

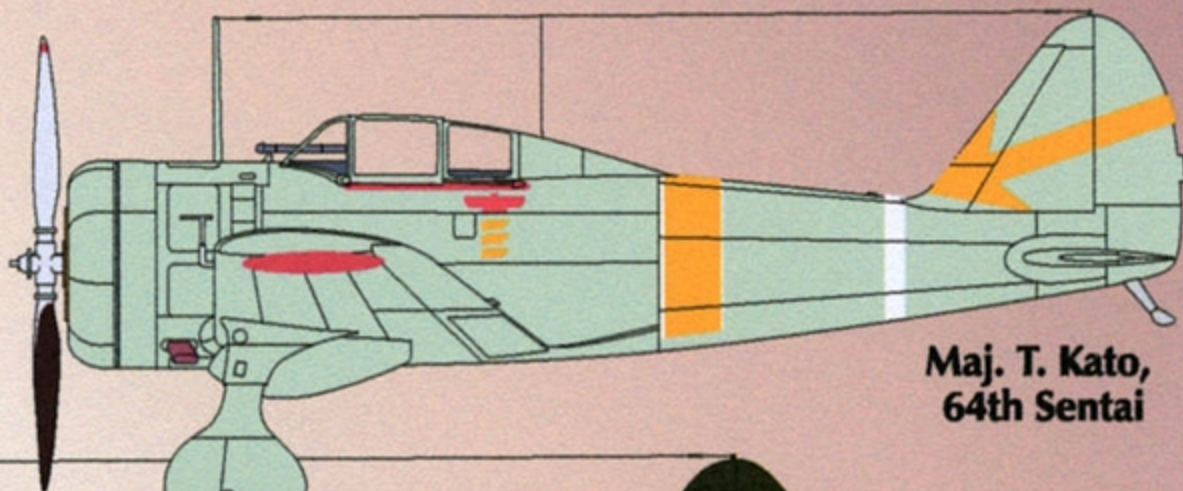
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48-058

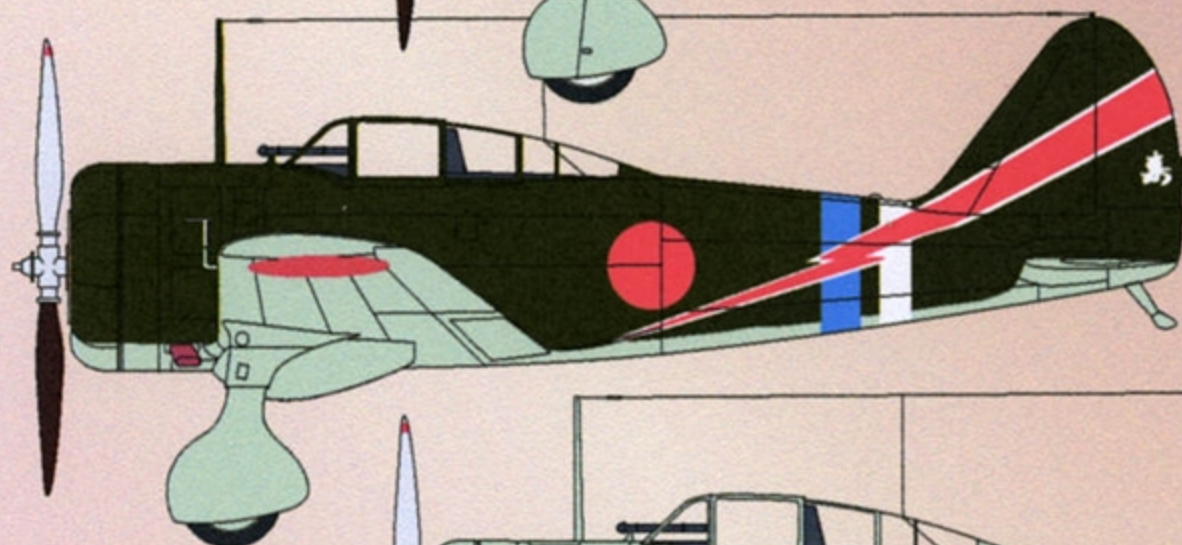
Type 97 Fighters Part 6

A/C #2



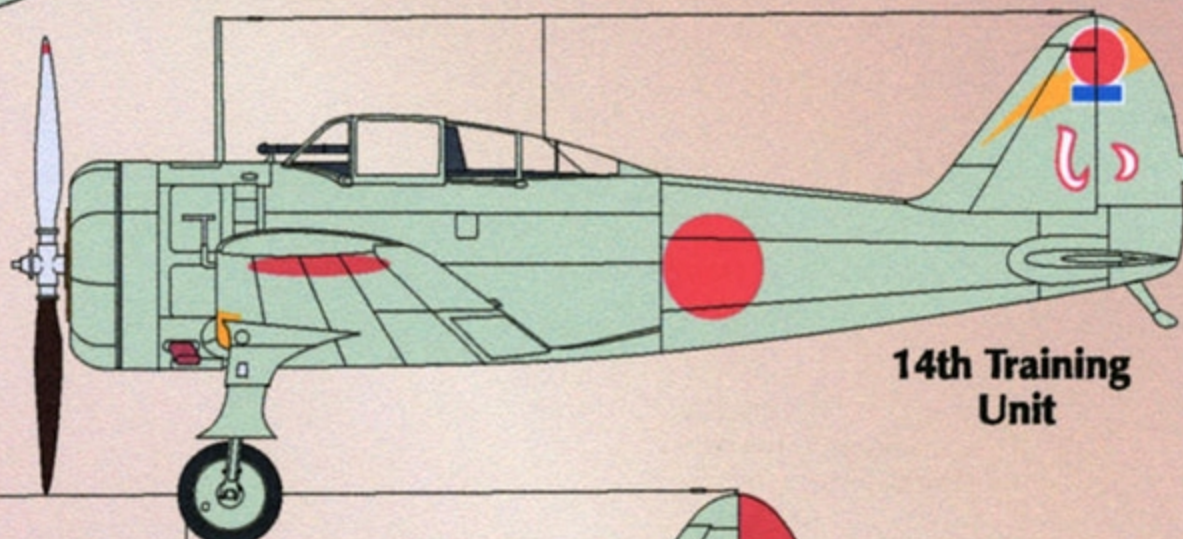
**Maj. T. Kato,
64th Sentai**

A/C #3



50th Sentai

A/C #4



**14th Training
Unit**

A/C #6



**4th Sentai,
2nd Chutai**

Recommended kit: Hasegawa Type 97 Fighter
Lifelike Decals wants to hear from you and your input.

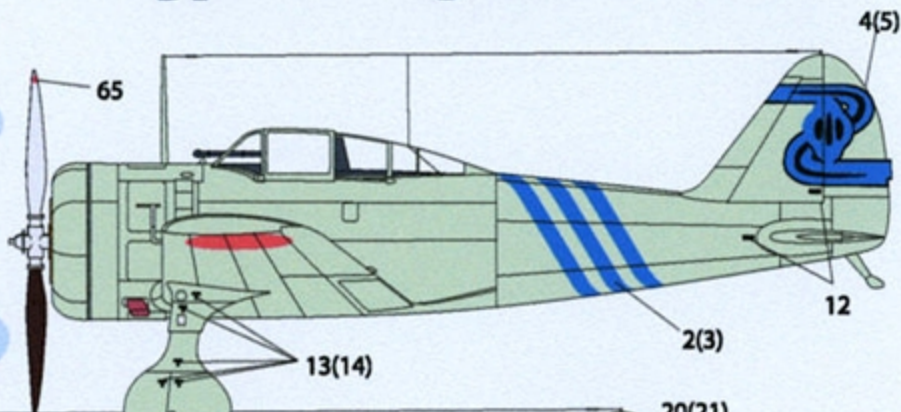
e-mail: lifelike_d@kcn.jp

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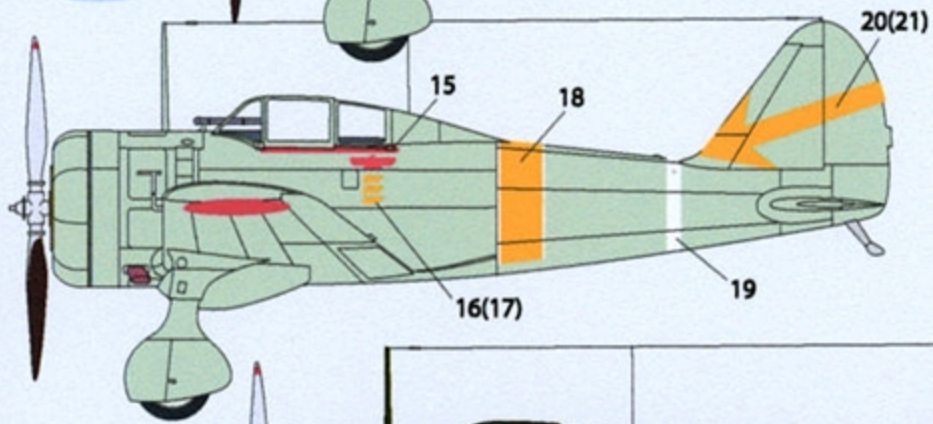
(A total of 8 a/c are featured herein!)

48-058 Type 97 Fighters Part 6

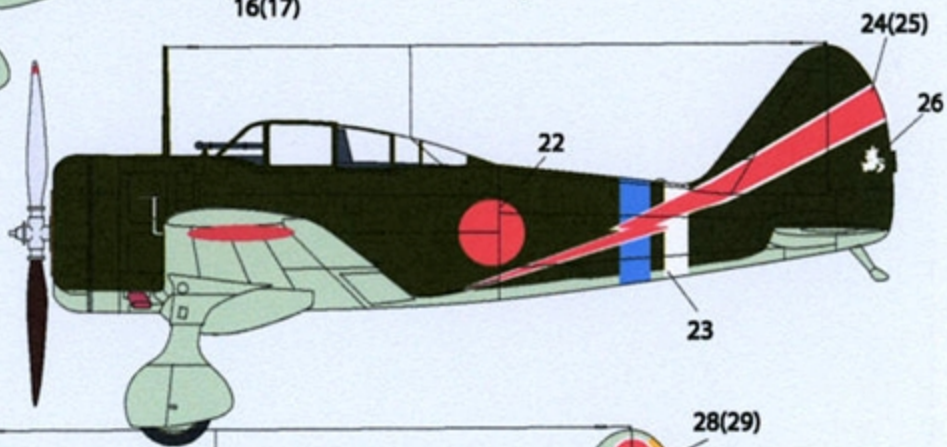
A/C #1



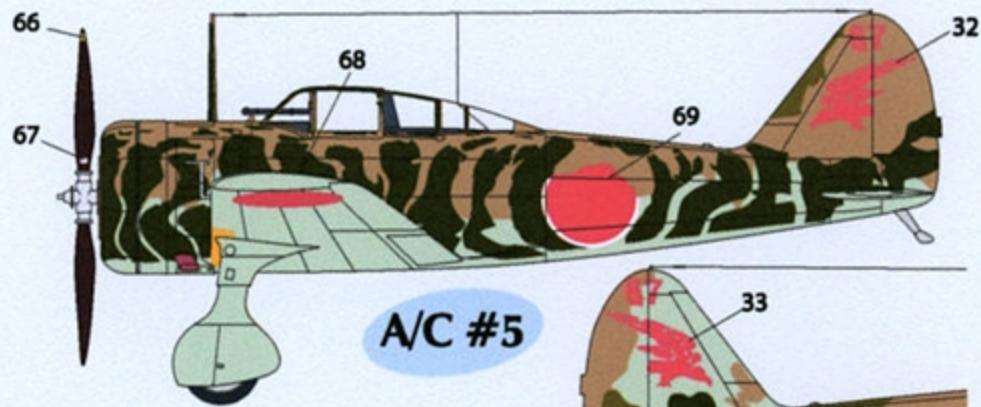
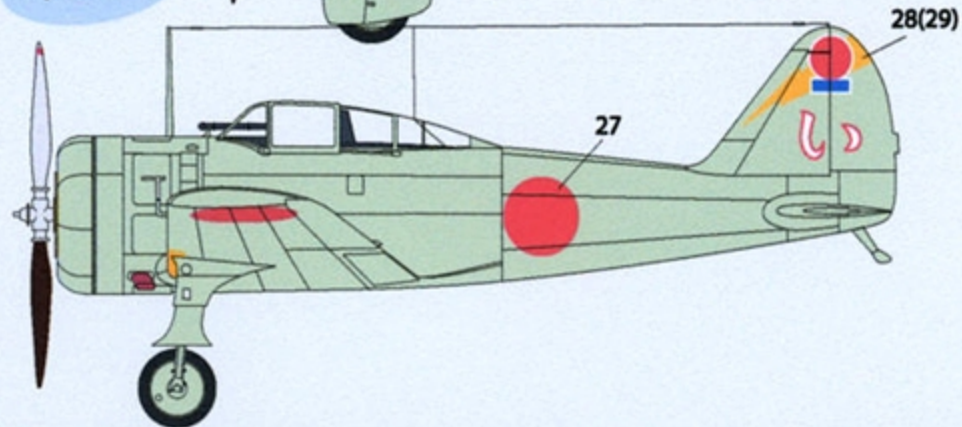
A/C #2



A/C #3

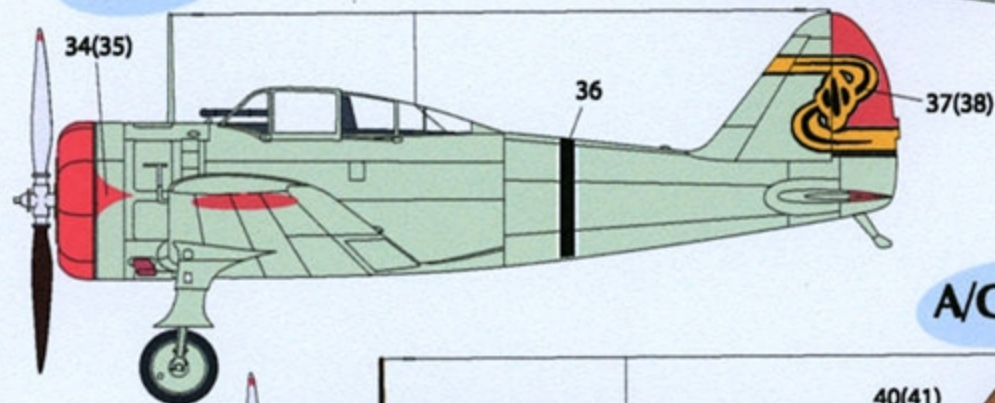


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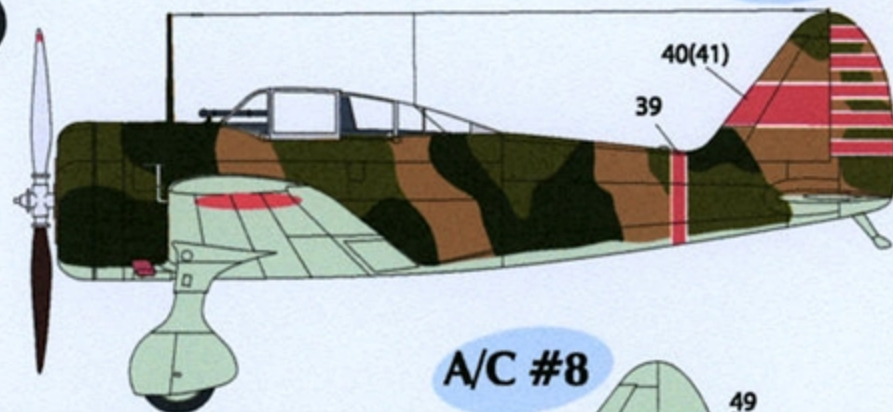


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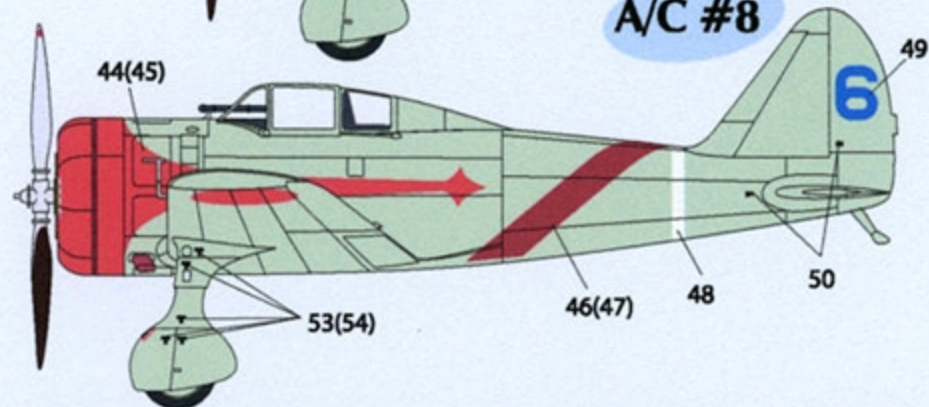
A/C #6



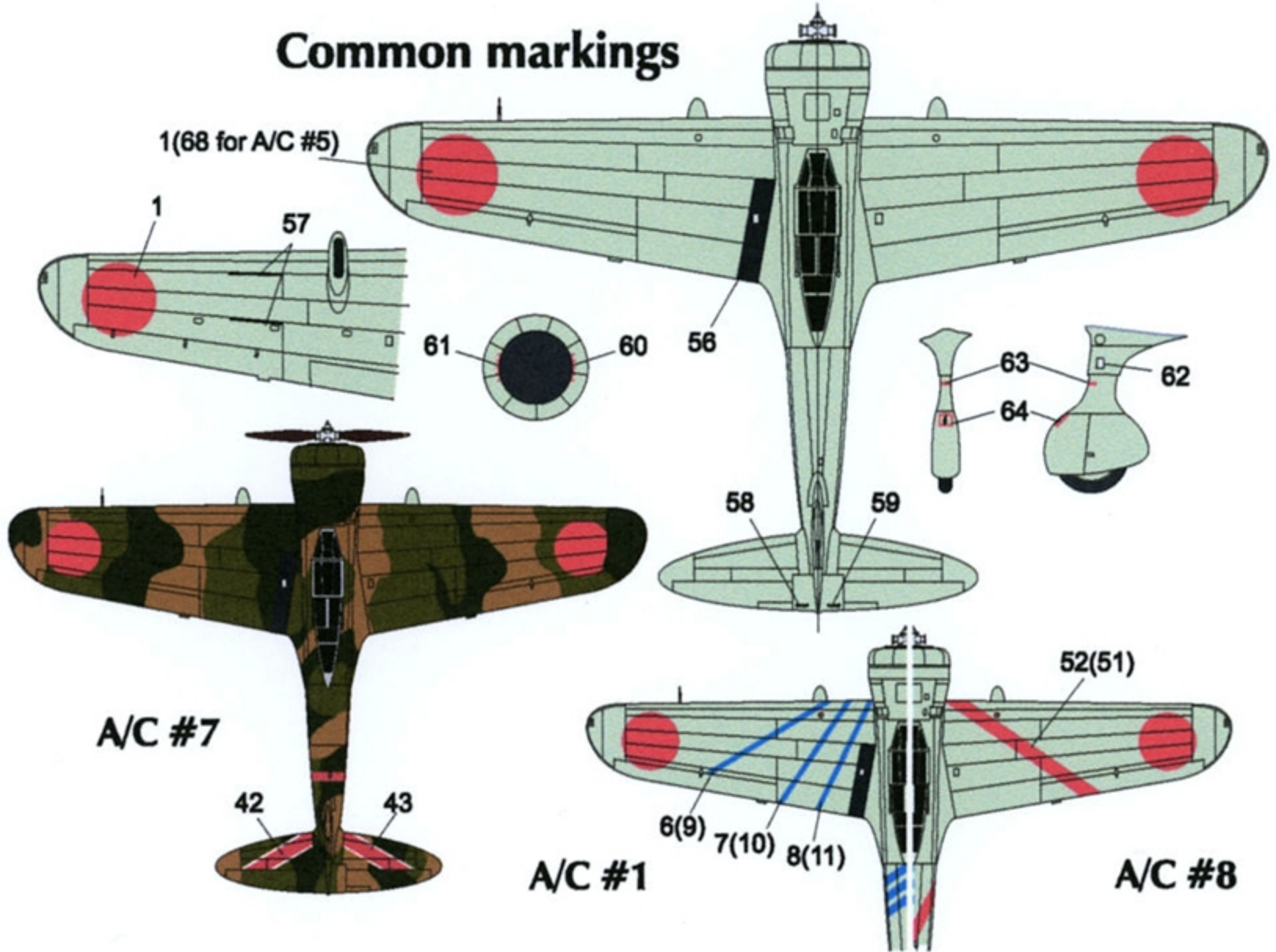
A/C #7



A/C #8



Common markings



Special thanks to Mr. Nick Millman for the information regarding the marking of a/c #3 and Commander Kato' s death, and Mr. Mark Smith for the little-known career of Col. Hayashi and check of English

References

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- (2) Koku Fan, February 1976 Issue (Bunrindo)
- (3) Revi magazine #34 (Revi Publishing, 2000)
- (4) Famous Aircraft of the World #29, Army Type 97 Fighter (Bunrindo, 1991).
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- (6) Maru Mechanic #12, Hayabusa, Shoki, Type 97 Fighter (Koujin Publishing, 1994).
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- (13) Koku Fan, March 2007.
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- (15) Japanese Army Air Force Fighter Units and Their Aces 1931~1945 (Hata, Izawa and Shores, Grub Street, 2002)/Japanese Army Fighter Aces 1931~45 (Stackpole Books, 2012)
- (16) Osprey Aircraft of the Aces #103, Ki-27 "Nate" Aces (N. Millman, Osprey Publishing, 2013)
- (17) Avions #220 (Editions Lela Press, November ~ December 2017).
- (18) Model Art Extra #395—Camouflage and marking of Hayabusa (Model Art, 1992)
- (19) Koku-Fan Illustrated #42, Japanese Imperial Army & Navy Aircraft color and marking (Bunrindo, 1988).
- (20) Aero Album vol. 9 (Aero Publishing, spring 1970).
- (21) Photo Collection of Japanese Army Aircraft II (Delta Publishing, September 1997).
- (22) Koku Joho (or Airview, Japanese magazine), June 1969.
- (23) Pacific War series #46, Type 4 Fighter Hayate (Gakken Books, 2004).

48-058 caption

All subject a/c are painted in "No. 1 gray green" color specified in Koku-Kikaku (IJA AF Aircraft Specification) #39, unless otherwise stated. Samples of this color shown currently on the internet indicate light gray color with little green tint, but the color photos (especially that of flying Ki-49 Donryu (Helen) belonging to Hamamatsu Flying School) taken by Mr. Shunkichi Kikuchi (official photographer of IJA AF) (ref. 1) and the various color photos of derelict IJA AF a/c taken by US forces (like ref. 2 and 3) show it is gray with distinct green tint, and is quite similar to German RLM 02

It is usual practice that marks 59 and 60, the fine degree markings (used to calibrate synchronization when the guns are fired through the propeller's arc) were very neatly masked over on the cowling's leading edge before the red or green was applied, preserving the original grey green background. Photographic evidence shows this practice was followed for a/c #6.

A/C #1: Ki-27 Otsu flown by 4th Sentai Commander, Lt. Col. Saburo Hayashi, Kikuchi AB/Kumamoto Pref., September 1940.

The only known photo of this a/c is shown in ref. 4~6, and its illustration in ref. 6~10. The Sentai mark on the tail and bands on fuselage and wings are much lighter than the Hinomaru's red, indicating this a/c belonged to HQ unit, and the three bands in these positions strongly indicate the Commander position of its pilot, in this case Lt. Col. Hayashi.

The Sentai mark is a stylized form of "Tachi-Arai" (the birthplace of this Sentai, meaning "washing Japanese sword") which shows the hand guard of a Japanese sword superimposed over a winding river. At this time no fuselage Hinomaru was applied. Ref. 6 indicates its s/n to be 5001.

Hayashi served as 4th Sentai Commander (Lt. Col.) from August 1939 to April 1941, and as Commander of 2nd Air Division (Colonel) in February 1944, but he was apparently detached from flying duties for most of the war to work for Imperial General Headquarters (IGHQ) staff, concentrating on intelligence and counter-intelligence in the following postings, through which he rose to Colonel: Chief of Operations Bureau's Organization and Mobilization Section, IGHQ; Chief of Russian Section of Intelligence Department, IGHQ; and finally Secretary to the Japanese War Minister (ref. 11). He is mentioned by author Max Hastings in his recent book *Secret War* (ref. 12) as the principal Japanese spymaster working against Russian interests in China.

A/C #2 Ki-27 Kou flown by Major Tateo Kato, Commander of 64th Sentai, Kwangtung AB/China, April 1941.

This is the a/c of legendary Commander, Maj. Kato, when he flew combat missions in the Sino-Japanese Incident. The only known photo of it is shown in ref. 13, but very regrettably it does not show the rear fuselage and tail section. There may be bands on the wings, but in the photo none can be discerned. The broad fuselage band, shown as yellow with a white outline, ends at the lower wing fillet. If it is typical of many other 64th Sentai Ki-27, there should be a narrow white fuselage band in front of the tail section, and no fuselage Hinomaru applied. There should be a Sentai mark (which was introduced in the beginning of 1941) on the tail, but its color is not definitely known. As he was the Sentai Commander, this aircraft might have a blue Sentai marking on the tail (or white with blue outline, as with his later Hayabusa). But why is the fuselage band yellow? Probably the yellow color is a token of his affection for his former Sentai (Hiko 2nd Daitai), when they operated Type 95 fighter (Ki-10 'Perry'), and the Sentai marking on the tail would be yellow too, but this is only our best guess. (His Hayabusa had white (with blue outline) for both the Sentai emblem AND fuselage/wing bands.). Below the cockpit is a red eagle mark (a symbol of 64th Sentai inherited from 2nd Daitai) and three yellow kill marks, which are said to stand for his three

kills achieved over Huizhou in May 1941. Since his Type 95 fighter already had three yellow kill marks (achieved in March 1939), this photo may have been taken soon after Commander Kato arrived at Kwangtung in April 1941. Additional drop tanks are fitted underwing.

Maj. Kato was a very skilled and respected fighter, shooting down nine enemy a/c in the Sino-Japanese Incident. While flying Ki-10, his unit once fought against young Chinese pilots flying I-15 whom Kato had taught at Akeno Flying School (ref. 14). He was promoted to Commander of 64th Sentai in April, 1941, and when the Pacific War broke out in December 1941, 64th Sentai achieved more than 200 victories (including nine for Kato himself) in Malaya, East Indies, and Burma. But he died in air combat with an RAF Blenheim IV, s/n Z9809, of 60 Squadron, (piloted by W.O. Martin H. Huggard) on May 22, 1942, and Tateshi Kato was posthumously promoted to Major General. Ref. 15 indicates that he voluntarily dived into the sea, but the information from Mr. Nick Millman (author of several Osprey Aces books) shed another light on this event as follows.

- (A) According to the RAF record that Nick possesses, the Blenheim was flying at very low-level over the sea, and was chased by five Ki-43 from Akyab. The first two attackers were both reported to be damaged by mid-upper gunner Flight Sergeant McLuckie's accurate return fire and turned away. (W.O. Yoshito Yasuda was one of the first two attackers.) Then three more Ki-43 attacked, and McLuckie fired at the leading a/c (flown by Commander Kato) which half-rolled and dived into the sea. The other two Ki-43 then gave up the chase. (The Blenheim was damaged with one undercarriage leg hanging down, but flying almost at sea level W.O. Huggard deliberately lowered altitude until the leg hit the sea and was knocked up into the well engaging lock. He then belly-landed successfully back at base.)
- (B) Nick was in correspondence with Mr. Yoshito Yasuda (who scored more than 10 claims of victories), and in a letter received in 2000, Mr. Yasuda described how he had attacked the same Blenheim IV, but received very accurate return fire from the gunner, with a bullet penetrating his windscreen, missing his head by about 10cm, which caused bleeding from glass fragments. He broke away and was able to return safely to base. Commander Kato's a/c was shot down soon after W.O. Yasuda broke away.

From these accounts Nick suspects that Commander Kato might have been similarly hit, and that a round from McLuckie possibly killed or fatally wounded Kato, causing him to involuntarily snatch the control column back, his Hayabusa receiving more hits to its belly before plunging into the sea.

A/C #3: Ki-27 Otsu flown by the leader of 1st Chutai, 50th Sentai, Moulmein/Burma, January 1942.

The only photo of this a/c was shown first in ref. 15, and more recently in ref. 16 and 17, accompanied by color illustrations. Though the photo is far from clear, the red lightning bolt (1st Chutai), light colored fuselage band forward of white theater band, drop tanks on lower wings, and the rather complicated Japanese Kanji on rudder can be discerned.

Millman-san's research concluded (and we agree) that this a/c would probably be the personal mount of Capt. Masao Morikawa (1st Chutai leader) based on his research findings which follow: (1) Capt. Fujio Sakaguchi (Capt. Morikawa's predecessor) was shot down in February 1942, and according to the RAF examination report of the aircraft's wreckage, his uncamouflaged Ki-27 had a red lightning bolt and blue fuselage band forward of the white band which served as a theater marking; (2) this report also confirmed that on the rudder of Capt. Sakaguchi's Ki-27 was a Japanese kanji with a meaning equivalent to "long life", not entirely visible in the report's photography; and (3) though the exact kanji Capt. Morikawa used for his Ki-27 is not known, its complexity bears

similarity to “寿”, which is said to be applied on the rudder of Sgt. Sugawara’s Hayabusa (50th Sentai 1st Chutai) (ref. 18). Illustrations in ref. 16 and 17 show the current style of “寿”, but in wartime days, an abbreviated style of OLD kanji “壽” should have been used.

There is no tonal difference on the a/c upper surface, so we judged upper surface camouflage color is No. 21 green only. (If brown color is also used, there should be distinctive tonal difference like Kuwabara’s (48-057) or Yonaga’s a/c (a/c #7)). Though the outline of the Sentai mark (a red lightning bolt) is rather dark, it should be white. The tone of a narrow white line from a distance is very often affected by the darker surrounding color, and it would have been much easier for crews to paint a new white outline rather than cover the grey green area in close parallel to the lightning bolt (when the green color was applied).

A/C #4: Ki-27 Otsu of 14th Fighter Training Unit, Nanyuan AB/near Beijing, November 1943.

The only photo of this a/c is shown in ref. 4, and color illustrations are shown in ref. 4, 6 and 10. Though only the tail section is shown in the far distance in the photo, white “ㄣ” can be discerned. The unit marking on the tail is the stylized form of “01” (derived from the original unit designation, Hayabusa No. 15301 Unit) invented by Major Hachiro Urakawa (flight leader). This “01” is painted over either yellow or red lightning bolt. Overall camouflage is grey green, over which Hinomaru is painted on 6 positions without white outline. “そ” Go of this unit does not carry lower landing gear spats, so the same might be the case with “ㄣ” Go as well.

A/C #5: Ki-27 Otsu (probably) of some unknown Special Attack unit, location unknown, soon after the war.

Two photos of this Ki-27 in derelict condition among a pile of damaged a/c in front of bombed hangars were once shown on an internet auction site, which show the rear fuselage and tail section of both sides (on the right side an American GI is leaning on the rear fuselage). The red diving eagle mark and “67” are clearly visible on the vertical tail (both sides), but its camouflage is unique and puzzling. Compared to the narrow white outline of Hinomaru, its lower fuselage is painted in grey green, and broad irregular No. 21 green patches are applied. What’s puzzling are the third and fourth colors (lighter than No. 21 green but darker than gray green) applied on the upper fuselage, tail, and even on the upper portion of the Hinomaru and its white outline. The upper surface of the root of left horizontal tail plane is also painted in the fourth color, along with No. 21 green patches. We tentatively use light brown and light green for these colors in the illustration, but these are merely best guesses. This third color is applied in a wide area, and seems to be painted before surrender, but as IJAAF regarded their a/c as gifts of the Emperor, it is hard to accept the crude overpainting of Hinomaru as something done by Japanese military personnel. Nothing is known for certain about the camouflage pattern on the forward fuselage and wings. The diving eagle mark is found on this Ki-27 as well as a Ki-43 Oscar, but which Special Attack unit they belonged to is not known.

A/C #6: Ki-27 Otsu of 4th Sentai 2nd Chutai, Tachiarai AB/Fukuoka Pref., end of 1941.

The only photo of this a/c is shown in ref. 4 (illustration in ref. 4, 10 and 19), and clearly shows a black fuselage band with Hinomaru applied on wings only without white outline. The cowling ring, nose flash, and rudder seem to be painted in red. Elevators also seem to be painted in red; deflected slightly upward in the parked state, they still appear darker than gray green. As with many training a/c, its lower spats are removed.

A/C #7: Ki-27 Otsu flown by Capt. Hyoe Yonaga of 24th Sentai 2nd Chutai, Nagilian AB/Philippines, December 1941.

One splendid photo of this a/c is published in ref. 4, and illustrations (sometimes with inaccuracies) are published in ref. 4, 9 and 16. In the Sino-Japanese Incident, 24th Sentai used a tail mark of two horizontal bands on the vertical tail and four horizontal bands on the rudder (indicating 24). When the Pacific War broke out, however, to conceal its identity from the enemy, it changed its Sentai marking to one horizontal band on the vertical tail, five horizontal bands on the rudder, and two diagonal bands on the horizontal tail plane; taken together, they show the original unit designation of Manchuria No. 158 Unit (the two diagonal bands look like 八 (=8) in Japanese). A close look at the photo clearly reveals that the diagonal bands on the horizontal tail (red with white outline) do NOT extend to the elevators. The rear fuselage band is also red with white outline (indicating 2nd Chutai leader). There are no diagonal bands discernible on upper wings. Its camouflage pattern is rather complicated, consisting of 3 colors. Probably they are (listing darkest first) dark green (No. 21 green), medium green, and earth brown, as the caption suggests.

After graduating from Tokorozawa and Akeno Flying Schools, Capt. Yonaga was assigned to 11th Regiment as 1st Lt. When the 24th Sentai was formed from 11th Regiment personnel, he engaged in the air campaign over Nomonhan as 2nd Chutai leader of 24th Sentai, scoring a total of 16 victories. He then became a teacher of Akeno Flying School, but when the Pacific War broke out, he was assigned again as 2nd Chutai leader of 24th Sentai, promoted to Captain. He had no opportunity for air combat in the SWPA, however, and returned to China. Entering Imperial Japanese Army University, after graduation he was assigned to HQ of Akeno Flying Division, promoted to Major, and posted as Commander of 101st Sentai. But after he conflicted with his Army superiors regarding the use of fighters in Special Attacks, he was assigned to Army Military Academy, there to teach for the remainder of the war.

A/C #8: Ki-27 Kou flown by 1st Lt. Iwori Sakai, leader of 64th Sentai 2nd Chutai, Nomonhan/China, fall of 1939.

Four photos of this a/c are shown in ref. 4, 20 and 21, and very fortunately markings of both sides are known. The fuselage flash is the Sentai marking, and the red fuselage band indicates 2nd Chutai. The upper photo on p44 of ref. 4 shows this a/c WITHOUT red diagonal band on upper wings, thus this was taken BEFORE 1st Lt. Sakai was nominated as 2nd Chutai leader. At that time tail number "6" seems to be red. On the other hand, the lower photo on p44 of ref. 4 and those in ref. 20 and 21 clearly show wing diagonal bands (red) and a much brighter "6". These photos thus show his a/c AFTER he was nominated as 2nd Chutai leader (September 1939). Color of "6" in this case is, in all probability, "Blue 6-3" (color of leader) specified in Koku Kikaku 8609 (ref. 23), which agrees with illustrations in ref. 4, 10, 16 and 22.

The lower photo on p44 of ref. 4 (showing the subject a/c flying under the cloudy sky) clearly shows a darker shade of fuselage diagonal band than that used for the nose red flash and wing band. Ref. 23 shows two types of red colors that IJAAF used. One is "No. 10 red" for Hinomaru and other bright markings, and the other "No. 9 red" is for less bright unit markings. We judged that "No. 9 red" is used for the fuselage diagonal band, and the other reds are "No. 10 red".

1st Lt. Sakai was one of the best pilots in IJAAF. He achieved 7 victories in Nomonhan, and then he became a teacher of Akeno Flying School, and then a test pilot at Army Flight Test Center in Fussa, mainly for Hien and Ki-100. He also achieved one B-29 victory while leading a defense fighter unit of the Center. His final rank was Major, and total score at war's end was nine.