

Battalion Bits BT8: PzKpfw IV Ausf D

Background

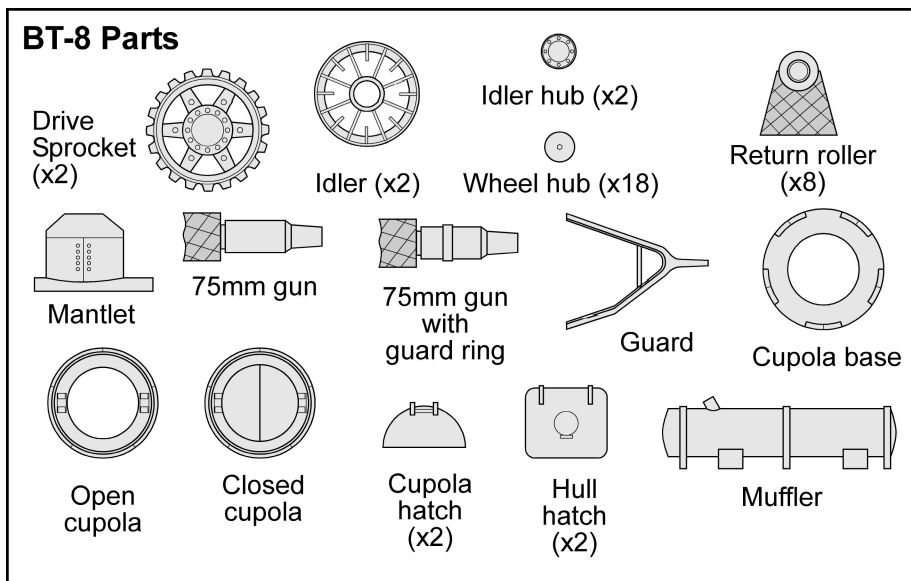
The PzKpfw IV was the heavier of the two standard tanks with which Germany started the war, and it continued in service with various upgrades through to the end. Initially fitted with a short 75mm gun as an infantry support vehicle, its larger turret allowed it to carry higher velocity 75mm guns and so continue in service until 1945. Its counterpart, the PzKpfw III was limited by its smaller turret although that chassis remained in service with StuGs until near the end of the war.

The Tamiya kit represents a late model Ausf J, so this resin conversion set allows the builder to backdate this kit to an Ausf D, as used in France, Russia and North Africa until about 1942. Early PzKpfw IVs were also upgraded in service so one can mix and match parts a bit to represent variations. The key structural identifiers of the D was the stepped front plate, and the mid-series turret with bulged rear plate and early armoured cupola.

Before Assembly

As with all resin sets, wash all the parts in a strong detergent and rinse in clear water to remove any oils or mould releases. Remove pour stubs and clean up the parts; use a mask when sanding resin and wet sand where possible. Cyanoacrylate adhesives work best but quickly; use five minute epoxy if joint requires manipulation while setting. These instructions follow the step-by-step kit instructions with variations where applicable.

Step 1: Substitute resin drive sprockets for kit parts A21, and resin return rollers for parts A10. Kit parts A16, A17, A19 and A20 are not required. Carefully sand the A22 wheel hubs down flush with the wheel rim. With a small rotary tool, you could reduce



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the height of the hub even a little more but do not reduce below the height of the spokes. Glue on the resin wheel hubs to parts A22.

Step 2: Fill the muffler mounting slots in part B15. Discard parts B12 & B13. Glue on the resin muffler, its bottom resting on the horizontal strip on B15, with the right hand mounting strap in line with the filled-in right hand slot. The smaller turret motor muffler will be added at a later stage.

Step 3: As per kit instructions.

Step 4: Cut two pieces of 1/8" tube 0.1" long. Use a round file to open up the centres until they slip over the axles on the rear plate, and glue in place. Glue on the resin idlers, making sure the slot lines up with the road wheels. Glue the resin idler hub in place.

Step 5: Assemble per kit instructions. My test assembly showed the tracks ended up nearly one link too long, and it was easiest to remove this from the front of part A6 under the idler.

Step 6: Clean up the pour sprues inside the rear corners of the resin upper hull. Then, substitute for part C37.

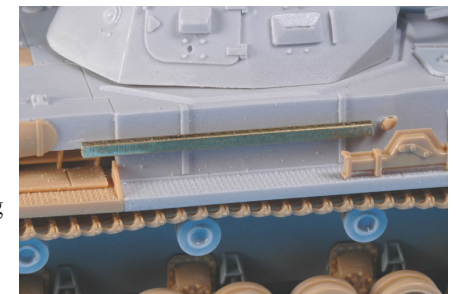
Step 7: The radiator fill box part D22 needs to be re-shaped. Slope the sides slightly toward the top, and use plastic strip to replace hinges. Cut off the mounting stubs and glue this item flush on the rear deck.

Step 8: Parts A11, and B11, B19, B30, B32 and B33 are not required. Substitute resin hull hatches for parts B2 & B3.

Step 9: As per kit instructions.

Step 10: Parts D1, D2, D24 and D25 are not required.

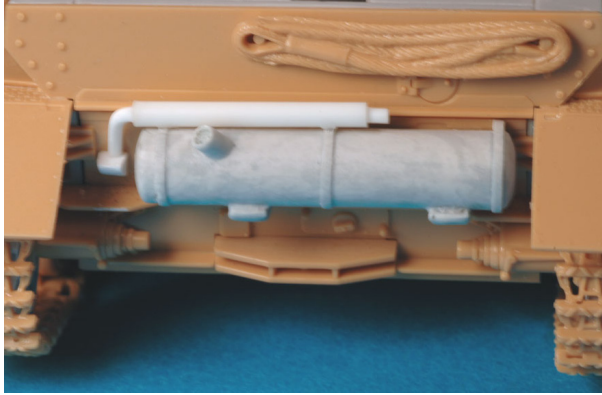
Step 11: Bosch headlight is a later fitting; early tanks often used a pair of simple headlights (not provided) so check your references. The shackle was apparently not fitted. Parts B31, B39 and B20 are not required. Antenna base part D12 can be used on the right-hand side, along with a 1.3" long length of brass channel. The antenna hinged down into this channel when not in use.



Step 12: Not applicable.

Steps 13-17: Not applicable, although many Ausf Ds did use the storage box.

Turret motor muffler: The turret traverse was powered by a small motor which had a separate muffler. Using the photo below, glue on a small piece of 0.080" quarter-round plastic (supplied) to act as the hull exit. Cut a piece of 0.080" diameter rod (supplied) to 0.75" long, and glue where shown. Cut a length of the 0.035" rod to 0.05" long and glue to the right-hand end. Bend, cut and fit a length of 0.035" rod on the other end.



Resin Turret Assembly: Clean up the resin turret base and after test fitting into the resin turret, glue together.

Resin Armoured Cupola Assembly:

The cupola had an armoured ring which was raised to allow vision through one of the five gaps between the five projecting lips (with a slot in the centre of each) along the edge. This conversion allows two options. The closed cupola is configured with the armoured ring lowered, and the upper hatches closed. The open cupola is shown with the armoured ring in the raised position, and also with the hatches moulded separately. For either configuration, make sure the slots on the ring and on the projecting lips line up, a gap faces forward AND the hatch hinges are on each side. There are two ways to assemble this and only one is correct. See the photo for clarification.

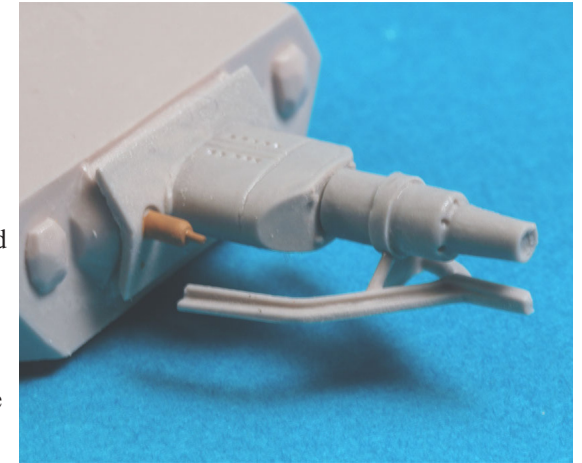
The resin cupola base fits into the hole in the turret top; ensure that the base is placed so that one of the gaps faces forward. Glue in place.



Resin mantlet and gun: The resin mantlet is glued to the resin turret, with the gun offset to the left. The coaxial mg part C8 can be used.

Two gun barrels are supplied. One is plain, the other has a mounting ring which is used to attach the resin antenna guard underneath the barrel. If you are building a variant without the antenna guard, glue the plain barrel into the mantlet. If you are using the antenna guard, choose the other barrel and glue the antenna guard to the ring. Note that the guard is not symmetrical, but the forward portion should be in line with the gun barrel.

Painting and finishing are up to you; lots of good references exist.



Not satisfied with a resin conversion? How about converting a conversion?

Backdating an Ausf D to an Ausf C

The Ausf C had a straight (as opposed to stepped) forward superstructure plate which is easy to put in place, but the starboard radio operator's hatch was in line with the driver's hatch, so a bit of surgery is required in the starboard front corner of the upper hull.. Replace the hull machine gun with a visor and pistol port.

The other major difference is the Ausf C had an internal gun mantlet, so work is required to convert the resin external mantlet.

Updating an Ausf D to an Ausf E

Use the resin hull provided with this set, but sand the two hatches on the front glacis flush and scribe in hatches as seen on the Ausf J kit. Sand off the resin driver's visor and use the visor from part B11 of the Ausf J kit to update the driver's plate. Spaced armour is fitted to the front of the drivers plate and over the auxiliary mg plate. Use the Ausf J kit turret and cupola, but substitute the visors and the side hatches from the resin turret (not easy, but probably easier than modifying the resin turret roof and rear plate to resemble the Ausf J kit parts).

References

- 1. Panzer Tracts No. 4 Panzerkampfwagen IV**, Tom Jentz and H.L. Doyle, Darlington Publications 1997 (and still available ... go get it!)
- 2. PzKpfw IV in Action**, Squadron Signal Publications
- 3. Achtung Panzer No. 1 PzKpfw IV**, Dai Nihon Kaiga Publication, 1989
- 4. Modelling the Early PzKpfw IV**, Tom Cockle, Osprey Publishing, 2005