

## Belcher Bits BL-15: Polaris A-3 IRBM 1/72

### Background

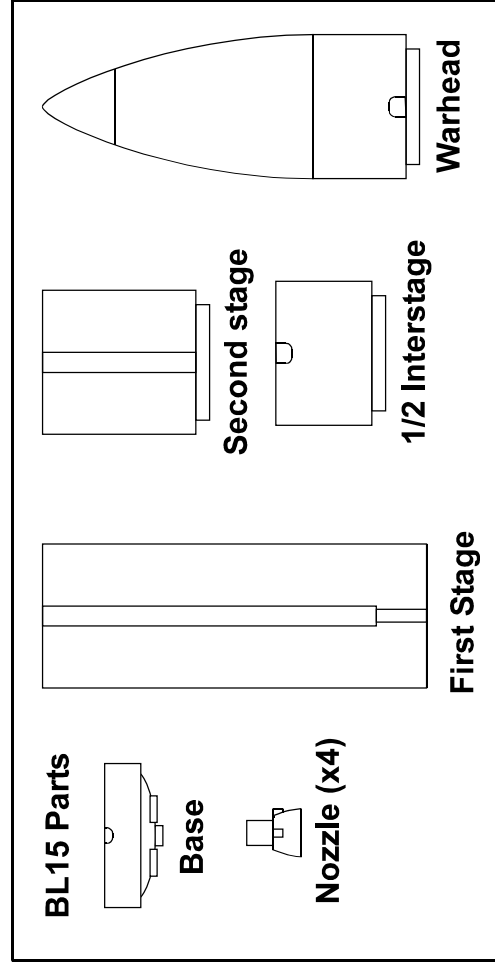
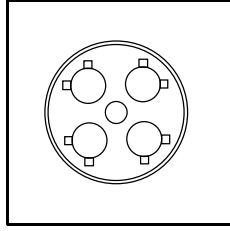
In 1956, the USN started development of sea-based IRBMs, and within a year, had evolved that requirement to submarine-launched solid fuel ballistic missiles. Development of the submarine and the missile (to be called Polaris) went on concurrently under the highest national priority and by 1960, 14 SSBNs were under construction. The initial Polaris A-1 had a 1200 mile range and the A-2 with a 1500 mile range entered service in 1962. The A-3 variant carried 3 warheads (shotgun style delivery, not independently targeted) and had a 2500 mile range. Eventually all 41 Polaris submarines were upgraded to the A-3 variant. In 1962, the UK Royal Navy decided to have a similar sea-based deterrent and by 1968, four SSBNs were operational with the 3 warhead Polaris A-3. This was later changed to a two warhead plus decoy arrangement under the Chevaline project.

USN Polaris were gradually replaced by Poseidon starting in 1968; UK Polaris continued in service until replaced by Tritons in 1996.

### Assembly

Like all resin kits, remove the parts from their bases / sprues and wash thoroughly to remove any release agents. The base and first stage have flat faces, while the rest are raised on cylindrical standoffs which are designed to fit inside the ends of the pieces below, so clean those ends up carefully and test fit everything.

Match up the cable fairing of the first stage with the small semi-circular end on the base and glue together; use a V-block if you have one, or against a straight edge on a flat surface. It is important to get these two parts correctly aligned since there are no positive guides. Line up the cable fairing end on the top of the interstage with the cable fairing on the first stage (yes, there should be a gap) and glue in place. Glue on the second stage then glue on the warhead with their cable fairings in line. That is the basic missile. The four nozzles are sanded on their bases, then glued into the holes in the base, orienting each nozzle so the two blocks on the side face outwards as in the sketch right. I believe those blocks are where the steering rams attach to the nozzles but I cannot find any details on their design.

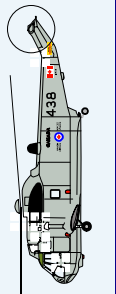


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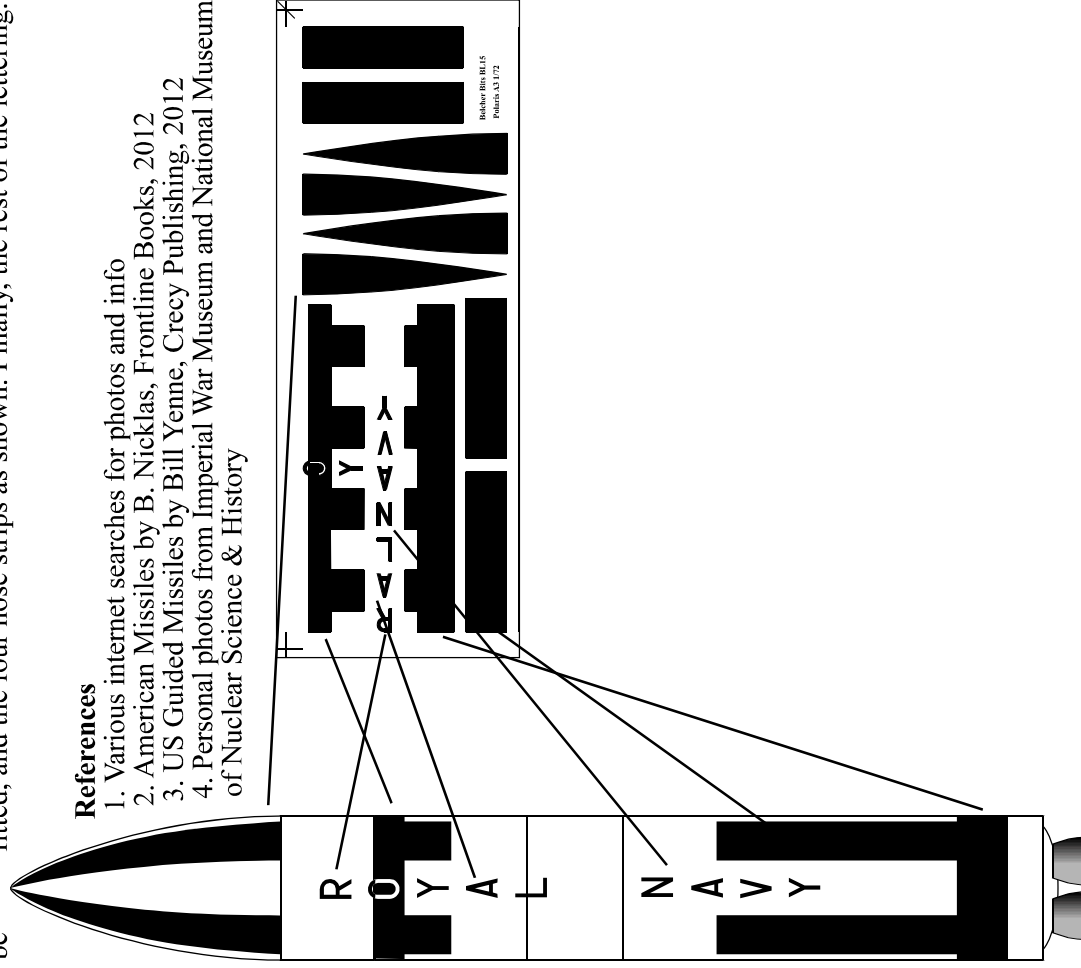
### Painting and Decalling

The basic colour is gloss white. Rocket nozzles are painted aluminium. Operational USN missiles seemed to be unmarked, but RN missiles were painted with a distinctive black roll marking. This can be painted on, but to make your life easier, this set includes a decal sheet so that ALL markings can be applied by decal.

The sketch below shows where the various decal elements go. It works best to put the circumferential decal strip with the letters OY on first, with the lettering on the opposite side of the missile from the cable fairings. The bottom circumferential strip goes on next. Once those are in place and dry, the four rectangular blocks can be fitted, and the four nose strips as shown. Finally, the rest of the lettering.

### References

1. Various internet searches for photos and info
2. American Missiles by B. Nicklas, Frontline Books, 2012
3. US Guided Missiles by Bill Yenne, Crecy Publishing, 2012
4. Personal photos from Imperial War Museum and National Museum of Nuclear Science & History



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Part No. A3 1/72