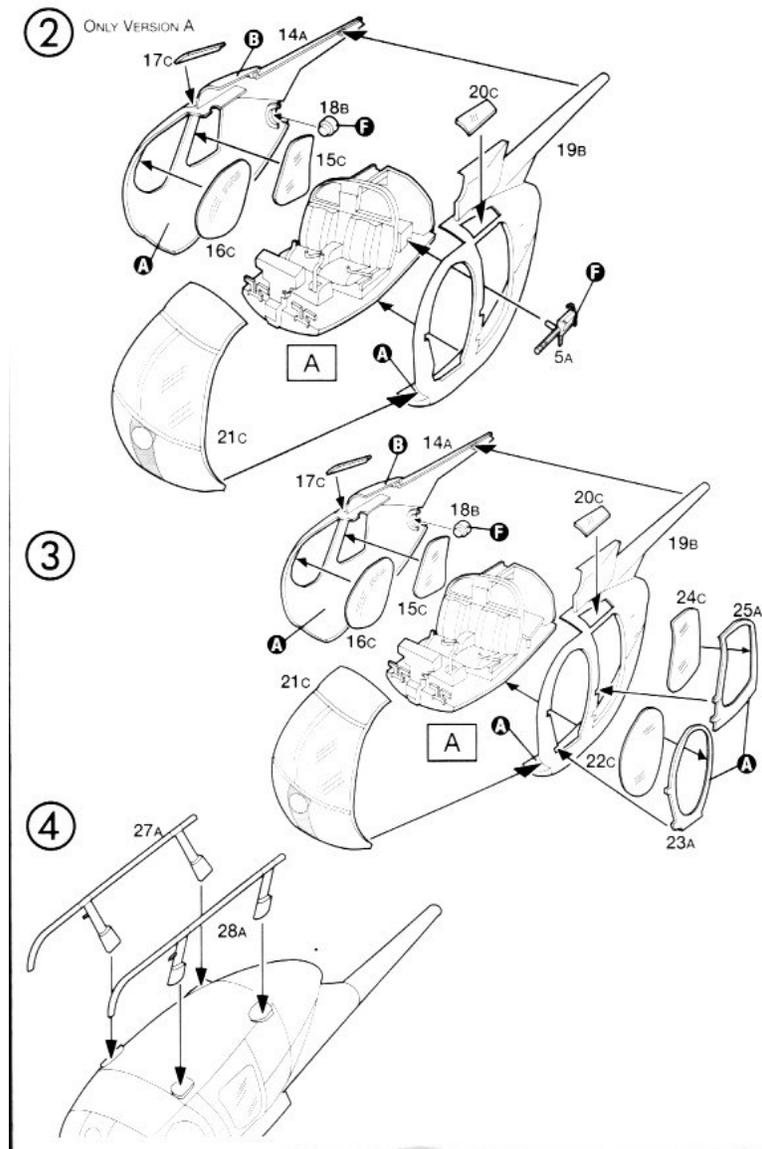
Construction:

I started by building the cabin interior as per the instructions, leaving off the instrument cluster and the pedals until later. I added some shields to the sides of the seats as seen in pictures of the real aircraft.

One thing that I found out after I had completed the kit is that the ammo box (part 4A) should be mounted vertically and not horizontally as shown.

I wanted to model the version with the shark's mouth. Photographs show that this particular aircraft often flew without the doors, so I wanted to model the kit sans doors also.

The port side doors (parts 23A & 25A) can be mounted in either the open or closed position. Not desiring any doors whatsoever, I started by discarding the port side doors along with their associated clear parts, and filled in the small locating notches left behind in the canopy frame. I then cut out the starboard doors and assigned their associated clear pieces to the parts box as well.



When I placed the cabin interior into the opening for another test fit, much to my dismay, with the doors now gone, it was apparent that the interior was way undersize. No wonder it fit so well on the first test fit. None of the bulkheads (parts 2A & 6A) met the sides! Nor did they go all the way to the cabin ceiling!

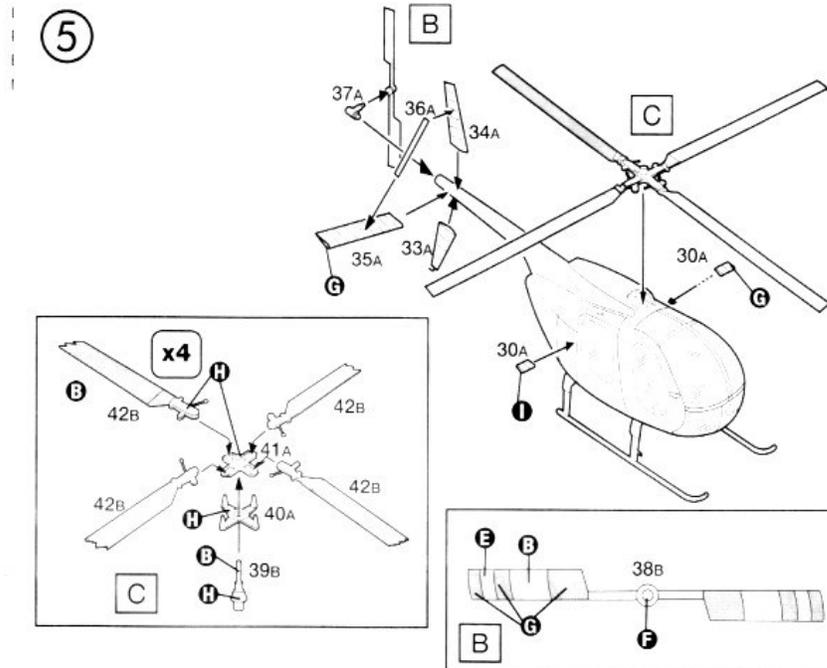
A proper fix would require mucho work which I did not relish doing, so I just added extra plastic sheet to the rear bulkhead so that it met the insides of the cabin. Then I added some more plastic to the roof console that runs between the front and rear seats so that they now touched the cabin ceiling. As for the forward bulkhead, it was left as it was.

Some lead weight was added beneath the floor boards towards the front of the aircraft to ensure that it

did not tail sit.

One of the tail booms was slightly warped but when it was glued to the other half it straightened out. The remainder of the build proceeded without any major issues, though you should be careful when adding the exhaust (part 18B) to ensure that it is centered properly.

Once again, Italeri have failed to get the rotation of the blades correct. If built as per the instructions the rotors would rotate clockwise, when viewed from above. But they should actually rotate counter clockwise. To correct this the blades were flipped over before being mounted to the hub. Then a small amount of droop was added to the blades.



I wanted a slightly different hue to the olive drab camouflage and used Aeromaster Olive Drab (9041) enamel paint. The remainder of the paint was Testors brand enamels.

The decals are in register and have dense pigments. They went on well and snuggled down nicely after a few coats of Microsol solvent. They are a

bit over scale, particularly the serial number (17340), the cavalry pennant and the red/white triangles on the engine panels.

But the major issue with the decal sheet comes from the fact that it does not have all the decals required to mark the aircraft properly. Web searches revealed that the 'copter carried all of its markings on both sides, and this was confirmed on the Heli-kit News web site by the actual pilot of the craft, Hugh Mills. Thus it was necessary to find another decal sheet. With the kit had been out of production for some time, I was unable to order another one. Fortunately, fellow rotary wing modeller Tony Morgan came to my rescue and sent me a set of the kit decals so that I could finish the model.

A final coat of Aeromaster acrylic flat (1003) completed the painting/decaling phase.

When it came time to add the canopy bubble, I found that the instrument cluster interfered, preventing the bubble from spanning the gap. The instrument panel was trimmed so that it fit a bit further back into the cockpit and allow the canopy to fit over the opening. Once this was corrected, I could see that the canopy still did not fit well. There were some noticeable gaps between it and the framing especially on the port side.

Conclusion:

Not the most fun kit to build. The size problems with the interior pretty well force you to build the kit with the doors closed, and the fit of the canopy is dodgy. For a kit that showed much promise upon opening the box, the actual construction proved that it was much more difficult to build than anticipated.