Cordite Encyclopedia Article

Cordite

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Cordite

Patented by Sir Frederick Abel and Sir James Dewar in 1889, cordite is a smokeless powder derived from nitroglycerine and nitrocellulose (guncotton). Although not the first of the explosive mixtures to supersede gunpowder, cordite nonetheless represented an important advance due to its plasticity, its ability to be molded into cord-like shapes and then be divided precisely into various sizes. Like all smokeless powders, cordite enabled armies to conceal their battle positions more effectively and also brought about improvements in gun and bullet technology. Variants of cordite and Paul Vieille 's (1833-1896) *Poudre B*, invented in 1884, formed the basic ammunition during World War I and are still in use today. Alfred Nobel's development of ballistite in 1888 made possible Abel and Dewar's invention, which was essentially ballistite with the addition of acetone and petroleum jelly for increased stability.