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May urged to pull plug immediately on Hinkley C over spying allegations

Name of China General Nuclear Power, which holds stake in the planned new reactors, has appeared in US legal papers

[Terry Macalister](#) Energy editor

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Theresa May is being urged to pull the plug on the controversial Hinkley Point C project immediately, after [new allegations of spying in the US](#) by a consultant working for the Chinese co-investor in the planned nuclear plant.

The new government is currently in the middle of a review of the **£18.5bn** Hinkley scheme following a final investment decision by the developers, EDF of France and its Beijing-based partner China General Nuclear Power (CGN).

Paul Dorfman, a senior research fellow at University College London, said the British prime minister could legitimately blame poor French reactor technology if she wanted to save face with the Chinese.

"No other OECD country would let China into its critical nuclear infrastructure, given its history of nuclear weapon proliferation. May has already taken the diplomatic 'hit' for this, so what's she got to lose?"

♦ "If government wanted to, it could avoid taking China to task on this by reframing the problem in the context of the failed French EPR reactor, which is three times over-cost and over-time where it's being built in Finland and France."

Angus MacNeil MP, the chair of the energy and climate change select committee, said the spying allegations raised grave concerns about corporate integrity and must form a key part of the government's current review of Hinkley.

"I am not sure the Chinese have anything to steal from Britain in the way of nuclear secrets. That is

after all why they are being brought in, but it does raise questions about how honourable the company is and whether it could cut corners on construction methods and issues like that.”

The name of China General Nuclear Power (CGN) has appeared as a defendant in US legal papers filed by the US authorities in a Tennessee district court.

Szuhsiung Ho, a senior adviser to CGN, is scheduled to appear in front of the court next week accused of trying to recruit US atomic experts to steal technology secrets to help speed up China’s own nuclear power programme.

CGN said it could not immediately comment on the scandal, but promised it would put out a written statement. Brunswick, the high-profile City PR firm that has been working with CGN on Hinkley, said it was not “acting on behalf of CGN in respect of this matter”.

The department of business, energy and industrial strategy also declined to comment on the implications of the court case.

Dorfman said there had already been endless concern and discussion between strategic defence experts in London about the wisdom of allowing China to invest in UK nuclear projects, and not just Hinkley.

“China has and always will play economic hardball. For China, Hinkley was always a loss-leader for Bradwell. The deal was, if China invested in Hinkley, then it could build and run its own reactor at Bradwell, the nearest nuclear site to London.

“Now the idea of China investing in Hinkley, then constructing and operating a reactor on British soil is really beginning to look like a Anglo-Sino bridge too far.”

Greenpeace’s executive director, John Sauven, said there were very real concerns about handing over the keys to our future energy security to companies run by foreign governments.

“There are a vast array of alternative power sources for the UK that [Theresa May](#) can choose from to keep the lights on, from solar, tidal and wind power through to interconnectors and storage. These are cutting edge technologies that will also attract investment into the UK, create jobs and don’t come with a huge health warning.”