

The F-16AM/BM Fighting Falcon in Norwegian service

The Norwegian F-16s have continually been upgraded since they entered service with the RNoAF. Some important upgrades that are relevant for modellers are the switch to LAU-129 missile rails for the combined use of AIM-120 and AIM-9s in the late 1990s (the original launcher was AIM-9-compatible only), structural upgrades and the Mid-Life Update program. Aircraft that have undergone the MLU are designated F-16AM and BM. A comprehensive description of RNoAF F-16s and how to model them was published in the September and October 2007 issues of Model Aircraft Monthly, available from SAM Publications.

The F-16 has, at one time or another, equipped 331, 332, 334, 336 and 338 Squadrons, and was withdrawn from service 31 December 2022. All aircraft were during the last years "owned" by the Norwegian Defence Materiel Agency (FMA), with the aircraft deployed to the squadrons, which is why squadron markings were rarely applied. Ironically, the aircraft have seen more "live action" since the Cold War ended with deployments to the Baltic, Balkans, Afghanistan and Crete where they have contributed to providing NATO with air power.

Modelling notes

These decals are designed to fit Tamiya's superlative kit as well as Hasegawa's decent, but older offering. Tamiya released a Thunderbirds C-model with the "small mouth" intake and the Pratt&Whitney F100 compressor and exhaust, but this is long out of production. The only current release is the CJ, Block 50 with the "big mouth" intake and General Electric F110 engine. However, there are aftermarket solutions for the intake and the exhaust – also remember to replace the bulged main wheel doors with the "flat" ones and of course the tailfin base. The Tamiya kit is a great starting point for an AM. For those not wanting to do the conversion, Hasegawa's kit released as an A Plus/C, later released as a C only, is a good starting point for an AM as the sprues contain the "small mouth" intake, "flat" wheel doors and correct base for the tailfin with the exception of the extension for the brake chute which needs to be added from scratch. The earlier kits only have the Sidewinder-capable launchers whereas the latest release include the correct LAU-129 launchers. The only "out of the box" F-16 AM kit is from AFV Club which is based on the Academy F-16C and supplied with resin parts for the tailfin, wheel doors and wheels. These kits are expensive and difficult to find.

Although there have been two-seat conversions for Tamiya's kit, the easiest route in this scale is AFV Club's F-16B Block 20 kit. Like the AFV Club F-16AM Block 20, this is a modification of an Academy kit. In this case, the F-16I Sufa with the same resin parts, and like the other kit, has a high price and is not easy to get hold of. A conversion of the Sufa kit with some scratchbuilding and aftermarket may well be the simplest option here.

The modeler may have to make adjustments to the refuelling marking on the spine if choosing the Academy-offsprings for their models. All models of the single-seater will need the ID light on the port side of the nose to be added from scratch.

Colour notes

The standard paint scheme is overall neutral grey FS36270 with launchers, pylons and fuel tanks in light grey FS36375. Stencilling is black FS37038, orange FS32356 and pale yellow FS33617. A transparent yellow anti-erosion tape was applied to the leading edges of the wings, horizontal stabilizers, tailfin and ventral fins from 1988 onwards, so RAF Hemp will look appropriate here. The grey radome is generally just slightly darker than the fuselage, but there are variations in tone – you may wish to consult photos to get the right shade for your specific model.

Marking notes

Some stencils have been printed in alternative styles. These have a letter in addition to the decal number (a, b etc.). It is impossible to briefly list which variants to go with each aircraft, so the modeller must refer to photos of the actual aircraft to verify which alternative to use.

Decalling notes

The items A-E are placards for undercarriage and wheel wells. Please refer to reference photos for application. Walkway lines and fuel tank lift lines must be trimmed to fit the specific kit.

Decal application

The decals have a very thin carrier film and need to be handled with care. Individual decals should be cut out and soaked for a few seconds in lukewarm water. Slide the decal from the paper over to the model's surface without wrinkling. Avoid moving the decal excessively to avoid tearing the film and washing off the adhesive. The carrier film might at first seem rigid and difficult to lay down over complex surfaces, but using decal solutions like Micro Set and Micro Sol will make them snuggle down over detail and make them look painted on when completely dry. For best results, decals should always be applied to a gloss surface.

Thanks

Thanks to Jens Håkon Brandal for help with the instructions.

Front page:

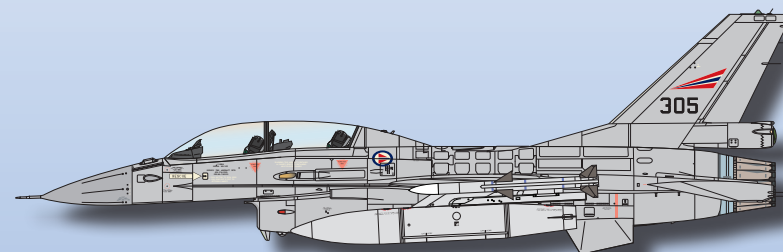
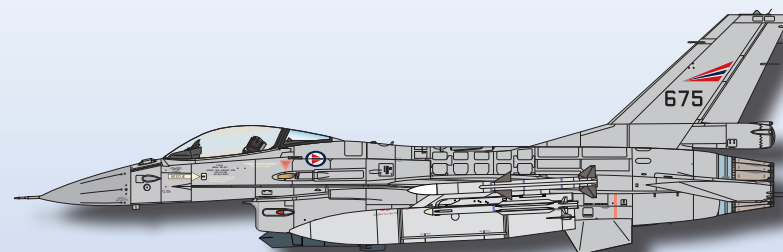
F-16AM, 80-3675. FLO, 331 Sqn., Bodø 2019.

F-16BM, 78-0305. FLO, 338 Sqn., Ørland 2008.

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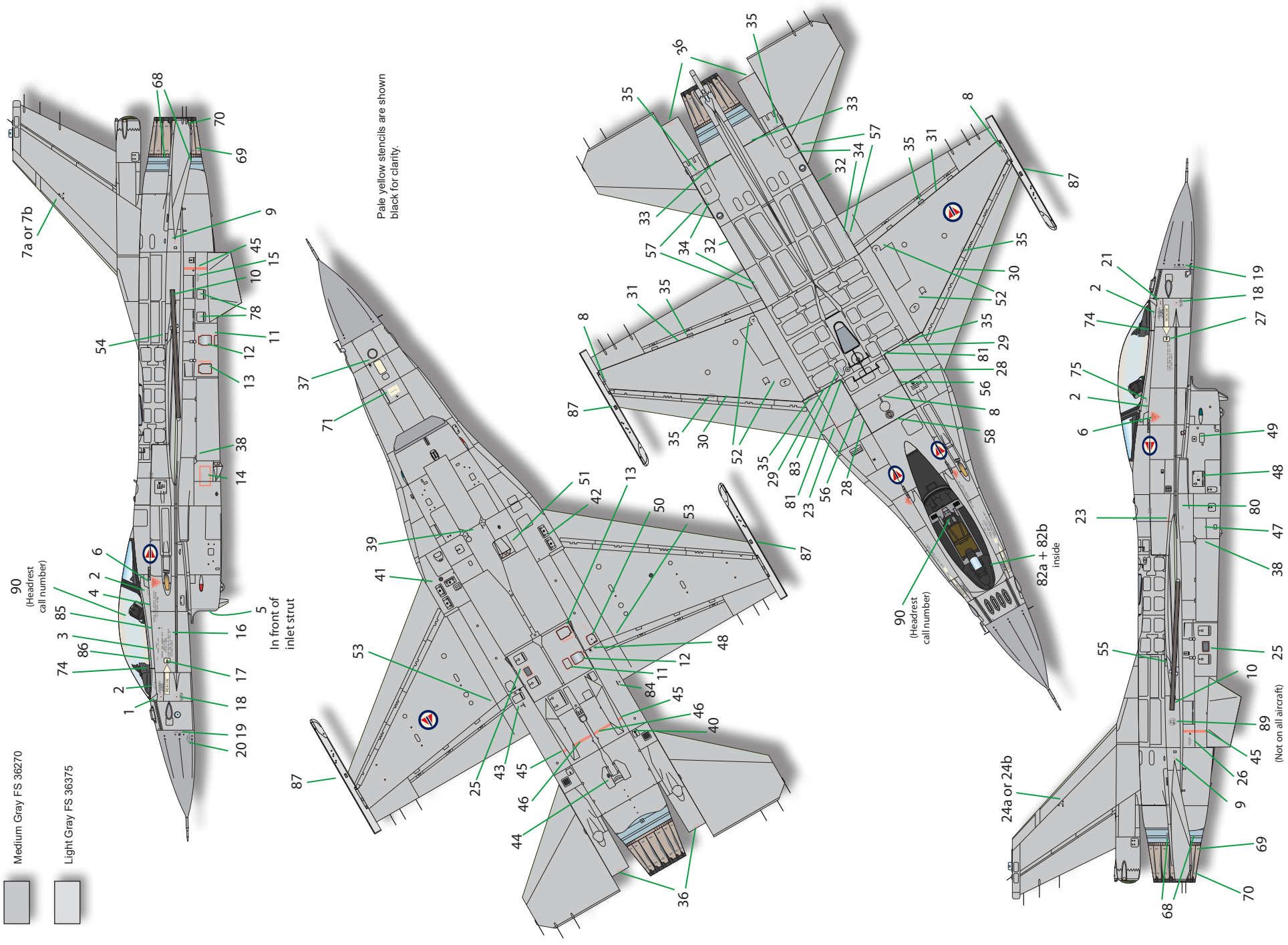
-  Medium Gray FS 36270
-  Light Gray FS 36375

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In front of
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Pale yellow stencils are shown
black for clarity.



(Not on all aircraft)

