



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

INDEPENDENCE MAN INDICTED FOR POSSESSION OF CYANIDE

KANSAS CITY, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that an Independence, Mo., man has been indicted by a federal grand jury for being in possession of potassium cyanide. According to Graves, this marks first case ever prosecuted in the Western District of Missouri under a federal statute that prohibits any person from possessing chemical weapons.

Hessam S. Ghane, 53, of Independence, Mo., was charged in a single-count indictment returned under seal by a federal grand jury on May 15, 2003. That indictment was unsealed and made public today upon **Ghane's** arrest and initial appearance in federal court. **Ghane** remains in federal custody pending a detention hearing on May 20, 2003.

Ghane is a naturalized citizen from Iran. A chemist with a Ph.D., he was employed with the United States Army Corps of Engineers until 1993, and taught chemistry at Maple Woods Community College in 1996 and 1997.

The indictment alleges that **Ghane** unlawfully stockpiled and possessed potassium cyanide, which is classified as a chemical weapon under federal law. A “chemical weapon,” Graves explained, is defined, in part, as a toxic chemical that causes death or permanent harm to humans. Potassium cyanide is included in the list of toxic chemicals specifically referenced in the federal statute that fall under the Chemical Weapons Convention.

“**Ghane** allegedly was in possession of 177 grams of potassium cyanide,” Graves said.

“Because this matter is the subject of a grand jury investigation,” Graves added, “we are not at liberty to provide additional information about the case. I would add, however, that there is no longer any threat to the public. **Ghane** is the only defendant charged in the indictment, and there are no allegations of a conspiracy involving any additional defendants.”

Graves cautioned that the charge contained in the indictment is simply an accusation, and not evidence of guilt. Evidence supporting the charge must be presented to a federal trial jury, whose duty is to determine guilt or innocence.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney D. Michael Green. It was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Independence, Mo., Police Department.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at

www.usdoj.gov/usao/mow