STAR WARS MILLENNIUM FALCON

BUILD THE MODEL – EXPLORE THE GALAXY



SKYTOP STATION BATTLESPHERE

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STAR WARS MILLENNIUM FALCON

USA Published by De Agostini
Publishing USA, Inc.
299 Park Avenue, New York,
New York 10171

UK Published by De Agostini UK Ltd
c/o Royds Withy King, 69 Carter Lane,
London EC4V 5EQ

DE, AT, NL, PL, CZ, SK, LT, SE
Published by De Agostini Publishing, S.p.A, Via G. da Verrazano 15,
28100 Novara, Italy

GREECE
Εισαγωγέας: De Agostini Publishing S.p.A.
Via G. Da Verrazzano 15,
28100 Novara, Ιταλία

Συμβουλευτικές Υπηρεσίες και Επίβλεψη της Ελληνικής Έκδοσης: BEST FLOWPACKS INTERNATIONAL LTD.

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Printed in Italy

ISSN: 2976-6990 (Print)
ISBN EE Countries: 979-12-209-0809-2

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ITALY
Pubblicazione periodica edita da De Agostini Publishing S.p.A.
Uscita n. 56 del 11/02/2026
Pubblicazione periodica quattordicinale
Registrazione presso il Tribunale di Novara n. 755 del 23/01/2024
Iscrizione al ROC n.21243 del 21/6/2011
Direttore Responsabile: Pietro Boroli
De Agostini Publishing S.p.A.
via G. Da Verrazzano 15 - 28100 Novara
Redazione: via G. Pepe 44 - 20159 Milano
Stampa: Rotomail S.p.A., Vignate (MI)

Data di prima pubblicazione: 03/01/2024

Poste Italiane S.p.A. Spedizione in abbonamento postale DL 353/2003 (conv. in L. 27/02/2004 n. 46) art. 1, comma 1, CNS Novara).

L'Editore si riserva il diritto di variare la sequenza delle uscite della collezione e/o i prodotti allegati. Forme e colori possono variare rispetto a quelli raffigurati.

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Prezzo numeri successivi € 13,40. Salvo variazione delle aliquote fiscali. L'Editore si riserva la facoltà di modificare il prezzo delle uscite in caso di significativi aumenti del costo delle materie prime, dei trasporti, del tasso di inflazione e dei tassi di interesse applicabili a livello nazionale.

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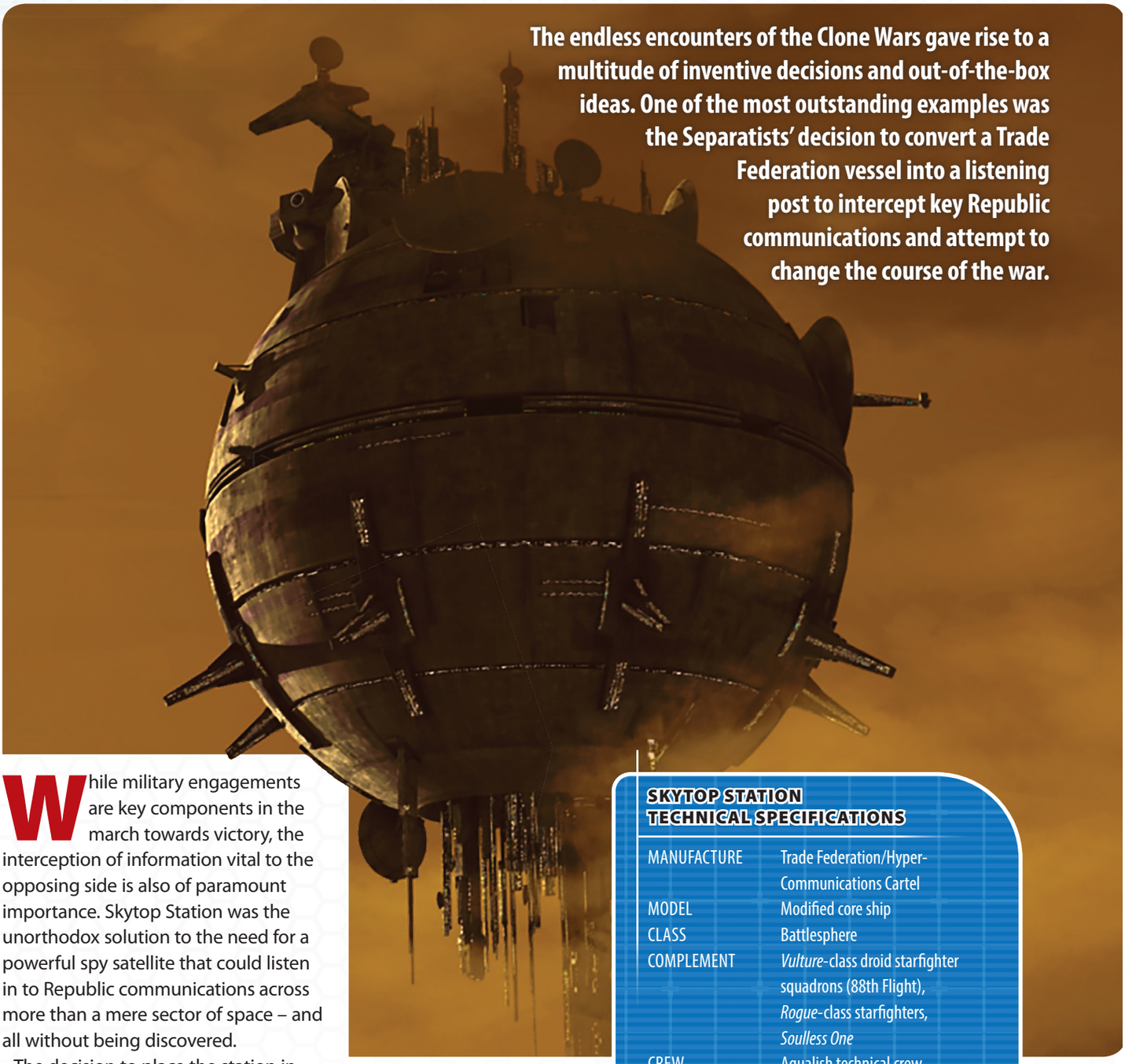
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CONFEDERATE LISTENING POST

SKYTOP STATION BATTLESPHERE

The endless encounters of the Clone Wars gave rise to a multitude of inventive decisions and out-of-the-box ideas. One of the most outstanding examples was the Separatists' decision to convert a Trade Federation vessel into a listening post to intercept key Republic communications and attempt to change the course of the war.



While military engagements are key components in the march towards victory, the interception of information vital to the opposing side is also of paramount importance. Skytop Station was the unorthodox solution to the need for a powerful spy satellite that could listen in to Republic communications across more than a mere sector of space – and all without being discovered.

The decision to place the station in the turmoil of Ruusan 2's atmosphere was a wise one. Republic teams were constantly on the lookout for enemy listening posts, so for CIS planners, the

With Skytop Station operational over the second moon of Ruusan, the CIS began using their new listening post to intercept Republic transmissions. The data they were able to harvest in this way helped the Separatists to ambush Republic forces.

SKYTOP STATION TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

MANUFACTURE	Trade Federation/Hyper-Communications Cartel
MODEL	Modified core ship
CLASS	Battlesphere
COMPLEMENT	*Vulture*-class droid starfighter squadrons (88th Flight), *Rogue*-class starfighters, *Soulless One*
CREW	Aqualish technical crew B1 battle droids B2 super battle droids IG-100 MagnaGuards

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STAYING ALOFT

The designers and engineers worked long and hard to toughen up the Trade Federation core ship's structure to give Skytop Station the best possible chance of remaining airborne, even during the moon's worst and most violent storms. The listening post's position deep in the thick clouds of the moon Ruusan 2 posed a unique and tricky problem. The atmospheric gases were corrosive to metal, making the enormous structure vulnerable to decay, while the clouds belched huge electric storms that threatened the stability of its superstructure.

logic of planting a battlesphere in such an otherwise unthinkable location was very attractive. Orbiting within a moon's stratosphere would be considered foolhardy at best – especially when the moon was as volatile as Ruusan 2. However, installing a listening post in such an inhospitable environment was a good way to conceal it from detection, so the Hyper-Communications Cartel opted to do just that.

MODIFIED CORE SHIP

Basing the station on the central structure of a Trade Federation core ship, the engineers devised ways to protect the hull from Ruusan 2's billowing, toxic atmosphere. They packed it with powerful repulsorlift generators that would keep the battlesphere afloat in the dangerous skies of Ruusan's second moon.

Skytop Station's main sphere was rigged with large upper and lower antennae arrays, giving the station powerful eavesdropping abilities. In addition, the upper hemisphere of the orb held a swathe of sensor dishes, so that, despite being shielded by the violent atmosphere of Ruusan 2, Skytop Station was capable of intercepting messages across the entire galaxy – an amazing feat of engineering. No starship was safe from its prying eyes, no message undetectable across the HoloNet or any other messaging system the station chose to turn its gaze upon.

DROID WORKERS

Such a complex and vital station required a sizable crew, and Skytop Station was staffed with a plethora of droids. While the standard 631 model



AQUALISH CREW

Skytop Station was built by the newly formed Hyper-Communications Cartel of Ando, whose leader Senator Po Nudo had pulled his Aqualish people out of the Republic and joined the Separatists, securing a seat on the CIS Council. Greedy and ambitious, Nudo spearheaded the construction and crewing of Skytop, giving himself the kudos of leading its build and control over funding and financial operations.

Ualaq Aqualish politician Po Nudo was chair of the Hyper-Communications Cartel, which instigated and funded the building of Skytop Station.

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RAID ON SKYTOP STATION

VICTORY FOR THE REPUBLIC

The swirling atmosphere of Ruusan 2 wasn't enough to keep Skytop Station hidden from detection indefinitely. When Republic astromech R2-D2 was captured by the Separatists and taken to Skytop to download his data, he was able to alert his master, Anakin Skywalker. This led Skywalker to Skytop where, after a lengthy skirmish, the station's repulsorlift generators were crippled and it plummeted down into the dense atmosphere of the Ruusan moon. With the loss of the listening post coming so soon after the destruction of his mighty starship *Malevolence*, the reputation of its commander General Grievous suffered. While an embattled Republic was still fighting for a foothold in the war, the two victories spurred it on and slowed down the onward march of the Separatists.



Anakin Skywalker rigged demolition charges that tore through Skytop Station as the rescue squad and R2-D2 made a desperate escape from the falling listening post.



Gha Nachkt was a Trandoshan who, using his freighter the *Vulture's Claw*, would scour battlefields for salvage. When he collected a damaged R2-D2, he saw an opportunity, and took the droid to Skytop Station.

B1 battle droid was cheaply constructed and intellectually underpowered, it was adequate for the menial tasks which the station computers doled out by the minute. It mattered little that the corrosive atmosphere played havoc with their circuits and systems (as it also did with the superior B2 super battle droids and, to a lesser extent, the deadly MagnaGuards also stationed on Skytop Station).

Aqualish technicians, familiar with the vessel and its upgraded systems, operated the delicate sensor suites that ran throughout the vessel and fed the filtered information through to the station's Separatist commander, General Grievous.

SEPARATIST TOOL

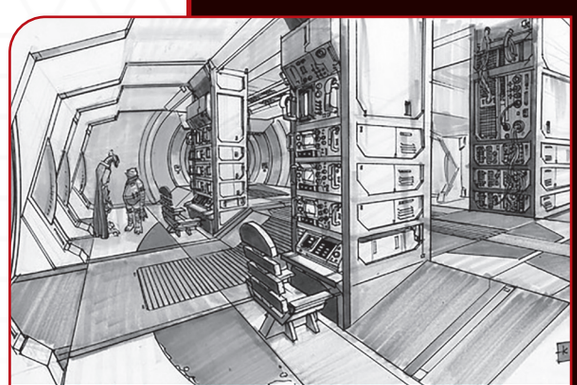
Once operational, the station set about its primary task of spying on Republic messages and communications. Count Dooku was instantly impressed, and relished the opportunities the tactical advantages the station would afford him. The station soon intercepted messages from Supreme Chancellor Palpatine himself, information which persuaded Count Dooku to interrupt the Republic's negotiations with the Toydarian monarch, and offer King Katuunko a place among the Separatists.

In the bid to further the rise of Sith influence in the galaxy, Skytop Station had the potential to be a powerful tool. When playing off both sides against the middle, knowing the intimate details of the opponents' communications is always a huge bonus.

BEHIND THE SCENES

APPEARANCES

The first screen appearance of Skytop Station was in the early Season One episode of *The Clone Wars*, "Duel of the Droids," where the battlesphere served as a key location. This was despite the show's designers only needing to design and 'build' a small number of virtual sets, due to their ability to shoot the same location from different angles. However, the station had been mentioned on screen before that, in the episode "Downfall of a Droid." In fact, it had appeared for the very first time in the *Clone Wars: Prelude* online comic written by Pablo Hidalgo and Henry Gilroy, and drawn by Jeff Carlisle, Katie Cook, Grant Gould, Tom Hodges, and Daniel Falconer. The station would also make an appearance in Nintendo's 2009 DS game *Star Wars: Clone Wars: Republic Heroes*. There, the player could battle IG-86 sentinel and BX-series commando droids in an attempt to destroy the station by taking out the main reactor.



Concept art showing the interior of Skytop Station for *The Clone Wars*: 'Duel of the Droids'.

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STARSHIP TRANSPONDERS

Transponders enable operators to register ownership of a starship, but the technology has been co-opted as a means of controlling the movements of vessels around the galaxy. While Imperial 'Identify Friend/Foe' transponders were intended exclusively for the Empire's navy, one also found its way onto the *Falcon*.



Buried deep within the *Millennium Falcon's* starboard mandible is one of her most secret fittings. Her Imperial IFF transponder, fitted and maintained by Han and Chewbacca, was so thoroughly illegal that its mere possession would have automatically warranted the most severe punishment that the Empire could mete out.

Transponders are shipboard devices that emit an identifying signal – which the equipment usually sends out in response to receiving an interrogation signal. Every legitimate ship's transponder transmits a code which is unique to that vessel, so it can be used to identify it at a distance and track its approach to a planet's orbital space.

THE BUREAU OF SHIPS AND SERVICES

Recording these codes is an essential part of a ship's registration process, and the stored data includes the registered name of the starship, her type and class, and the names of the registered owner and commanding officer. For thousands of years, recording and updating transponder codes has been the responsibility of the Bureau of Ships and Services (BoSS), the self-appointed insurer of public safety during space travel. The BoSS has remained an autonomous non-governmental organization – although during Emperor Palpatine's reign it became known as 'Imperial Ships and Services'.

The Bureau registers nearly every ship in the civilized galaxy, other than a few whose owners go to great lengths to keep a low profile. Among the Bureau's other responsibilities is the administration of pilots' flight certificates, and it also keeps galactic charts and maps up to date, transmitting the information to space ports across the galaxy so that starships can improve their data. The BoSS has offices at the local, planetary level, to keep an eye on the vessels plying in system routes. It also operates on a larger, galactic level, with offices at most of the galaxy's major space ports.

EMBEDDED DATA

The transponder codes assigned by the BoSS are built into starships' power units by making slight individual variations in the ship's sublight engine emissions. This unique pattern is regulated by a transponder director that is sealed into the ship's engine.

In theory, this makes transponder codes tamper-proof, while the BoSS prides itself that its agents are incorruptible. In practice, transponder codes can be altered in three ways: replacing the sublight drive, installing new transponder codes or tampering with the bureau files, which are stored in encoded computer cores. All of these are complex procedures that require a lot of time, money, and expertise, and are often abandoned in favor of buying or chartering a new vessel for a particular job.

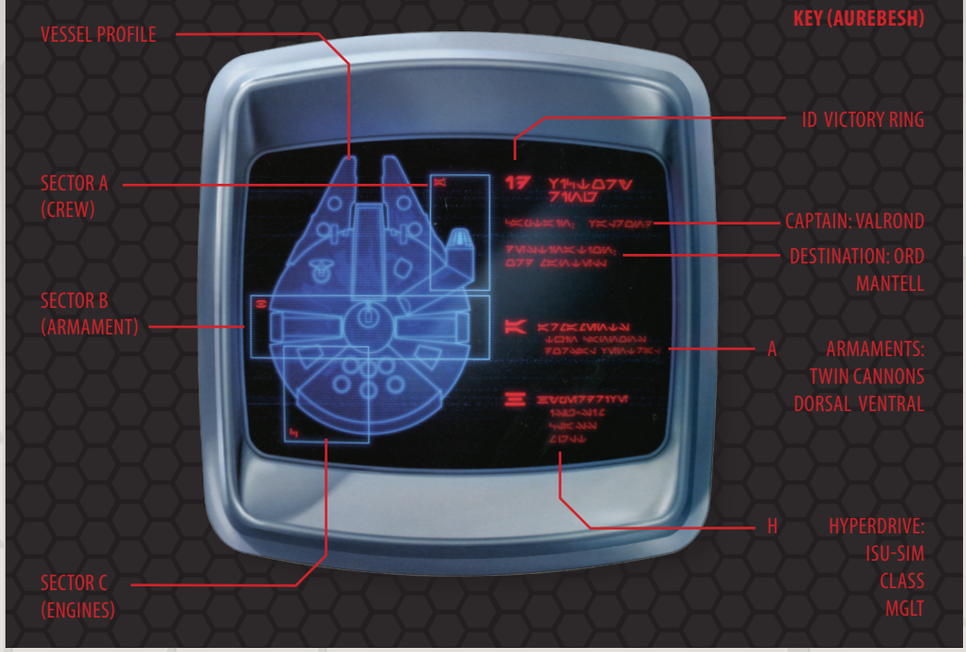
IMPERIAL IFF TRANSPONDERS

Under the totalitarian rule of the Empire, the Imperial fleet realized that transponder codes could be used to maintain Emperor Palpatine's tight grip on the galaxy. When the Empire took power, starships received their own Imperial Ships and Services-issue datapad for inspection by port officials and Imperial boarding parties. In addition, the Empire's starships were equipped with 'Identify Friend/Foe' (IFF) transponders. These military-grade starship components were used

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TRANSMITTING A FALSE IDENTITY

This display shows the readout that appeared on an Imperial screen during an encounter with a battered YT-1300 freighter near Ord Mantell. The ship checked out as the *Victory Ring*, operated by a Captain Valrond. In reality, this was an identity created by Han Solo to match a false IFF transponder code that he had loaded into the *Millennium Falcon*. On this occasion, Leia Organa was able to use the Varond alias, as Solo had not specified a gender for the captain.



to interrogate the transponder codes broadcast by other spacegoing vessels that come into range, as well as sending their own transponder codes out into space. Such codes were received in a spirit of friendship by other Imperial starships and their allies, and a spirit of fear by all those who opposed Palpatine and the agents of the Galactic Empire.

Installation of an IFF transponder aboard any civilian vessel was virtually unknown. In fact, fitting such illicit technology aboard a non-Imperial Navy starship was made a felony of the highest order, and the discovery of the equipment would spark a high priority Imperial investigation into the activities of everyone found aboard a starship with one fitted.

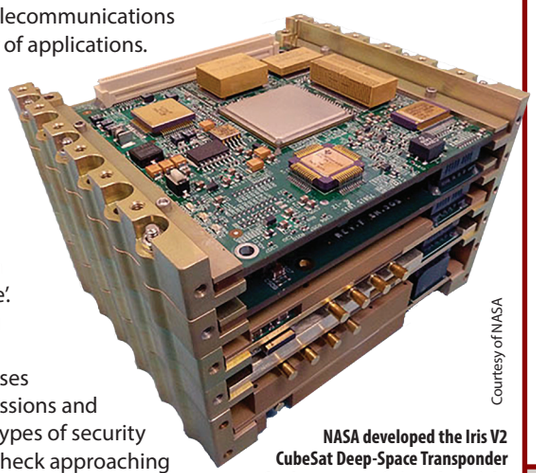
THE FALCON'S TRANSPONDER

The *Falcon*'s IFF transponder is installed halfway up the starship's starboard mandible, but neither Han Solo nor Chewbacca admitted to knowing how this sensitive piece of Imperial equipment got there, or who had it installed. Nevertheless, they were happy to use the IFF system to stay one step ahead of nearby starships. When used in conjunction with the *Falcon*'s long-range sensors, the IFF transponder can help to spot other starships several minutes before their captain, pilot, or crew are able to detect and then identify the modified YT-1300 freighter.

In instances when the crew of the *Falcon* decide to stick around instead of running into hyperspace, the ship's IFF transponder can be used to make her appear to be just another one of the many thousands of YT-1300 Corellian freighters tramping across the galaxy. Over the decades, the official record shows that the *Millennium Falcon*'s serial number YT 492727ZED has been registered as *Corell's Pride*, *Fickle Flyer*, *Meetyl's Misery*, *Stellar Envoy*, and *Wayward Son*. However, during her clandestine smuggling career, she was registered in hundreds of disparate space ports under dozens of different aliases. The *Falcon* is known to have masqueraded as the *Close Shave*, *Sunfighter Franchise*, and *Victory Ring* during Solo's various clandestine operations.

REAL-WORLD TRANSPONDERS

Transponders (an abbreviation of 'transmitter-responders') are a real-world telecommunications technology with a wide variety of applications. The use closest to that of the Imperial Starfleet is in military aviation, which has its own friend-or-foe systems, and also in air traffic control. When a transponder receives an interrogation message, it responds with an identification signal known as a 'squawk code'. Everything from Earth-orbiting satellites to security gates also uses transponders. A satellite uses transponders to uplink transmissions and re-transmit them, while some types of security gates use IFF transponders to check approaching vehicles. Each arrival triggers the gate's interrogation signal, which seeks out the onboard transponder to ensure it belongs to an authorized vehicle. If it does not check out, the gate will not open.



Courtesy of NASA

NASA developed the Iris V2 CubeSat Deep-Space Transponder for deep-space missions that might take a number of years. The equipment is designed to be physically robust, radiation tolerant and capable of shedding excess heat during navigation-tracking sessions lasting several hours.

BEHIND THE SCENES

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YOUR NEXT PARTS

COMPONENTS CHECKLIST

1. Hull frame TF-23
2. Hull frame TF-24
3. Plant-on details (3 on sprue)
4. 2-hole connectors (x 2)
5. 4-hole connectors (x 2)
6. Hull panel TP-17

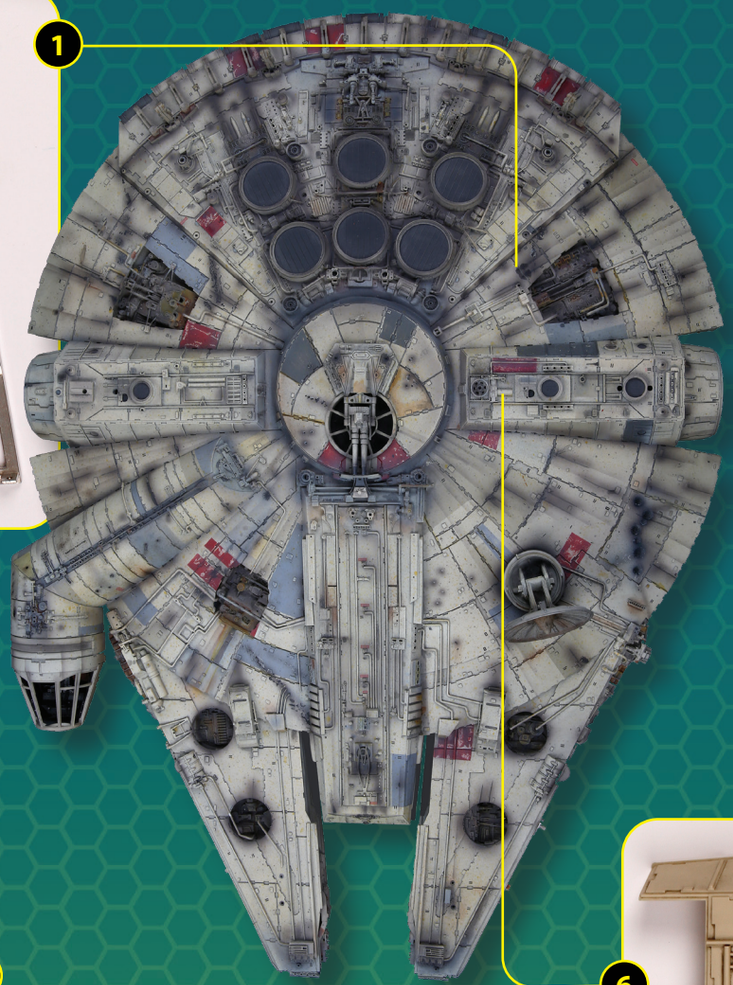
This issue's parts will soon be used to extend the upper hull framework, but first it is time to add the final details to the lower hull plating.

Because of the large cutaway in the upper hull, you need a few more pieces before continuing to build the framework. However, there is plenty of assembly work to do, in preparation for the electronic components which you will receive next issue. Stage 57 sees you fitting the main circuit board that will enable you to test the ramp mechanism and its lighting circuit – but before doing so, you need to add the final details to the lower hull plating.

WHERE THE PARTS FIT

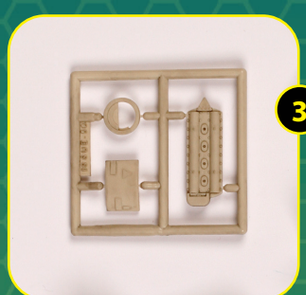
HULL FRAMES



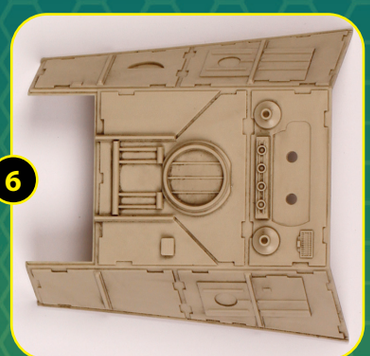




PLANT-ON DETAILS



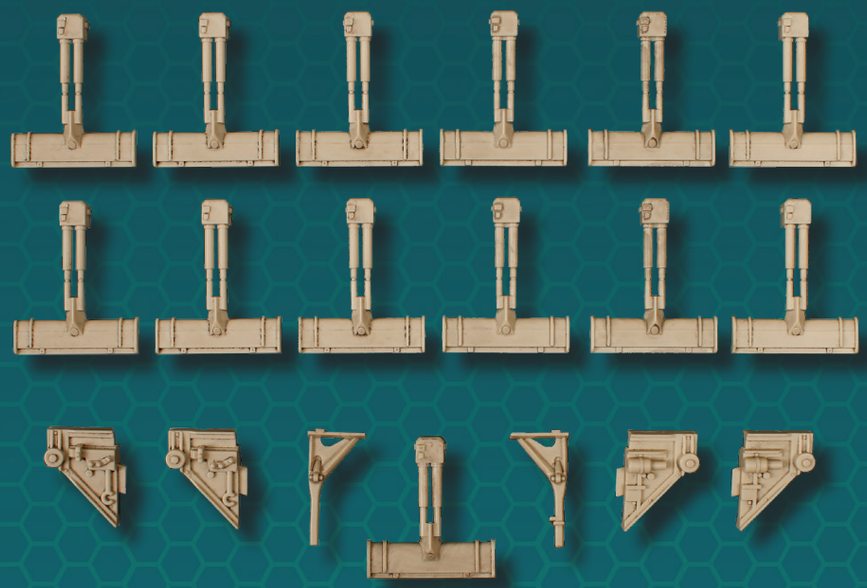
HULL PLATING



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DETAILING THE THRUST VECTOR PLATES

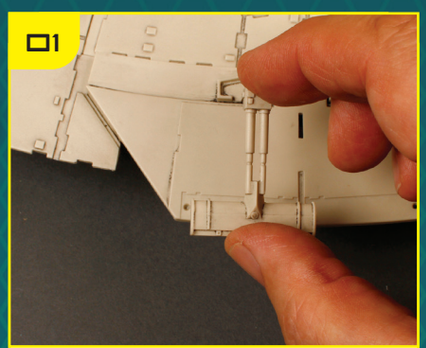
The 13 thrust vector plates below the sublight engines have a complex array of external mechanisms that can now be fitted.



Lay the parts out as shown, noting that one actuator (shown in the bottom row) is shorter than the other 12, and that the y-shaped braces are a left and right pair.

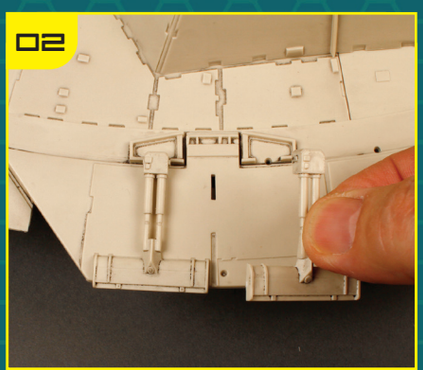
For this stage, you need the 13 thrust vector actuators provided with Issues 32, 33, and 34, plus the pressure stabilizer assemblies put together in Stage 34, and the left and right plant-on braces from Issue 45.

01



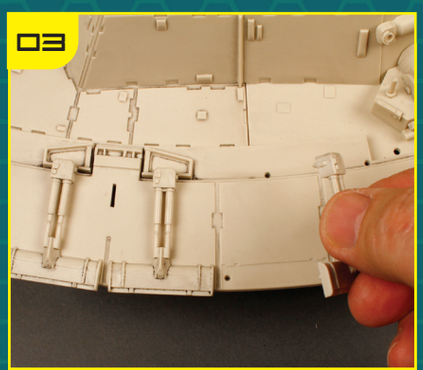
Glue the first full-length actuator to the three fixing holes in the thrust vector plate furthest to the left.

02



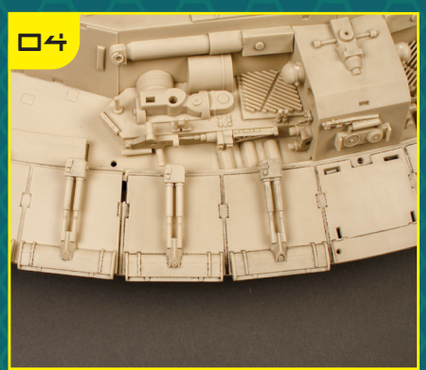
Glue the second full-length actuator to the thrust vector plate next to it.

03



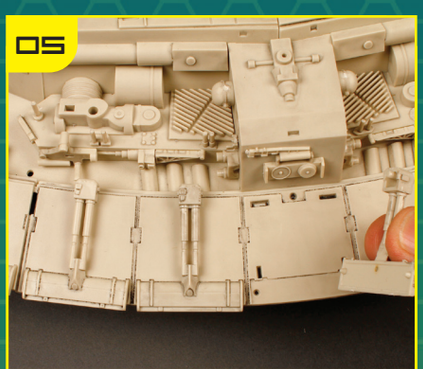
Fit the third full-length actuator in the same way.

04



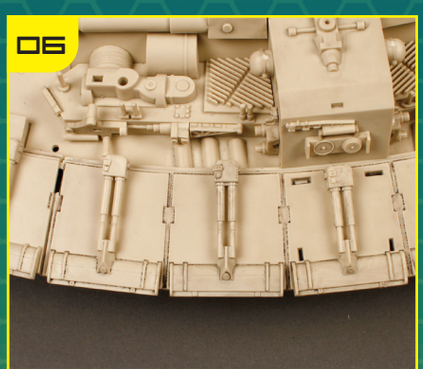
Continue like this until you have fitted six of the thrust actuators.

05



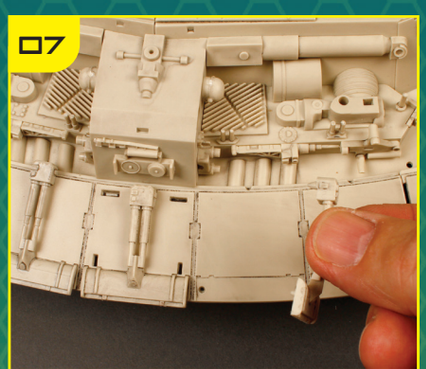
The center thrust actuator is the one that is shorter than the rest.

06



Glue this actuator to the three holes in a similar way to the others.

07

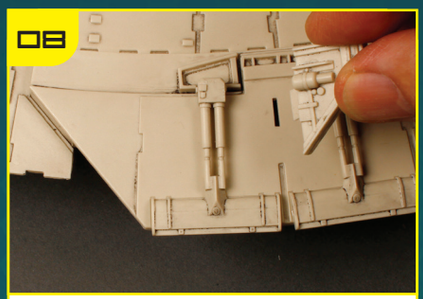


Continue fitting full-length actuators to the remaining six thrust vector plates.

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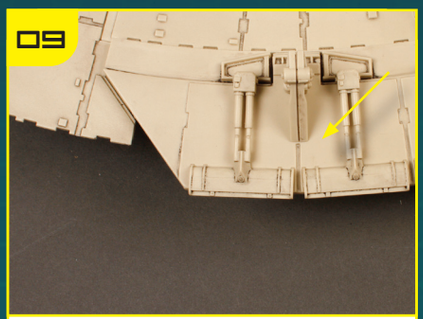
STAGE 56 ASSEMBLY

08



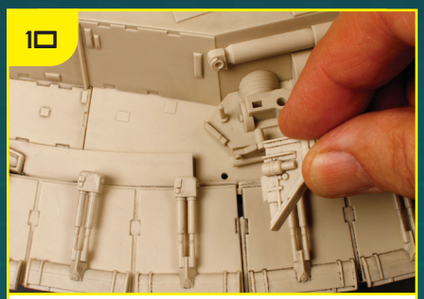
Glue the first pressure stabilizer into the slot between the end two thrust vector plates.

09



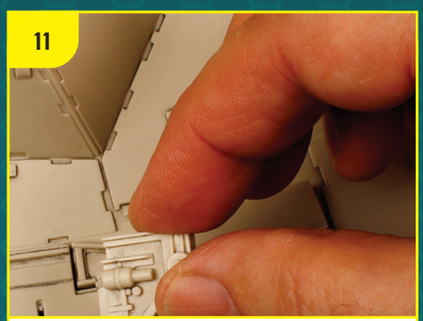
Ensure that the pressure stabilizer is at right angles to the plates.

10



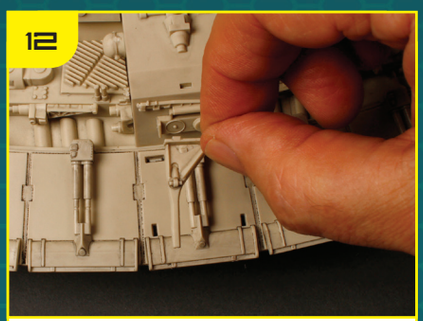
Glue the second pressure stabilizer into the slot between the fourth and fifth thrust vector plates.

11



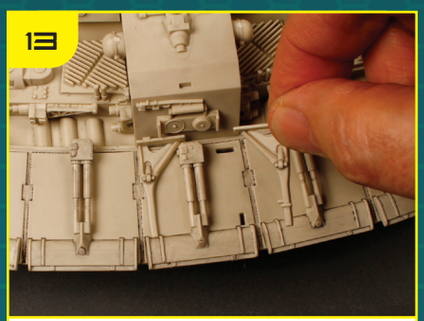
Glue the other two pressure stabilizers to the other end of the array.

12



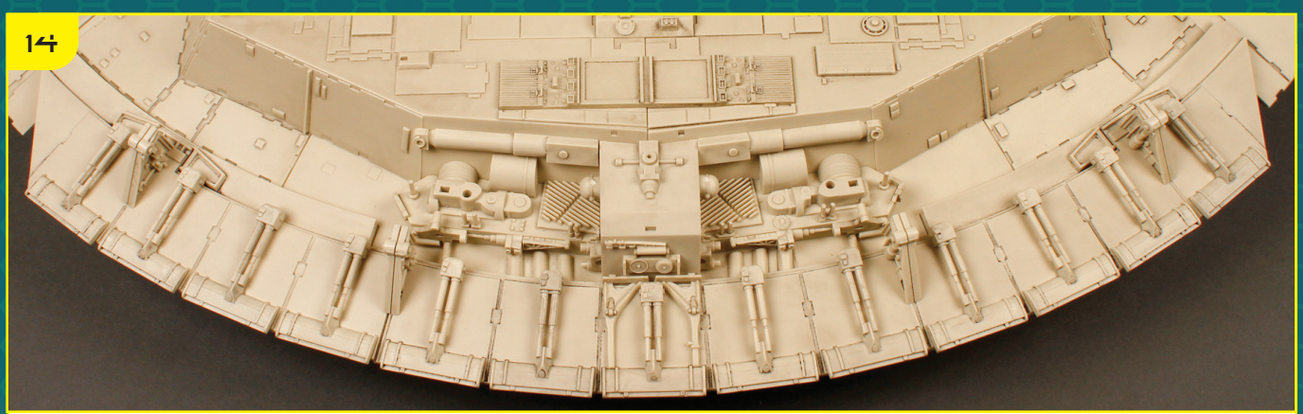
Glue the left y-shaped brace to the two slots in the center thrust vector plate.

13



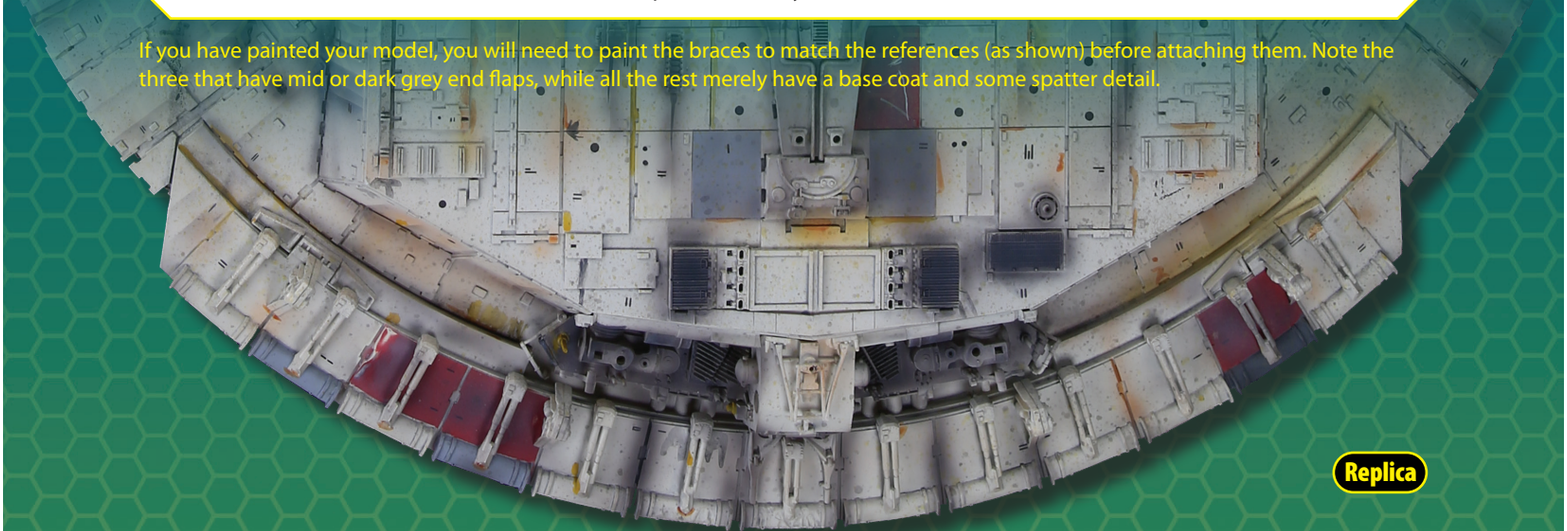
Fit the right y-shaped brace in a similar way.

14



The completed assembly should look like this.

If you have painted your model, you will need to paint the braces to match the references (as shown) before attaching them. Note the three that have mid or dark grey end flaps, while all the rest merely have a base coat and some spatter detail.



Replica

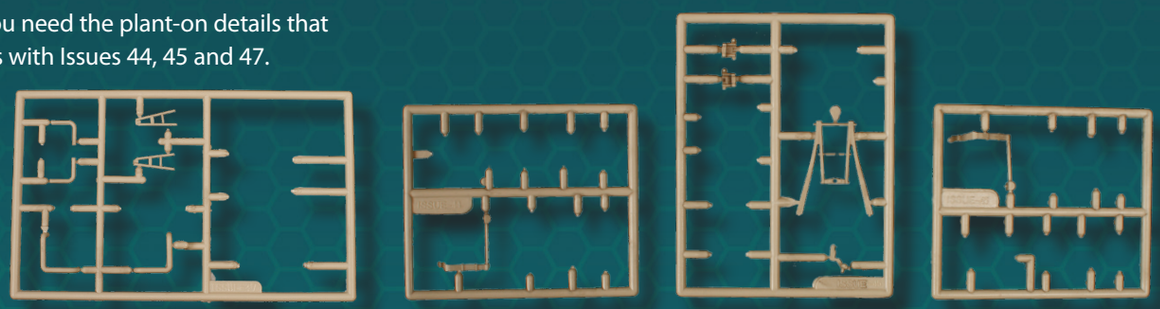
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ADDING THE FINAL DETAILS

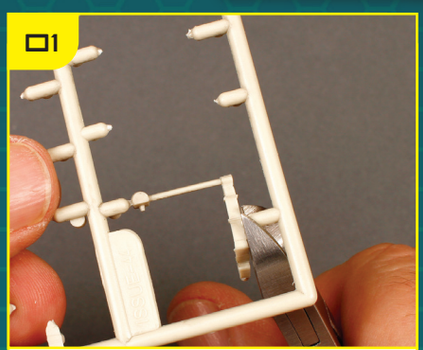
There are a few more fine details that have not been fitted yet to prevent them from being damaged. Once you have added them, you will need to handle the underside of the ship carefully and not put pressure on the most delicate components.

For this stage, you need the plant-on details that came on sprues with Issues 44, 45 and 47.

If you have left the parts on their sprues as suggested, they will look like this.

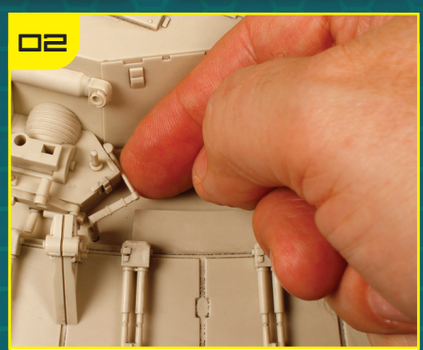


01



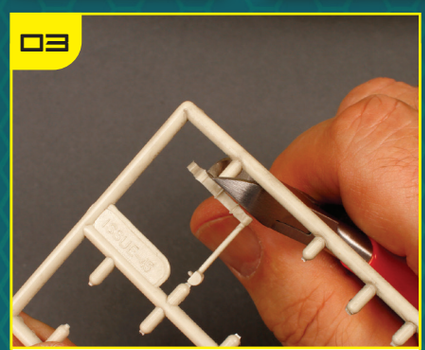
Cut this part off the Issue 44 sprue and trim off any molding flash.

02



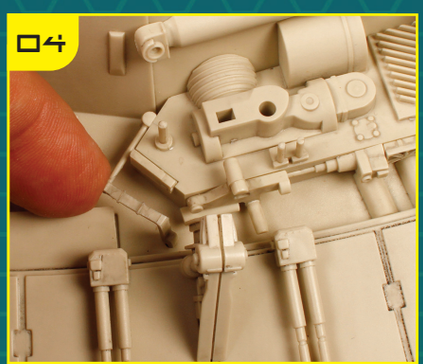
It fits into a hole in the end of the central machinery, and another in the hull.

03



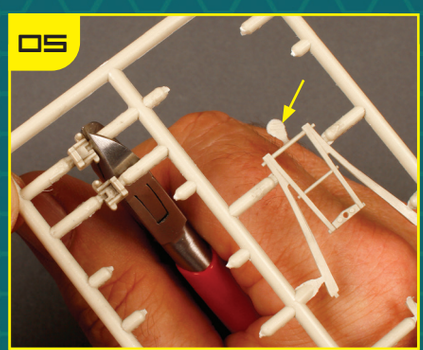
Cut the mirror-image part off the Issue 45 sprue.

04



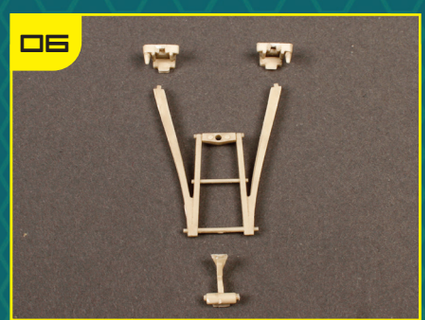
Glue it to the other end of the machinery.

05



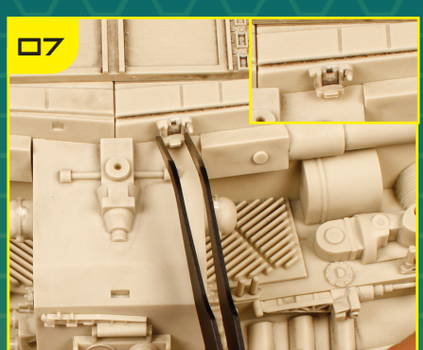
Clip all four parts off the remaining Issue 45 sprue. Trim off the indicated flash.

06



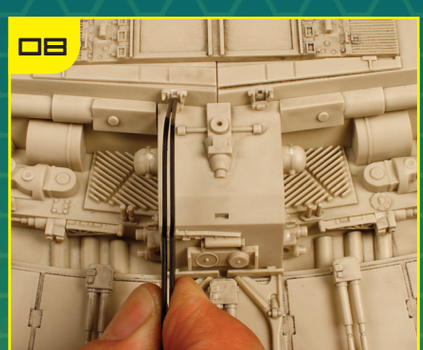
Lay out the four parts like this, noting that the small brackets at the top are left- and right-handed.

07



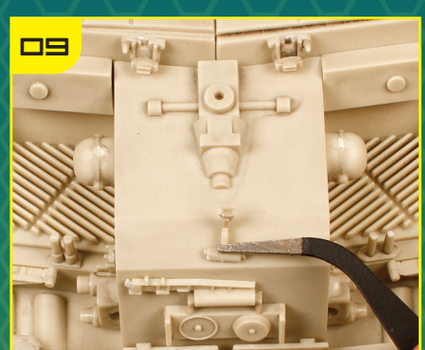
Carefully glue the right-hand bracket to this notch in the rear housing.

08



Glue the left-hand bracket to the other notch.

09

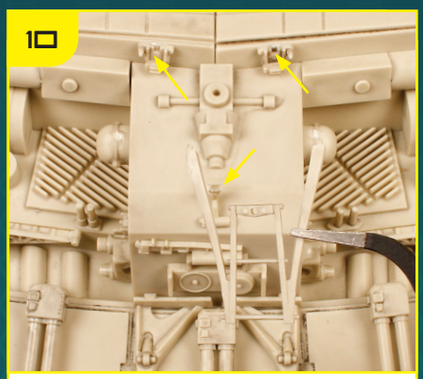


Glue the T-shaped saddle to the center notch in this housing.

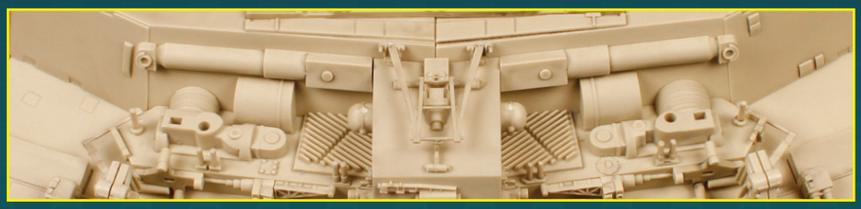
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STAGE 56 ASSEMBLY

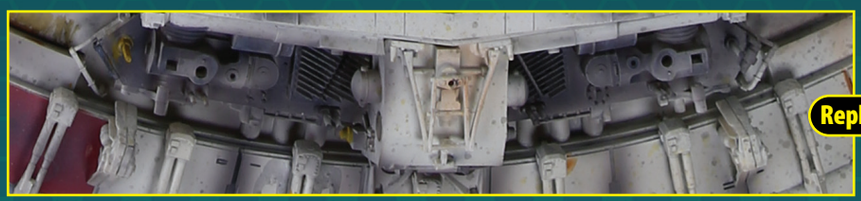
10



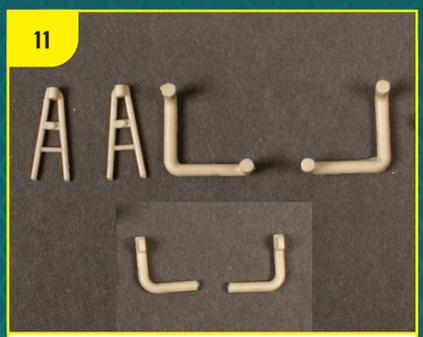
Glue the W-shaped frame to the holes in the brackets and the groove in the top of the saddle.



The completed assembly should look like this. If you painted your model, you will need to paint the parts to match the references (as shown below) before and after attaching them.

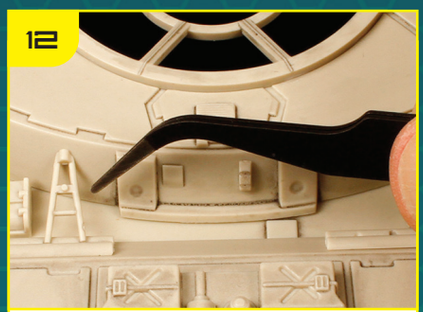


11



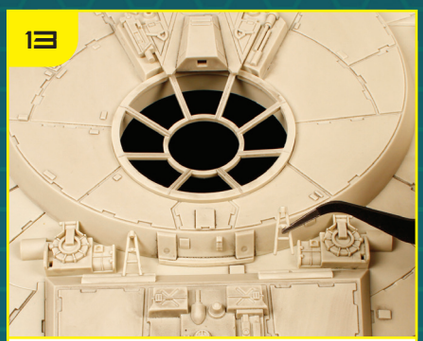
Cut the six parts off the Issue 47 sprue: note that they are all in left/right pairs.

12



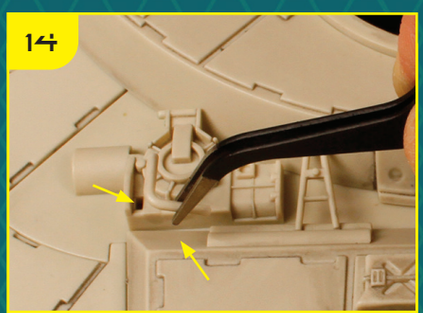
Glue this A-frame to the two holes in the component just forward of the turret and glue the point to the turret.

13



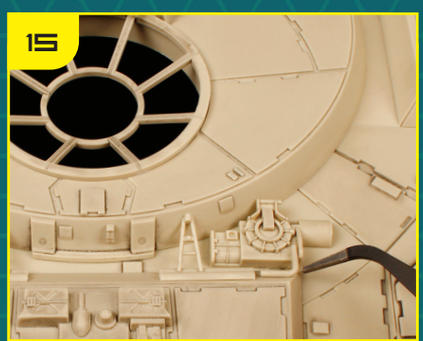
Glue the other A-frame to the opposite side of the model.

14



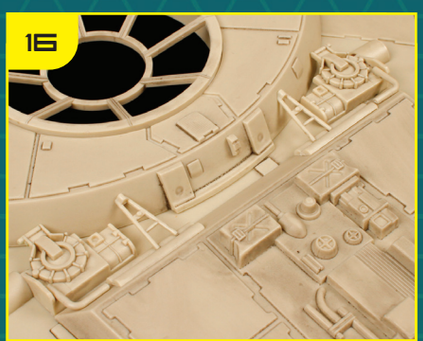
Glue the tab on the end of the smaller L-shaped pipe into this slot in the housing, and glue its other end against the flat.

15



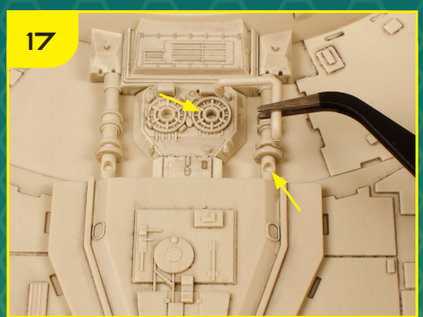
Glue the matching pipe to the opposite side of the model.

16



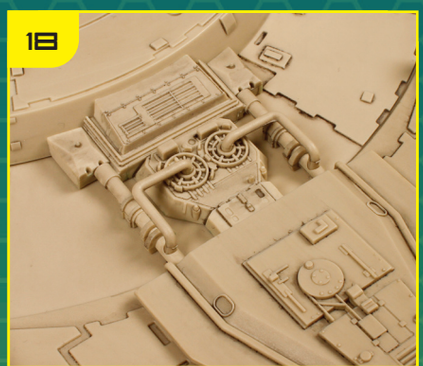
The completed assembly should look like this.

17



Glue the ends of the larger L-shaped pipe into these two holes in the machinery behind the turret.

18



Glue the second pipe in place like this.





Once again, if you have painted your model, you will need to finish these details.

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