

Belcher Bits Decal BL-14: Russian SS-25 ICBM 1/72

Background

The RT-2PM Topol (NATO designation SS-25 Sickle) is the first Russian mobile ICBM. It is a 3 stage, solid propellant missile carrying a single 500 kt warhead to a maximum range of 10,500 km. It was developed from the RT-21M Pioneer (NATO SS-20 Saber), a 2 stage mobile theatre ballistic missile which carried 3 MIRV warheads and was eliminated by the INF treaty in 1988. Another casualty of that treaty was the US Pershing TBM.

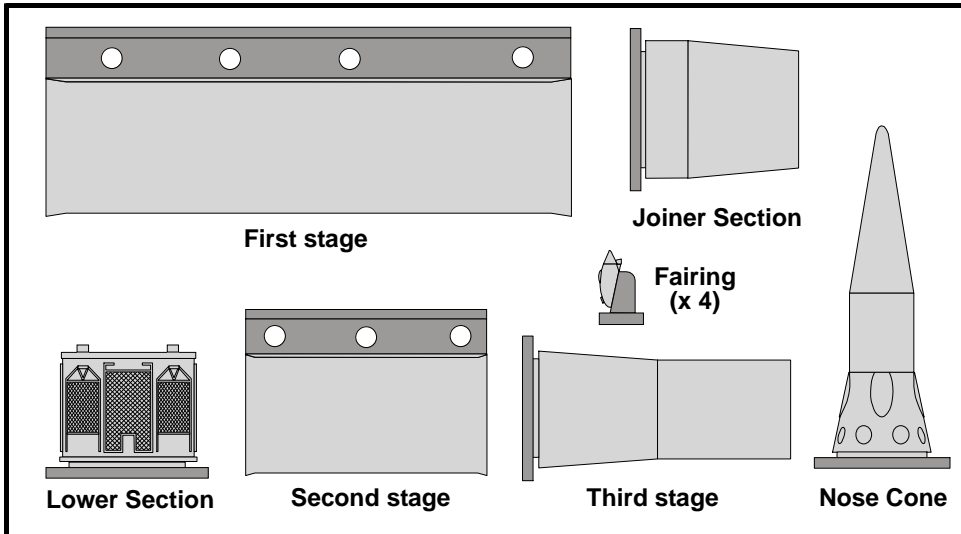
The SS-20 was deployed with a six axle launcher/erector. The Topol uses a similar system, but larger; its Transporter Erector Launcher is a 7 axle cross country vehicle (which is available as a 1/72 kit by Zvezda). Launching procedure involves 'popping' the rounded top of the cylinder, jacking the truck to a level attitude then raising the tube into a vertical orientation. At launch, the missile is ejected from the tube by a compressed gas charge, and the first stage motor ignites when the missile is clear of the tube. Initial steering is by way of 'egg-crate' aerodynamic surfaces, but second and third stages use gas injection into the nozzle for course correction.

The Topol is a potent weapon because it is completely mobile, yet with intercontinental range. Even so, it is being replaced in service by the slightly larger SS-27 Topol M, which can be distinguished by its 8 axle TEL.

Assembly

Like all resin kits, remove the parts from their bases / sprues and wash thoroughly to remove any release agents. The first and second stage sprues are attached to cable fairings which run up the outside of the motor tubes. The cylindrical parts are raised on cylindrical standoffs which are designed to fit inside the ends of the motor tubes, so clean those ends up carefully and test fit everything.

Line up the cable fairing of the first stage with the small rectangular end on the lower section and glue together. Line up the cable fairing end on the joiner section, and glue it to the first stage, then glue on the second stage with its cable fairing in line. Same thing for the third stage and nose cone. Just make sure the cable fairings and fairing ends line up. That is the basic missile.



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Final steps

Remove the four fairings from their bases. These fairings are glued on the nose cone on the elliptical bases on the side of the nose cone. There will be a slight gap around the nose of each fairing, so use a bit of putty to fill this gap.

Painting

The basic colour is dark green (please don't ask for an FS595 number). The first stage motor tube is sort of natural epoxy composite colour, a kind of streaky yellow/brown. Second and third stage tubes are black. The pointy tips of the fairings are red. The aerodynamic fins are natural metal. Now, the master for these fins was made from a photoetched grid rather than a screen, so it is sort of reversed from the actual item. To paint this so it looks best, paint the grid area black, then apply a wash of silver to the grooves. Then paint the frames silver.

Decals

I am not sure what the purpose of the Cyrillic-lettered grid is, although I suspect they are some sort of markings to enable ultrasonic inspection of the solid propellant in the tubes. The photos I have seem to indicate black markings on natural background for the first stage, and white markings on a black background for the third stage. I'll bet there are markings on the second stage as well, but they are not white and I can't see them so I didn't provide them. The decals are applied in one piece, wrapping around the motor tube from one side of the cable fairing to the other. Use lots of decal solution and try not to stretch them while applying.

References

1. Various internet searches for photos and info

