

# Dassault Mirage III

**History:** The RAAF used its Mirages in two primary roles; air superiority and ground attack. The aircraft themselves were initially produced as fighters and ground attack with the first 50 single seaters produced as fighters and the second 50 as ground attack aircraft. Later the first 50 were retrofitted with ground attack avionics so that all Mirage IIIOs could undertake both roles. The pilots who were trained to fly the Mirages were also trained in air fighting and delivering ordnance against ground targets.



The first RAAF unit to take delivery of the new Mirage IIIOs was No 2 Operational Conversion Unit, based at Williamtown in New South Wales. It had been in existence for many years, training and converting pilots to fly the air force's front line

fighters. When the Mirages began arriving the unit handed on its Sabres and began the task of training Mirage pilots for the operational squadrons that were planned to be formed. The first single seat Mirages arrived at 2OCU in the second half of 1964 and two twin seat aircraft arrived in late 1966. The course the pilots went through had two parts, a general course covering basic fighter tactics and air to ground weapons delivery. This was followed by a six month course dedicated to the Mirage where the pilots learned the skills necessary in front line operations.

This training equipped pilots with both sets of skills but this didn't mean that Mirages and their pilots were not fully proficient in both skills. In fact, Australian pilots enjoyed engaging opponents from many friendly forces in all kinds of aerial activities and built up a good collection of camera gun photos of most of the West's best fighters from some of the best units.

Another early unit to accept Mirages IIIOs was the Aircraft Research and Development Unit (ARDU) based at Edinburgh in South Australia. It's Mirages were used to develop and test the Mirage's

capabilities to introduce new tactics and equipment. The small number of Mirages that went to ARDU remained there for most of their operational life, undergoing a number of modifications during their work.

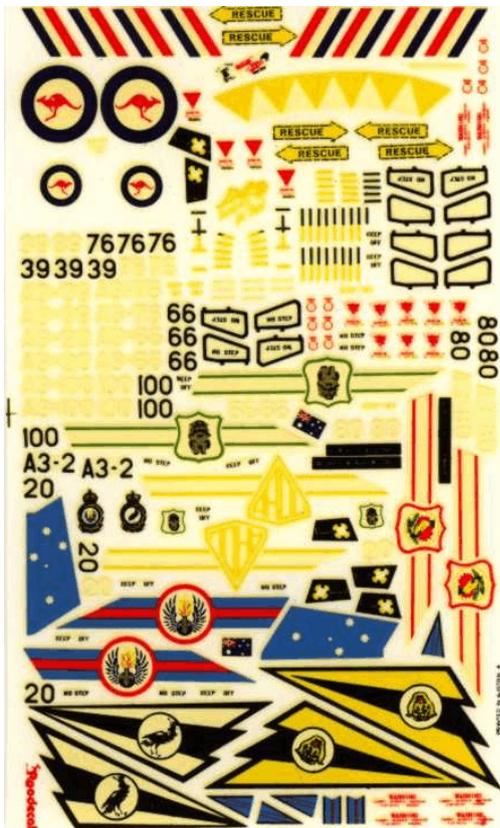


The RAAF's Mirages also served with a total of five operational squadrons, initially based at Butterworth in Malaysia and Williamtown on Australia's eastern coast. Late in their career Mirages were also based at Darwin. The first unit to operate Mirages was 75 Squadron that was officially converted to them on 1 August 1965. The other squadrons to later be equipped with Mirages were 76 Squadron, 77 Squadron, 79 Squadron and 3 Squadron. All these

squadrons had illustrious histories as fighter squadrons during World War II and all flew Sabres before converting to Mirages.

### **The models - A3-2, ARDU, c.1970s**

Many years ago a local company called Roodecalcs produced a decal sheet for various RAAF Mirages. Depending on your ability to cannibalize roundels from somewhere else, this sheet made possible to make at least three different Mirages. It was an exceptionally useful sheet



but I haven't seen it around for a while. Recently I acquired another copy on eBay but, as it turned out, I needed them both.

One of the more esoteric versions of the Mirage made possible by this sheet is a colourful ARDU version in canary yellow and very dark green (so dark it looks more like black). The instructions with the sheet are very helpful about where the marking go so the only trouble is in getting a decent coverage with yellow. There must be a secret to getting good yellow coverage on models but nobody has let me in on it yet. As a result I put on countless coats of yellow paint and only stopped because the poor model was in danger of disappearing under all the paint. It is far from perfect, but as good as I dared manage. When it came to putting on the decals I found they were quite transparent so I ended up using many of the decals from both sheets, just to give the markings satisfactory density. Then, on with a couple of gloss cote and a buff up with some very fine sandpaper. The end result is fairly spectacular, if you don't look too close.

### **A3-100, 3 Squadron, c.1970s**

In the late 1960s I went to one of the wonderful air shows the RAAF used to put on at Laverton every year. (Everything was on display and no expense was spared. On one memorable occasion seven or so F-4s came up from behind the crowd and not much below mach 1. The noise was astounding.) At one of these shows I saw my first Mirage in the new three-colour camouflage scheme. At that stage of my modelling career I'd learned that metallic finishes were very difficult to achieve realistically so when I saw this Mirage in its new colours I was immensely relieved because I would be able make a decent model of one at last. Almost 40 years later I got around to it.

These days the aluminium scheme is easy to do and the three colour camouflage gave me all the trouble. The first question was simply what greys and green they were. (In the old days 'dark grey' and 'green' would have been quite sufficient but these days we've got used to getting FS numbers with everything.) Eventually I decided to go with what looked right rather than getting too flustered, so I ended up using FS36118 Gunship Grey and Humbrol 30 green on the top and Humbrol 28 light grey below. All camouflaged Mirages used the same general pattern but with some flexibility, so that wasn't too difficult to achieve.

I applied a couple of coats of gloss coat for the decals and found again it was often necessary to use both sets to get good colour density. The Frog kit decals were also for A3-100 so I used some of them instead. Then came the problem of the gloss leading edges; everyone knows about them but nobody says how far back they go. In the end I made an educated guess that looks good enough to me. The finished model looks nice, but rather drab in comparison to the other Mirage models I've made so far.