

7.5cm PaK 40/4 auf RSO mit Allwetterverdeck

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Dragon Models has re-released their 7.5cm PaK 40/4 auf RSO/03 'Smart Kit', originally shipped in 2010. This time, however, they've included an all-weather canvas cover ('Allwetterverdeck'). The kit is the fourth DML release of their RSO series, and contains their popular 75mm PaK 40 main weapon used in several of their other kits. The exquisitely-detailed tarpaulin cover is molded in DS plastic and comes as a single, rigid part. Other new parts include the seats and a newly molded PaK pedestal/mount. The main cargo deck has been replaced with one sporting much more detail, including individual ammunition lockers (nine in all), with one locker providing an option to be modeled open or closed. The track is Dragon's individual-link Magic Track.

The acronym RSO stands for Raupenschlepper Ost, which translates as 'Caterpillar Tractor East'. The terrible muddy and icy conditions experienced on the Eastern Front convinced Germany it needed a highly



The contents of this box include:

1 Main lower hull, upper-front hull, and Allwetterverdeck packaged separately.

12 Sprues in soft, light grey plastic, packaged separately

2 Baggies of individual-link Magic Track.

2 Small photo-etch sheets, including a main weapon gun shield and ammunition details.

1 8-page blue and white instruction sheet with 22 steps.

The kit comes with four schemes represented using the ubiquitous Dragon blue-and-white three-view drawings, and a small (but perfectly registered) sheet of decals from Cartograph of Italy. These include:

- Unidentified Unit, Eastern Front 1943, Overall German Yellow with grey canvas cover
- Unidentified Unit, Eastern Front 1943, Overall German Grey
- Pz.Jg.Abt. 152, 1.Ski.Jg.Div., 1944, Eastern Front 1943, Overall German Yellow with mottled German Red-Brown and Green camouflage and no canvas cover
- Pz.Jg.Abt. 152, 1.Ski.Jg.Div., 1944, Eastern Front 1943, Overall German Grey, w/no canvas cover

mobile, tracked vehicle. The Steyr Company proposed the RSO and it immediately became popular thanks to its mobility and reliability. In all, about 23,000 RSOs were

produced by a range of manufacturers. The original version had a pressed-steel cab and truck-style cargo bed. Later it was decided to convert some into an anti-

tank role by mounting the 75mm PaK 40/4 gun on the rear and by lightly armoring the driver's compartment.

Dragon's new release includes a special canvas cover to protect the fighting compartment. Given the harsh winter conditions the vehicle was expected to operate in, this canvas cover was much welcomed by crews.

German WWII armor modelers will recognize the nicely detailed RSO lower chassis and the PaK 40 anti-tank gun. Enough extra goodies, such as the open driver's compartment and ammunition storage lockers (with two kinds of shells and storage tubes) will entice the super-detailers among us, yet a relatively lower part count (for Dragon models) will attract new modelers.

The Instructions

There are sprues from several different Dragon kits included in the box. That said; I found nothing significant as far as errors or omissions. There are some minor inconsistencies and these are pointed out where needed, below. The only criticism I have is that in many steps the exact placement of crucial parts is vague at best, illustrated by a simple pointing arrow telling you to 'put it somewhere in this general area'. As a direct result, I had some fit issues later on, which are detailed below.



Things to consider before starting:

The build sequence is pretty straight forward: engine and chassis first, then the driver's compartment, the main deck and finally the gun.

Due to complexity in the design and fit of the chassis and running gear, I suggest you perform the steps involving those assemblies in the following order: 3,5,4,6.

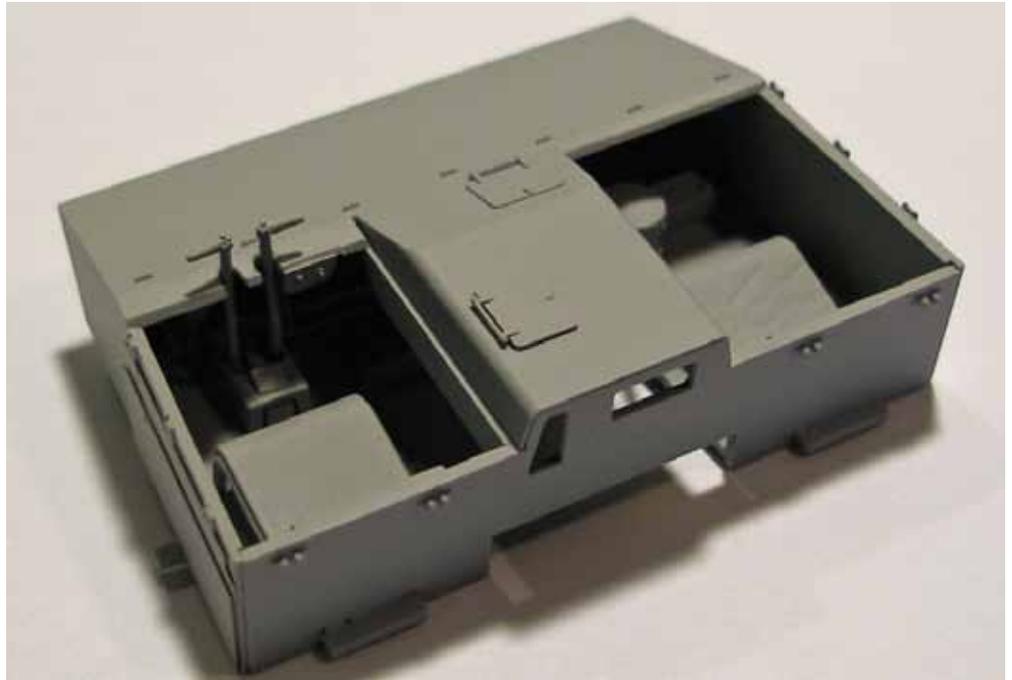
The gun can be built separately and dropped on last, as well as the track, which is completely exposed and accessible.

There is a built-in ammunition locker and a wooden crate that can be assembled open, if desired, exposing 4 rounds each. That decision can also wait until the end of the build.

Finally, the build-it-all-and-then-paint-it approach will work (it's what I did) but it still pays to plan ahead and proceed slowly.

The Build Engine

The kit comes with a reasonably detailed engine. Unfortunately, I felt the assembly was overly complex, with a poor fit throughout, and very little of the completed engine is visible once the driver's compartment is seated. There is a very small hatch (Part D14) that can be left open, and a glimpse of the sides can be seen if you leave



the drivers compartment open, but that's it. Still – I applaud Dragon for making the effort. Other modelers may not have the same problems with the assembly as I did.

Lower chassis and running gear

Dragon chose to engineer the drive shaft that runs from the engine aft, through one bulkhead and into another, as eight separate pieces, which don't exactly fit to each other or through the bulkhead without opening up the hole (see Step 3). But that's only the beginning of the frustration. In Step 4 you build an 'H'-shaped axle with connecting cross-members, which isn't used until Step 6, later. The problem with this approach is that the fit of the various

pieces is very poor, leading to a wobbly assembly that is difficult to align. You can't install it on the lower hull until after finishing a (tricky) Step 5. By then (for me) the entire thing had cured solid. I strongly suggest that you complete Step 3, then Step 5, then Step 4 and finally Step 6.

In Step 4, it is unclear from the diagram which end of Part B3 faces forward or aft. Try dry-fitting the wheels with some tape. When they are spaced evenly, you have the correct orientation.

In Step 5, you will need to attach Parts A7/A8 first, followed by Parts A15/A18 which partially cover and prevent access to the first two parts when installed.

In Step 6, the drive axle that I painstakingly assembled in Step 4 is too narrow to fit where it is supposed to. To solve the problem I cut the axle in two, added a plastic spacer to one side and then glued the axle back together so it would line up with the rest of the running gear (see image below).

In Step 7, I could not get Parts A25/A26 to seat properly so I left them off.

The good news is, from here on out, the design is solid and assembly a breeze.

Drivers Compartment

The kit comes with a somewhat detailed driver's compartment that can be closed with hatches when in combat, or opened in travel mode. I chose to leave mine open, opting to use the photo-etch 'open' doors over the plastic 'closed' doors. Construction is pretty straight forward, although assembly E13 didn't seem to fit where the instructions placed it, so I cut off a piece and just put it

'there', next to the passenger seat. Tiny wire grab-handles are included in the kit (that's not an empty baggie!) for the doors in the open position. Mine were attached at one point in time. When I went to photograph the model I saw that both handles had gone on walkabout. There were no attachments points for the tiny ends, so I imagine it didn't take much effort to pop them off.

Cargo Deck

The completely new rear cargo deck is well detailed, with nine separate ammunition lockers, one of which can be posed open, displaying up to four projectiles. Only the shorter (HE) rounds will fit, however.

Interestingly, the instructions contain an image (upper right-hand corner, Step 10) showing the old deck, with a small rectangular section at the rear of the deck molded shut. On the new deck this is a rectangular hole. There is no part in the Parts map to put there, and the image shows the old deck, as mentioned.

Searching my baggie of unused parts, however, I did come up with Part 25 that fit, but does not contain the same tread pattern that matches the area all around it.

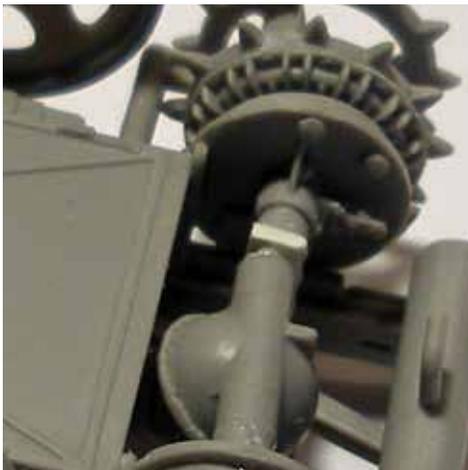
7.5cm PaK 40/4

Dragon included their standard (and still pretty nice) slide molded 75mm main weapon in this kit. Steps 12-18 follow the assembly of that and everything goes pretty smoothly. Part B54 is mislabeled as B64. I like the fact that Dragon uses plastic gun shields for this gun. Many modelers may prefer photo-etch parts here, but the thinness of what is offered in this kit looks pretty good to me.

The entire weapon assembly sits on a new pedestal mount that is well engineered and sturdy.

The Track

The RSO comes with two baggies of individual-link Magic Track, that, as always, go together very well. The short





span of both runs allows you to assemble the entire run before draping it on the vehicle. Dragon provides 77 links for each side and recommends that you use 67 links. I found that their recommendation is spot on, providing the proper sag that is prevalent on these vehicles.

Unfortunately, I was distracted while working on the second run and I did not allow it to cure sufficiently to stay in one piece when being installed. By the time I had all the smaller chunks attached and set where I wanted them to be, it was too late to rectify the fact that the entire run was put on backwards. If I had a week to search the internet and my library, however, I am confident that I can find a picture of the track on a real vehicle installed backwards just like mine... Doh!

Step 21 - Bringing it all together

The weapon can be installed in travel mode or in combat mode, the difference being how the rather finicky support bracing is attached. I had to manhandle some of the parts to get everything in the instructions to fit where I believe they are supposed to go - it's difficult to tell.

There are two sets of delicate photo-etch latch and hasp assemblies that do not come with plastic alternatives. I left these off.

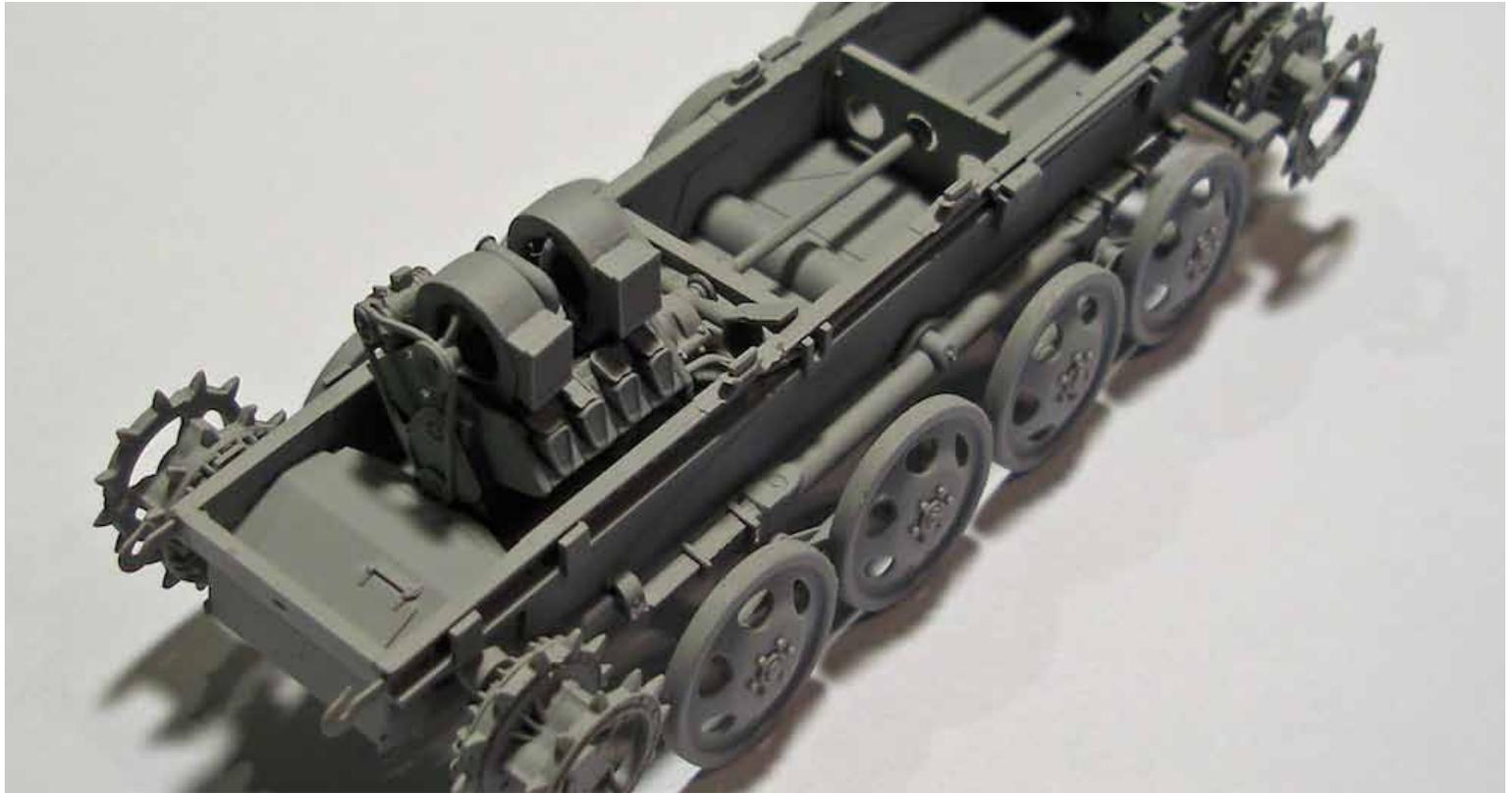
The all-weather canvas cover ('Allwetterverdeck') in my sample kit was warped, but a few quick dunks in boiling water and the canopy straightened out just fine. The entire cover is waaaaay too thick for 1/35th scale, but when attached, the front and back of the canopy

contains folds that hide the thickness so everything ends up looking fine.

Painting and Finish

I decided to paint my RSO in an overall German-grey scheme. I already have another RSO in a summer three-color scheme and I thought the canopy included in this version would be more appropriate in a winter-grey finish.

(Note: I thin all Tamiya paint and primer products 50:50 with Gunze Mr. Color Leveling Thinner, which has its own retarder for airbrushing. If you haven't tried this thinner with Tamiya paints, you really should. I use Model Master Airbrush Thinner for thinning their paints. I use Vallejo's own thinner for all Vallejo paints. I thin all Mig and AK weathering products with Mona Lisa Odorless Paint Thinner. This wonderful product thins only



what you mix it with, and won't affect the underlying coat beneath it, no matter what it consists of. Really amazing stuff. I use a Pasche-H Single-Action airbrush, Number #3 tip, at 20 lbs. pressure for everything.)

Painting and finishing followed these steps:

Painting: I started by airbrushing a primer coat of Gunze Mr. Surfacer 1200 over the entire surface to cover the photo-etch, oils and glue spots and to prepare it for the subsequent finish.

I then sprayed the entire vehicle using Rustoleum (rattle-can) Flat Black. I've been using this paint with great success recently. It dries smooth and thin, it's cheap, and I can do the whole vehicle in about 1.5 seconds. Once back in my model room I touched up the areas the rattle-can didn't reach with Tamiya XF-69 NATO Black. The dark pre-shade coat provides the shadows that are needed in all the nooks and crannies.

I followed this with a base coat of Tamiya XF-63 German Grey. I was careful to spray the inner

portion of the wheels and try to miss the nearby track. I then mixed a little Tamiya XF-2 Flat White in with the German Grey and sprayed the inner portions of all the panels to lighten up the grey a little.

Decals: With painting finished, I hand-brushed the surface areas that would be receiving decals with a coat of Future floor polish to give the decals a smooth surface to slide on to.

Once the Future was dry I went about applying the few decals in the kit. Dragon has thoughtfully included a

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'complete' license plate decal along with one that you can assemble yourself. I chose the former, as well as couple of Balkan Crosses from my spares box (there are none in the kit). I used the Red and Blue MicroSol and MicroSet products without any problems.

Once the decals were dry, I hand-brushed another coat of Future to seal the edges of the decals.

Detail Painting: Before I moved on to weathering, I painted the breech block of the PaK with Model Master Steel, and the four ammunition rounds peeking out of the rear storage bins with Model Master Brass.

Hairspray Chipping: Next I used an aerosol can of TreSemme hairspray to coat the vehicle and canopy before applying a light coat of Tamiya Flat White. I waited 30 minutes and worked the un-cured white paint with a stiff brush and water until I had the chipped effect I was looking for.

Filters: I mixed some Mig Wash Brown with Mona Lisa and gave the entire vehicle and canopy a filter to change the rather bland tone of the German Grey, paying special attention to the running gear. I followed this by mixing another filter made of Mig Dark Wash (aka Burnt Umber) and Mona Lisa and applied that to the two ammunition boxes on the cargo deck and the two front



seats. The last filter applied was a mix of Mig Standard Rust pigment and Mona Lisa on several areas, including the exhaust manifolds.

Pin Washes: Once the filters were dry, I shot the entire vehicle with Future to provide a glossy base for a pin wash. I used Mig Dark Wash right out of the bottle to accentuate the detail throughout and to bring out the wonderful wood grain of the cargo deck side panels. Next I used AK Interactive Track Wash straight from the bottle on the tracks to break up the grey 'monotony', and finally applied a streaking wash on all

the flat surfaces using AK Interactive Streaking Grime for Panzer Grey, working it with Mig Thinner for Washes until I had what I was looking for.

Dry Brushing: Once the pin washes were dry I dry-brushed everything sticking out, including the folds on canopy with Mig Faded Grey Oil Paint, which really made the detail pop out.

Flat Coat and Dusting: Once satisfied, I gave the whole vehicle a coat of Vallejo Flat Varnish followed by a dusting of Vallejo Model Air Light Brown, working from the bottom up, to blend everything together.

Metal Highlights: The last step was to go over the vehicle with a silver pencil and Mig Gun Metal pigment to bring out a metallic sheen where appropriate.

Conclusion

This kit was a lot more challenging than I thought it would be. I spent a lot of time with the chassis and running gear and had some fit problems, although I concede that other modelers may not have the same problems I did. There were some PE parts that did not have any plastic alternatives as usually found in other Dragon kits.

On the other hand, the main weapon is beautiful and went together very well. The added detail on the cargo deck included in this version of the RSO really brings alive what otherwise was a pretty mundane surface. And once together, the chassis and running gear looks great. The Magic Track makes quick work of the track and the slide molded barrel eliminates the need for removing the big seam line usually found there.

I recommend this kit for average-to-experienced modelers only – beginners might have issues with the instructions, the photo-etch,

and the running gear. The complexity of the design and the fit problems require a bit of actual modeling to occur. I recommend that you go slow, pay attention to the instructions, and consider the suggestions included above.

I would like to thank Dragon Models and Dragon USA for providing this kit for review, and to IPMS USA for giving me the opportunity to build it.



