

Martin P5M-2

History: The P5M was a direct descendent of the Martin PBM Mariner that served with many air forces around the world during World War II. Towards the end of the war the US Navy began considering development of a more modern flying boat and the Martin company's proposal for an improved PBM gained favour. The new flying boat was based on the PBM with its characteristic gull wing and nacelle bomb bays and the prototype was built by converting an existing PBM-5. The most notable difference was a conventional tail and the extension of the hull to the tail that gave the new flying-boat greater internal capacity and made it more seaworthy during take-off and landing. This prototype flew for the first time on 30 May 1948 but the P5M was not ordered into production until two years later.

The first version of the P5M, the P5M-1, was flown for the first time on 22 June 1951. It was different from the prototype in several important ways to meet its changing role. The PBM had been equipped to engage submarines caught cruising on the surface but by the 1950s submarines could remain submerged for much longer periods so the new flying boat had all its gun armament removed and it carried much more sophisticated submarine detection equipment. It also had more powerful engines and the cockpit was raised to give the crew better visibility. Deliveries to the US Navy's VP-44 began in April 1952 and 167 P5M-1s were produced. A new version, the P5M-2 was introduced in 1954 and 116 were built. It had more powerful engines, increased fuel capacity and a new T-tail that reduced weight and allowed the incorporation of a more streamlined MAD boom fairing. An advanced version of the P5M was proposed in 1955 but the US Navy decided to use land-based aircraft for its anti-submarine patrol work and adopted the Lockheed P3V instead. The P5M was the last flying boat to serve with United States forces.

P5Ms flew with the US Navy until the late 1960s. Three squadrons based in the Philippines operated from Cam Ranh Bay in Vietnam between 1964 and 1967 patrolling the southeast Asian coastline and occasionally attacking small surface vehicles with rockets mounted under the wings and machine guns fired from open doors. The US Coast Guard took delivery of eleven P5Ms for air-sea rescue work but found the big planes difficult to maintain and handed them to the US Navy.

The only other force to fly P5Ms was the French Aeronavale. Seeking a replacement for its old Sunderland flying boats based at Dakar on the Atlantic coast of West Africa it was loaned ten P5M-2s through the Mutual Defence Air Pact. Delivery was taken of



the first one at Baltimore on 9 January 1959 and after French crews had been trained in the United States the flying boats were ferried to Dakar across the South Atlantic from Brazil. Nine P5M-2s flew on patrols and the tenth was kept in reserve. The P5Ms were returned to the United States in August 1964 when France withdrew from NATO. They were the last flying boats to fly in French service.

Data: patrol flying boat. *Engine* two Wright R-3350-32WA turbo-compound radial piston engines of 2573kW (93450hp) each. *Wing span* 36.02m (118ft 2in). *Length* 30.66m (100ft 7in). *Maximum take-off weight* 38,555kg (85,000lbs). *Maximum speed* 404km/h (251mph). *Range* 3299km (2050miles). *Armament* torpedoes, bombs or mines up to 3629kg (8000lb) carried in wing nacelles and 454kg (1000lb) carried under the wings. Crew eleven.

The kit: Hasegawa 1:72

There is, so far as I know, only one kit of the P5M and this is it. It is not a widely known aeroplane but then Hasegawa has the occasional burst of innovation away from the usual run of most popular aeroplane types that it peddles. On the other hand, since the kit was first released around 1972 it was probably still a well remembered aeroplane then. There is nothing remarkable or unusual about this kit, it is standard Hasegawa fare lacking only some of the more detailed features of more modern kits. I picked it up at a swap and sell a couple of years ago for something like \$30 so I can't say whether or not it is currently available.

Like almost all Hasegawa kits there is nothing difficult about the construction process. The parts have numbers and you can follow the directions in the instruction pamphlet or you can, like most modellers I suspect, just put the parts together in the way that seems most logical. This kit has little features like individual cooling grills for the engines and two rows of engine cylinders and, most novel



of all, the engine cowlings are attached the engines and the engines attach to the nacelles. This is something that would be appropriate to most models of radial engines aeroplanes but you don't see it very often these days, even though this kit was released almost 40 years ago. One review of this kit criticised it for the lack of cockpit detail but it is difficult to see very much through the rather large cockpit windows, so I didn't bother about any more detail. On the other hand, you can see enough that Plan B is a little too basic, so I splashed out with a bit of light grey in the appropriate places as well.

The most primitive part of the kit is the decals. Hasegawa have never managed to provide decals up to the standard of some of the eastern European manufacturers or Superscale and the decals in this kit are rather clunky. There is also little of the stencilling detail that you might find in more recent kits - that might be because people didn't expect them when this kit was designed or because the P5M didn't have much stencilling. I couldn't find any after-market decal sheets so that is still a bit of a mystery.

Fortunately the decal sheet does offer the option of an Aeronavale P5M so I could at least make this kit into something more interesting than the routine US Navy version. In some ways it might have been safer to make a US Navy version because there are enough photographs around to help in getting the colours accurate. The only photographs of an Aeronavale P5M I could find showed it with an upper surface painted white and numbers and insignia painted on the fuselage. It would not have been impossible to improvise them on this model but, since I couldn't find out whether the white extended to the wings (unlikely but possible), I decided it was safer to follow the kit instructions. Doing it that way means there is nothing on this model to distinguish it from any of the ten P5Ms that went to Dakar, but perhaps that is the way they arrived there. The other advantage of using this scheme was that it allowed me to make this model in my favourite modelling colour and the result is a large hulking blue model.