COMMON FARMING CHEMICALS SOURCE OF F.B.I. ALERT

Law Enforcement officers across the country have been put on the lookout for people trying to acquire certain types of explosives.

An FBI bulletin went out late last week warning about urea nitrate. The bulletin said that known terrorist organizations, including al-Qaida, might be trying to acquire the ingredients to make the compound. Jim Ludwiczak, an explosives expert, says the terrorists may be interested in it because it's cheaper than dynamite.

Urea nitrate

Urea nitrate is a loose compound of urea, the diamide of carbonic acid, and nitrate.

Explanation: Urea nitrate is a plastic explosive used for the charge on a nuclear weapon or as a component of a non-nuclear high explosive. It can also be used as a catalyst in Diels-Alder reactions of aromatic amines. It is favored by amateur terrorists because it is fairly easily derived from urea fertilizers or made by combining nitric and uric acids. Nitric acid can be found as waste from several industrial processes, while urea can be found as biological waste from most animals (in the form of urine). Thus, it provides similar explosive power, but lower cost, as TNT. Additionally, it is quite stable, with low friction and shock sensitivity, making it somewhat stable to work with, but also causing it to require an additional more unstable chemical detonator, called a booster, for use as a high explosive. However, in use as an industrial explosive, urea nitrate is used as a sensitizer to a less reactive fuel. It was the main component of the explosive used in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center.

Authorities say they have no intelligence suggesting an imminent threat, but they warn terrorist groups don't always act immediately. They say, as well, that al-Qaida has used the compound in the past.

Agricultural Chemical suppliers, Co-Op’s, and farmers are urged to contact their local Law Enforcement agency regarding any unusual sales, attempted sales, or thefts of agricultural chemicals that contain urea and/or nitric acid.