

# SO114451

## 1/144 Red Top

### Brief history and description of missile

Red Top was developed in the UK by Hawker Siddeley during the late 1950s and early 1960s as an successor to the earlier Firestreak. It entered service with the RAF in 1964 and became closely associated with the the Lightning.

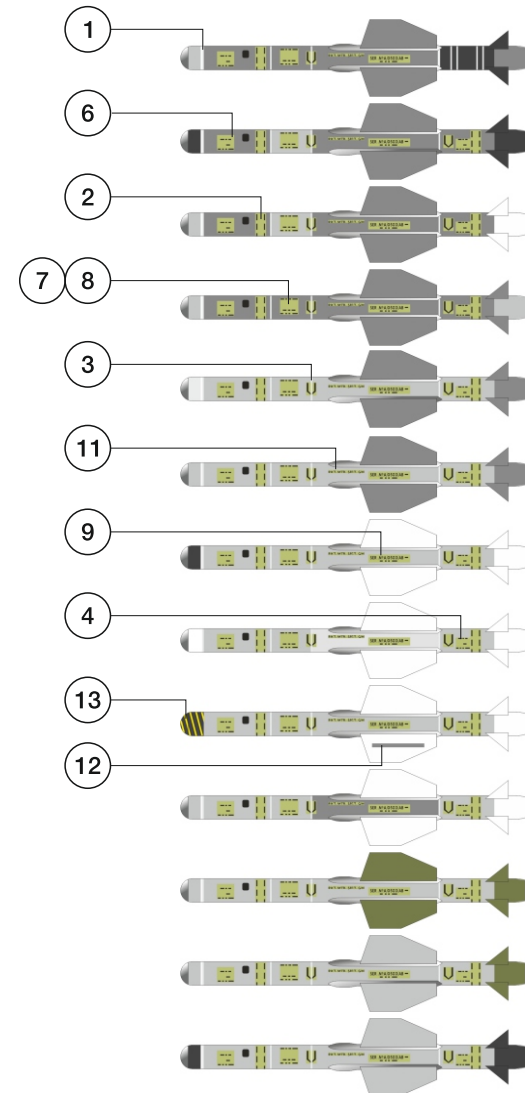
The missile's development focused on addressing limitations of its predecessor, particularly in terms of seeker sensitivity, engagement envelope, and overall reliability in high-speed interception scenarios. It incorporated a more advanced IR homing system, improved electronics, and a more powerful rocket motor, reflecting rapid advances in missile technology during that period of Cold War. One of Red Top's key strengths was its enhanced all-aspect capability compared to earlier IR missiles, allowing it to engage targets not only from the rear but also from limited frontal aspects, albeit under favorable conditions. Its seeker was more resistant to background interference, such as solar reflections, and better suited to high-altitude interceptions. Additionally, the missile had a relatively large warhead, increasing lethality even with near-misses. The improved propulsion system provided greater speed and range, making it effective against fast-moving bomber threats, which were its primary intended targets. However, Red Top also had notable drawbacks. Despite improvements, its infrared seeker still struggled against maneuvering targets and in cluttered environments, particularly at lower altitudes. The missile was relatively heavy and bulky, limiting aircraft loadout flexibility. Its cooling system and electronics required careful maintenance, reducing operational simplicity compared to later designs. As air combat evolved toward highly agile dogfights, Red Top's performance was less competitive against smaller, more maneuverable fighters, especially compared to newer generation missiles.

Primary user of the Red Top missile was the RAF, which deployed it on the Lightning. FAA Sea Vixens carrying Red Tops were not uncommon too. Use on TSR-2 was contemplated, but in the event that effort went nowhere.

Red Top missiles were typically finished in grey for operational rounds, often varying shades of grey across the sections. This variety of grey was also not unusual for the aerodynamic surfaces.

Red Tops come in variety shades of grey.  
And green.  
And white.  
Any combination seems plausible.  
No better option other than to trust the photographic evidence.  
Fortunately, the markings follow a far more regular pattern.

### Colors and markings



To protect delicate hands of modeller from razor-sharp edges of Red Top fins you may choose to use rubber trims:

