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Saturday December 22 9:45 AM ET

Georgia Arrests Smuggler with Radioactive Materiel

TBILISI (Reuters) - Georgian police have arrested an Armenian smuggler with 10.5 ounces of radioactive uranium that he planned to sell in Turkey, a senior security official said on Saturday.

The official, who asked not to be identified, said Georgian police and security services had arrested Armenian national Eduard Kazaryan on Wednesday in the Samtskhe-Javakheti region in southern Georgia where many ethnic Armenians live.

“We have serious suspicions that the uranium had been stolen from the Armenian nuclear power station," he said.

Kazaryan had with him one plate of low-grade uranium-235 which he had smuggled from Armenia and intended to sell in Turkey for \$7,000, the official said.

Safety worries had forced Armenia to shut down its only nuclear power plant in the aftermath of a disastrous earthquake in 1988, but it relaunched the station in 1995 because of acute power shortages.

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, there have been a number of cases of nuclear materials being stolen from poorly guarded facilities, sparking grave concern in the West.

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