

Renault charged with 'deceit' in diesel emissions inquiry

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According to a fraud squad report seen by AFP, investigators found discrepancies of up to 377 percent between emissions from Renault vehicles during tests, and results from actual on-the-road use by consumers.

French carmaker Renault said Tuesday that it had been charged by prosecutors over claims it cheated on emission tests for diesel vehicles

for several years, a scandal that has rocked rivals across the industry.

"Renault denies having committed any offence and reminds that its vehicles are not equipped with any rigging software for pollution control devices," the company said, reiterating its stance since the inquiry was opened in 2017.

Fraud investigators accused Renault of "fraudulent strategies" used by top managers for over 25 years to falsify the emission test results, including its longtime chief Carlos Ghosn.

A report claimed the existence of "software" that ensured equipment on vehicles dating back to 1990, originally used on cars with petrol engines, would produce results in line with EU anti-pollution limits.

France's Peugeot has also been targeted by investigators over suspected cheating in the "dieselgate" scandal, which erupted in 2015 when Volkswagen, Europe's biggest carmaker, admitted to fitting 11 million cars—8.5 million in Europe—with devices allowing them to fool [emission](#) tests.

The scandal has cost VW some 32 billion euros including fines, [legal fees](#) and vehicle refits and recalls.

"Renault has always complied with French and European regulations," the company said.

It said a court had ordered the company to pay 20 million euros (\$24 million) in bail and provide a bank guarantee of 60 million euros to cover any compensation orders.

Carlos Ghosn's role?

Ghosn, who was ousted after his shock 2018 arrest in Japan on financial misconduct allegations, was questioned by French judges who travelled to Lebanon last month over the suspected cheating, sources close to the inquiry told AFP.

According to a fraud squad report seen by AFP, investigators found discrepancies of up to 377 percent between emissions from models during tests, and results from actual on-the-road use by consumers.

Investigators also said they found no evidence Ghosn charged anybody else with approving the company's emissions control decisions, which therefore made them "his responsibility".

But Ghosn, who fled to Lebanon in late 2019, was heard only as a witness, and would need to be in France to be formally indicted.

Renault's new chief, Luca de Meo, has been tasked with accelerating a shift to [electric vehicles](#) as European governments crack down on carbon dioxide pollution.

The group posted a record net loss of 8.1 billion euros last year as the Covid crisis wreaked havoc on auto sales.

Consumer groups have assailed Renault and other automakers for selling cars that performed much worse in terms of emissions than they were led to believe.

"Dieselgate" also became a key factor in pushing the European Parliament to adopt legislation last November that will open the door to US-style class action lawsuits against companies accused of widescale fraud or other crimes.

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