

Chemical weapons are chemical substances in either gaseous, liquid, or solid form that could be used for hostile purposes because of their direct toxic effects on plants, animals, and humans. The agents are inanimate and incapable of self-reproduction. The effects of biological agents are dependent on their ability to multiply in a person, animal or plant attacked, and include bacteria, viruses, rickettsia and fungi. Toxins are inanimate chemical poisons usually produced by living organisms such as lower forms of life (algae, bacteria or fungi; fish and plants) and by higher organisms. Some such substances may also be synthesized in the laboratory.

It has been argued that the advent of biotechnology, i.e., man's ability to engineer and alter genetic information, has made the distinction less clear between chemical agents (toxicants), toxins, and biological agents. Because of its relevance to a number of CWC-related issues, including procedures for investigation of allegations of the use of chemical weapons and the problems posed by novel agents, this matter will eventually require further consideration.