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TECHNICAL REPORT 8206

HPLC ANALYSIS OF SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, AND TNT IN WASTEWATER

ERNST E. BRUEGGEMANN

US ARMY MEDICAL BIOENGINEERING RESEARCH and DEVELOPMENT LABORATORY
Fort Detrick
Frederick, MD 21701

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20. Abstract (continued)

different compounds was accomplished in <28 minutes. The detection limits were 0.2 µg/mL for SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, and TNT. The method is simple, quick, and reproducible. ↖

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INTRODUCTION

The explosives 1-acetyloctahydro-3,5,7-trinitro-1,3,5,7-tetrazocine (SEX), 1-acetylhexahydro-3,5-dinitro-1,3,5-triazine (TAX), 1,3,5,7-tetranitro-1,3,5,7-tetraazacyclooctane (HMX), 1,3,5-trinitro-1,3,5-triazacyclohexane (RDX), and 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene (TNT) are being produced at several ammunition plants across the United States. When these plants are operating at full capacity, millions of gallons of wastewater (possibly containing these compounds) will be produced on a daily basis.

Environmental concern for military explosives has increased recently due to the mounting evidence that many, if not most, aromatic nitro derivatives possess biological properties detrimental to animals and humans.¹⁻⁴

Since the wastewater effluents from these plants will probably contain explosives, it is necessary to develop a method for the trace analysis of these compounds. Thin-layer chromatography (TLC) of explosives has been reported in the literature.⁵⁻⁷ This technique provides simple detection of explosives; however, quantitation suffers from the crudeness inherent in most quantitative TLC analyses. Gas chromatography (GC), because of its speed and sensitivity, received much attention as a method for the analysis of explosives. This technique, however, is limited due to the fact that many explosive compounds are thermally unstable.⁸⁻¹⁰

High performance liquid chromatography (HPLC) appears to be the method of choice for the analysis of explosives because HPLC can be conducted at ambient temperatures and without loss in efficiency of separation or speed of analysis. Also, time-consuming sample preparation in HPLC (under the proper conditions) is kept to a minimum. Direct injection of aqueous samples on a reverse phase liquid chromatographic system was first considered because of minimal sample preparation. However, because of possible column degradation by particulate matter and unknown (strongly retained) solutes, this idea was rejected. Also, the water to be analyzed was found to contain SEX, TAX, HMX, RDX, and TNT at levels too low for direct injection.

A sample preparation technique known as trace enrichment¹¹ was used with aqueous samples. A SEP-PAK[®] (Waters Assoc., Milford, MA) containing reverse phase (C₁₈) packing material was used to concentrate and clean up the samples prior to chromatographic analysis. The technique is simple, quick, and very reproducible.

OBJECTIVE

This analytical method was developed in support of research in wastewater treatment for the Holston Army Ammunition Plant, Kingsport, TN.

MATERIALS

EQUIPMENT

A Waters Liquid Chromatographic System[®] (Waters Assoc., Milford, MA) was employed throughout the study. The system consisted of the following components: two Model M6000A solvent delivery systems, Model 720 system controller, Model 730 data module, Model 450 UV-VIS variable wavelength detector, and Model U6K universal injector.

The column used was a flexible-walled cartridge (10 cm long x 8 mm I.D.) containing 10 μ m reverse phase particles (C₁₈) under radial compression (Waters Assoc., Milford, MA). SEP-PAK[®] C₁₈ cartridges (Waters Assoc., Milford, MA) were used in the trace enrichment technique.

CHEMICALS

1-acetyloctahydro-3,5,7-trinitro-1,3,5,7-tetrazocine (SEX), 1-acetylhexahydro-3,5-dinitro-1,3,5-triazine (TAX), 1,3,5,7-tetranitro-1,3,5,7-tetraazacyclooctane (HMX), 1,3,5-trinitro-1,3,5-triazacyclohexane (RDX), and 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene (TNT) were obtained from Holston Army Ammunition Plant (Kingsport, TN) and used without further purification. The internal standard 1,3 dinitrobenzene was synthesized and recrystallized in this Laboratory.¹³ Solvents used for HPLC were of HPLC grade. Water used for HPLC was glass distilled.

METHODS

HPLC CONDITIONS

Separation of the explosives was achieved by using a reverse phase column (C₁₈) and a mobile phase of methanol and water. A linear gradient elution program was used in which the eluent was changed from 95% Pump A (25% MeOH/H₂O) to 50% Pump B (80% MeOH/H₂O) in 30 minutes at a flow rate of 1.7 mL/min and a pressure of 500 psi. The column effluent was monitored at 240 nm (0.1 absorbance units, full scale). The injection volume was always 100 μ L.

PREPARATION OF STOCK AND STANDARD SOLUTIONS

A stock solution containing the five explosives was prepared by dissolving the solutes in acetone at a concentration of 100 mg/L. One milliliter of each stock solution was pipetted into 50, 100, 250, and 500 mL volumetric flasks. The contents of each flask were then diluted with glass-distilled water to yield standard solutions with concentrations of 2.0, 1.0, 0.4, and 0.2 ppm, respectively.

CONCENTRATION OF SAMPLES AND STANDARDS USING THE SEP-PAK[®] C₁₈ CARTRIDGE

Before standards and samples are processed by this technique, it is essential that the cartridge be "activated" in the following manner. Two to four milliliters of methanol are passed through the cartridge to activate the packing material and remove organic impurities that might be on the cartridge. Following this, 15 mL of glass-distilled water are passed through the cartridge to displace the methanol. The cartridge is now ready for use.

One hundred microliters of a 200 ppm 1,3-dinitrobenzene solution (dissolved in methanol, internal standard) are added to 20 mL of each sample or standard solution. This is then passed through the SEP-PAK[®] cartridge at a flow rate of approximately 10 mL/min using a 50-mL glass syringe. Next, 10 mL of air are gently passed through the cartridge with a 10-mL glass syringe to displace the remaining aqueous solution from the packing material. Four milliliters of a 50% acetonitrile/water solution are then passed through the cartridge to remove the adsorbed explosives. This is followed by 10 mL of air. This eluent, including the air-displaced fraction, is collected in a glass screw-cap test tube.

The contents of the screw-cap test tubes are centrifuged at 2,000 rpm for 15 min. The supernatant liquids (both standards and samples) are transferred to individual sample vials. Samples and standards are now ready for analysis by HPLC.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The ratios of peak areas of SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, or TNT to peak area of the internal standard were plotted versus concentration of SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, or TNT. By examining the R^2 correlation coefficients in Table 1, it can be seen that all the compounds show a linear relation over the concentration range analyzed ($R^2 > 0.995$). The lower detection limit was 100 ng.

Recovery studies were done with laboratory-spiked wastewater (Table 2). The peak areas of the SEP-PAK[®]-trapped materials were compared with standards having identical concentrations of the compounds examined. The recovery of SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, and TNT was in the 70 to 76% range.

The peak area of the internal standard (1,3 dinitrobenzene) was followed over a 5-day period (Table 3). It appears that the SEP-PAK[®] cartridge trapped the internal standard from water with good reproducibility (S.D. \pm 2%).

Figure 1 shows a chromatogram of a mixture of standard compounds (including internal standard). It can be seen that all the compounds were separated. Base-line resolution ($R = 1.25$)¹² was obtained for all compounds (including internal standard).

Figures 2 and 3 show typical chromatograms of a wastewater influent and effluent, respectively.* Both influent and effluent chromatograms show complete resolution of all the compounds with no interfering peaks present.

The method described is suitably precise, accurate, sensitive, and selective for the determination of SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, and TNT in wastewater (see Appendix A).

* The influent was a synthetic wastewater with chemical oxygen demand (COD) of approximately 1,200 mg/L, mostly formaldehyde and formic acid, and was used to examine the treatability of Holston wastewater by a sequencing batch biological reactor. The effluent contained less than 100 mg/L COD.

TABLE 1. R² CORRELATION COEFFICIENT, SLOPE AND Y INTERCEPT
FOR SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, AND TNT OVER A 4-DAY PERIOD

Sample	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4
SEX	slope = 0.125 Y intercept = 0.010 R ² = 0.9995	slope = 0.130 Y intercept = 0.006 R ² = 0.9997	slope = 0.120 Y intercept = 0.014 R ² = 0.9997	slope = 0.132 Y intercept = -0.004 R ² = 0.9997
HMX	slope = 0.631 Y intercept = -0.067 R ² = 0.996	slope = 0.652 Y intercept = -0.011 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.678 Y intercept = -0.035 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.641 Y intercept = -0.043 R ² = 0.999
TAX	slope = 0.117 Y intercept = 0.012 R ² = 0.9991	slope = 0.119 Y intercept = 0.019 R ² = 0.9859	slope = 0.112 Y intercept = 0.013 R ² = 0.9994	slope = 0.105 Y intercept = 0.034 R ² = 0.9925
RDX	slope = 0.322 Y intercept = 0.019 R ² = 0.997	slope = 0.452 Y intercept = 0.007 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.372 Y intercept = -0.022 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.361 Y intercept = -0.011 R ² = 0.999
TNT	slope = 0.641 Y intercept = 0.039 R ² = 0.998	slope = 0.666 Y intercept = 0.037 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.548 Y intercept = 0.016 R ² = 0.999	slope = 0.580 Y intercept = 0.035 R ² = 0.999

TABLE 2. PERCENT RECOVERY OF
SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, AND TNT
IN WASTEWATER

Sample	% Recovery
SEX	70
HMX	76
TAX	75
RDX	72
TNT	75

TABLE 3. PEAK AREA OF INTERNAL STANDARD
OVER A 5-DAY PERIOD

Sample	Peak Area	Mean	S.D.
Day 1 (internal standard)	8,356,660		
Day 2 (internal standard)	8,362,131		
Day 3 (internal standard)	7,975,181		
Day 4 (internal standard)	8,198,366	8,170,093	± 197,107
Day 5 (internal standard)	7,958,129		(± 2%)

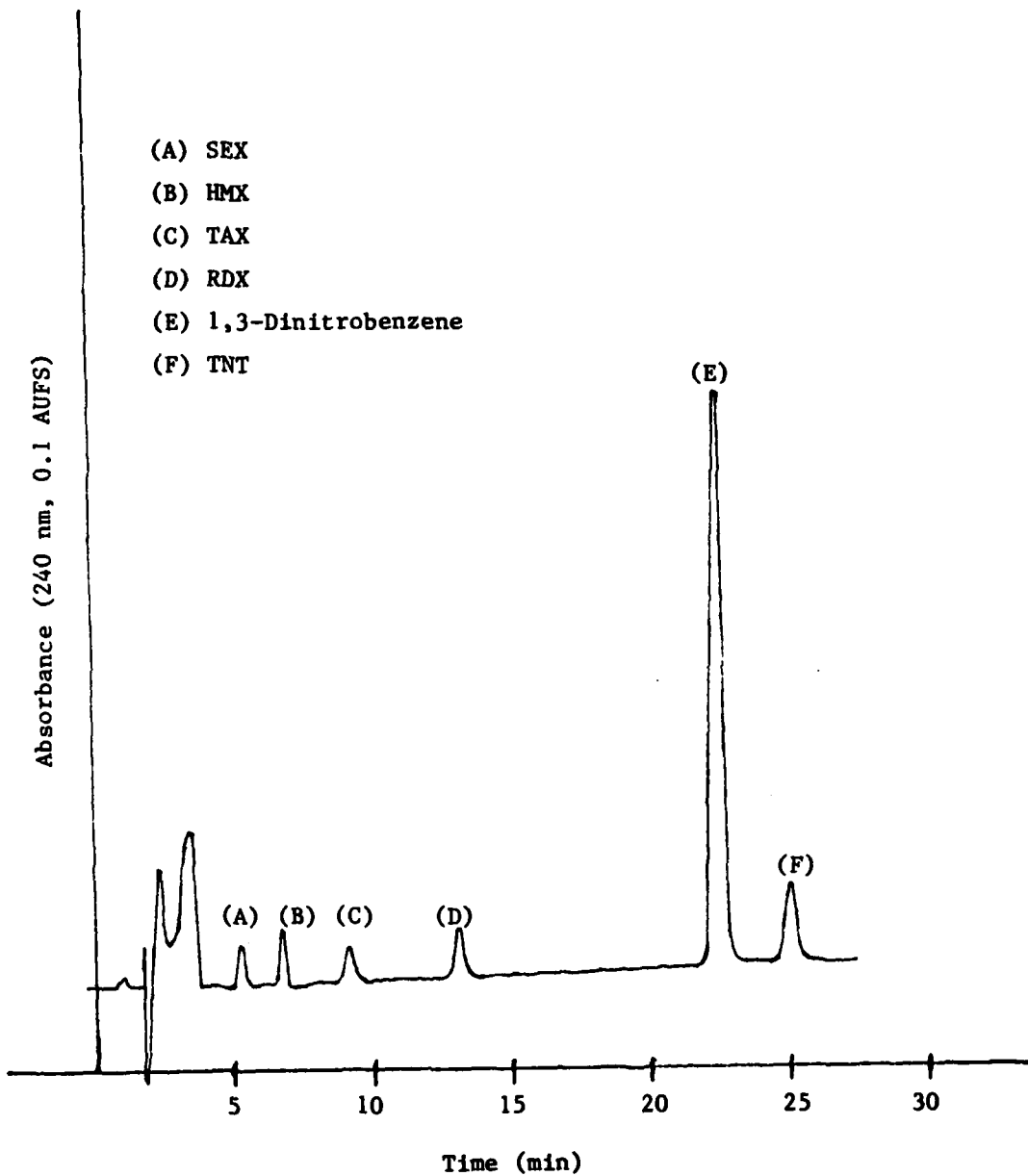


Figure 1. HPLC chromatogram of standard mixture of SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, 2,4,6-TNT, and 1,3-DNB.

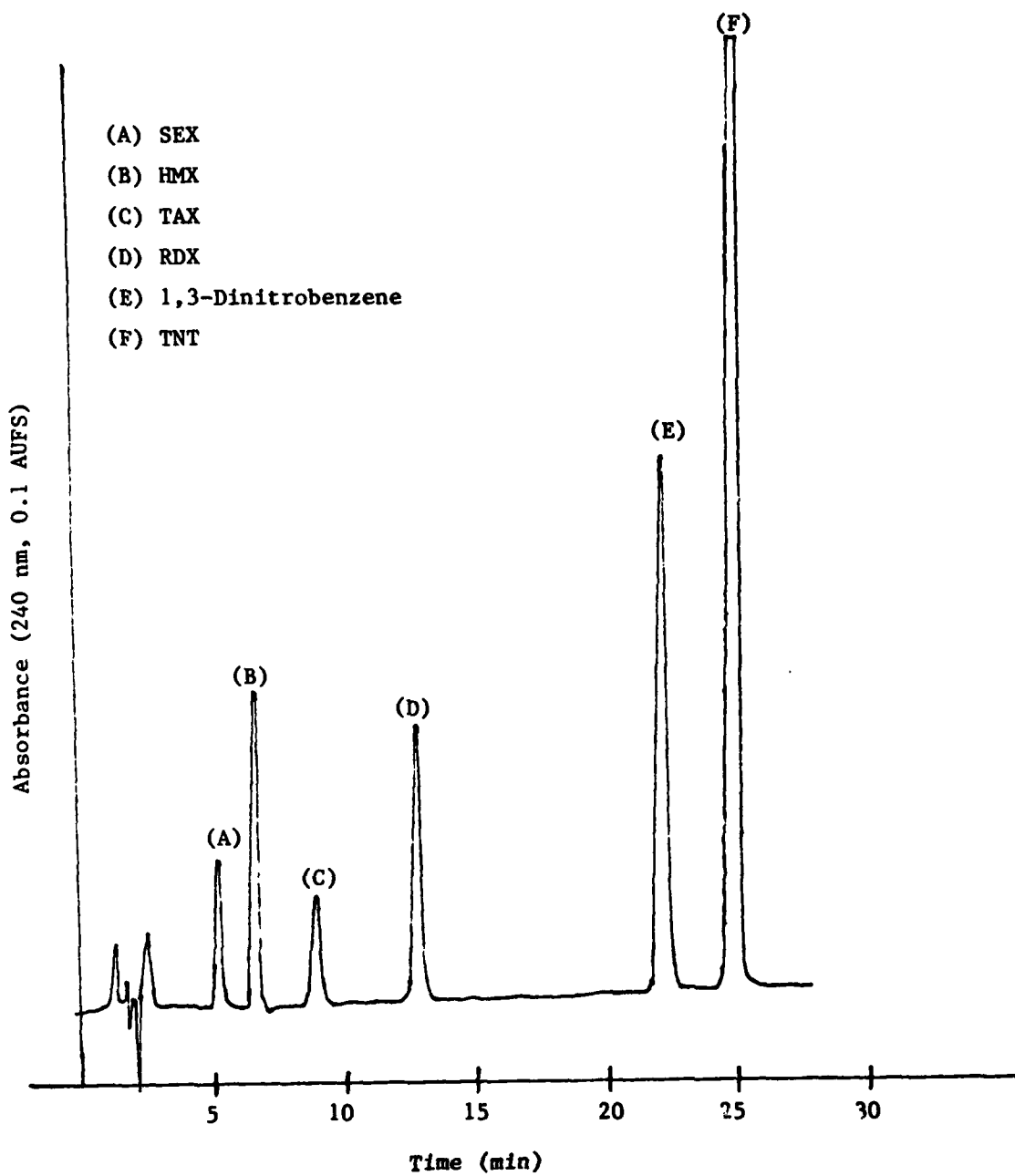


Figure 2. HPLC chromatogram of wastewater influent containing SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, TNT, and 1,3-DNB.

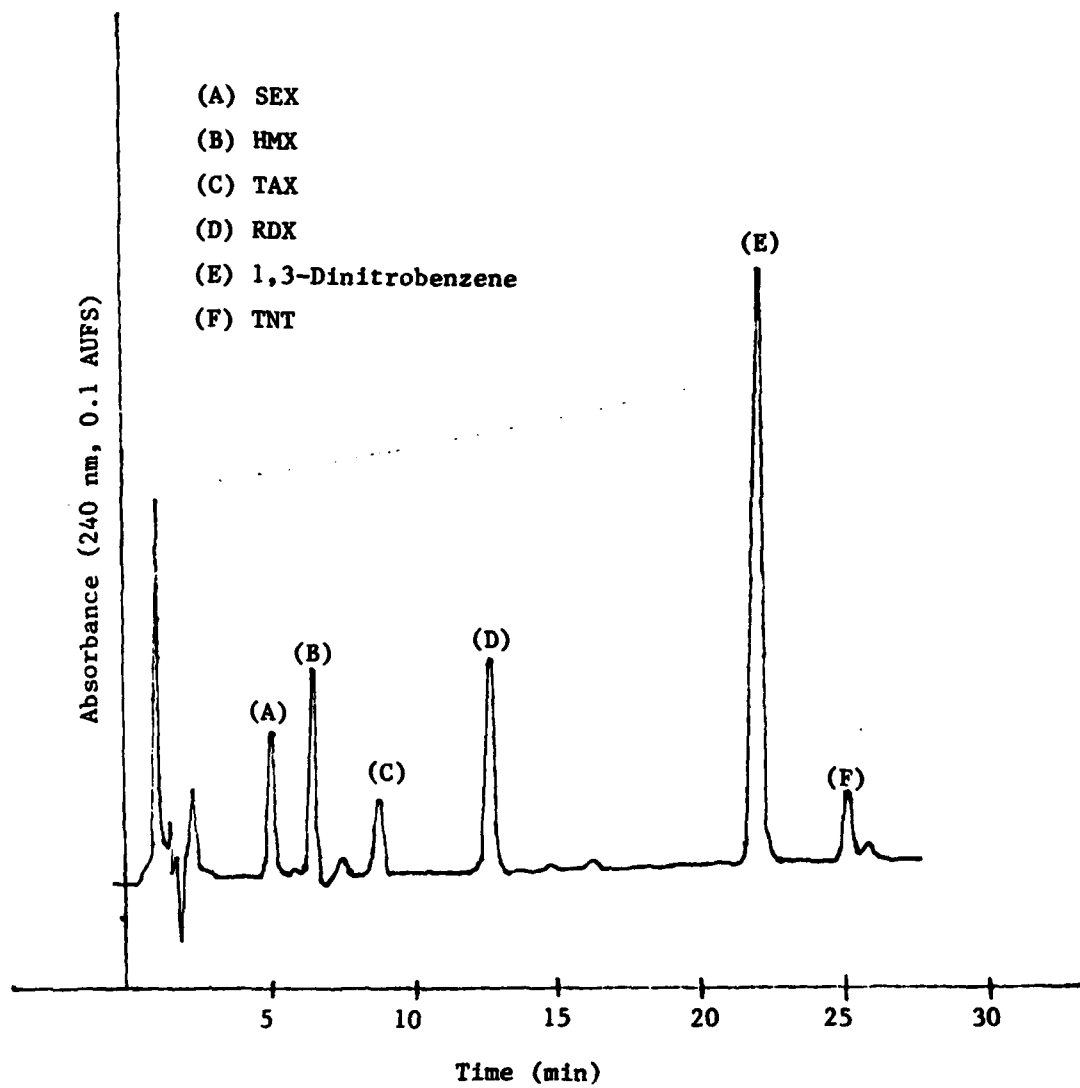


Figure 3. HPLC chromatogram of wastewater effluent containing SEX, HMX, TAX, RDX, TNT, and 1,3-DNB.

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APPENDIX A

PRECISION AND ACCURACY DATA

TABLE A-1. ACCURACY DATA

Sample (day)	Actual Concentration (ppm)	Experimental Concentration (ppm)	% Recovery
<u>SEX</u>			
1	0.59	0.66	111.86
2	0.59	0.59	100.00
3	0.59	0.67	113.56
4	0.59	0.61	103.39
<u>HMX</u>			
1	0.63	0.62	98.41
2	0.63	0.60	95.24
3	0.63	0.66	104.76
4	0.63	0.57	90.48
<u>TAX</u>			
1	0.64	0.88	137.50
2	0.64	0.70	109.38
3	0.64	0.66	103.13
4	0.64	0.59	92.19
<u>RDX</u>			
1	0.67	0.69	102.99
2	0.67	0.70	104.48
3	0.67	0.69	102.99
4	0.67	0.67	100.00
<u>TNT</u>			
1	0.61	0.55	90.16
2	0.61	0.58	95.08
3	0.61	0.57	93.44
4	0.61	0.58	95.08

TABLE A-2. PRECISION AT VARIOUS CONCENTRATION LEVELS, SEX

Sample (day)	ppm	Mean ppm	Standard Deviation	Relative Standard Deviation (%)
<u>0.244 ppm</u>				
1	0.25			
2	0.21			
3	0.22			
4	0.27	0.2375	±0.0275	11.58
<u>0.48 ppm</u>				
1	0.50			
2	0.51			
3	0.51			
4	0.45	0.4925	±0.0287	5.83
<u>1.19 ppm</u>				
1	1.15			
2	1.18			
3	1.18			
4	1.19	1.1750	±0.0173	1.47
<u>2.38 ppm</u>				
1	2.40			
2	2.38			
3	2.38			
4	2.38	2.3850	±0.0100	0.42

TABLE A-3. PRECISION AT VARIOUS CONCENTRATION LEVELS, HMX

Sample (day)	ppm	Mean ppm	Standard Deviation	Relative Standard Deviation (%)
<u>0.25 ppm</u>				
1	0.31			
2	0.26			
3	0.28			
4	0.29	0.2850	±0.0208	8.32
<u>0.50 ppm</u>				
1	0.50			
2	0.53			
3	0.54			
4	0.51	0.5200	±0.0183	3.52
<u>1.52 ppm</u>				
1	1.15			
2	1.18			
3	1.12			
4	1.17	1.1550	±0.0265	2.29
<u>2.51 ppm</u>				
1	2.56			
2	2.54			
3	2.56			
4	2.54	2.55	±0.0115	0.45

TABLE A-4. PRECISION AT VARIOUS CONCENTRATION LEVELS, TAX

Sample (day)	ppm	Mean ppm	Standard Deviation	Relative Standard Deviation (%)
<u>0.26 ppm</u>				
1	0.21			
2	0.18			
3	0.23			
4	0.18	0.2000	±0.0245	12.25
<u>0.51 ppm</u>				
1	0.56			
2	0.61			
3	0.56			
4	0.67	0.6000	±0.0523	10.25
<u>1.28 ppm</u>				
1	1.29			
2	1.46			
3	1.26			
4	1.16	1.2925	±0.1247	9.74
<u>2.55 ppm</u>				
1	2.54			
2	2.46			
3	2.55			
4	2.58	2.5325	±0.0512	2.02

TABLE A-5. PRECISION AT VARIOUS CONCENTRATION LEVELS, RDX

Sample (day)	ppm	Mean ppm	Standard Deviation	Relative Standard Deviation (%)
<u>0.27 ppm</u>				
1	0.34			
2	0.32			
3	0.31			
4	0.27	0.3100	±0.0294	9.48
<u>0.53 ppm</u>				
1	0.51			
2	0.54			
3	0.53			
4	0.56	0.5350	±0.0208	3.89
<u>1.33 ppm</u>				
1	1.25			
2	1.24			
3	1.26			
4	1.27	1.2550	±0.0129	1.03
<u>2.66 ppm</u>				
1	2.70			
2	2.70			
3	2.69			
4	2.68	2.6925	±0.0096	0.36

TABLE A-6. PRECISION AT VARIOUS CONCENTRATION LEVELS, TNT

Sample (day)	ppm	Mean ppm	Standard Deviation	Relative Standard Deviation
<u>0.24 ppm</u>				
1	0.26			
2	0.25			
3	0.26			
4	0.24	0.2525	±0.0096	3.80
<u>0.49 ppm</u>				
1	0.48			
2	0.49			
3	0.47			
4	0.49	0.4825	±0.0096	1.99
<u>1.22 ppm</u>				
1	1.20			
2	1.21			
3	1.21			
4	1.22	1.21	±0.0082	0.68
<u>2.44 ppm</u>				
1	2.45			
2	2.45			
3	2.45			
4	2.44	2.4475	±0.0050	0.20

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