

The deal included compensation deals, main assembly in Switzerland, the supply of AIM-120 AMRAAM missiles, a simulator and a training program. The 26 single seat and 8 two seat Hornets differ from others of the same type by having main fuselage bulkheads made from titanium, enabling them to reach a service life of some 5000 flight hours within 30 years of use. Three Squadrons, 11 (Tiger), 17 (Hawk) and 18 (Panther) started training on the type in 1996, partial operational readiness was achieved in 1998. Nine years after the fall of the Berlin wall, a modern innovative fighter replacement, which had been sought for decades, had finally arrived with the Swiss Air Force. All Swiss Hornets are dedicated entirely to the air defense rôle and today operate tactically from Payerne, Sion and Meiringen airfields respectively.

In order to improve the performance in the role of an interceptor, RUAG in Emmen developed and constructed special low drag pylons to carry air-to-air missiles under the wings. The American SUU-63A/A pylons were considered to be very versatile, but they created induced drag during high speed flight. Switzerland's parallel Hornet procurement with Finland was foreseen as a way of saving money, but hard figures are impossible to confirm if this achieved the desired effect. The internal ALQ-165 airborne self protection jammer was procured simultaneously. In 1996, extensive flight testing took place in Patuxent River and China Lake in the USA involving J-5001 and the F/A-18F J-5231 (which unfortunately crashed two years later in Switzerland). These two were the only Swiss aircraft that actually came from the US production line. The relatively young and small Swiss Hornet fleet has already undergone two upgrade programs centered around the uplink and downlink of radar information, (Link 16) and the use of the "off bore sight" AIM-9X Slidewinder. Recently a number of state of the art FLIR pods have been ordered in the US. These are due to be used in air-to-air mode only.



Robert Schneider
Müllheim, March 2010



ICE HORNET'S



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F/A-18 C & D



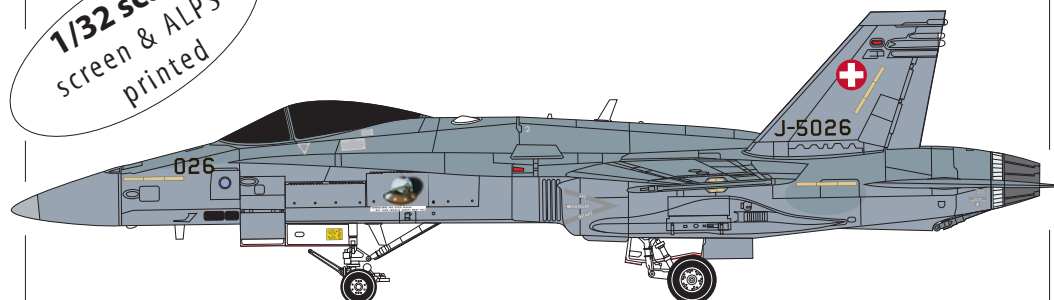
**TERRESTRIANS ARE GOOD PEOPLE
... BUT THEIR FEMALES ALWAYS WANT YOU**

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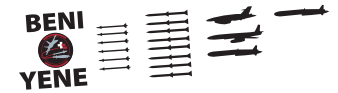
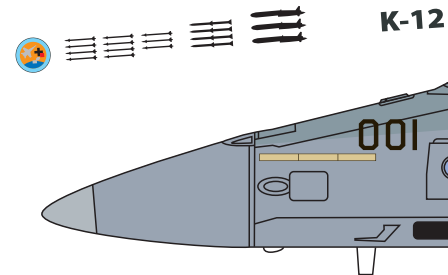


The purchase of 34 aircraft to replace the ageing Mirage III interceptor fleet was a painful process. It took roughly 12 years to search for a suitable type and pass the procurement act in parliament. The political disputes ended in 1993 when Swiss voters ratified parliament's decision to close the deal with what was then the McDonnell-Douglas Aircraft Company.

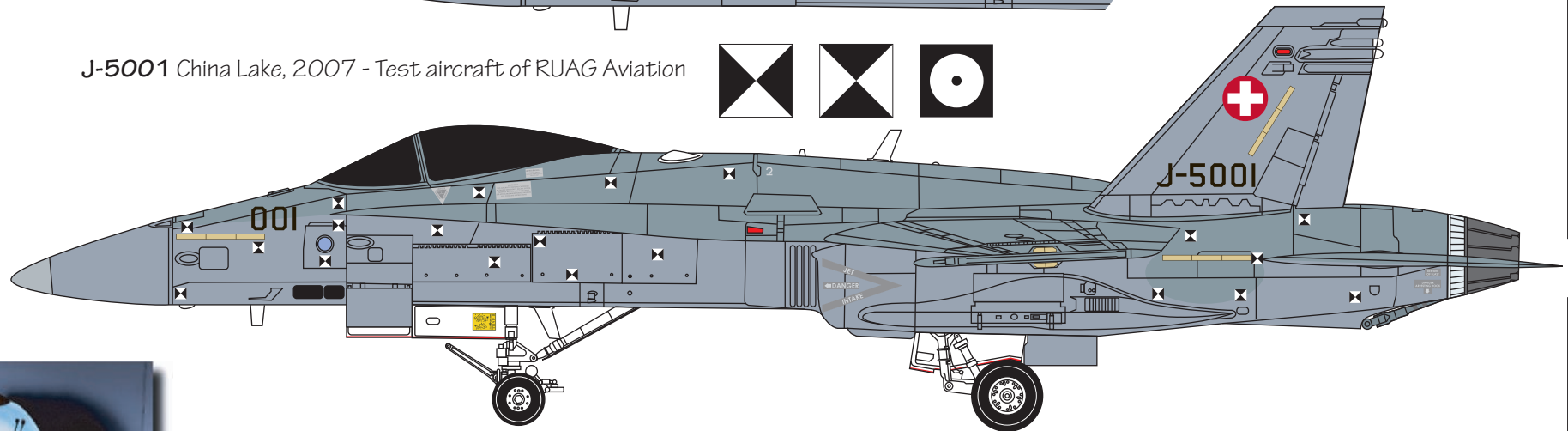
**1/32 scale
screen & ALPS
printed**



MC32008B - ©Matterhorn Circle, March 2010

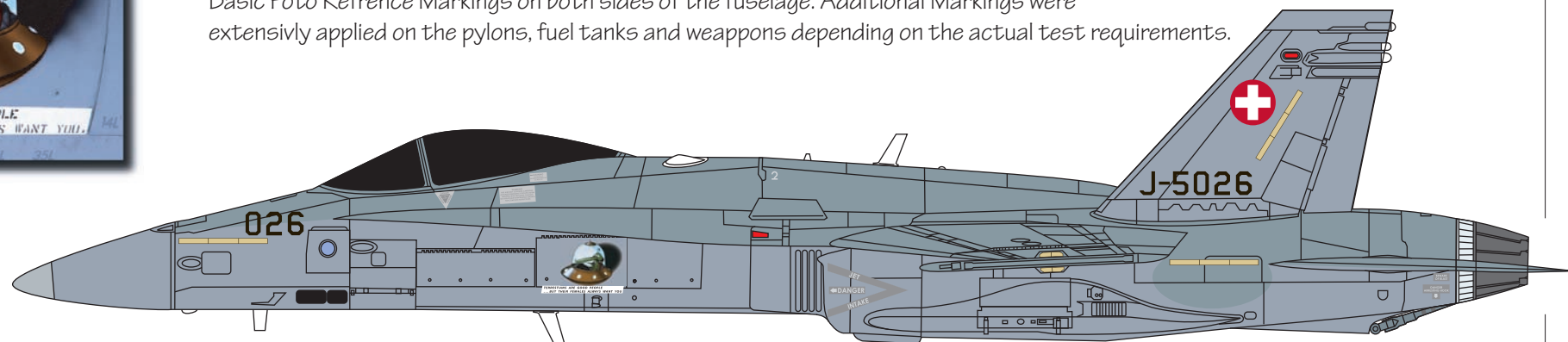


J-5001 China Lake, 2007 - Test aircraft of RUAG Aviation



J-5001 Patuxent River, 1996

Basic Foto Reference Markings on both sides of the fuselage. Additional Markings were extensively applied on the pylons, fuel tanks and weapons depending on the actual test requirements.



J-5026, October 1999 - last of the line - the original cartoon with the title "Terrestrials are good people... but their females always want you." The lower part of the cartoon was removed after a brief period.

These decals have been screen printed by Fantasy Workshop in the UK. I thank Ray Howard for his kind advice as well as Silvain Hautier of Syhart Decals for his great encouragement. Furthermore, I acknowledge Jason Cheah of F-4Dable Models who created the first complete decals sheet on the Swiss Air Force F/A-18s. Credit for support goes also to Geri Friedlos and Erich Riester who provided photo material for this project.

Some notes of interest:

J-5001 was built by the McDonnell Douglas Aircraft Cooperation in St. Louis, MO and belongs to RUAG Aerospace. It serves as test bed for the various upgrade programs, flight performance, weapons integration and technical modifications. This is certainly the most interesting FA-18 in the Swiss inventory due to the constant change of markings purposely applied for testing. The integration of the high visibility camera equipment on the various stations adds a real challenge for the modeller. Lately, names of test pilots and 'kill marks' that represent live firings of various weapons (some that are not in the Swiss inventory) have been applied below the cockpit frame.

J-5026 follows the Swiss tradition with regards to the last assembled aircraft being baptized with a cartoon character. Other examples are 'Mata Hari' (Mirage IIIRS), Geronimo (Mirage IIIS) or Robin Hood (Hawker Hunter Mk58). J-5026 has an alien in a small flying saucer painted on the left hand fuselage. The alien was reading a newspaper with the title "Terrestrians are good people ...but their females always want you", This may have been good news for the little alien, but the words only lasted for a brief period and had to be removed to give the Air Force a better image. Having said that, one can use this title on an early Swiss F/A-18 without the modifications, or simply cut the title off. The visible modifications are the active IFF antennas in front of the cockpit (bird slicer antennas) and the simplified weapon load (not capable of carrying the AIM-9X or AIM-120).

All other F/A-18C & Ds carried the very plain standard US scheme of dark compass grey over compass grey. J-5011, J-5017 & J-5018 had the respective Squadron emblems painted on both sides of the fuselage below the cockpit. In 2005, some color was added to the fins J-5011, representing a stylized Tiger. Alongside this came a set of fuel tanks that carried the logo of the 11th fighter squadron in black and yellow. Two years later, this was replaced by real Tiger art by Stephan Beutler for the 2007 Tiger Meet in Norway. Unfortunately, both schemes cannot be done with this decal sheet since they have been covered before.

In November 2009, fighter squadrons 17 & 18 followed suit with some striking schemes for like numbered Hornets as designed by graphic artist Hansjörg Oberholzer. He kindly provided a copy of the file that was used to cut the masks for the original paint job on the real aircraft. These two aircraft are covered with Matterhorn Circle MC32008A - paint masks and decals



Unique 'low drag pylon' developed to carry AIM-120B AMRAAM on the outboard wing station. This view shows an AIM-9P during an early test. Please note the intensive use of additional photo reference markings.



Camera racks attached to the weapons hard points. In this instance to record modifications to the landing gear. Various camera outfits could be carried. Check www.mc-one.ch for more information.

