

# Ricin trial: Liverpool dad 'plotted to buy enough poison to kill 1,400 people'

From the [St Helen's Star](#)

A Liverpool man arrested by anti-terror police tried to buy enough deadly poison to kill 1,400 people, a court today heard. Dad-of-two Mohammed Ammer Ali, 31, allegedly ordered 500mg of the chemical weapon ricin from the darkest recesses of the internet and had it shipped to him disguised as toy car batteries.

What the computer-obsessed software programmer did not know was that the man he had been communicating with on the internet black market was an undercover FBI agent known as Peter who was posing as a ricin supplier. . . In a series of encrypted chats they discussed details including the price of a lethal dose, discounts for bulk orders and repeat purchases, and ricin's "shelf life", jurors were told.

At one point Ali asked: "How do I test this ricin?" and received the instruction: "You must test it on a rodent."

Peter had already alerted British authorities who allowed the negotiations to run their course, jurors were told.

On February 10, Ali took delivery of a toy car with "special batteries" at the home he shared with his wife and two young sons in Prescott Road, Liverpool. Instead of ricin, the five concealed packets contained a harmless powder and the toy was covered in a "unique marker" which sticks to skin on contact and can be seen under a UV light, the court heard.

Police swooped, searching five addresses in Merseyside, including one in Rainhill.

They arrested Ali they seized the opened package from his home office as well as his computer and mobile phone. The computer showed that Ali had begun searching Google in October last year for poisons such as abrin, ricin and cyanide. Records showed that on February 4 – days before the delivery – he made a payment of 2.1849 Bitcoins, the online currency, jurors were told.

He had made a list on his computer notepad which included the entries “paid ricin guy” and “get pet to murder”.

After receiving the delivery, Ali searched Google for “pocket-sized pets”, “animal rescue centre”, “chinchillas Liverpool” and “rabbit rehome – adopt an unwanted bunny from a rescue centre”, the jury was told.

Prosecutor Sally Howes, QC, said ricin was the “poisoner’s perfect poison” as it left no traces that would be uncovered in a post mortem. She told the jury that Ali, the son of newsagents, used bitcoins to buy the ricin on the Evolution Marketplace, a dark web trading site for deadly substances, drugs, and guns.

Ms Howes told the jury: “Despite the subject matter of this case, the police have found no evidence to suggest that this defendant has any association with terrorist activities or terrorist organisations.”

She said if genuine, Ali would have bought “a lethal dose sufficient to kill between 700 and 1400 people”.

She said: “Ricin is a highly toxic, naturally occurring substance that is produced in the seeds of the castor oil plant. Ricin is classed as both a chemical and a biological weapon. The symptoms of ricin poisoning are totally non-specific and the toxins are rapidly metabolised and eliminated from the body.

“Similarly at post mortem there will be no free toxin present

in either blood or body tissue. Ricin poisoning therefore is not detected clinically and leaves no post mortem finding. The poisoner's perfect poison."

Ali, who was born in Bolton and has lived all his life in the North West of England, denies the charge of attempting to possess a chemical weapon between January 10 and February 12.

Ms Howes said he is likely to argue that he sought to buy ricin on the Dark Web "out of curiosity" and his attempt to possess it was for "peaceful purposes" and not to use it as a chemical weapon.

She said his defence team is likely to rely on a psychological assessment that Ali has traits associated with Asperger's syndrome to explain what he did. . . he refused to be drawn into revealing to the bogus ricin supplier who his intended target or targets were. *I know several young men with Asperger's syndrome – they all know right from wrong, and that murder is wrong. And as for what he was planning – he lived in a flat above a restaurant. The resutarant business is nothing to do with him.*