Author's Accepted Manuscript

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www.elsevier.com/locate/talanta

PII: S0039-9140(17)30684-7

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.talanta.2017.06.049

Reference: TAL17668

To appear in: Talanta

Received date: 24 February 2017 Revised date: 15 June 2017 Accepted date: 18 June 2017

Cite this article as: Ayşem Üzer, Uğur Yalçın, Ziya Can, Erol Erçağ and Reşat Apak, Indirect Determination of Pentaerythritol Tetranitrate (PETN) with a Gold Nanoparticles—based Colorimetric Sensor, *Talanta* http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.talanta.2017.06.049

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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

Indirect Determination of Pentaerythritol Tetranitrate (PETN) with a Gold

Nanoparticles-based Colorimetric Sensor

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Abstract

Pentaerythritol tetranitrate (PETN) is the nitrate ester of pentaerythritol, used as an energetic and filling material for military and civilian purposes and rarely for terrorist actions. As there is no reliable nano-colorimetric method for PETN assay, we developed an indirect method based on the determination of nitrite, obtained by reduction of nitrate derived from the alkaline hydrolysis of PETN with H_2O_2 . We colorimetrically determined the final product, nitrite, by both conventional Griess reaction and a recently developed gold nanoparticle-4-aminothiophenol-N-(1-naphthyl)-ethylenediamine (AuNP-4-ATP+NED) method. Nitramines (RDX and HMX), if present, could be degraded by alkaline hydrolysis, without affecting PETN. The analytical performance characteristics of the developed assays as molar absorptivity (ϵ), limits of detection (LOD) and quantification (LOQ) were: ϵ =1.06×10⁵ L mol⁻¹ cm⁻¹, LOD=0.03 mg L⁻¹ and LOQ=0.11 mg L⁻¹ for indirect Griess method; ϵ =1.9×10⁴ L mol⁻¹ cm⁻¹; LOD=0.12 mg L⁻¹ and LOQ=0.4 mg L⁻¹ for AuNP-4-ATP+NED method. Both methods were applied to a 1:1 (w/w) mixture of PETN and TNT (corresponding to the composition of military explosive 'Pentolite'). In order to eliminate the interference from TNT, the Meisenheimer anion of TNT formed in alkaline medium was retained on a strongly

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