

# Thales denies allegations as fraud office launches probe into suspected bribery



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Defence firm Thales has denied allegations related to an investigation by the UK's [Serious Fraud Office](#) (SFO) and [French](#) authorities.

The weapons manufacturer said the investigation is targeting four of its entities in the UK and [France](#), regarding “the performance of a contract in Asia”.

The SFO said on Thursday that it had launched an investigation into suspected bribery and corruption at the firm, alongside French agency Parquet National Financier (PNF).

Thales said in a statement to French financial markets: “Thales confirms that the Parquet National Financier in France and the Serious Fraud Office in the United Kingdom have initiated an investigation in relation to four Thales entities

located in France and the UK, regarding the performance of a contract in Asia.

Thales complies with all national and international regulations

Thales statement

“Thales denies the allegations brought to its knowledge.

“The group is fully co-operating with the PNF in France and the SFO in the UK.

“Thales complies with all national and international regulations.”

Thales, which employs more than 7,000 workers in the UK, is one of the Government’s key defence contractors, and built hundreds of lightweight missiles which the UK sent to [Ukraine](#) in September.

It comes after police in France, the Netherlands and Spain searched the company’s offices in June over suspicions of corruption linked to arms sales abroad, according to reports.

On Thursday, SFO director Nick Ephgrave said: “Working collaboratively with our international partners is a crucial factor in the fight against international corruption and with this case I hope to reinforce the SFO and PNF’s long-standing relationship, built on mutual co-operation and shared success.

“We will together rigorously pursue every avenue in our investigation into these serious allegations.”

Thales specialises in defence electronics, and built the 650 so-called Lightweight Multirole Missiles (LMMs) that the UK announced it would supply to Ukraine in September, in a £162 million order.

The weapons, manufactured at one of Thales’ plants in Belfast,

are designed for short-range fire and can hit targets up to about six kilometres away in the air and on the ground.

Thales also won a £1.8 billion UK defence contract in February which will see it maintain the Royal Navy's fleet of ships and submarines for the next 15 years.