

USMC PHANTOMS IN S.E. ASIA

PART 2



VMFA-334 Falcons



Callsign Lovebug 6

LTCOL Jim Sherman and CAPT Len Catanzaro 24/25 November 1968

Left outboard fuel tank ghosted to show ordnance load



VMFA-232 Red Devils



Callsign Motion 2

MAJ Jake Albright and 1LT Jake Jacobsen 22 July 1972

Left outboard fuel tank ghosted to show ordnance load



VMFA-333 Shamrocks



Callsign Shamrock 201

MAJ Lee Lasseter and CAPT John Cummings 10 September 1972

The F-4J Phantom II was introduced into combat by the US Marine Corps in Viet Nam in 1968 with VMFA-334 and ended its combat days with VMFA-232 after the January 1973 cease-fire. The subjects of this decal cover that entire span of events and include combat markings for F-4Js flown by three Marine fighter attack squadrons. A product of considerable research including inputs from squadron members, this decal may differ from what has been published elsewhere. Most USMC air activity in Southeast Asia was in direct support of ground operations and, prior to the Linebacker operations of 1972, few opportunities were afforded for Marine pilots to engage enemy MiGs. The subjects of this decal mainly flew typical "mud moving" close air support and interdiction missions. The only air-to-air victory of the war by a Corps aircraft and crew came on 10 September 1972 when Major Lee Lasseter and Captain John Cummings downed a MiG-21 over North Viet Nam while flying with VMFA-333 off the carrier USS *America* (CVA-66).

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FOX ONE
FOD 48-006
DECALS

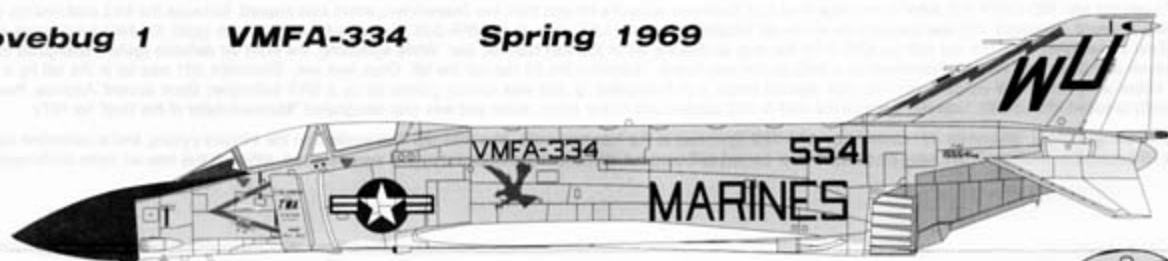
Lovebug 6 VMFA-334 24/25 November 1968



Mission Summary: On the night of 24/25 November 1968, LtCol Jim Sherman, commander of VMFA-334 based at Da Nang, and his RIO, Capt Len Catanzaro, flew two truck interdiction missions along the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos in BuNo 155735/WU6. The flight arrived in the target area at 9pm and Lovebug 6, flying wing in the two ship formation, was to suppress enemy AAA while his lead aircraft struck a truck convoy transiting the target area. When the lead Phantom rolled in, two 37mm AAA opened fire. LtCol Sherman responded by launching pairs of 5" Zuni's at the guns which immediately ceased firing. At the same time, two ZSU-23s opened fire on the lead as he released his bombs and began jinking to exit the target. Again, with LtCol Sherman firing Zuni's at the ZSU's, they quit shooting and began digging for cover. The lead aircraft destroyed all eight enemy trucks and LtCol Sherman dumped his Rockeyes on the nearby gun positions prior to exiting the area. The Phantoms returned to Da Nang to refuel, rearm and go out again. Arriving again in the target area around midnight, they found the NVA had moved in road repair equipment. Repeating their tactics they silenced the AAA while destroying a road grader and repair crews. After Jim Sherman's tour was completed on 13 February 1969, LtCol Sam D'Angelo became skipper of VMFA-334, which had moved down the coast to Chu Lai. He and his RIO, Capt Ken Strayhorn, flew Lovebug 1, F-4J BuNo. 155541.

Aircraft Configuration: Lovebug 6 carried six Mk.20 Rockeye II cluster bombs on the centerline MER, three LAU-10 Zuni Rocket pods, each with four 5-inch Zuni's, on each wing inboard pylon/TER, and a 370-gallon fuel tank on each outboard pylon for each of the missions of 24/25 November 1968. VMFA-334 Phantoms always carried two AIM-7 Sparrows in the forward missile wells.

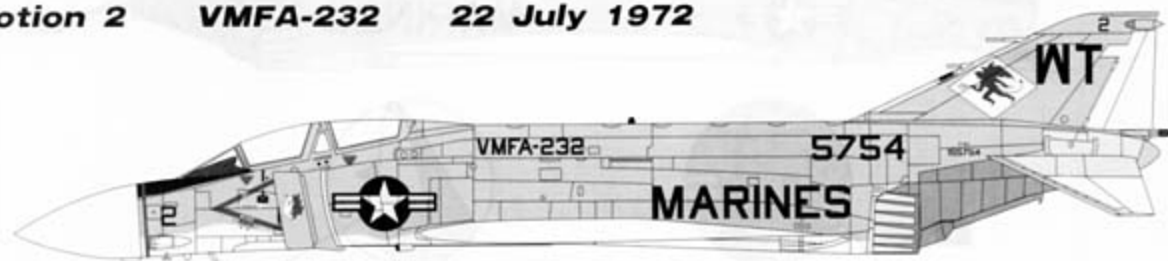
Lovebug 1 VMFA-334 Spring 1969



Markings Notes: VMFA-334 painted a diving red falcon on sides of their Phantoms below the squadron number. A red lightning bolt was applied just behind the fin leading edge. Note the thin lettering style of "MARINES" on the fuselage sides, "Rescue" in Japanese characters under the Rescue Arrow markings. Weight placard stencils were carried on the air conditioning inlets on the nose. No aircrew names were carried on the squadron aircraft except for Sam D'Angelo's Lovebug 1, which carried his name, TWA - Top Wop Airlines, and a Firebee drone symbol marked "Bula Bula." The leading edges of all flying surfaces and jet intakes of VMFA-334's Phantoms were finished in Coroguard, which was dull aluminum in color. VMFA-334 usually painted the noses of their 370-gallon wing tanks red, the squadron color.



Motion 2 VMFA-232 22 July 1972

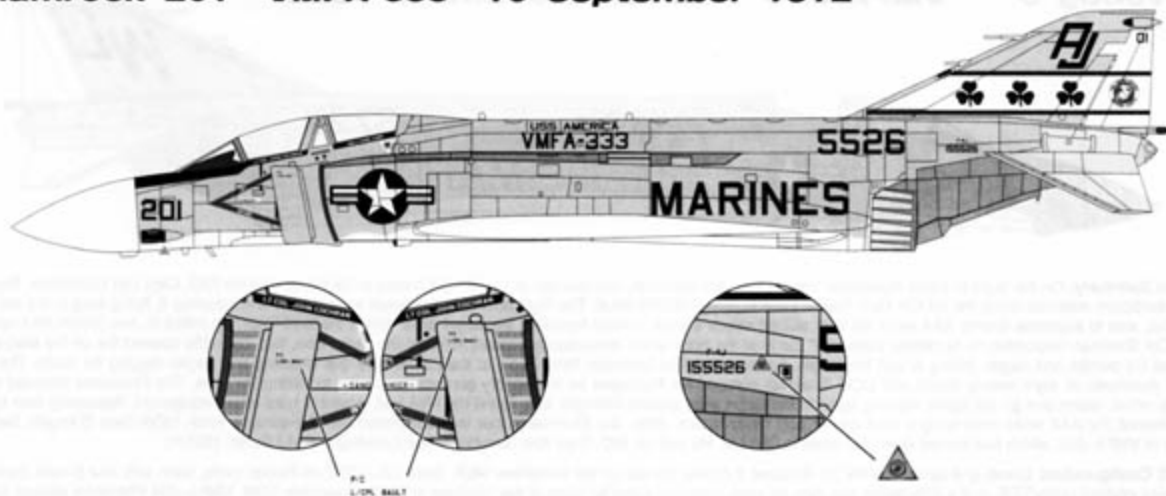


Mission Summary: The Red Devils' Executive Officer, Major Jake Albright and his RIO, Lt Jake Jacobsen in Motion 2, flew BARCAP as part of a Linebacker mission flown from Nam Phong, Thailand, on 22 July 1972. After a two-hour weather delay, Albright led a flight of four Phantoms north and east of Hanoi/Haiphong hoping to draw MiGs away from a USAF precision-weapons strike. The flight plan included a segment roaring down the Red River at 550 knots and 300 feet below the ridge line (100 feet above the ground), overflying two MiG bases and upsetting several sampans with the shock waves created on the water's surface. The flight then popped up to 20,000 feet hoping to lure the MiGs into the air while a second Marine flight remained at low level to surprise the enemy. No MiGs were sighted but the mission was memorable because the Marines were finally challenging the MiGs to come out and fight plus the fun of the legal flattening with sampans overturning and their crews leaping into the river. No hits were received and all the crews returned safely to Nam Phong after an inflight refueling.

Aircraft Configuration: Motion 2 carried four AIM-7E2 Sparrows in the fuselage wells, four AIM-9G Sidewinders on the inboard pylons, two 370-gallon fuel tanks outboard on the wings, and a 600-gallon centerline fuel tank on the 22 July 1972 mission.

Markings Notes: During their 1972/3 combat deployment to Thailand, VMFA-232 painted their Red Devil emblem on the gray vertical tails of their Phantoms. A red and white devil's head was applied to the inlet ramp, the white half forward. Note the wide letter "A" in "MARINES" on the fuselage sides, "Rescue" in Japanese characters under the Rescue Arrow, and the black pilot's kick step markings. Weight placard stencils were carried on the air conditioning inlets on the nose. No aircrew names were carried on the squadron aircraft. The leading edges of all flying surfaces and jet intakes of VMFA-232 Phantoms were finished in Coroguard, which was dull aluminum in color. Motion 2 carried a unique red band on its nose.

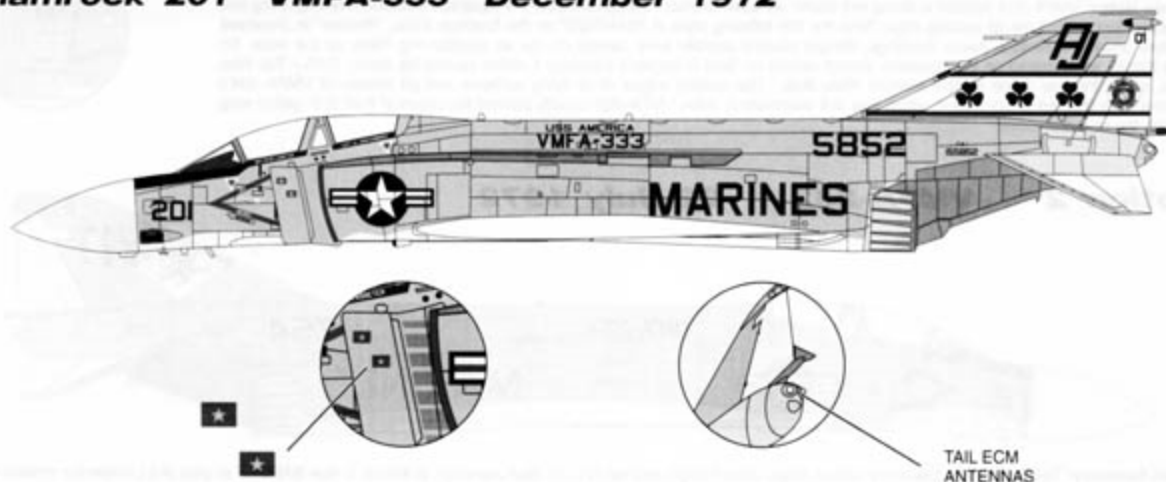
Shamrock 201 VMFA-333 10 September 1972



Mission Summary: Shamrock 201 was flying MiGCAP on 10 September 1972 when its crew acquired a MiG-21 over Phuc Yen airfield, North Viet Nam. Pilot MAJ Lee "Bear" Lasseter and RIO CAPT "Lil' John" Cummings fired four Sparrows without a hit and then two Sidewinders which also missed. Because the MiG pilot and his ground controller believed Shamrock 201 was carrying six air-to-air missiles (the usual USN load, but VMFA-333 carried eight: four of each type), the MiG went wings-level to land. Bear immediately took him out with an AIM-9 for the only all-Marine kill of the Viet Nam air war. While egressing, the NVN air defense system energized to shoot them down and Bear fired his last Sidewinder at a MiG on the way home, observing the hit but not the kill. Once feet wet, Shamrock 201 was hit in the tail by a "Black SAM" (there were no RHAW indications). The crew ejected under 5 or 6 negative 'g' and was quickly picked up by a SAR helicopter. Back aboard America, they were unofficially credited with 1.5 kills. Lasseter became the VMFA-333 skipper later in the same cruise and was also designated "Marine Aviator of the Year" for 1972.

Aircraft Configuration: Shamrock 201 carried four AIM-7E2 Sparrows in the fuselage wells, four AIM-9G Sidewinders on the inboard pylons, and a centerline fuel tank on the 10 September mission. There were no stores or fuel carried outboard but we believe the outboard pylons were retained, although this has not been confirmed.

Shamrock 201 VMFA-333 December 1972



Markings Notes: BuNo. 155526, Shamrock 201, was the squadron commander's Phantom and carried the names of LTCOL John Cochran and MAJ Hank Carr on the canopy rails and of the plane captain, LCPL Bault, on both intake ramps. We believe the green and white aircrew nameplates were on both sides. Note the narrow letter "A" in "MARINES" on the fuselage sides. We saw no forward Ejection Seat Warning Triangle or Rescue Arrow on the left fuselage of BuNo 155526. Black "Gross Wt." panels were carried on the air conditioning inlets. A triangular NAD Cherry Point decal was carried on the right rear fuselage just forward of the small BuNo presentation. Walkways were outlined in black. Note that the leading edges of the engine air inlets were painted red. The centerline tank was white, but tanks decorated with Shamrocks, a green tip, "VMFA333", and a modex number (not necessarily the same number as the airframe) were frequently carried. After Bear Lasseter became squadron commander in December 1972, BuNo. 155852, the new skipper's Shamrock 201, carried Lasseter's name and that of CAPT "Lil' John" Cummings on the canopy rails along with two victory flags on the left inlet ramp representing their claim of 1.5 victories from 10 September. All rescue arrows and ejection seat warning triangles appear to have been carried and are provided.

USMC Phantom Paint Scheme

- Upper Surfaces: Matt Gull Gray FS36440
- Lower Surfaces, Wheel Wells: Gloss White FS17875
- Metal Areas
- Dive Brake Interiors, Edges: Gloss Red FS11136
- Antiglare Panels: Flat Black FS37038

For the 1/48 scale Hasegawa F-4J Phantom II Kit

F-4J Construction Notes

- Remove triangular plates on horizontal tails
- Remove all formation lighting
- Do not use long ECM antenna fairings on inlet sides
- ECM antenna under right inlet the same as under left inlet and not as in the kit. (VMFA-333/ 232)
- Add small circular ECM antennas on tail cone (VMFA-333 only)
- Nose gear door cover on the kit is incorrect (see drawings below)

General Markings Notes

- 30" National Insignia on Fuselage, 45" size on Wings
- Red Ejection Seat Warning Triangles on WU1/6, WT2
- White Outlined Warning Triangles on AJ201
- Swallow-Tailed Rescue Arrows on WU1/6, WT2
- Rescue Arrow style on BuNo. 155852/AJ201
- Fuel Tanks, AIM-9 Launchers, and TERs were White but sometimes carried Squadron Color tips

WU1, WU6, WT2 Upper Surface Scheme

Fuselage and
Wing Walkways
Dark Gull Gray
FS36231 with
Black Outline
FS37038 on
WU1/6 only

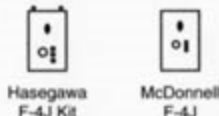
Red Ram Air Turbine
Door Stripe (Decal)



Wing Walkways
Black Outline
only with
no Fuselage
Walkways
on WT2

Fuselage and
Wing Walkways
Dark Gull Gray
FS36231 with
Black Outline
FS37038

Red Ram Air Turbine
Door Stripe (Decal)



AJ201 Upper Surface Scheme

Decorated centerline tank,
VMFA-333, 1972 cruise

References

- VMFA-334 *Falcons in Vietnam*, Col James R. Sherman and Steven Albright, *Smoke Trails* 9:1, 1994
- Gray Ghosts*, Peter E. Davies, 2000
- F-4 Phantom II Part 3*, In Detail & Scale Vol. 12, Bert Kinzey, 1983
- Cruise Books: VMFA-334 1967/9; VMFA-232 1971/2, 1972/3; VMFA-333 1972/3

Acknowledgements

MAJ Jake Albright USMC (ret), Steve Albright, Peter Davies, COL Jim Sherman USMC (ret), and others (names withheld by request)

*I would appreciate seeing photos of your finished Phantom models!
Send them to me, Ben Backes, at:
Fox One Decals, PO Box 12111, Wichita KS 67277-2111*

Custom Art By

