

Belcher Bits BL-21: Minuteman I (LGM-30A or B) 1/72

Background

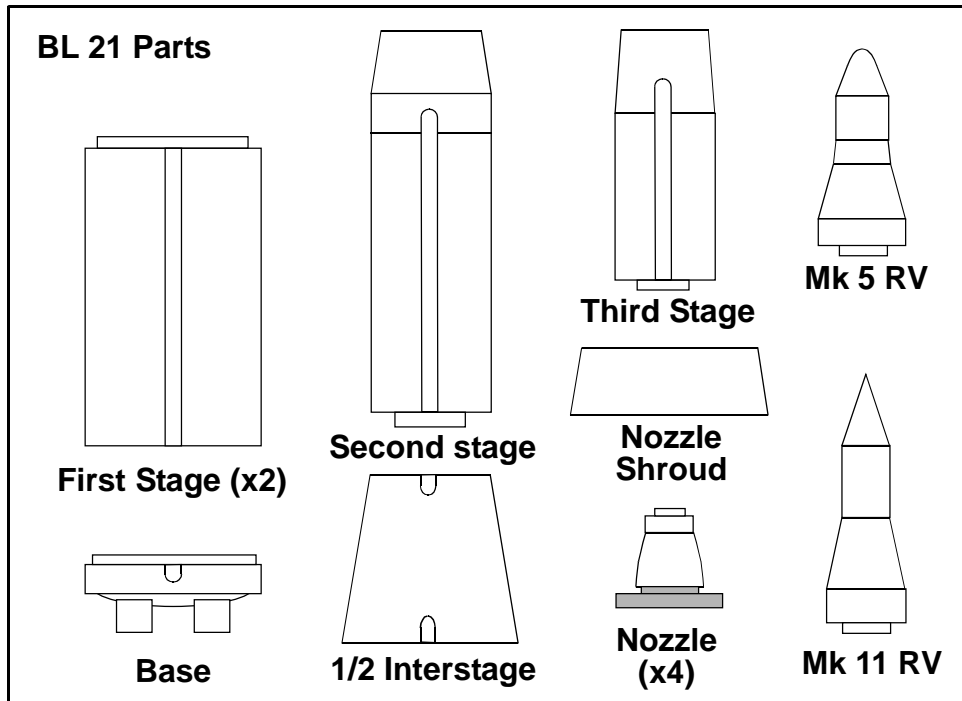
In 1957s, the USAF started development of a solid-fuelled ICBM which could be launched with less preparation and require much less maintenance than the Titan ICBM. No doubt rapid development of solid rocket technology by the Navy drove this requirement as well. The Minuteman 1 can be distinguished from later missiles by its smaller diameter second stage and discontinuous cable raceway.

The first Minuteman I wing was declared operational in 1962, with 150 Minuteman 1A (LGM-30A) fitted with the Mk 5 RV. Later, 650 Minuteman 1B (LGM-30B) were added; these had the later and more potent Mk 11 RV.

Assembly

Like all resin kits, remove the parts from their bases / sprues and wash thoroughly to remove any release agents. All parts have raised 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 stack and glue together, raised standoffs up. Fill the seam for this joint. 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 on the second stage, then third stage. Glue on the warhead: The shorter Mk 5 goes on an LGM-30A, while the LGM-30B uses the longer Mk 11. 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.



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Painting

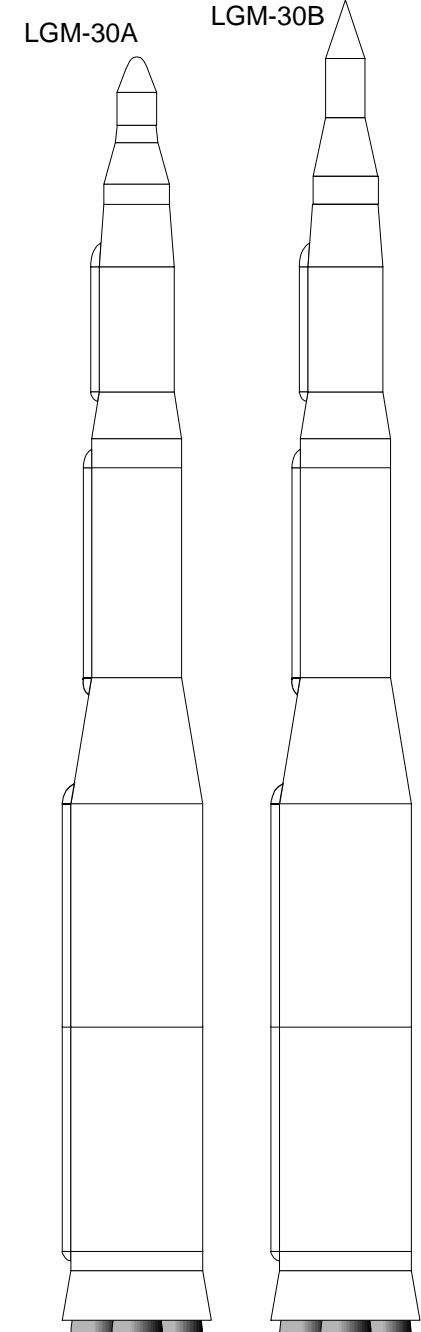
Total weight is a factor in missile range, so flying extra paint towards the target is not done. Operational missiles are painted but only for corrosion control purposes. Having said that, I have only ever seen photos of Minuteman Is in an all-white scheme, although some shots show some black bars which generally indicates roll markings on test missiles. Normally, you would never 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

Speaking of Transporters ...

MilMod Models of Germany has developed a 1/72 resin kit of the specialized Boeing Transporter Erector Loader vehicle. This is available through Aviation Megastore in the Netherlands. Search for MilMod 072001. It's big, it's unique but hang onto to your wallet ... it's pricey. Still, how else are you going to get your Minuteman model into the silo?



Shown less than full-sized.