

Belcher Bits BL-23: Trident I C4 SLBM 1/72

Background

Fielded in 1979, the Trident C4 was developed as an improved SLBM, offering greater range through aerodynamic improvements as well as new propellants. This was achieved even though the missile was no larger than its predecessor, the Poseidon C3 and could be easily fitted to existing SLBM subs.

The range of the UGM-96 Trident C4 was 4000 miles compared to the Poseidon at 2500 miles. This was achieved through the use of a third stage in the nose of the missile, around which are arrayed up to 8 Mk 4 RVs (at 100kt). In 1992, the START 1 treaty came in to effect and as new Ohio class submarines came into service with Trident D5 missiles, Poseidon and Trident C4 subs were withdrawn from service by 2005.

Assembly

Like all resin kits, remove the parts from their bases / sprues and wash thoroughly to remove any release agents. The first stage halves 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.

The assembly sequence may seem a bit odd, involving some assembly after painting, but there is method in the madness. It is much easier to paint the GRP exteriors of the first and second stage motors before gluing on the cable fairings.

Match up the flat ends of the first stage halves and glue together; use a V-block if you have one, or against a straight edge on a flat surface. Fill the seam. Glue the 1/2 interstage part to the top of the first stage assembly. Glue the 2/3 interstage part on top of that. Glue on the nose section. That is the basic missile, without the base section.

On a flat surface, place some sandpaper down and sand a small flat about 3/16" wide along the length of the missile up to where the second stage starts to reduce in diameter. This flat is where the cable fairings will go after painting.

On the bottom of the first stage, glue on the base by lining up the cables with the flat. Finally, glue the nozzle into the recess in the base.

Prime and get ready to paint the missile.

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Initial Painting

Nose and interstages are painted aluminum, while the engine base is white. Paint these and mask off. The first and second stages and nose cap are some form of filament-wound FRP (not your garage-style fibreglass!) These sections of the missile are not painted, only those metal sections of the missile being painted for corrosion protection. Painting the FRP sections to represent the filament wound fibres is a lot of work but really makes the model stand out when finished. I painted the tubes RAF Dark Earth, then roughly drybrushed a Desert Sand yellow around the tubes. Then a number of coats of Tamiya Transparent Orange to sort of blend everything together. Remove all the masking, and on to final assembly.

Final Assembly and Final Painting

Cut the supplied strip to 2.55" long. Sand lightly so the long edges on one face are slightly rounded. Paint this strip aluminum, as well as the resin cable cover. Using white glue, attach these covers in line sitting on the flat which you made earlier. The resin cable cover goes from the scribed line on the second stage up, and the plastic strip cable fairing goes below that. If you have any excess glue squeeze out, use a damp cotton swab to remove.

The accumulator and valve around the nozzle are aluminum, while some of the wiring around the base is red or silver. Nozzle is white.

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. Photos of example at Air and Space Museum, Udvar-Hazy.

