

Box 14.1 RDX BOMBS

RDX, commonly known as cyclonite, was widely used during World War II, often in explosive mixtures with TNT.ⁱ During World War II, the British termed cyclonite “Research Department Explosive” (R.D.X.) for security reasons and used it as a more powerful form of TNT for attacking German U-boats.ⁱⁱ It was one of the first plastic explosives and has been used in many terrorist plots.ⁱⁱⁱ Outside of military applications, RDX is used in controlled demolition to raze structures. Ahmed Ressam, the al-Qaeda “Millenium Bomber,” used a small quantity of RDX as one of the components in the explosives that he prepared to bomb Los Angeles International Airport on New Year’s Eve, 1999–2000; the combined explosives could have produced a blast forty times greater than that of a devastating car bomb.^{iv}

i. Tenney L. Davis, *The Chemistry of Powder and Explosives*, Vol. II (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1943).

ii. MacDonald and Mack Partnership, *Historic Properties Report: Newport Army Ammunition Plant; Newport Indiana*, AD-A175 818, prepared for National Park Service (Minneapolis, MN: McDonald and Mack Partnership, 1984), 18, <http://www.dtic.mil/cgi-bin/GetTRDoc?AD=ADA175818>.

iii. John Sweetman, *The Dambusters Raid* (London: Cassell Military Paperbacks, 2002), 144.

iv. *US v. Ressam*, US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit (February 2, 2010), http://www.nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/US_v_Ressam_9thcircuitappeals0210.pdf; *US v. Ressam*, US District Court, Western District of Washington at Seattle, December 1999, http://nefafoundation.org/miscellaneous/FeaturedDocs/U.S._v_Ressam_Complaint.pdf.