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French police raid nuclear developer's office in Paris

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French police raid nuclear developer's office in Paris

Adam Sage, Paris

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The headquarters of the French state-owned company that designed Britain's new nuclear reactors was raided by police yesterday.

About 50 officers searched the offices of Areva, the nuclear engineering group, as part of a preliminary inquiry into corruption allegations.

The inquiry was launched by the French national financial prosecution service into Areva's purchase in 2011 of uranium from Niger worth \$319.8 million. The uranium was sold later to Russian traders who made an \$82 million profit and then to a Lebanese company that made \$17.6 million, according to French media reports.

A spokesman for Areva said that the deals had been lawful and were part of negotiations with an unspecified customer to build a nuclear reactor. In the end the reactor was never built.

A spokesman for Niger's government told *Le Monde* that it had made about \$800,000 from the transactions and had used the money to buy cars for presidential bodyguards.

Areva, which designed the two reactors being built at Hinkley Point by EDF, the state-owned French energy provider, is already under investigation in connection with Niger. An inquiry was opened in 2014 into allegations that it overpaid Uramin, a Canadian mining group, whose main uranium mines were in Niger. Anne Lauvergeon, Areva's former chief executive, denies wrongdoing. Areva confirmed that its offices outside Paris had been raided and said that it was co-operating with police and prosecutors.



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