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EDF accused of spying on anti-nuclear groups

By Peggy Hollinger in Paris

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[EDF](#), France's nuclear energy operator, paid investigators to infiltrate the anti-nuclear movement around Europe, according to testimony given in a French judicial investigation.

The investigation is looking into whether the state-controlled group condoned illegal practices as part of a surveillance operation.

The affair has exposed an underworld of computer hackers and private investigators who claim to have worked for some of the world's most respected companies. It also raises questions over the methods employed to ensure the safety of nuclear operations in France and abroad.

Pierre François, the deputy head of EDF's production security division, said he had organised surveillance on Greenpeace in "France and in Europe" since "about 2002". The disclosures come in confidential court documents first revealed by the investigative website Mediapart and seen by the Financial Times.

The work involved "a web watch, completed by on-the-ground work" that he described as "going to meetings, to demonstrations" and "taking the temperature of these organisations".

EDF has denied that it sought to hack into the private networks of Greenpeace or others and has attempted to register itself as a victim of the affair. The plea was rejected by French judges.

Mr François denies the allegations against him, in particular claims made by the private investigators he hired that he condoned an illegal hacking operation into the computer of Yannick Jadot, Greenpeace's campaigns director in France, in September 2006.

Greenpeace has condemned the computer hacking, which has sparked controversy in France, not least as the memories of the bombing of the Greenpeace campaign ship Rainbow Warrior in 1985 are still raw. French secret services hacked into Greenpeace's computer network to gain information on the vessel's campaign against nuclear testing in the Pacific, before blowing it up in Auckland harbour, killing a photographer on board.

Allegations that this time a public company may have used hackers have revived concerns about France's approach to anti-nuclear activists, who struggle to be heard in the face of widespread political and civil support for nuclear power.

“The question is how much did the French state and French intelligence know about this,” says Philippe Vasset, editor of Intelligence Online, a security newsletter. “This affair strikes a chord in the public psyche.”

The affair is equally likely to raise concerns in Britain, where EDF has just acquired [British Energy](#), the UK’s nuclear operator, and where the anti-nuclear movement is far more powerful.

Thierry Lorho, the former secret service agent whose company, Kargus Consultants, was hired by EDF to “provide operational support for strategic surveillance”, has told the investigating judge that he was asked by Mr François to hack into Mr Jadot’s computer as a trial run for a longer-term contract to track the NGO’s activities.

According to the testimony, Mr Lorho introduced a young computer expert to Mr François. The expert, Alain Quiros, corroborates the claim and says in his testimony that he even sketched out on a paper napkin the way in which he would enter the Greenpeace system, via a tool known as a Trojan horse. This would allow him to record every e-mail and every keystroke made by Mr Jadot. Mr François and EDF’s head of security, Pascal Durieux, reject these claims. Mr François, himself a former member of the security services, suggests in his testimony that Mr Lorho is seeking revenge for the termination of his contract with EDF.

Jean-Marc Sabathé, EDF’s security director, said in an interview on Monday with Le Monde, the French newspaper, that Mr François and Mr Durieux had been suspended after an internal company inquiry found that contacts to hire Kargus had breached company rules. Management knew nothing of the contacts, Mr Sabathé insisted.

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