

## AMtech's, 1/48 scale, Ta-183 "Huckebein"



**By Bryant Dunbar**

The first time I saw AMtech's 1/48 scale Ta-183 "Huckebein" kit was at the 2001 IPMS Butch O'Hare show. Scott Van Aken had a built up test shot on display. It only took a moment for me to decide I wanted one, NOW! Scott explained it was a test shot but kits would be available in the near future.

The Ta-183 would have been an incredible performer and no doubt would have superseded the Messerschmidt Me 262's capabilities had it been built and flown. In late 1942, Focke-Wulf's founder, Kurt Tank and engineer Hans Multhopp, began studies to create the Ta-183. Their work culminated in a design that was to have a prototype ready for its maiden flight in May or June 1945. Plans were for another fifteen test aircraft to follow. Two tail designs were considered for the aircraft. Both were to be built and compared. One tail was a more conventional, low version mounted along the fuselage. The other was the radical "T" design that we are most familiar.

The first production aircraft was scheduled for completion in October of 1945. However, British forces captured Focke-Wulf's facilities on April 8 and no examples were ever built. The Soviets

found complete plans for the Ta-183 in Berlin and it's believed they may have built as many as six test aircraft. Most are of the opinion the MiG-15 is a direct descendant of the Ta-183.

After WWII, Kurt Tank went to Argentina at the invitation of President Juan Peron. There he developed the IAE-33, Pulqui II. This aircraft had more similarities to the Ta-183 than the MiG-15 with the exception the IAE-33 had a very "nose high" attitude and short main landing gear. The "T" tail design appears almost identical to that of the Ta-183.

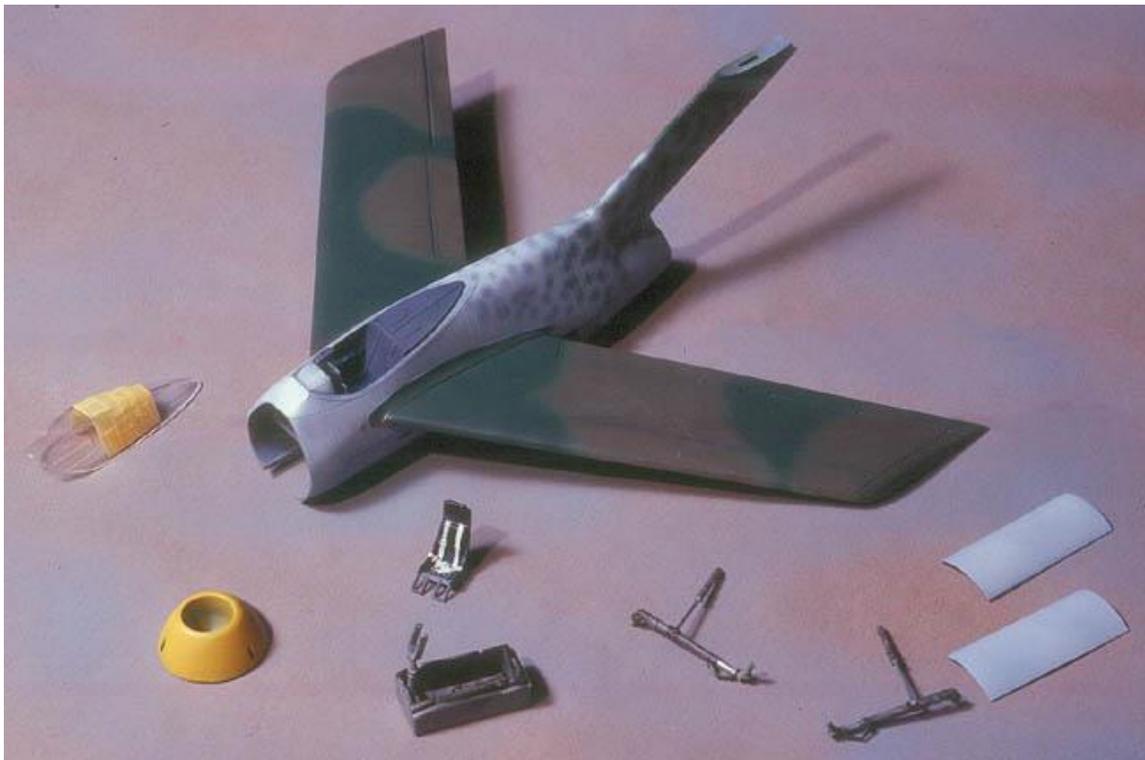
Unlike the real Ta-183, AMtech's kit is a reality. Upon purchasing mine, I noticed it was a very well thought out kit with good execution of the parts design, instructions, and decals. The parts were very clean and had very good fit qualities. The instructions were a seven-page booklet with very clear and concise directions. The decals, by Microscale, provided options for six different aircraft. The kit provided two options. It came with two tail and two engine exhausts versions to represent the Jumo-004 engine or the He-011 engine. I chose to build the Jumo-engined version. The second option was to either incorporate an open belly compartment with an external fuel tank or to place a cover over the compartment and delete the fuel tank. I liked the clean lines of the Ta-183, so I chose to close the compartment.



Overall construction was straightforward with assembly of the cockpit first followed by wheel well interiors and the fuselage. The cockpit has good detail and looks every bit like a WWII

German fighter's cockpit. I painted the cockpit with RLM 66 (gray) and detailed the instrument panel with appropriate yellow and red-rimmed instruments. Because the Ta-183 had a very simple canopy design with good view of the cockpit interior, I decided to add a set of photo etch seat belts from a FW-190 kit. I elected to pose the model with the canopy open. The only complaint with the kit is the canopy is a one-piece molding. There is a well-defined line that separates the sliding canopy from the windscreen. Using that line as a guide, I used a very sharp scalpel to separate the two. With a little time and careful work the parts separated with no problems.

The landing gear and door assemblies came next. I sprayed these areas with RLM 02 (light gray) and weathered them with thin, black enamel wash mixed with a little dishwashing liquid. As I applied the solution, I would blow on the area so the wash would settle into the corners and crevices. I was looking for a very dirty and used look considering the aircraft would have been flown off of unimproved runways and probably would have had a variety of maintenance issues.



The wing assembly came last before doing the exterior paint scheme. The wings have very close tolerance slots that fit into the fuselage. The fit is so snug that glue is almost unnecessary. I incorporated the weapons mounts but chose to leave the missiles off at this time. (I'd like to do some research on the missiles and confirm the correct colors before I attach them to the aircraft.)

I wasn't too interested in any single paint scheme that was provided in the instructions. One option was a yellow nosed aircraft. Another was one with a white and black check pattern. (The

black checks are made up from two decals on the sheet). I liked the idea of combining them and having the yellow and black check nose. To accomplish this, I first painted the nose white then yellow to ensure an even yellow color. (The checks would be applied later.) The rest of the fuselage, underside of the wing, and tail surfaces were airbrushed with RLM 63 (light gray). The top of the wings and upper tail surfaces are a camouflage pattern of RLM 80 (dark green) and RLM 81 (drab green).

The spine and tail surfaces of the aircraft have a mottled pattern. I used RLM 83 (bright green) just aft of the cockpit and sprayed in small spots working back along the top of the fuselage. About half way back, I changed over to RLM 80 and worked up the tail. Next I painted overlapping spots of RLM 61 partially covering the bright green spots and some of the dark green mottle until I got near the base of the tail. The last step was to feather in some of the original RLM 63 to help blend the colors together. The decals came next which was a straightforward affair with typical German insignia of WWII



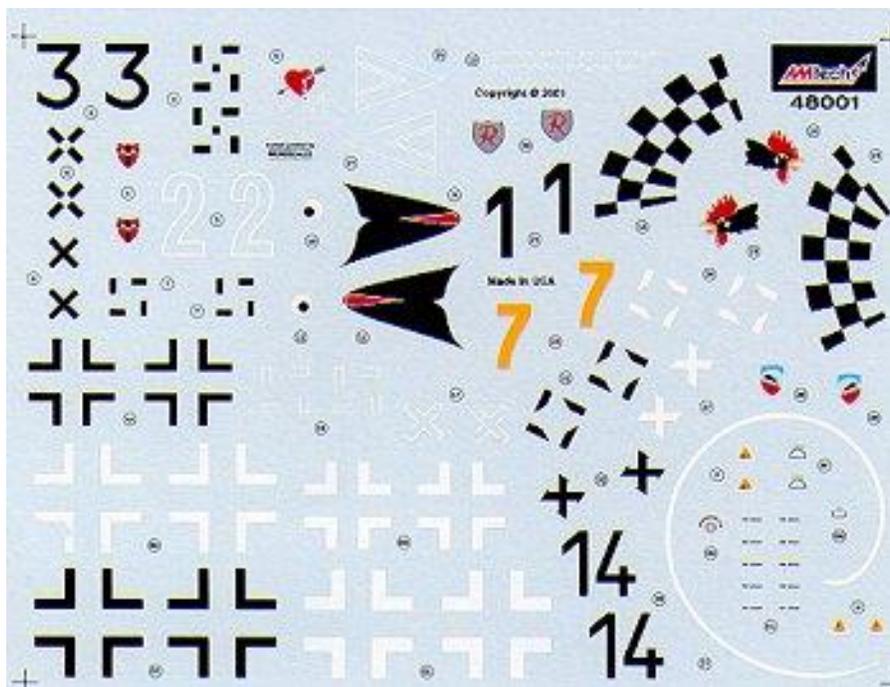
Once the paint and decaling was complete, I wanted to give this “bird” a very weathered appearance. I used chalk pastels of varying browns and dark grays with good effect. The brown tones give the look of leaking hydraulic fluids or engine oils. The grays worked well to “dirty up” the shell chutes and cannon ports. The Ta-183 had an all-metal wing. It appeared the only way to get into the cockpit was to walk on the wing area next to the fuselage. I dry brushed some silver along the wing root to represent scuffs from boots. I brushed more along the leading edge surfaces to show debris thrown up from takeoffs and landings on unimproved runways. The last

step in weathering was to apply a wet pastel wash where dirty boots would have left footprints behind.

Upon completing the weathering, I applied a coat of Future Floor polish to seal the decals and pastels. The last coat on the model is Polyscale Flat thinned with distilled water and a drop of dishwashing soap. Once that was done it was time to add some extra details. I made an antenna mount and placed it along the aircraft's spine, off setting it to the left. I stretched some sprue and connected the "antenna wire" between the mount and the forward tip of the horizontal stabilizer. Again using spue, I made a UHF loop and attached it to the centerline of the aircraft's spine.

The last problem I needed to address was the fact the kit provided no parts for a canopy aft bulkhead.

Leaving the canopy open, I found you could look down and see the inside of the fuselage. To correct this, I shaped a bulkhead out of plasticard and painted it RLM 66. I positioned it just past the rear most portion of clear unpainted plastic. It was an easy fix and gave a realistic effect.



Overall I'm very pleased with the results of this kit and found it was fun to build. It's nice to have a subject matter that allows for complete freedom of interpretation since the aircraft never really

existed. In my opinion, it's an aircraft so ugly you have to fall in love with it. My wife can't see the charm in it that I do and just laughs when she sees it.

I can almost see a real one sitting in a hangar at an airport and the owner jumping in it on weekends and going for a joyride. You'd have to admit every head would be turned asking, "What the heck was that?"



