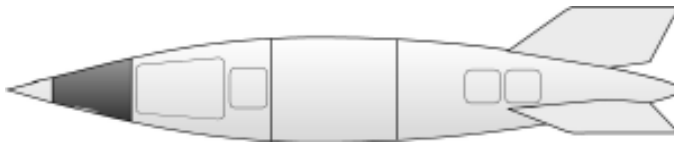
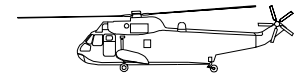


Belcher Bits No. BB30: French Tactical Nuclear Bomb 1/48

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Background

In 1962, France tested the prototype of its AN-11 nuclear bomb. This weapon was a plutonium implosion type similar to the US Mk 4, although it was packaged in a more streamlined case. It was intended for high altitude delivery from the then-new Mirage IVA. Shortly after introduction in service, the Force de Frappe realized that low-level delivery method was more survivable because of more capable AA missiles, and the AN-22 bomb was developed which incorporated better safety features and a retarding parachute. Although this has not been confirmed, it is assumed that all AN-11s were converted to AN-22s and these remained in service until 1988.

The strategic strike free-fall weapon was replaced in 1987 by the ASMP (Air-Sol Moyenne Portee = Air to Ground Medium Range) missile, a ramjet powered missile. These are carried now by Mirage IVP, two seat Mirage 2000N and Super Etendard.

The AN-52 was developed as a tactical weapon, its 25 kT maximum yield being less than half that of the AN-22. The AN-52 shared the MR-50 warhead with the land-based Pluton rocket. The bomb at 0.6m in diameter and 4.2m long was fairly compact and weighed only 455 kg. It was carried by Mirage IIIIE and Jaguar A aircraft of the Air Force, and also by Super Etendards of the Aeronavale. It was available for use from 1972 until 1991, when the tactical nuclear strike role disappeared.

AN-52

The AN-52 is a relatively simple shape, with three fixed fins at the tail. Use a razor saw and cut the front and rear sections off their bases, and sand the remaining standoffs until the bases are flat. Glue the two halves together, lining up the two holes (which indicate where the lugs would be installed, if you were showing this bomb unmounted) and fill the seam. The raised strips on the tail section indicate where the tail fins are to be attached. Cut three tail fins from 0.020" (0.5mm) sheet using the template given on the instruction sheet, and glue in place. Operational bombs were painted aluminum, with a flat black nose section as shown on the sketch; non-operational shapes were usually overall white.

AN-52 Pylons

The centerline pylon for the Mirage IIIIE incorporates a small air scoop at the front (purpose unknown). The scoop is not moulded in, but you can hollow it out more easily before you attach the pylon. It is designed to fit the Italeri (originally ESCI) Mirage IIIIE. Note that the rear of the pylon is slightly cut away to clear the tapered fairing on the bottom of the fuselage. Mirage IIIIEs modified to carry the AN-52 appeared to have a slot cut in this fairing for the bomb top fin.

The centerline pylon for the Jaguar is similar but does not include the air scoop. This should fit either the ESCI or Airfix Jaguars.

The Super Etendard carried the AN-52 on the starboard inboard pylon with a fuel tank on the port side. The only kit of this aircraft is by Heller. The pylon supplied replaces the kit pylon.

In all cases, the pylons indicate small protrusions which represent the bomb attachment hardware; there were no protruding anti-sway braces.

Other French Nuclear Weapons in 1/48

The Heller Mirage IVP includes both an AN-22 free fall weapon, and a representation of the ASMP. The Eduard Mirage 2000N (which is itself based on the older Heller kit) also includes an ASMP.

References

1. "La 4e EC et le tir nucleaire", Air Fan No. 352, March 2008
2. "Force de Frappe", Air International Vol. 49 No.5, November 1995
3. "Development of the French Arsenal", www.nuclearweaponarchive.org

