

Belcher Bits BL-18: Minuteman III (LGM-30G) 1/72

Background

In 1957s, the USAF started development of a solid-fuelled ICBM which could be launched with less preparation and require much less maintenance than the Titan ICBM. No doubt rapid development of solid rocket technology by the Navy drove this requirement as well. The first Minuteman I wing was declared operational in 1962. The Minuteman II followed four years later with a new second stage, increasing the range from 6300 to 7000 miles. Minuteman IIs also carried penetration aids to disguise the RV trajectory.

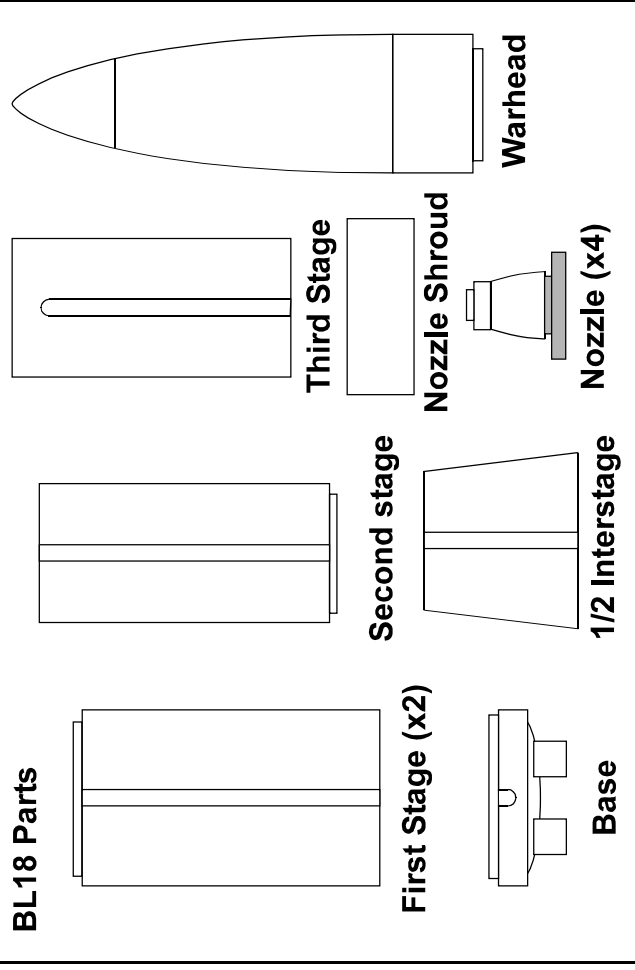
By 1971, the Minuteman III was operational. Range increased again to 8000 miles, and the missile carried 3 MIRV warheads. As part of strategic arms treaties, Minuteman IIIs are now 'de-mirved ... yes, that is a word, apparently) and only carry a single Mk 12 RV.

Assembly

Like all resin kits, remove the parts from their bases / sprues and wash thoroughly to remove any release agents. The second stage top and third stage bottom are flat, while the rest are raised on cylindrical standoffs which are designed to fit inside the ends of the piece below, so clean those ends up carefully and test fit everything. Match up the cable fairing of the two first stage halves and glue together. Line up the cable fairing end on the top of the base with the cable fairing on bottom of the first stage and glue in place. Glue the nozzle shroud to the bottom of the base. At the top end of the first stage, glue on the 1/2 interstage. Glue the flat faces of the second stage and third stages 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. Glue that assembly to the interstage, then glue on the warhead. That is the basic missile.

The four nozzles are cut off their base and the bottoms sanded flat, then glued into the holes in the base.

BL18 Parts



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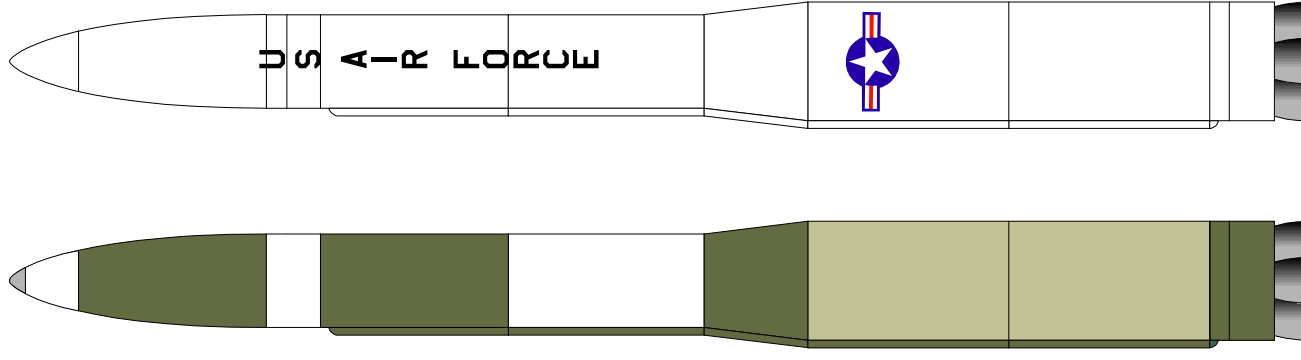
Painting

Total weight is a factor in missile range, so flying extra paint towards the target is not done. Operational missiles are painted but only for corrosion control purposes. Metal parts in the shroud, interstage and cable fairings are painted in a matt olive green primer, and the first stage rocket tube is painted in a pale green (possibly an anti-fungal) coating, although the LGM-30G in the USAF Museum is black. The other parts of the missile are painted gloss white. The tip of the nosecone is natural metal.

Having said that, you will never generally see an operational missile because they are loaded from the transporter into the silo. If you see an all-white missile with USAF and star and bar, it is likely a display example. Decals are included for those who want to use them.

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



Shown less than full-sized.