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Belcher Bits BD-35: RCAF North Star 1/72

Background

In 1945, Trans Canada Airlines decided that the Douglas DC-4 would be the choice for the new airliner post-war. It was felt the design was fairly mature since the military version (C-54) had been in service for nearly two years at that point. However, TCA considered that the best engine for their new airliner would be the Rolls Royce Merlin RM-14. At the same time, Canadair was looking for work and in talks with Douglas, bought most of a C-54 production plant in Illinois as well as many C-47 airframes and tooling. In all, Canadair bought some 600 carloads of equipment from Douglas, including 60-70 complete C-54 fuselages.

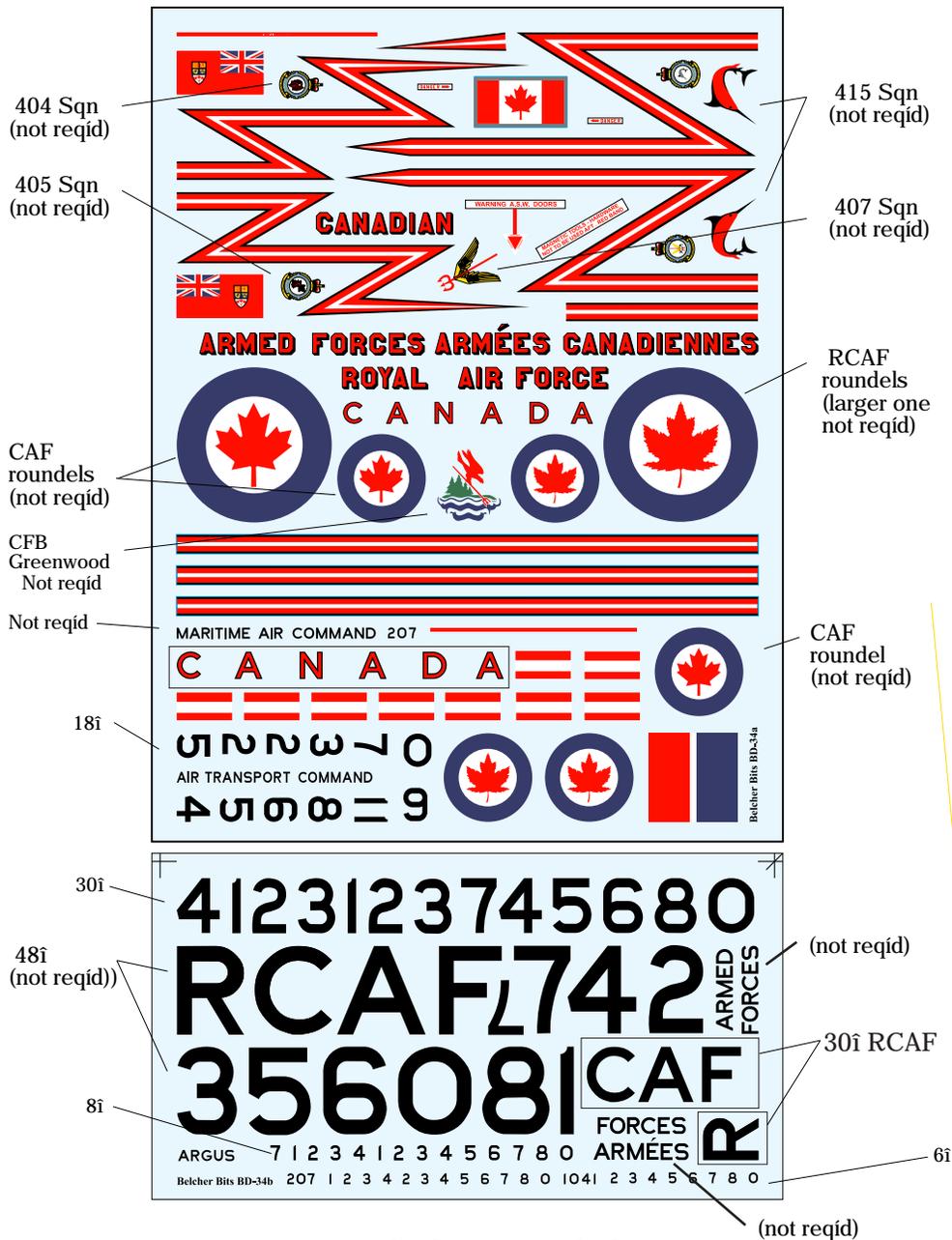
Although the use of the North Star by TCA was the genesis of this aircraft, this conversion is more concerned with RCAF use which started in 1947 with 426 Sqn from Dorval outside Montreal in the role of long distance transport. Eventually, 24 North Stars were in service until 1966.

The Canadair North Star was mostly a C-54 with Merlin engines, although the higher speed and power of these engines required some structural reinforcement of the wings and some DC-6 landing gear components were incorporated. However, most differences were not apparent visually. North Stars performed sterling service in transport of Canadian troops during the Korean War from 1950-53.

Why do these decals look familiar?

Well, the original decals done for the Belcher Bits conversion BL19 are sold out, and the conversion set is therefore out of production. The resin parts were still available through Hannants in the UK. Be sure to buy the AIM - Transport Wings TWC72019 set; this includes the original ejector exhausts without the crossovers later used on airliner variants. However, the all of the markings are identical to those which can be found on Belcher Bits decal BD34 for the Canadair Argus, so that sheet is included with this set.

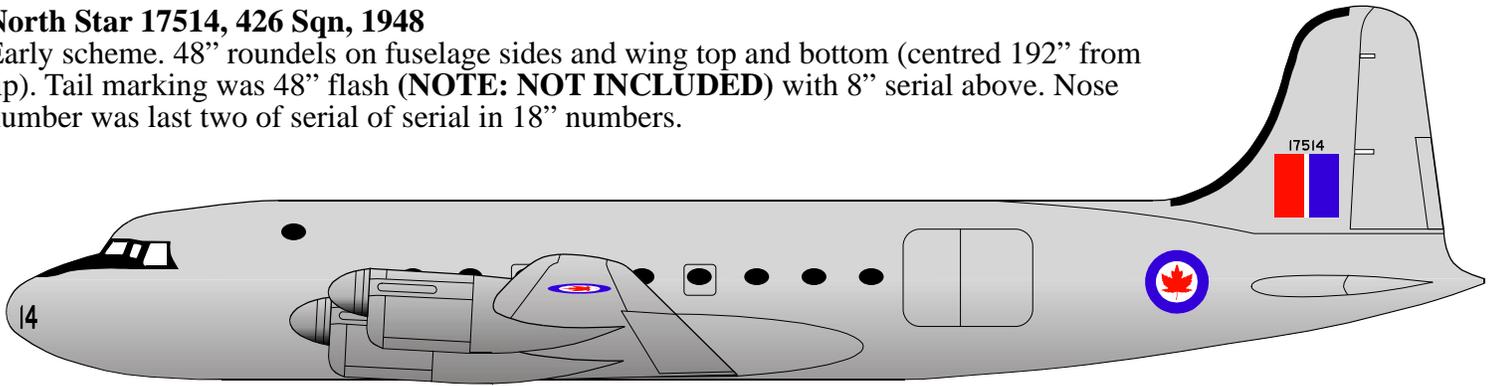
There should be enough of the fuselage flash on the two sheets to do the North Star, but you may need to use part of the later dual returning nose flash. North Stars all used the early quad returning nose flash.



2 each sheet provided

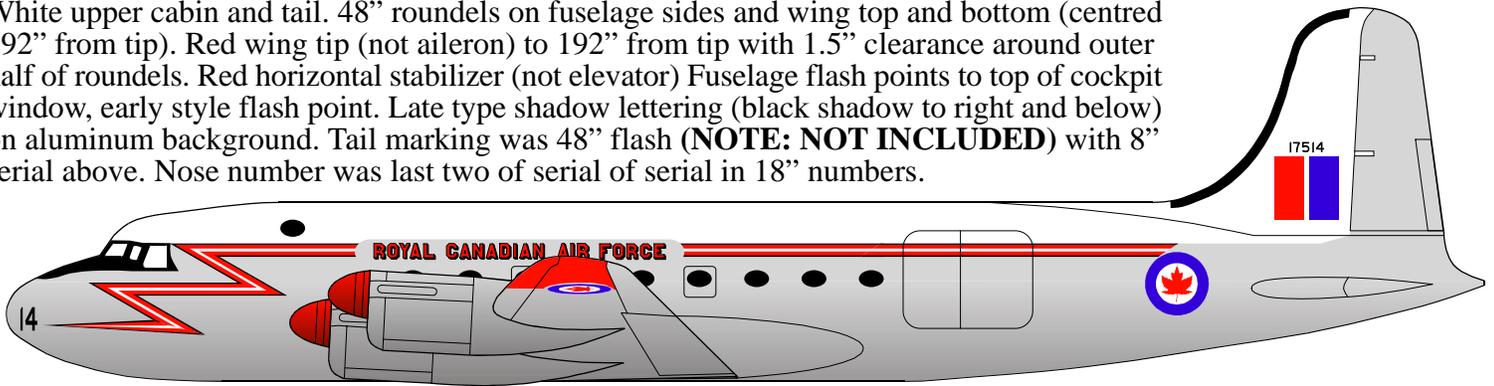
North Star 17514, 426 Sqn, 1948

Early scheme. 48" roundels on fuselage sides and wing top and bottom (centred 192" from tip). Tail marking was 48" flash (NOTE: NOT INCLUDED) with 8" serial above. Nose number was last two of serial of serial in 18" numbers.



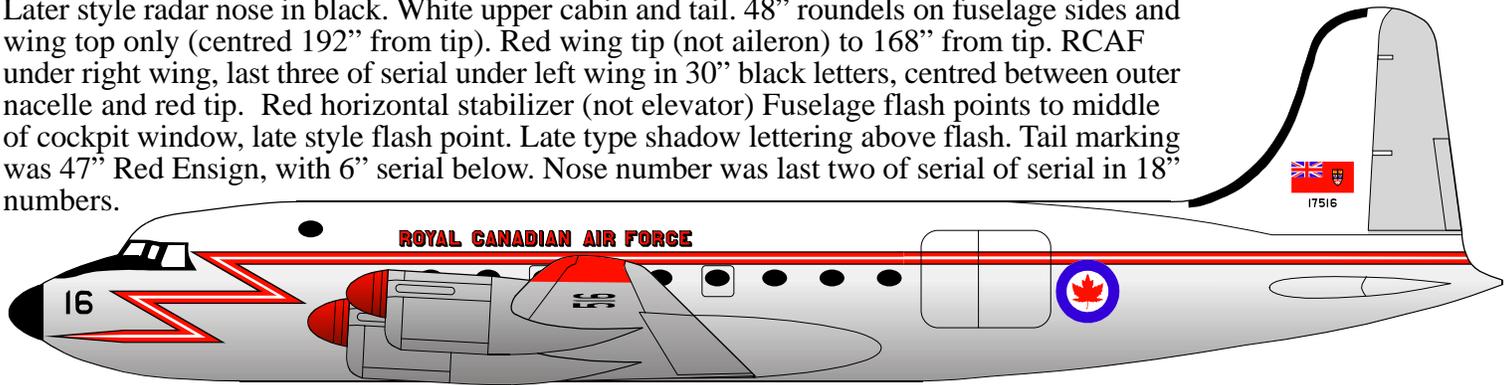
North Star 17514, 426 Sqn, 1951 (Korean War)

White upper cabin and tail. 48" roundels on fuselage sides and wing top and bottom (centred 192" from tip). Red wing tip (not aileron) to 192" from tip with 1.5" clearance around outer half of roundels. Red horizontal stabilizer (not elevator) Fuselage flash points to top of cockpit window, early style flash point. Late type shadow lettering (black shadow to right and below) on aluminum background. Tail marking was 48" flash (NOTE: NOT INCLUDED) with 8" serial above. Nose number was last two of serial of serial in 18" numbers.



North Star 17516, 426 Sqn, 1959-65

Later style radar nose in black. White upper cabin and tail. 48" roundels on fuselage sides and wing top only (centred 192" from tip). Red wing tip (not aileron) to 168" from tip. RCAF under right wing, last three of serial under left wing in 30" black letters, centred between outer nacelle and red tip. Red horizontal stabilizer (not elevator) Fuselage flash points to middle of cockpit window, late style flash point. Late type shadow lettering above flash. Tail marking was 47" Red Ensign, with 6" serial below. Nose number was last two of serial of serial in 18" numbers.



References

1. The Canadair North Star, Larry Milberry, CANAV Books, 1982
2. RCAF Aircraft Finish and Markings 1947-1968, Patrick Martin, 2003