



Cookie Sewell got the snappy banded tricolor camouflage pattern on this 1/35 scale Soviet BA-6 armored car with the aid of a secret weapon that should be in every armor modeler's arsenal: Silly Putty.

Masking with Silly Putty

Paint complex armor camouflage patterns without the fuss

Story and photos by Cookie Sewell

Painting the way, multicolored camouflage schemes common on armored vehicles can be a pain, but I recently discovered an inexpensive, easy-to-use masking substance: Silly Putty. Silly



Putty? Yep, same stuff we played with as kids, pulling images of the Sunday comics off the paper and stretching them into goofy faces. Turns out it can be an armor modeler's best friend, at least when painting time rolls around.

Silly Putty has a number of great advantages for masking armor models. It is far simpler and easier to work with than tape, frisket paper, or other materials such as a liquid masker. It gives far more thorough protection, leaving no edge for "underspray" or fuzzy joint lines.

Even when saturated with paint, Silly Putty leaves no residue and pulls

away cleanly. If your estimate of how much you'll need to cover an area turns out to be slightly off, you can just stretch it a little more to fit. It is easy to squeeze inside and around small parts like wheel sockets and mounts, so that you can paint those parts off the model and still have bare styrene as a gluing surface to attach them after painting.

One of the reasons most aircraft masking techniques don't work for armor camouflage is the details – pins, fittings, tie-downs, handles, tow hooks, lifting shackles, and other bits – that stick out on armored vehicles. Silly Putty goes right



After giving the BA-6 a base coat of Floquil mud, Cookie put on the Silly Putty (looks like bubble gum, doesn't it?) mask before spraying the next color. The tape keeps the overspray away from the undersides of the fenders and hull to minimize the need for touchups later on.

over these items, but it won't pull them off when it's removed.

My sample project is a 1/35 scale 1930s Soviet BA-6 armored car built from an Eastern Express kit. I decided to give it the rather gaudy three-color camouflage scheme used during late 1941. There were some variations in the colors on the full-size vehicles; I chose to paint mine in green, black, and sand. The scheme is actually very similar to the modern Russian pattern.

I had previously painted the inside of the BA-6's engine bay, so I sealed off the openings with pieces of index card to protect the interior parts from overspray. The model was then sprayed with a base coat of Floquil mud, which is a good match for the sand color I wanted.

I masked the sections I wanted to keep sand-colored with the Silly Putty. To make the masking strips, I put the Silly Putty on a flat surface and rolled it out like pie dough. It must be rolled flat and relatively thin to work best. Once it was flat, I simply cut out the shapes I needed, which can be done either freehand or using a template.

Unlike other materials, Silly Putty does not tear easily, so I cut the strips with a *very sharp* knife. Otherwise, instead of separating from the "rolled dough" part, the pieces would have stretched and deformed, making a mess of things.

Unless you have an unusual situation, a camo pattern should be painted from lightest to darkest color, so the next color I applied was the green. After that, I added more Silly Putty strips and then painted on the black.

After the paint was dry, cleanup was very simple: I just peeled off the Silly Putty, rolled it up, and put it back in its egg. It separates gently from the model and usually doesn't take hand grabs or similar photoetched metal parts with it. You can use it for several models, but on future projects pay attention to the colors the Silly Putty carries with it. Keeping it in the egg – which you forgot to do as a kid and later found the putty either stuck



Silly Putty masks eliminate seepage and give nice sharp color definition. Cookie got good results here dry-brushing with Floquil Old Concrete. It's a light-yellowish tan that simulates summer dust and blends well with all three camo colors.

in Mom's carpet or hard as a brick – is a good idea.

Silly Putty masking lets you avoid the frustrating debate about whether to paint first and hope assembly goes well, or build and then hope you can get the paint on smoothly. Don't let the "silly" name put you off – this silly stuff is for serious modelers. **FSM**

My thanks to Steve Zaloga for introducing me to Silly Putty masking.



The finished BA-6 with its impressive tricolor camouflage. The wheels on these vehicles did not have matching patterns, so each wheel could be different.