

MECHANICS 26

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SPECIAL FEATURE

MOBILE SUIT

GUNDAM 0080

WAR IN THE POCKET



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SPECIAL FEATURE

MOBILE SUIT

GUNDAM 0080

WAR IN THE POCKET

March 1989 marked a milestone for the franchise with the launch of its first-ever OVA series: *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket*. Spanning six episodes, this project broke new ground for the series in every sense. Helmed by debut director Fumihiko Takayama and scripted by Hiroyuki Yamaga (famed for directing Gainax's *Royal Space Force: The Wings of Honnêamise*), this fresh creative lineup garnered significant attention as the first *Gundam* project not directed by series creator Yoshiyuki Tomino.

The story centers on Alfred, a young boy living in Side 6's Libot Colony. Far from a typical ace pilot narrative, the series focuses on a grounded human drama, depicting the grim realities of war through a child's eyes—a radical departure for the franchise at the time. While episodes 2 and 3 feature almost no combat, the impact of the mobile suits when they do appear is nothing short of masterfully executed. From the Arctic base raid in Episode 1 ("How Many Miles to the Battlefield?") to the Kämpfer's assault in Episode 4 and the tragic final showdown between the Alex and the Zaku II Kai in Episode 6, these sparse yet powerful scenes have left an indelible mark on fans. Of course, it goes without saying for readers of this book that Yutaka Izubuchi's stunning mechanical designs are a massive part of that enduring legacy.

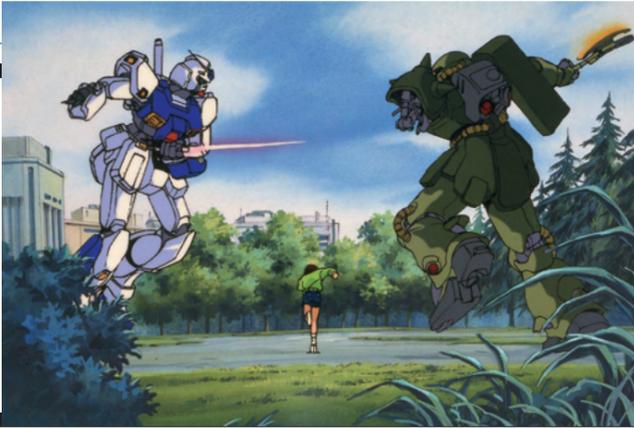
In this comprehensive feature, we revisit this seminal work through the lens of mechanics and scale modeling. We take a deep dive into the appeal of the series, centered around the iconic mobile suits and machines that have been immortalized as model kits.

Development landscapes of rival factions in the final days of the One Year War

By the closing stages of the One Year War, mobile suits (MS) had become the definitive mainstay of every military's arsenal. Both the Earth Federation Forces (EFF) and the Principality of Zeon were racing to integrate hard-won combat data into their next-generation machines. Let's take a look at the historical and technological backdrop of the mobile suits featured in *Mobile Suit Gundam 0080: War in the Pocket*.

Commentary by Hiroyuki Kawai

U.C. 0080



Earth Federation Forces Deploying the GM with refined production know-how

While the Principality of Zeon continuously rolled out a dizzying array of specialized mobile suits, the Earth Federation Forces took a different approach, securing victory through a streamlined strategy centered on the GM (RGM-79). By narrowing their focus to a limited number of models, the Federation achieved a level of standardized production and logistical efficiency that Zeon only began to attempt in the final months of the war.

That said, the initial GMs were "rush jobs," and in many ways, they failed to live up to their original design potential. The machines that were later refined and upgraded based on early combat data and operational feedback are what we now categorize as the "Late Production Type GMs." Compared to the rushed Early Production Types, these later variants boasted vastly improved maintainability and pilot handling, with specifications that finally put

them on par with the RX-78-2 Gundam. Furthermore, these units featured high modularity; components like armor plating and backpacks were designed for easy swapping, allowing some existing airframes to be retrofitted to Late Production specifications. While their total production numbers remained relatively low, they played a vital role in colony security and terrestrial base defense.

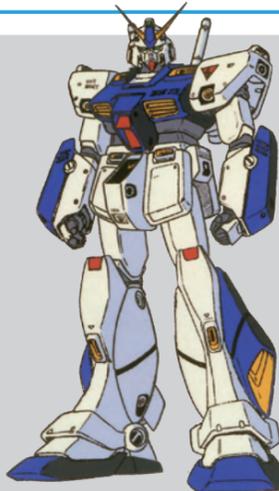
The Earth Federation's first Newtype-Specific mobile suit

The RX-78-2 Gundam's combat debut was a matter of sheer happenstance, triggered by Amuro Ray's unexpected boarding. However, its subsequent performance was nothing short of legendary. The vast trove of combat data brought back by Amuro became the bedrock for the Federation's mainstay MS development.

As the war progressed, Amuro's awakening as a Newtype reached a point where his reaction speeds began to outpace the Gundam's mechanical limits. The urgent need for a machine that could keep up with his heightened senses led to the birth of the RX-78NT-1, codenamed "Alex."

While categorized as a Newtype-use machine, the Alex eschewed the complex Psycommu systems seen in Zeon's experimental units. Instead, its design philosophy focused on maximizing responsiveness. The joints were treated with Magnet Coating from the factory level, and the cockpit introduced cutting-edge features like the panoramic monitor and linear seat, drastically enhancing pilot handling.

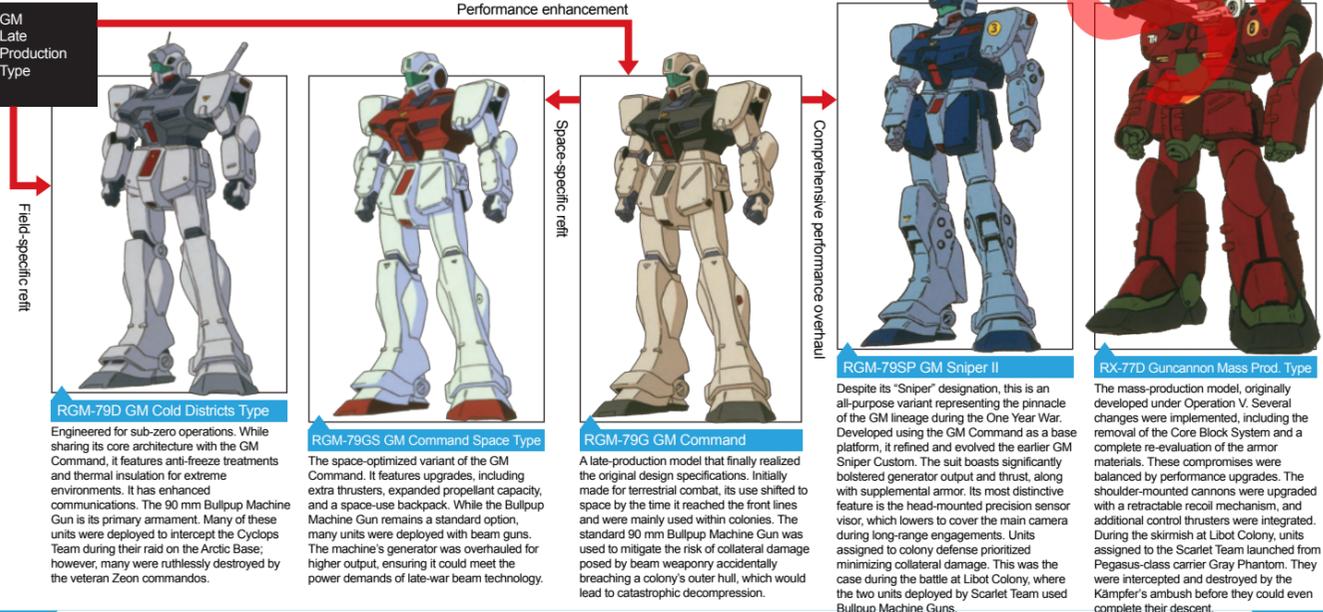
The design DNA and technological innovations of the Alex would later be inherited by the so-called "Augusta Lineage," paving the way for high-performance machines such as the GM Custom and GM Quel.



The Gundam NT-1 is shown here equipped with Chobam Armor, designed for both visual concealment and damage mitigation. To offset the significant weight penalty of the additional plating, the armor itself incorporates supplementary verniers and thrusters to maintain mobility. Originally intended as a temporary test-bed configuration, the armor—along with the forearm-mounted Gatling guns—was reportedly slated to be discarded before the unit's final official deployment.

RX-78NT-1FA Gundam NT-1 "Alex" (Chobam Armor Type)

RX-78NT-1FA Gundam NT-1 "Alex"



Principality of Zeon Forces The "Integrated Maintenance Plan": Moving beyond fragmented standards

Throughout the One Year War, the Principality of Zeon developed a vast array of specialized MS to meet diverse tactical requirements. However, with multiple contractors—Zeonic, Zimmad, and MIP—independently spearheading development, Zeon faced a logistical nightmare. Each model and manufacturer utilized disparate equipment standards, non-interchangeable parts, unique production lines, and varying control interfaces.

To rectify these systemic inefficiencies, the "Integrated Maintenance Plan" was initiated. By standardizing components and unifying cockpit configurations across all units, the plan aimed to streamline production, simplify field maintenance, and drastically reduce the

time required for pilot conversion training. The plan also addressed Zeon's increasingly critical manpower shortage. As the student mobilization program intensified, the standardization of control schemes was prioritized to ensure that even green pilots could be deployed to the front lines with only minimal training. However, the full-scale rollout of units produced under the Integrated Maintenance Plan did not begin until the final stages of the conflict, just as the Earth Federation Forces launched their massive counteroffensive. Ultimately, these machines never reached the numbers necessary to turn the tide of battle, and the war ended before the true effectiveness of the plan could be fully realized.



MS-06FZ Zaku II FZ

The final production variant, developed under the rigorous specifications of the Integrated Maintenance Plan. By successfully unifying parts and control standards, the FZ achieved a significant leap in overall combat performance compared to its predecessors. Its primary armament was updated to the MMP-80 90 mm Machine Gun. Known variations include the Commander Type, distinguished by its head-mounted blade antenna, and the Type B, which features the distinctive "Fritz Helm" head design.



MS-14JG Gelgoog Jäger

The final production model of the series, it was developed with Integrated Maintenance Plan specifications. It features a significant boost in generator output, added auxiliary sub-thrusters, a specialized backpack unit, and expanded propellant capacity. Designed primarily as a sniper-type unit, it utilizes a cutting-edge fire control system (FCS) and carries a specialized large beam machine gun optimized for long-range precision strikes.



MS-09R-2 Rick Dom II (Zwei)

An upgraded variant of the Rick Dom, redesigned to meet the standards of the Integrated Maintenance Plan. Unlike the original, which was essentially retrofitted for space, the R-2 was purpose-built. The addition of expanded propellant capacity extended its operational endurance, allowing for longer combat sorties. Following the One Year War, it became a familiar sight as a mainstay unit for the Delaz Fleet, a prominent Zeon remnant group.



MS-07E Z Gok-E

An overhaul of the Z Gok produced under the Integrated Maintenance Plan. It retains the potential of the original while featuring a more streamlined profile for underwater use. This variant introduced telescopic limbs, and its primary propulsion systems were relocated from the torso to the legs. By clearing the rear housing, the "E" model can mount optional equipment, most notably external jet packs for enhanced surface mobility.



MSM-03C Hy-Gog

A redesign that overhauled the internal structure and overall balance. It is able to retract its legs and stow its arms within the shoulder armor during underwater cruising. It can be equipped with Hand Missile Units that cover the claws, and is interchangeable with the Z Gok-E by utilizing the same optional jet pack system.



MS-18E Kämpfer

A specialized high-mobility assault unit, engineered specifically for high-speed hit-and-run strikes and rapid base infiltration. To maximize its thrust-to-weight ratio, the design incorporates high-output thrusters with thinned armor for significant weight reduction. It is equipped with multiple weapon hardpoints, allowing it to carry a devastatingly diverse arsenal. Its signature loadout includes shotguns, Giant Buzz II bazookas, and the lethal Chain Mine.

RX-78NT-1 GUNDAM NT-1 ALEX

A sleeker evolution: adjusting the Alex's proportions through part extensions

Our lead-off build for this feature is the Gundam NT-1 Alex, developed by the Earth Federation Forces at the Augusta Base. Specifically tuned for the awakened Newtype, Amuro Ray, the Alex was a cutting-edge prototype mobile suit that integrated the latest technological advancements of the era, including Magnet Coating, a 360-degree panoramic monitor, and a linear seat cockpit.

For this project, I utilized the MG Ver. 2.0 released in June 2019. This kit is a modern masterpiece, featuring a complex multi-layered structure that recreates everything from the internal frame to the detailing on the inner armor walls. From its "hybrid format"—boasting contemporary MG standards like vinyl-based seals for the shoulder joints—to original MG gimmicks like the Chobam Armor deployment, the kit is a joy to assemble.

While the base kit already offers excellent proportions and functionality, I chose to extend various sections of the frame to inject my own personal flair into the design. These subtle yet effective modifications result in a taller, sleeker, and more "stylish" silhouette for the Alex.



BANDAI SPIRITS 1/100 scale plastic kit
"Master Grade"
RX-78NT-1 Gundam NT-1 Ver.2.0 modified

**RX-78NT-1
Gundam NT-1 Alex**

Composition and text by
Hiroshi IMIZU



COLORING DATA

White: White + Cobalt Blue
Blue: Cobalt Blue + Purple + White
Gray: Gray-Violet + White + Cobalt Blue
Yellow: Yellow Orange + Monza Red
Red: Hermann Red
Weaponry: Medium Sea Gray + Black + White
Dark Blue (Armor): Midnight Blue + White



◀ I aimed for a sleeker, more sophisticated Alex by extending the abdomen, hip joints, thighs, and arms. I also scribed new panel lines across the entire body and applied a heavy array of caution decals to really bring out that high-spec prototype aesthetic.