



Four men were apprehended on November 1, 2011 in Georgia for planning to develop and use ricin as a weapon of mass destruction (WMD). The poison has already been deemed a difficult substance to use as a WMD and experts are saying this Georgia militia group posed very little threat. Ricin has been attempted to be weaponized for mass effect in the past; however, there has been no success. These men in particular had gotten as far as purchasing and obtaining castor beans, from which ricin is developed. Although history has shown us only failures with ricin WMDs, we can never be too sure these guys had the right formula and developmental capabilities to successfully issue a mass ricin attack.

Castor Beans

Ricin poison is found naturally in castor beans. If the beans are chewed and swallowed, it is possible for the poison to be released and cause injury. Ricin can take the form of a powder, mist, or a pellet, or it can be dissolved in water or weak acid. It is a stable substance under normal conditions, but can be inactivated by heat about 80°C (176°F). Castor beans are processed throughout the world to make castor oil. Ricin is part of the waste “mash” produced when castor oil is made. Ricin has been used experimentally in medicine to kill cancer cells.

How you can be exposed

- It would take a deliberate act to make ricin and use it to poison people. Accidental exposure to ricin is highly unlikely, except through the ingestion of castor beans.
- If made into a partially purified material or refined into a terrorist or warfare agent, ricin could be used to expose people through the air, food, or water.
- In 1978, Georgi Markov, a Bulgarian writer and journalist who was living in London, died after he was attacked by a man with an umbrella. The umbrella had been rigged to inject a poison ricin pellet under Markov's skin.
- In the 1940s the U.S. military experimented with using ricin as a possible warfare agent. In some reports ricin has possibly been used as a warfare agent in the 1980s in Iraq and more recently by terrorist organizations.
- Ricin poisoning is not contagious. It cannot be spread from person to person through casual contact.

How ricin works

- Ricin works by getting inside the cells of a person's body and preventing the cells from making the proteins they need. Without the proteins, cells die. Eventually this is harmful to the whole body, and death may occur.
- Effects of ricin poisoning depend on whether ricin was inhaled, ingested, or injected.

For more information on ricin visit: <http://emergencv.cdc.gov/agent/ricin/facts.asp>.

For the complete article on the November 1 arrests visit: <http://www.globalsecuritynewswire.org>