

CHALLENGES

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The Man behind the Sorbonne could have helped Areva in Abu Dhabi

Lunch with Pascal Renouard de Vallière, an imposing man (1.98 m tall) and a chum of Olivier Dassault, the man behind the scenes who initiated the creation of the Sorbonne in Abu Dhabi in 2006. He was the one who convinced Jean-Robert Pitte (President of the Sorbonne at the time) to sign an agreement with the Heir Apparent, Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, after two years of work. In his words, “Pitte was somewhat skeptical,” although this contract will bring in €500,000 to the university per year. Instead of being paid (a bill for two million dollars remains outstanding), this intermediary will be awarded the Legion of Honor on the orders of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where his popularity was waning prior to recent media attention. This atypical lobbyist, who lives in Cairo and loves to refer to his modest background, has deciphered the subtleties of Middle Eastern rites throughout his career. He offered Areva his help with the nuclear power plant contracts lost just recently. “They never returned my call,” he says. In his opinion, we should have tied the opening of our military base in Abu Dhabi to the signature of this contract.