



Figure 18. Gyrojet M201 emergency signal flare rocket showing the flare “second stage” atop a more or less conventional Gyrojet “first stage” and the time delay separation charge between the two.

eventually began production. This Gyrojet-designed item remains in service today, and is available in a variety of colors and infrared and chaff options. These present more challenges for the collector who needs one of everything!

Furthermore, for the collector most obsessed with getting one of everything, there are even miniature Gyrojet flare sets made for use with G.I. Joe action figures, which, of course, do not fire.

OTHER MBA PRODUCTS

Although beyond the scope of our topic of Mark 1 Model B Gyrojets, completeness demands brief mention of some other MBA products.

Whereas the Gyrojet pistols and carbines were 12 or 13 mm, there were much larger Gyrojets. These included the 15-, 20-, 25-, 30-, and 40-mm Gyrojet rockets developed for various applications. Some were kinetic energy kill munitions for defense against incoming missile attacks. Some were potential carriers of chemical munitions, or illumination rounds for perimeter security use. The 40-mm round was a cloud seeding rocket fired from launchers mounted in aircraft for seeding the base of clouds to induce rainfall.

After the May 4, 1970, antiwar riots at Kent State University, Mainhardt sensed a business opportunity for less lethal ammunition for riot control use. This led to a line of stun bag munitions that fired small cloth pouches filled with small shot, or other objects. These were made in 40-mm size for use with the M79 grenade launchers, 37-mm for police gas guns, 12-gauge for shotguns, and also in .38 special. These were known as “stun bag,” “stinger,” and “short stop.”

Showing more creativity and a desire to be free from hassles associated with firearms, ammunition, and the BATE, Mainhardt then branched into producing devices that fired stun bag-type projectiles using power from CO₂ compressed gas cylinders in nylon housings.

CONCLUSION

MBA was an innovative company that provided an incredibly wide variety of products and services for a broad spectrum of military, law enforcement, and civilian customers. Their goal was to earn money, not necessarily to produce rocket guns. Their Gyrojet pistols and carbines were a remarkable technological advance, but despite the fine engineering and creativity, they did not fill a market need. Even their novelty value was offset by their high initial cost, the high cost of ammunition, and their unsolved accuracy problems. However, as oddities, they offer an interesting field for a collector. As noted previously, there are a very wide variety of variations among the limited production total of approximately 1900 Gyrojet pistols and carbines. This exhibit focuses on the Mark 1 Model B, that is the 1100 or so more or less mass production models, but still justifies acquiring an interesting variety of items. And, you can brag that you own a gun like James Bond used!

REFERENCES

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