



# Department of Justice

United States Attorney Paul J. Fishman  
District of New Jersey

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## **FLORIDA MAN ADMITS ROLE IN INTERNATIONAL MURDER CONSPIRACY AND SALE AND SMUGGLING OF DEADLY TOXINS**

WASHINGTON – A Florida man today admitted producing and selling potentially deadly toxins ricin and abrin for use as weapons and conspiring to kill a woman in the United Kingdom, U.S. Attorney Paul J. Fishman announced.

Jesse William Korff, 19, of LaBelle, Florida, pleaded guilty before U.S. District Judge Peter G. Sheridan in Trenton federal court to an information charging him with five counts of developing, producing, transferring and possessing toxins, five counts of smuggling toxins and one count of conspiring to kill a person in a foreign country.

Korff was arrested in Florida on Jan. 18, 2014, following a joint investigation by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Homeland Security Investigations (ICE-HSI) and the FBI.

“Jesse Korff admitted producing and selling potentially deadly toxins to strangers over the Internet,” U.S. Attorney Fishman said. “Working in the shadows of a secretive computer network favored by cybercriminals, he peddled his poison on a virtual black market of illegal and dangerous goods. Today he admitted he was in the midst of aiding an overseas customer in an attempted murder. Thankfully, an undercover law enforcement officer posing as a buyer was able get Korff off the street before he could conclude the transaction.”

“HSI has worked tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to shutter underground websites such as BMR and arrest those responsible for reckless and dangerous illegal activity,” Andrew McLees, Special Agent in Charge of HSI Newark, said. “Anyone involved in the sale of toxins designed for use in chemical terrorism must be stopped, and this guilty plea shows HSI’s commitment to stopping individuals who show callous disregard for public safety in the interest of making a buck.”

“The overriding focus of the FBI’s WMD Directorate, and the primary focus of the FBI’s overall efforts is prevention,” Aaron T. Ford, Special Agent in Charge of FBI, Newark, said. “To keep the threat posed by Korff from becoming a reality, the FBI leveraged subject matter experts to include WMD coordinators, special agent bomb technicians, hazardous

evidence response teams, surveillance and computer forensics personnel to disrupt the activities of Korff. The intensive three-day search, evidence collection, analysis and investigation uncovered an international nexus to Korff. Working through FBI legal attachés, information gleaned from the investigation was communicated to foreign law enforcement partners to disrupt international subjects.”

According to documents filed in this case and statements made in court:

In April 2013 HSI special agents began investigating illicit sales activity on an underground Internet marketplace known as “Black Market Reloaded” (BMR). The website provided a platform for vendors and buyers to conduct anonymous online transactions involving biological agents, toxins, firearms, ammunition, explosives, narcotics and counterfeit items.

From August 2013 through January 2014 Korff maintained a seller’s profile on BMR under the screen name “Snowman840.” He advertised the sale of deadly toxins and provided his prospective purchasers with information about quantities necessary to kill a person of a given weight, along with instructions on how to secretly administer the toxin to avoid suspicion. Korff sold ricin and abrin to international purchasers in India, Austria, Denmark and England. He smuggled the toxins from Florida to the international purchasers by concealing the toxins in packages sent through the U.S. Postal Service.

In December 2013 Korff provided a quantity of abrin to a purchaser in London who claimed she intended to kill her mother. After the purchaser’s receipt and administration of the initial dose, which she claimed was ineffective, Korff agreed to provide a second quantity of the toxin in order to assist the purchaser in the implementation of the murder plot.

Before Korff had an opportunity to smuggle the second dose of abrin to the London purchaser, a federal undercover agent contacted Korff through BMR and negotiated the sale of two liquid doses of abrin. Korff told the buyer about his delivery methods – concealing vials in a carved-out and re-melted candle – and discussed how much abrin was needed to kill a person of a particular weight and how best to administer the toxin. Korff also assured the buyer that a victim’s death would appear to be similar to a bad case of the flu.

Following Korff’s arrest, FBI agents searched Korff’s property over three days and recovered several computers, castor beans, rosary peas, capsules, vials, jars, syringes, filters, respirators and other items commonly utilized in the manufacture, production, sale, packaging, and shipping of toxins and chemical substances. Among the items recovered was a liquid dose of abrin that Korff had intended to ship to the London purchaser.

The toxin and murder conspiracy charges to which Korff pleaded guilty carry a maximum potential penalty of life in prison and a \$250,000 fine. The smuggling charges carry a maximum potential penalty of 10 years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. Sentencing is scheduled for Nov. 21, 2014.

U.S. Attorney Fishman credited special agents of HSI, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge McLees in Newark, New Jersey; special agents of the FBI in Newark, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Ford; and FBI special agents under the direction of

Special Agent in Charge Paul Wysopal, Tampa Division, with the investigation leading to today's guilty plea. He also thanked HSI in Ft. Myers, Florida, under the direction of Special Agent in Charge Susan McCormick, for their work. The U.S. Attorney also thanked the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force, including the U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the Glades County, Henry County and Lee County, Florida, sheriff's offices for their assistance. Vital support was provided by the Justice Department's National Security Division Counterterrorism Section and FBI WMD Directorate in Washington, the FBI Laboratory Division, the DHS National Bioforensic Analysis Center; the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Middle District of Florida; and the London Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), SO15 Counter Terrorism Command, under the direction of Commander Duncan Ball.

The government is represented by Assistant U.S. Attorney Dennis C. Carletta of the U.S. Attorney's Office National Security Unit in Newark.

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