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Polly Peck offices searched by police

DETECTIVES from the Serious Fraud Office today searched the Mayfair headquarters of Asil Nadir's crisis-torn Polly Peck empire.

In a dramatic escalation of the probe into the company's affairs, six uniformed officers entered the four-storey Regency building in Berkeley Square shortly before 8 am.

Other officers arrived throughout the morning as police guarded both entrances.

Inside there were chaotic scenes as staff were sent home and an intensive search of company papers got underway. This afternoon, a senior accountant for Polly Peck said as he left that investigators had been searched his briefcase. The man, who declined to be

by **Tim Barlass**

named, said more than a dozen officers were in the building. "They seem to be mostly working on the second floor but exactly what they are doing I don't know. They went through my bag and asked my name and position," he said.

He added that between 20 and 25 senior Polly Peck staff were in the offices assisting in the search.

The move is the latest development in the fortunes of the company, which owns the multi-million pound Del Monte fresh fruit business.

The SFO has already interviewed Mr Nadir, Polly Peck's chairman and

chief executive, about alleged insider dealing and illicit support of the group's shares.

This afternoon Mr Nadir said in statement: "I have committed no criminal act and, in particular, I have not been involved with any illegal or unauthorised share dealings."

He said today's police search on behalf of the SFO was "symptomatic of a new desperation on the part of that body".

Polly Peck was placed in the hands of administrators last week after a plea to the High Court by its directors. Last month, officers called on South Audley Management, also in Berkeley Square, a company owned by, and set up to manage, Nadir family interests.

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