

Brief history and description of missile

The de Havilland Firestreak was one of the UK's first operational infrared-guided air-to-air missiles, developed during the early Cold War to equip high-speed interceptors against Soviet bombers.

Its origins trace back to the early 1950s under de Havilland, at a time when radar-guided weapons were still immature and infrared homing offered a simpler alternative. Entering service in the late 1950s, Firestreak was designed primarily for high-altitude interception, reflecting the strategic emphasis on countering nuclear-armed bomber threats rather than agile dogfighting targets.

Firestreak had several notable strengths at the time it was deployed. Its relatively large warhead and proximity fuze gave it a high probability of kill once within effective range, and its infrared seeker—while primitive by modern standards—was reasonably effective against the hot exhausts of jet bombers. The missile was also integrated with interceptor fire-control systems, allowing coordinated engagements at speed. However, its limitations were significant. The seeker required a strong heat signature and was generally restricted to rear-aspect engagements, meaning it had to be fired from behind the target. Its range and maneuverability were limited, reducing effectiveness against smaller or more agile aircraft. Additionally, the missile's electronics were bulky and required extensive cooling, which increased complexity and maintenance demands. Reliability in early service was also mixed, reflecting the novelty of guided missile technology at the time. Operationally, Firestreak represented an important stepping stone rather than a definitive solution. It demonstrated the viability of infrared homing but quickly became outclassed by more advanced missiles such as the Red Top missile, which improved on range, seeker capability, and engagement flexibility.

The missile was primarily used by the RAF on interceptors like the Javelin, Venom, Sea Venom, Sea Vixen and Lightning.

In terms of appearance, Firestreak missiles were typically finished in white, drab or black, with standard coloured bands indicating live or inert status and stencils. A distinct feature of the Firestreak is its octagonal pyramid clear glazed nose which we attempt to recreate here by providing clear nose section.

Firestreak was seen in many colours throughout its career. In search for the pattern we strongly recommend to place faith in your photographic evidence, Do not trust AI - it will tell you Firestreaks come in grey and have standard brown-blue--yellow bands. That's not even funny.

Much safer to follow the carrier:
Javelins carried white or orange.
Lightnings - white and green (or black).
Sea Venoms - white or black.
Sea Vixens - orange.

Look out for seeker head and proximity fuze caps - coming in red or black.
 Whole missiles can also be single colour, that would indicate a mock up.

The last scheme is just for the Venom to show off. But It is so sweet with those tiny roundels...

Colors and markings, have fun.

