

The P-40M first arrived in the SOPAC theatre in August 1943 with the 44<sup>th</sup> FS. Several 70<sup>th</sup> FS pilots were seconded to the 44<sup>th</sup> FS to gain combat experience in the type at this juncture. Only a handful of “M” models wound up in USAAF service in the SWPA, one being illustrated in Profile 110. The “M” model was, however, ubiquitous in both the RAAF and RNZAF inventories.

The first “N” models appeared in New Guinea in September 1943, and ushered in a new era of markings, but oddly these were P-40N-5s, not P-40N-1s, which served exclusively in the SOPAC theatre, making their debut in Guadalcanal in December 1943. In New Guinea the ubiquitous N-5 immediately swelled the ranks of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> FS. The first P-40N-15s and P-40N-20s appeared in June 1944 which included twenty former RAAF airframes, just when USAAF Warhawk units were about to vacate New Guinea. The first P-40N-30 appeared at Morotai in the NEI a few months later. Late-model P-40Ns and P-40Ms were still in Pacific service by war’s end, mainly serving in ground support roles. Even the occasional old-timer P-40E remained active at the end of the war serving as a hack, photo-ship or commandeered by maintenance units to ferry parts and documents.

Finally, a word of caution. The degree to which airframes were traded and transferred between units was extreme. It was commonplace for a squadron to have three to five airframes every month taken offline while they were repaired, let alone those lost in combat or side-lined due to a lack of parts. If the repairs required were sufficiently substantial the fighter would be given to a service squadron, before often re-entering service with a different combat unit. As such, it was commonplace for many P-40s to have undergone two to three markings schemes, even within the same squadron. Thus, it can be difficult to be definitive about particular airframe markings unless a particular timeframe is nominated. In most cases photographic evidence covering broader timeframes is deficient.

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