

# COMBAT ZONE CHRONICLES

AN ONGOING NEWSLETTER

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## Don't Mess With the Major

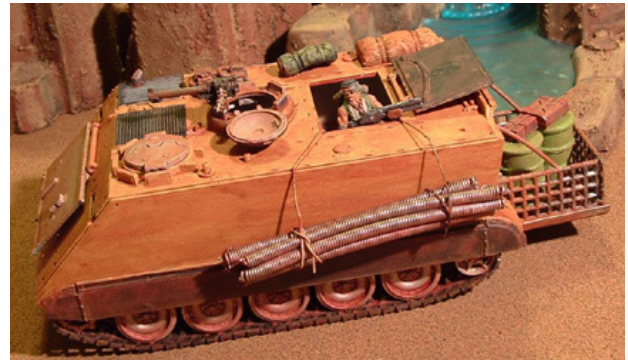
by Karl Paulsen

Meet the Major, commander of the the Muckland Irregulars (formally incorporated as Muckland Reclamation Ltd.).

Tired of carrying scrap in poorly armored autos, or having to hire the local nomads to caravan their salvage to market, the Irregulars pooled their resources, and made a visit to the annual Octagon Security Ltd. surplus auction. There they acquired the Desert Scavenger.



Promptly nicknamed Matilda by her crew, the Desert scavenger has proved to be the perfect vehicle for transporting salvage, providing portable shelter and scaring the hell out of their rivals. (Drybed Salvage and Supply, LLC). All the while –



much to the Irregular's delight-raising considerable concern amongst the local Constabulary.

### Background:

The motif of post/apocalyptic scavengers living off the scraps of a long-gone civilization is fertile ground for gaming. Additionally, I have long been fascinated by the lumbering Sandcrawler vehicle used by the Jawas in Star Wars to transport their salvage. As a Sandcrawler would likely fill an entire table a much smaller vehicle was needed, and thus was born the Desert Scavenger.

### The Tank:

The M113 is a great subject for modeling. It's boxy, nondescript shape lends itself well to most any era from the 1960's through -as we will see- the future and sci-fi settings. Serving as, troop carriers, mortar platforms, mobile HQ's, Rocket launcher platforms, field repair vehicles, and even as an AFV with a

small turret, nearly every variation has been produced in an affordable 1/35 scale kit.

What does this mean to you, the Combat Zone player? It means that it's time to get some vehicles involved in your games! Even if you don't use vehicles, the Desert Scavenger makes an excellent piece of scenery, or mission objective and I found it was a lot of fun to build.



### **Why a Model Kit? :**

As I mentioned, there are many kits available. Being model kits, they come with much more detail than the sci-fi tank kits sold by most gaming companies.

It is not unusual for them to have such features as opening doors, working tracks, and detailed interiors, as well as lots of fun pieces that can be used to customize this, or other projects you may have.

1/35 and 1/48 are usually the best scales for 28mm figures. I choose 1/35 for the M113 for a nice large, hulking, look to the model. In 1/35 scale the M113 has large front, rear and top hatches and is tall enough that you can place troops inside.

The kit you see pictured in this review is made by Tamiya, one of my favorite makers of plastic kits. The detail is great, the tracks actually roll and yet it cost less than \$25. Similar M113 kits can be purchased online for as little as \$15, and are more than suitable for gaming purposes.

### **Things you will need, in addition to the M113 kit.**

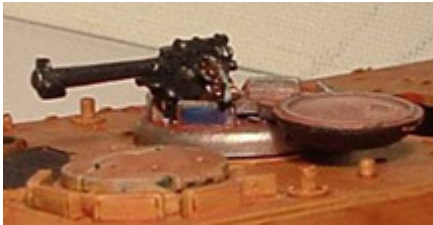
- A piece of plastic Granny Grating: (plastic mesh used for cross stitching, officially called "plastic mesh canvas")
- Some small wire: I prefer guitar or bass strings, but whatever you can lay your hands on.
- eM4 Ganger Heavy weapons (kit SF7P or SFP7a) or Trooper Heavy Weapons (Kit SFP5 or SFP5a) You could use the .50 caliber machine gun that comes with the m113, but I prefer to use weapons from either the Ganger or Trooper heavy weapons packs for continuity of style between the vehicle and the figures.
- Random bits from toys, models, etc. for salvage.
- Random pieces to build an engine, assuming you want to, and the kit doesn't supply one
- General modeling supplies: Glue, paint, hobby knife, razor saw, etc.

### **Basic Kit Assembly:**

The first rule for these kits is simplify, simplify, simplify. Unless you are a hardcore treadhead and are building a display model, you will want to leave off a lot of the pieces from this kit. I am building a vehicle that must stand up to the rigors of gaming, so

flimsy bits like guardrails, handles, antennae, etc are best left off. The kits can be assembled basically as per the instructions with a few exceptions.

One thing to note is that the front hatches in the models cover where the engines would be. I prefer to locate the engines near the middle of the vehicle, or wherever it is most difficult to place figures, and leave the front area clear and the hatch open-able so that figures can be placed there.



**Armaments and accessories:** 1/35 scale weapons and accessories may or may not work for your gaming, depending on how flexible you are with scale and what your particular kit comes with. Combat Zone troops have weapons and proportions that are slightly on the "Heroic" side.

Thus, I have found that .50 caliber machine guns, missile and grenade launchers, packs, gas cans and ammo cases can work well, while small arms, smaller SAWs, shovels and some other accessories do not look appropriate.

Again, leave off as much detail pieces as you can. For the basic exterior construction, I build the tank body, hatches, treads and mud guards. For the interior, I install almost nothing.

To the left and right of the top of the front hatch are slots where headlamps fit in. Leave the

headlamps off, or put them elsewhere and you and shave the upper side of the slot a bit to make nice looking viewing slots. They aren't really necessary with all the periscopes at the top hatches, but they look quite sharp.

### **Customization.Steps:**

**Interior:** Get creative. I am going for maximum flexibility (read: "I change my mind a lot"), so the engine, stacked boxes, drums, weapons, packs, and equipment inside the tank are held in place with blutac (a.k.a. poster putty or sticky-tac).

Bunks were considered, but I determined that with space at a premium, the Muckland Irregulars would sleep in hammocks. It is recommended that you make as much of the interior stowage and equipment removable as possible so that you can fit more figures in later if needed.

**Engine:** I built a small engine-looking contraption near the middle of the vehicle. The engine is made of a G.I. Joe missile launcher that I cut apart with a razor saw (the unsung hero of miniature customization) , and then glued together in a different configuration along with a couple of other model bits.

### **The Junk bed:**

Drill two holes at the top corners of the door and at the top corners of the doorway

Leaving the rear door down, string wire through those holes from the top rear corners of the model to the holes at the end of the door, so it is open, but also perpendicular to the ground

(not resting on the ground), and creates the floor of the junk bed.

Construct the walls of granny grating, and fill with the "junk" you have collected. (see granny grating cut to size below)

As with the interior stowage, if the salvage is removable, it will allow you to place figures in the Junk-Bed if your scenario requires. If you glue the bits of salvage together into larger blocks base they can be removed and used as scenery, or a mission objective. Salvage can come in many forms.

I constructed one salvage block of toy parts, one of model parts, and one of lengths of cut up bass strings wrapped up with wire that will hang off the side. Hint: The side hanging gear need not be glued on as the straps are simply bent at the end and hooked over the opening under the large roof hatch.

**Exterior:** An oil can and two packs from the kit, and a random bit of equipment from a battletech back pack were added to the top of the model.

**Weapons:** Most kits already have a

mounting for weapons. I actually lost the Weapon mounts for this model, so the mount is just a small piece of sprue between the gun and the upola. The gun is the autocannon body paired to the barrel from the recoilless rifle.

Note that the hatch has been repositioned to be open to the side rather than to the rear so as not to interfere with the larger open-able rear top hatch.

Assemble, paint and weather as you see fit. As the pictures show, it doesn't take much to create an appearance that is the pride of the Muckland Irregulars and looks fine on the tabletop.

There you have it! I hope this inspires you to start building your own vehicles. Of course, the venerable M113 has way more uses than just scrap hauler. Most any Corporate, Military, Paramilitary, Rebel, and Police force can find a use for this ubiquitous vehicle, and your local military model purveyor has many other vehicles that can provide the basis for your own creations.

For game stats, check out the tracked AFV stats listed in **Vehicles in Combat Zone** or **Vehicles in Combat Zone Redux**