

Dragon M270 MLRS w/ M26 Rocket Pods

Kit Number:	3523	
Scale:	1:35	
Cost:	Varies	
Availability:	In Release	
Rating:	3.5 out of 5 stars	
Media:	Injection molded plastic	
Reviewed By:	Richard Slusher	
Review Type:	Construction Article	
Date:	Sept 1999	

Pro:

1. Super amount of detailing in kit (14 parts trees).
2. Eight page instruction guide.

Con:

1. Instruction guide is vague at times as to placement of parts.
2. Smaller parts are too hard to see and can be easily lost.
3. Some of the parts are hard to find on their trees. C & D trees are on the same piece of sprue; but are treated as separate trees.
4. Fit of the rocket tubes into launcher is awfully tight.

Overall the kit is a fine piece of work and with a little effort can be a true showstopper. Any problems found with the building of the kit are discussed in the steps where they were found.

Step 1: Road Wheels and Lower Hull

The road wheels, drive sprockets, and return wheels all fit together nicely in their respective places. The backs of some of the torsion bars do have some sinkholes; but these are easy to fill and correct.

I've held off on mating the wheels to the torsion bars until after I get the tracks put together. This is just my own personal preference. I just find that the wheels are easier to paint if I leave them off.

My advice though would be to mask off the ends of the torsion bars prior to priming and painting. The fit of the wheels and sprockets can be a little snug even unpainted. It wouldn't be a good thing to snap off a torsion bar trying to wedge a wheel on. Just stick a tiny piece of masking tape over the ends or use a liquid masking compound if you have it.

The two tie down points on the front of the lower hull are VERY tiny so be careful when putting them together (two pieces each) and gluing them on. Squeeze too hard with your tweezers and you'll be on your hands and knees combing through the carpet looking for them. Lots of luck with that maneuver!

The instructions aren't very clear on the placement of the shock absorbers either. I found the right holes easily enough; but they still need to be a little clearer.

Step 2: Crew Compartment Doors

This step went together without any major problems. My only complaint is that the rear view mirrors will need to be filled and shaped a little; but that's nothing to lose sleep over.

Step 3: Front of Crew Compartment

This step is pretty straightforward too. Keep those tweezers handy for installing the lights and the grab handles above the louvers.

Step 4: Inside of Crew Compartment (Front)

Nothing exciting here. Just be careful when removing part B24. It's awfully thin and can easily be broken.

Step 5: Inside of Crew Compartment (Back)

Yawn! It doesn't get much easier than this. Just be sure to keep the seat leg (B58) straight.

Step 6: Mating Rear of Crew Compartment to Hull

According to the instructions the rear of the crew compartment sits on top of the two angled notches toward the front of the hull. I've held off on putting these parts together though. I plan to prime and paint the hull and crew compartment pieces before putting them together. This is just my preferred method. Feel free to do what you feel comfortable with.

Step 7: Crew Compartment Roof

No surprises here.

Step 8: Building Crew Compartment to Hull

I held off on doing this step until I get the interior painted. All the major pieces are ready to be primed.

Step 9: Mating Upper & Lower Hull Pieces

I didn't do this part yet either for the same reason. I've still got to put the tracks together and paint everything.

Step 10

Just follow the instructions...

Step 11: Building the Rocket Tubes

Nothing out of the ordinary here. The only thing that's a little awkward is putting the end caps (H26) onto the back end of the tubes (H25). The parts aren't all that big and you have to get them real close together and lined up properly.

Step 12: Rocket Tube Braces

These pieces, H11, H12, H20, & H21 go together OK; but a little bit of trimming may be necessary to get them all to line up.

Step 13: Self Contained Loading System

There were no problems here either.

Step 14: Mounting Rails for Loading System

This is a pretty easy step here. You could leave the loading system off the kit all together being that the launcher will cover it up; unless you're building a diorama of the MLRS being loaded.

Step 15: Launcher Base

Self-Explanatory.

Step 16: Underside of Launcher Base

Everything seems to fit well; but I'd hold off on putting part G14 on. You have to put on two of them and they are rather delicate. I advise waiting and putting them on when you're done handling the launcher.

Step 17: Launcher Sides

Everything is OK except for the top part of piece F6. Those little tabs are VERY fragile so be careful.

Step 18: Installing Tracks for Loading System

No trouble here.

Step 19: Mating Loading System to Rocket Tubes

I skipped this step. It just looks like too much of a pain in the butt to mess with. You can try it if you want; but don't curse my name when you have trouble. I warned you...

Step 20: Inserting Rocket Tubes into Launcher

The fit of the tubes and loading system definitely needs some patience. The fit fine until you get them almost halfway in then they start getting a little tight. I found it necessary to give the loading system braces a few touches with my rotary tool before they slid in easily.

Step 21: Rear End of Chassis

Part A10 is VERY, VERY thin so be careful when removing it from the parts tree. I accidentally broke mine; but was able to super glue it back together. Thank God for Crazy Glue!!

Step 22: Mating Launcher to Chassis

The pivot points formed by G12 & G8 are just a little too big for their places on part E3. I had to file them down a little bit before I could get the cover pieces G11 to fit well. The fit of the launcher base into the upper hull leaves something to be desired too. Since I held off on mating the upper hull to the lower hull I was able to sand the underside down a little and that loosened things up.

At this point was ready to go back and put paint the tracks and put them on. There weren't any problems here; but I have learned to appreciate vinyl tracks. I know that will stir up fierce passions by the individual link track crowd; but that's just my own preference.

Now let's cover painting and decals...

On the main body parts I used Testor's "U.S. Army / Marines Gulf Armor Sand".

The rocket packs were painted with Testor's "Medium Field Green". The reason they were not painted with the Gulf Armor Sand is that in the field soldiers did not waste time painting the rocket packs. They may have on the ones that came with the vehicle at the port; but the re-loads weren't.

The rubber parts of the road wheels were painted using a Testor's "Flat Black" paint pen. I've found this to be a lot easier than using a smaller brush. The hubs were painted the same Gulf Armor Sand that the rest of the body received.

The tracks were painted using Testor's "Steel" with a few drops of flat black mixed in to darken the color a bit. The Steel dries too brightly otherwise. If you have a color that you like better then go ahead and use what you like. Once the tracks were dry I went back and painted the track pads Flat Black.

After I let everything dry for a couple of days I the whole model two coats of Future floor polish to seal the paint. Then I put on the decals. You have the choice of using the decals for either the 1st Cavalry Division or the 42nd Field Artillery Brigade. I gave all the decals a coat of decal set solution too. Then the whole model was given another coat of Future and allowed to dry.

Now comes the wash. I'm sort of new to the idea of doing washes so feel free to use whatever technique you like. I mixed approximately two pea sized amounts of artists' Burnt Umber to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a baby food jar of turpentine. I'd rather have to put a couple of lighter coats on then have too much on the first one. I held the model up vertically with the front of the vehicle up. This way when I put the wash on it would run "down" the vehicle going into the panel lines like dust and dirt being pushed by the wind as the vehicle was driven. Also pay attention to the tracks and road wheels

too. Do a couple of coats of this wash then put the model down and let everything dry for at least 24 hours. I let mine dry 48 hours just to be sure. To finish up, I gave the whole model a coat of Testor's Clear Flat Lacquer to get rid of the shine from the future.

In conclusion, (finally) the Dragon 1/35 scale MLRS kit is an excellent kit. It does have a few problems; but they seem to be fairly easy to work around. With a little effort this kit can be a real showstopper.

Happy Modeling!