

Kit Review

(March, 2005)

Tamiya Agusta A-129 kit. number 60758, 1/72 scale

The Kit:

This kit is a rebox of the Italeri A-129. It is molded in 78 olive green pieces spread over two sprues. There is one clear sprue for the cockpit glass. The plastic is a bit on the soft side. Panel detail is represented by both recessed lines and raised lines. There is also a plethora of raised rivet detail. Most parts will require some scraping or sanding work to remove flash and seams.

The decal sheet contains two options - one for a machine from the 7th "Vega" Regiment at Casarsa Della Delizia, Italy and the other for a CAE machine at Viterbo, Italy, both in 1998. Instrument panel decals are provided. The decals are printed by Cartograph in Italy, which provides another clue as to the origin of the kit. The images are glossy, with dense ink and in register. The carrier film is nice and thin.

Construction:

The model was built basically straight out of the box, but some things just had to be changed or added. I found the rivets annoying, so the first modification was their removal. I also decided to remove most of the raised panel lines. The soft plastic made the sanding easy, but the few recessed panel lines suffered sporadic damage. I rescribed some but not all of the lines that were represented by these rivets and fixed the damaged recessed lines. This was done with an Xacto knife using Dymo tape as a guide.

Construction started with the cockpit. The seats have molded in belts and harness which look quite good when finished. The excellent fit of the parts resulted in no problems when inserting the cockpit tub between the fuselage halves. I was quite surprised because this has been a problem area before with many other Italeri based kits.

I had to add some thin plastic shims to some of the edges of the cockpit sills to ensure a tight fit for the canopy.

For the most part, the remainder of the kit went together without too much fuss. Overall the fit is generally good, but not excellent. Most seams and joints will require a bit of work to get a good result. Particularly troublesome is the seam along the bottom of the fuselage, the seams between the parts making up the engine covers (parts 13, 14 & 15) and the joins between the wings and the fuselage, and the horizontal stabilizer and the fuselage.

The ordinance was both good and bad. The TOW missile tubes were excellent, while the rocket tubes were a big disappointment. The tube (parts 29 & 30) are of a smaller diameter than the end pieces (parts 31 & 32) which resulted in a prominent step between them.

Another issue was the engine compartment. It is completely hollow, and you can see directly into the interior of the model, so I had to add some plastic inside the engine intakes to blank off the openings. A trial fit of the intakes revealed that their alignment differed when viewed from the front of the aircraft. The starboard intake had a slight upward angle while the port intake was level. After checking reference photos, I decided

that the port intake was the one that was correctly aligned, so some sanding and scraping of the starboard intake was done to get it to match the level aspect of the port intake.

There is also a fit problem with what the small pod located at the nose of the aircraft (parts 42 & 43). It is too big to face straight ahead in its allocated spot, so you are left with the choice of trying to sand it down in size to fit, or do as I did and mount it so that it is aimed to the side.

The rotor blades are a gem, being well molded and quite thin, especially at the trailing edges. The tail rotor is too thick but I didn't try to thin it since that would have removed all the recessed detail.

Most of the small fiddle parts, such as the various steps and antennae and the landing gear and sensors were left off the kit until just before the end.

A word here about the canopy. It is an excellent molding. The part is crystal clear and thin. It even has wipers molded onto it, which is a nice touch but creates a problem in regards to finishing them. They are too small and fine to paint afterwards, so I scrounged some olive green coloured decals from my spares, cut some thin strips from the sheet and applied them to the wipers.

The canopy was masked, the cockpit filled with tissue paper and masked over, and the kit was primed with Testors Light Grey. After fixing a few flaws it was then painted overall with Aeromaster Olive Drab. The main rotor blades were painted black with yellow tips. The painting guide does not show the yellow tips but web photos show them. The tail rotor was painted olive drab with yellow tips. Prior to applying the decals, a coat of Testors gloss was applied.

I chose the markings for the 7th Regiment aircraft. The majority of the decals went on with minimal fuss. I applied multiple coats of Microsol to get the decals to set down. From my experiences with other Italeri kits, it is best not to move the decals around too much. Doing so just increases their chances of silvering.

Following the decaling, most of the remaining parts were added - the gear legs, the wheels, the ordinance, the steps, and the seats. All of the parts were then sprayed with Aeromaster acrylic flat.

Then came the sprint to the end.

Using another trick from Keith Goodman (www.kgwings.com), I cut small rectangular pieces from a gold and silver sequin and glued them to the spots where the glass would be located on the sensor pod. I feel this gives what a more convincing representation of the glass versus using paint.

Next to be put on was the canopy. This fit nice and tight. Then the final steps consisted of painting the red and green navigation lights with some high gloss paint, and the attaching of the main and tail rotors.

Conclusion:

A typical Italeri kit - in Tamiya clothing. Not an easy build, but then not too difficult either. As it stands the kit is not too bad, but if the raised detail had been replaced with scribed lines and better plastic used, this kit would be a stellar effort rather than a mediocre one.