

White phosphorus



Also known as: WP or Willie Pete

Military use: in munitions, to mark enemy targets and conceal troop movements. Also as an incendiary device

Appearance: colourless or yellowish, translucent, wax-like

Qualities: spontaneously ignites in air. Thick white smoke produced, and fires that must be extinguished with sand

Burns: at up to 1,300C until deprived of oxygen by submersion in water. Can reignite if exposed to air

International accords: Protocol III of the 1980 Convention on Conventional Weapons bans use of incendiary weapons against any military objective located within a concentration of civilians

Precedents:
2004: US military used WP in Fallujah, Iraq
2006: Used by Israeli army against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon