



SITUATIONAL INFORMATION REPORT

18 October 2012

(U//FOUO) Exploding Targets: Commercially Available Binary Explosive Agent Poses Potential Public Safety Risks and Concerns

(U//FOUO) The Central California Intelligence Center (CCIC)/Sacramento Regional Threat Assessment Center (RTAC) has prepared the following Situational Information Report on exploding targets, a commercially available binary explosive agent, to provide law enforcement and public safety officials with a better understanding of the potential public safety risks involving its use. While exploding targets are legally permissible depending on state and local regulations, the CCIC is concerned that the mixture may be more dangerous than what is stated on the manufacturer's website especially if mishandled by individuals with novice experience in handling explosive components or when used in large quantities to detonate bigger targets and, in essence, creating an explosives or incendiary device. The CCIC is currently unaware of any reporting or incidents within the Sacramento RTAC area of responsibility which indicate exploding targets are being used for nefarious purposes; however, the recent conviction of Fairbanks militia members in Anchorage, Alaska, for conspiring to kill federal officials and illegally stockpiling weapons and 19 jars of Tannerite exploding targets highlight the potential dangers of this binary explosive when exploited by domestic violent extremist groups.

(U) Information in this assessment is current as of 17 October 2012.

(U) Background: Exploding Target Proliferation

(U) Tannerite^{USPER}: First Manufacturer of Exploding Targets

(U) The production and distribution of exploding targets have occurred since at least 2002 when the manufacturer of the Tannerite brand began to market and sell them as a "binary explosive" supplied as two powders in two separate containers. Since Tannerite, other companies that manufacture exploding targets have surfaced that produce similar binary explosive mixtures (See Figure 1). As a result, this binary explosive agent has become more accessible to the public through large



Figure 1: Exploding Target Manufacturers - 1. In the Red; 2. Sure Shot; 3. Star Targets; 4 Red Jackets; and 5. Tannerite

stockpiles available at local gun shops, and outdoor sport stores as well as online purchase via the Internet.

- (U) Exploding targets consists of two powder components that, when combined, produce the explosive agent that the Tannerite website advises is primarily used “as a target for firearms practice.”ⁱ
- (U) Since the components are not categorized as an explosive agent until mixed, the binary exploding target package can be purchased and shipped in the United States without an explosives manufacturing license.

(U) Specified Requirements by Manufacturer to Cause Explosion

(U) Companies that manufacture and distribute exploding targets insist these explosives agents are “designed to be safe,” “will not cause a fire,” and “cannot be initiated by any method other than center fire rifle.”ⁱⁱ Some even provide instructional video through their online websites or through an instructional DVD of how to prepare the compound to cause an explosion. The manufacturers of exploding targets advise, “small caliber rimfire or slow moving pistol ammunition” will not cause detonation of the exploding target mixture to occur. The following includes specifications from the manufacturers or sellers of exploding targets in order to cause the compound to detonate:

| Manufacturer | Compound Weight (lbs.) | Caliber Recommended | Minimum Distance Between Targets and Shooter | Minimum Bullet Velocity (FPS) |
|--|------------------------|-------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| Sure Shot ^{USPER iii} | 0.5; 1.0; 2.0 | .223REM or higher | 100 yards | N/A |
| Zomboom ^{USPER iv} | 0.5 | 5.56mm (.223) or larger | 100 | N/A |
| Star Targets ^{USPER v} | 0.5; 1.0; 2.5 | 40-gr bullet | 50 | 2200 |
| Shockwave ^{USPER vi} | 1.0 | .223 or higher | N/A | 2200 |
| Tannerite ^{vii} | 0.5; 1.0 | .223 or higher | 100 | 2000 |

(U) In addition, some manufactures of these binary explosives such as Star Targets and Sure Shot sell rimfire targets that can be shot at a minimum distance of 25 yards with a .22LR or 17-gr bullet with a minimum bullet velocity of 1000 feet per second.

(U) Context:

(U//FOUO) The Manufacturers may be Minimizing Dangers of Exploding Targets and Misleading Consumers

(U//FOUO) The manufacturers provide both guidance and knowledge to consumers through their website regarding the components of exploding targets and the ability to purchase this product in the United States without an explosives manufacturing license which suggests a familiarity with federal laws that govern the manufacturing and shipment of binary explosives but are likely unfamiliar with state and local ordinances that regulate its use. The CCIC is concerned the manufacturer may be exploiting certain loop holes in how federal laws regulate binary explosives and using this knowledge for commercial gain, but minimizing the dangers of exploding targets and misleading its consumers with its “designed to be safe” pronouncement.^{viii}

- (U//FOUO) The basic mixture of these exploding targets consists of a fuel and an oxidizer composition. For instance, the invention claims filed by the inventor of Tannerite under the US Patent Office and Trademark Office maintain that Tannerite consists of the following:
 1. (U) ammonium nitrate in the amount between 50% and 100% by weight and ammonium perchlorate in an amount between 0% and about 50% by weight; and
 2. (U) aluminum powder in the amount of approximately 90% by weight, titanium sponge in the amount of approximately 5% by weight, and zirconium hydride approximately 5% by weight.^{ix}

(U//FOUO) Recent Wildfires Sparked by Exploding Targets Use Underscores Public Safety Concerns

(U//FOUO) Recent incidents of wildfires caused by exploding targets in the Northwest region of the United States raises concerns of recreational shooting occurring on designated Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and US Forest Service territory when fire restrictions are implemented and public safety issues neglected. The relative ease in which exploding targets can be purchased and obtained through designated retail sporting good vendors or online orders, also raises public safety concerns especially when being handled by explosives novice or when mixed in large quantities to cause a larger explosion to the exploding target.

- (U) On 19 August 2012, five individuals were cited for reckless burning charges after exploding target detonation ignited a 35-acre wildfire on BLM land near Mayfield Pond in Alfalfa, Oregon.^x
- (U) In mid June 2012, recreational shooters caused a wildfire that burned approximately 30 acres of Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife land. Local officials found pieces of label from jars of Tannerite along with hundreds of empty shell casings from various caliber firearms.^{xi}
- (U) Incidents of exploding targets being used to detonate vehicles, household appliances, pianos, and portable toilets have also been reported across the United States and can be viewed on video sharing websites such as YouTube^{USPER} (See Figure 2).
- (U) Additional media exposure through reality television shows such as “Sons of Guns” that showcase exploding targets have contributed to increasing both public curiosity and demand for these products.



(U) Figure 2: One Pound of Tannerite Used to Blow Up a Piano

(U//FOUO) Conviction of Militia Members in Alaska Highlights Concerns of Exploding Targets Being Exploited by Extremist Groups

(U//FOUO) The recent conviction of Fairbanks, Alaska militia members underscores concerns regarding terrorist group exploiting the recreational or sporting use of Tannerite for nefarious purposes.

- (U//FOUO) In mid-June 2012, members of the Alaska Peacemakers Militia were convicted of federal charges including conspiring to kill federal officials and illegally stockpiling weapons.^{xii}
- (U//FOUO) Federal authorities seized weapons and weapon components during the time of their arrests including 30,000 rounds of ammunition, black powder, machine guns, pistols, 19 jars of Tannerite, grenades, and tear gas.^{xiii}

(U) Civil Liberties: The Central California Intelligence Center (CCIC) is designed and encouraged to focus on sharing information collected in the ordinary course of business in connection with possible illicit and suspicious activity. The CCIC refrains from investigating or reporting on First and Second Amendment activity unless such activity is illicit, illegal or poses a threat to public safety. CCIC personnel that encounter or handle any United States person information shall do so consistent with Executive Order 12333, 28 CFR 23 guidelines as well as the Attorney General Guidelines for Domestic FBI Operations. Any questions related to reporting information possibly implicating constitutionally protected activities, such as free speech, right to own arms, or free exercise of religion, etc., will be reported to the FBI's Office of General Counsel or the Chief Division Counsel for review.

(U) This information is property of the Central California Intelligence Center (CCIC) and may be distributed to state, tribal, or local law enforcement officials with a need-to-know. Further distribution without CCIC authorization is prohibited. Precautions should be taken to ensure this information is stored and/or destroyed in a manner that precludes unauthorized access.

(U//FOUO) Please forward information concerning exploding targets or other suspicious activity to the CCIC at www.sacrtac.org or (888) 884-8383.

Endnotes:

- ⁱ (U) Internet Site; “Frequently Asked Questions”; www.tannerite.com/frequent-questions/tannerite-exploding-target-patent; accessed on 11 September 2012.
- ⁱⁱ (U) Ibid.
- ⁱⁱⁱ (U) Internet Site; “Our Products”; <http://www.shop.sureshotexplodingtargets.com/>; accessed on 17 October 2012.
- ^{iv} (U) Internet Site; “Zomboom Exploding Rifle Targets”; <http://zombieindustries.com/shop/zomboom-exploding-targets/>; accessed on 17 October 2012.
- ^v (U) Internet Site; “Star Exploding Targets”; <http://www.cabelas.com/targets-chronographs-star-exploding-targets.shtml>; accessed on 17 October 2012.
- ^{vi} (U) Internet Site; “Exploding Targets”; <http://shopdandtarms.net/shockwave-exploding-rifle-target-pound-p-40539.html>; accessed on 17 October 2012.
- ^{vii} (U) Internet Site; “20pk Tannerite 1/2 lb. Exploding Rifle Targets”; http://www.ebay.com/itm/20pk-Tannerite-1-2-lb-Exploding-Rifle-Targets-/280843859806?pt=LH_DefaultDomain_0&hash=item416399375e; accessed 17 October 2012.
- ^{viii} (U) Internet Site; “Frequently Asked Questions”; www.tannerite.com/frequent-questions/tannerite-exploding-target-patent; accessed on 11 September 2012.
- ^{ix} (U) Internet Site; *United States Patent and Trademark Office*; “Binary exploding target, package process and product”; <http://patft.uspto.gov/>; Accessed on 28 September 2012; UNCLASSIFIED.
- ^x (U) Online Newspaper; Brittany Weiner, Barney Lerten and Joe Burns; *KTVZ*; “Five Target Shooters Cited in Alfalfa Wildfire”; 19 August 2012; <http://www.ktvz.com/news/Five-target-shooters-cited-in-Alfalfa-wildfire/-/413192/16190514/-/sg2rtoz/-/index.html>; accessed on 10 September 2012; UNCLASSIFIED.
- ^{xi} (U) Online Newspaper; Eric Barker; *The Lewiston Tribune*; “Authorities Find Rifle, Seek Owner”; 16 June 2012; http://lmtribune.com/northwest/article_32dfad22-e683-5833-a2b0-e703b04cd3b2.html; accessed on 10 September 2012 .
- ^{xii} (U) Online Newspaper; Rebecca Palsha, Chris Klint and The Associated Press; *Channel 2 News*; “2 Fairbanks Militia Members Convicted of Conspiracy to Commit Murder”; 18 June 2012; <http://www.ktuu.com/news/jury-in-fairbanks-militia-trial-may-issue-partial-verdict-061812.0.2668495.story>; Accessed on 09 September 2012; UNCLASSIFIED.
- ^{xiii} (U) Online Newspaper; Richard Mauer; *Anchorage Daily News*; “Militiamen Called Terrorists and Harmless in Opening Arguments”; 09 May 2012; <http://www.adn.com/2012/05/08/2457218/dangerous-or-just-wacky-trial.html>; accessed 10 September 2012.