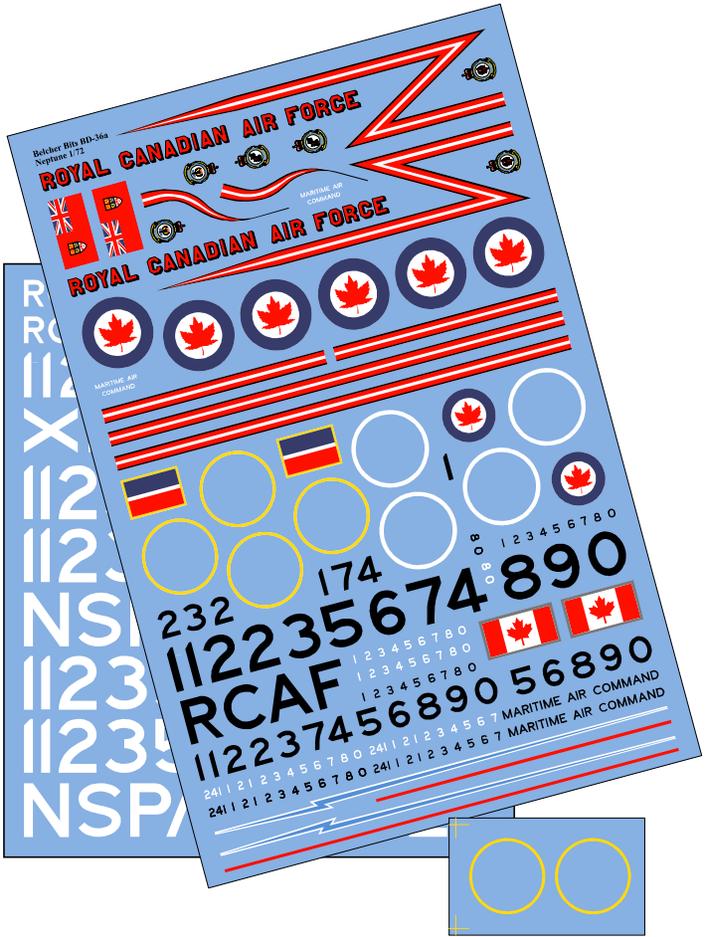




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Belcher Bits Decal BD36: RCAF Neptune 1/72

As early as 1948, it was recognized that RCAF Lancaster 10 MRs would need to be replaced in the maritime reconnaissance role. In 1952, the RCAF issued a requirement for what was to become the Argus but realizing delivery would not come soon enough, ordered 25 ex-USN P2V-7 Neptunes in 1953. They served from 1955, lasting until 1968 and were operated by 2(M) OTU, 404, 405 and 407 Squadrons.

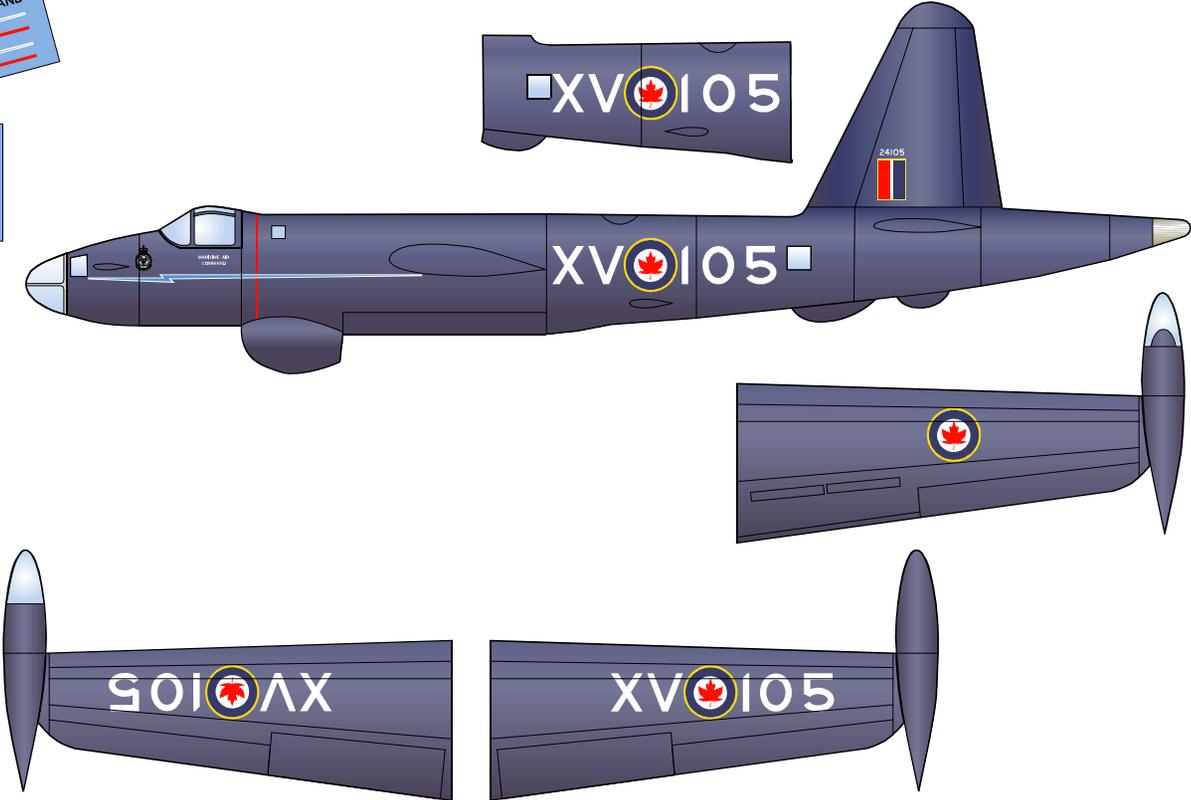
Initially delivered without jet engines, these were later installed as a retrofit so check your references.

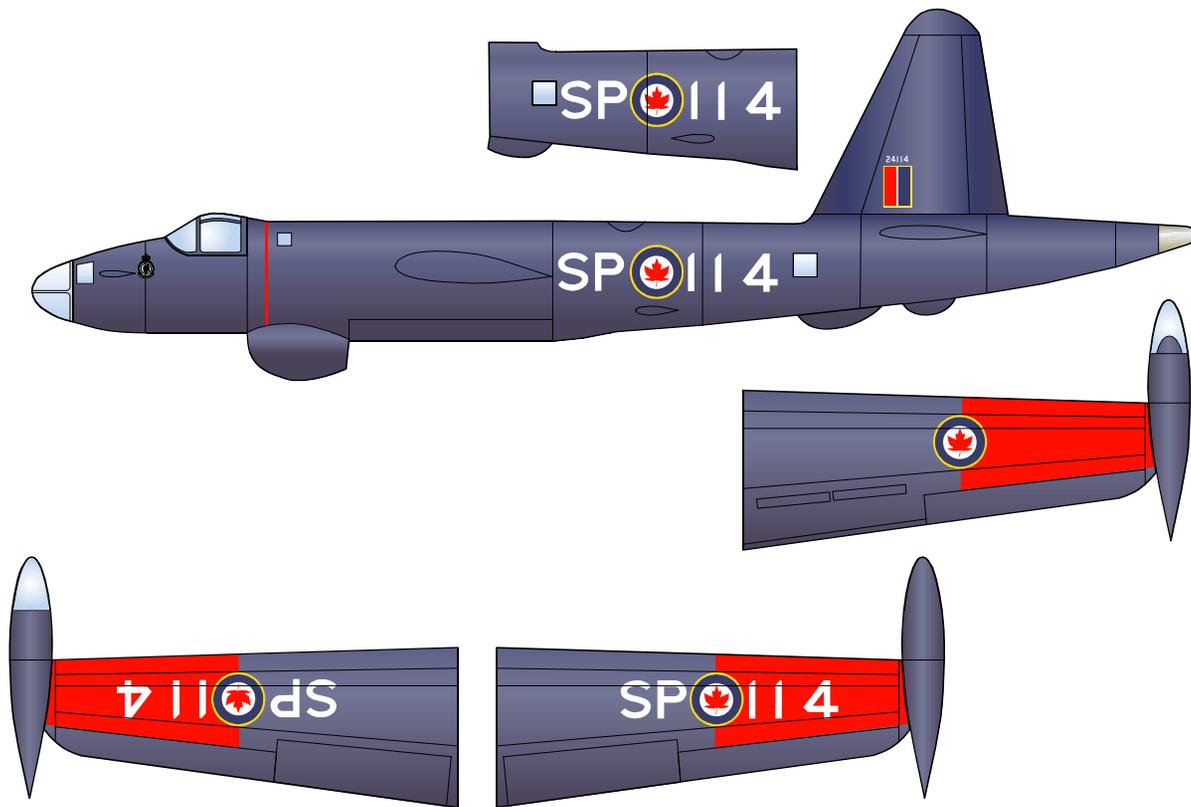
References

IPMS Canada RT, Volume 13 no.6 and Volume 14 No.1
 RCAF Aircraft Finish and Markings, P. Martin, 2003

Neptune, s/n 24105, 2(M) OTU, 1956

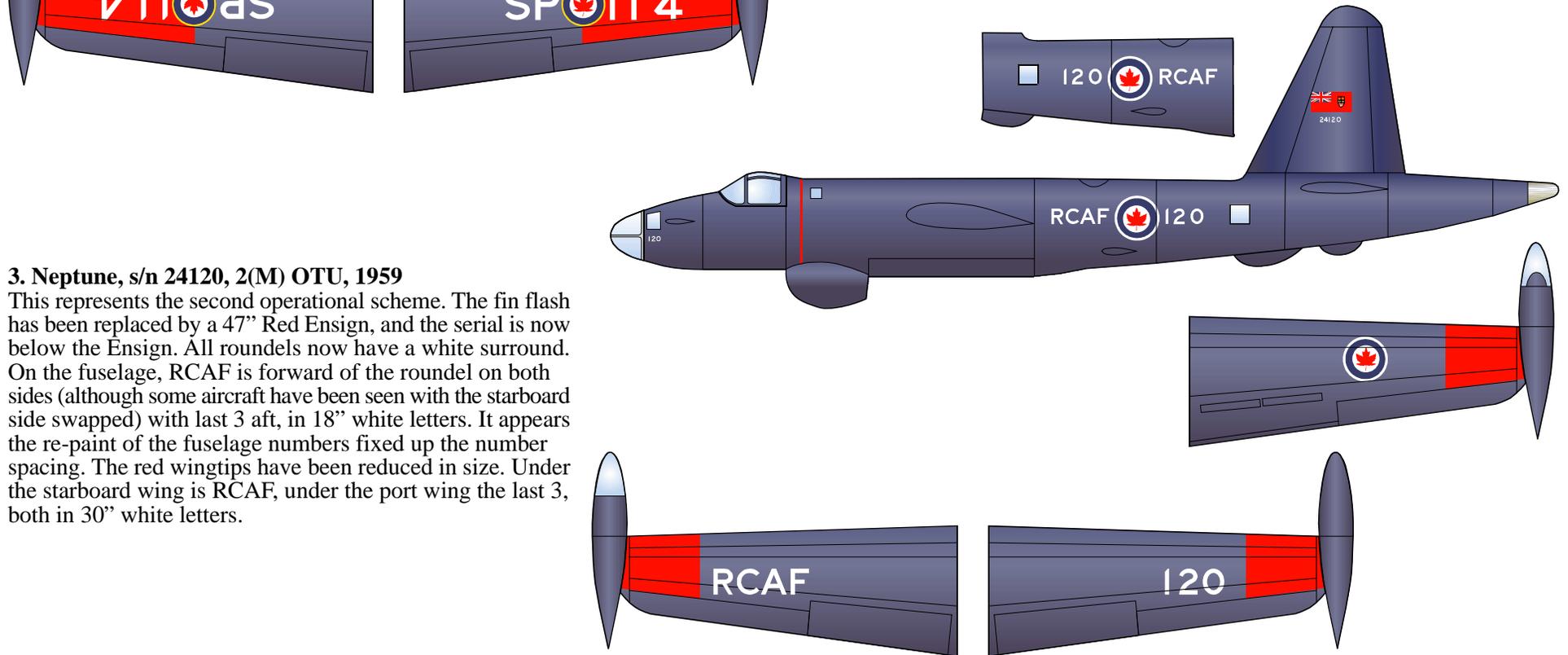
This represents the delivery scheme. The airframe was overall Gloss Sea Blue. Yellow-bordered 48" roundels on fuselage, upper and lower wings. Squadron codes and last 3 of the a/c number were in 36" white letters. Squadron codes were XV (2 OTU), SP (404) and VN (405) ... 407 Sqn also operated the Neptune with code RX; this is not included on the sheet but could be made from a P and N if desired. 2 OTU aircraft had a white-bordered blue flash as shown, and MARITIME AIR COMMAND in small white letters below the canopy. On the tail was a red/white/blue flash, with serial in 6" numbers above. The tip of the MAD boom is unpainted fibreglass. Wingtops had 48" roundels, centred 34" out from end of ailerons, while under the wings were the codes and last-3 in 36" letters. Under the starboard wing, the letters AND the roundel were oriented to read from the rear.





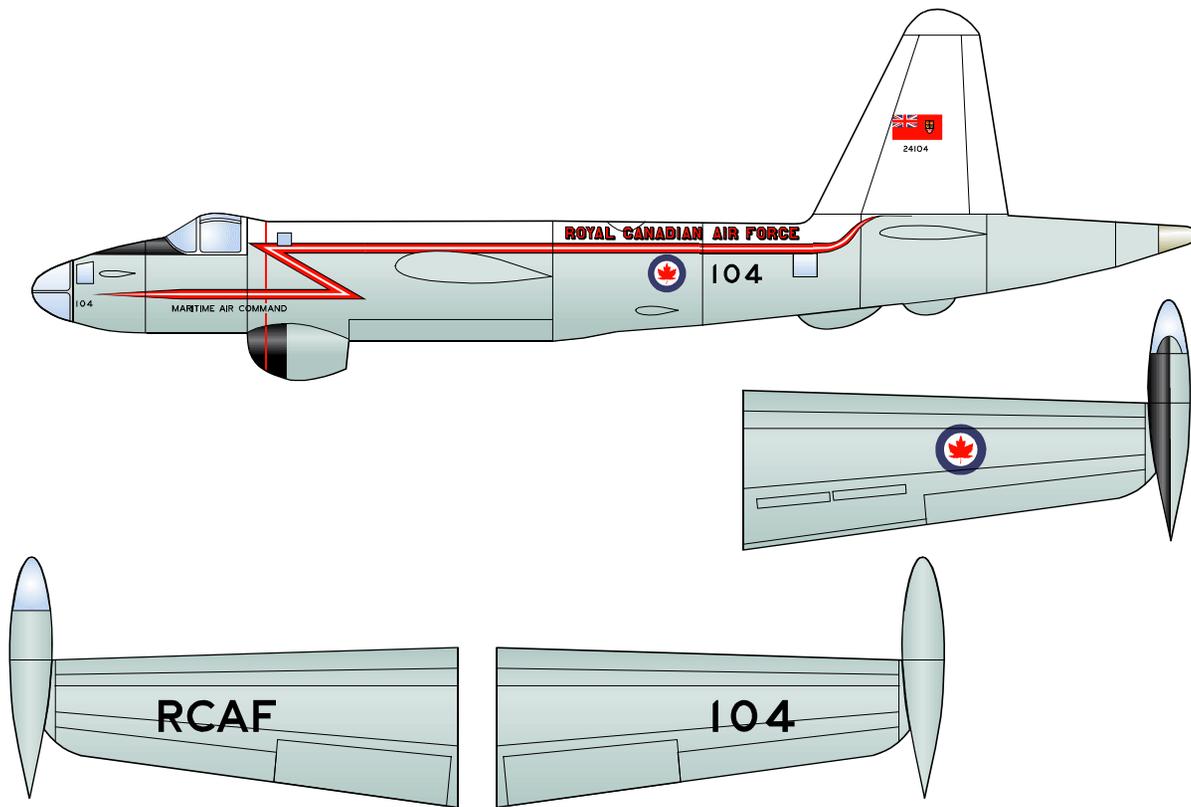
2. Neptune, s/n 24114, 404 Sqn, 1956

This represents the first operational scheme. Basically the same as scheme 1 but without the blue and white flash, and with high visibility red panels on the wingtip tops and bottoms. The tailplane (but not the elevator) was also red. One point is that the letter spacing was a little wonky, with odd looking gaps between the '1' and other numbers. I think the painting instructions must have provided x inches per number, and the number 1 didn't need all that space.



3. Neptune, s/n 24120, 2(M) OTU, 1959

This represents the second operational scheme. The fin flash has been replaced by a 47" Red Ensign, and the serial is now below the Ensign. All roundels now have a white surround. On the fuselage, RCAF is forward of the roundel on both sides (although some aircraft have been seen with the starboard side swapped) with last 3 aft, in 18" white letters. It appears the re-paint of the fuselage numbers fixed up the number spacing. The red wingtips have been reduced in size. Under the starboard wing is RCAF, under the port wing the last 3, both in 30" white letters.

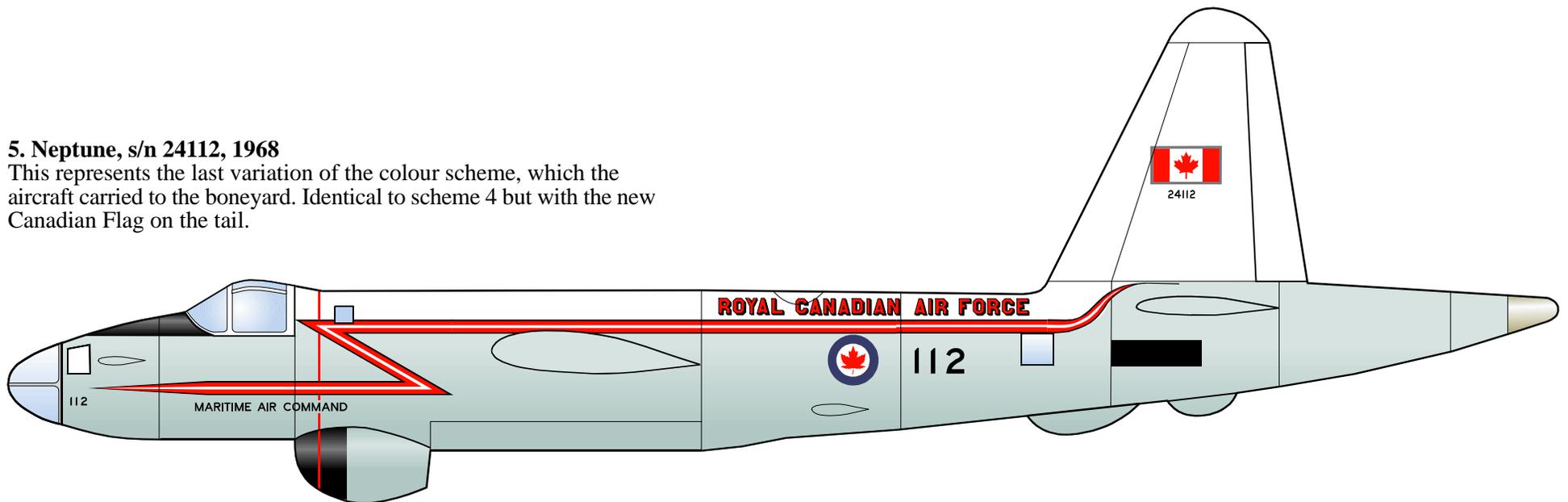


4. Neptune, s/n 24104, 1961

This represents the last operational scheme. The aircraft is overall Grey 1-2 (that elusive slightly greenish grey that has never been released as a model paint!) with a white fuselage top and fin. The colours are separated by a 10" double-reversing flash, which terminates at the aft end with an unusual upwards 'swoosh' just forward of the tailplane. The flash sits just above the rear window, and if carried forward to just aft of the cockpit, will partly cover the forward fuselage window and will need to be partly cut away in the area of the wing root. Above the flash is ROYAL CANADIAN AIR FORCE in 12" shadow lettering. The fuselage roundel is 36" with the last 3 in 18" black letters aft of the roundel. Below the flash centred on the cockpit is MARITIME AIR COMMAND in 6" black letters, and the a/c number is repeated on the nose, forward. Wing markings are similarly sized to the previous scheme but no surround to the roundel, and black instead of white lettering. The wingtip pods have the top inner quarter in flat black, as is the area ahead of the canopy.

5. Neptune, s/n 24112, 1968

This represents the last variation of the colour scheme, which the aircraft carried to the boneyard. Identical to scheme 4 but with the new Canadian Flag on the tail.





This shot, grabbed from the internet and credited to RCAF Photo, shows several pertinent points. First, notice how the fuselage flash needs to be cut away slightly at the wing root, and how the flash covers the prop warning strip. Also note the black painted areas behind the engines (top and bottom of the wing) and the shape of the anti-glare panel ahead of the cockpit. Finally, that black rectangle under the tailplane is, I believe, to cover exhaust staining from a rear fuselage mounted APU, and is present on both sides of the aircraft.