

By Nigel Green

Detectives have raided shipyard offices across the UK as part of an investigation into allegations of fraud.

Officers from the Ministry of Defence searched Tyne Slipway and Engineering Co Ltd, in South Shields, seizing computers and documents during an operation on the site which lasted all day. They also searched the company's Wear Dock offices in Sunderland and its premises in Gosport, Hampshire.

Details of the investigation have not yet been revealed but they are believed to relate to a contract involving the company, which repairs small naval patrol craft.

The Ministry of Defence confirmed the investigation was connected to the arrest of a 34-year-old former MoD employee on suspicion of fraud and theft in August last year. In December, officers arrested a 40-year-old civilian contractor on suspicion of fraud by false representation. Both men were interviewed at Bridgend police station in South Wales and released on bail.

An MoD Police spokesman confirmed officers executed search warrants at three commercial addresses in South Shields, Sunderland and Gosport, on Thursday, September 16.

He added: "The searches were carried out as part of an ongoing MDP fraud enquiry into an alleged conspiracy to defraud the MOD. "Two people have previously been arrested in connection with this investigation.

"Neither of these arrested men have a direct employment link to the locations searched on Thursday 16 September 2010. As investigations are continuing it would be inappropriate to comment in further detail at this time. The alleged fraud is still under active investigation and we are not able to attach a monetary value to it at this time."

The Managing Director of Tyne Slipway Harry Wilson has so far declined to comment on the searches.

The Ministry of Defence Police is a national civilian police force of about 3,500 officers who have the same powers as any local police force.

Their role is to deal with any crime or disorder affecting MoD property, personnel, land and installations in the UK.