

The Mysterious Case of Iranian Nuclear Scientist Shahram Amiri. What was His Relationship to the CIA?

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Iranian scientist Shahram Amiri disappeared in June of the last year in Saudi Arabia while on pilgrimage to Mecca. He left for Saudi Arabia on May 31st and his wife [said that the last she heard from him](#) was in a June 3 phone call.

On September 21st [Iran informed International Atomic Energy Agency](#) (IAEA) on the construction of uranium enrichment facility near the city of Qom. Four days later Western leaders announced it to the world. Most Western media left out the fact that they announced the existence of the facility four days after Iran announced it to the IAEA. Even [Wikipedia](#) claims that the facility near the Iranian city of Qom was “revealed publicly on September 25, 2009 in a joint appearance by the leaders of the United States, France, and the United Kingdom”. On October 7th, 2009 the Iranian government accused the USA that it was behind Amiri’s disappearance in Saudi Arabia and the U.S. government refused to comment on it. The next day a London-based newspaper [Al-Sharq al-Awsat](#) wrote: “The Iranian JANA news website reported that Amiri worked at the Qom facility, and that when he traveled to Saudi Arabia to perform pilgrimage, he did so with the intention of escaping abroad, although the website did not publish the source of this information”. Though the only JANA News website you can find on Internet is [official Libyan news agency](#) which could hardly know anything about Amiri’s employment and intentions. [ABC News later reported](#) that Saudi Arabia cooperated with the USA in disappearance of Amiri. The newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat is owned by Saudi Arabia. On October 15th the French Intelligence analysis website [Intelligence Online](#) published an article stating that Amiri, who worked at Qom before leaving Iran instructed in October 2009 in Frankfurt IAEA inspectors on details of the nuclear enrichment facility near Iranian city of Qom before they went there for inspection. Two weeks later the French daily [Le Figaro](#), apparently citing the Intelligence Online website repeated that story, but stated that the IAEA denied that it would be informed by Amiri in Frankfurt on the facility in Qom. When on December 8th 2009 the Iranian government claimed that Amiri was kidnapped the representative of the U.S. government, at the press conference, again [refused to comment](#), but four days later the British Daily Telegraph repeated the story of Amiri’s giving information on Qom facility to IAEA inspectors. The [Daily Telegraph](#), which in December 2003 published a false story of 9/11 ringleader Mohamed Atta’s training in Iraq did not verify the story with the IAEA and simply quoted the Intelligence Online as a source. It is certainly unusual for respectable newspapers to quote Internet websites as sources of important information without verifying their story. The Daily Telegraph as well presented the readers the explanation of Amiri’s disappearance by that website. According to Intelligence online Amiri was approached by the CIA through a

German businessman while on the trip connected with his research in Frankfurt in Germany and final contact was made in Vienna in Austria where he assisted Iranian representative at the IAEA (Iranian nuclear agency denied that Amiri worked for them). Soon after Amiri disappeared in Saudi Arabia. According to [Daily Telegraph's story](#) "he was believed to be in Europe, protected by Western intelligence agency, in a CIA-led operation".

In the spring of this year, when the CIA decided to announce that Amiri is in the USA, it presented a different story. It [told ABC News](#) reporters that it had "approached the scientist in Iran through an intermediary who made offer of resettlement on behalf of the United States". CIA explained to ABC News that it was conducting hundreds of interviews with Iranian Americans hoping to recruit their relatives in Iran working in science and politics. In this version Amiri decided still in Iran to resettle to the USA and he had plenty of time to arrange for his family to join him for his trip to Saudi Arabia. Why did he not do it? Then in June came the third story of Amiri's defection. When Amiri's video, where he said that he was abducted by the CIA, escaped them and wants to return to Iran was shown on Iranian television, [ABC News wrote](#) that Amiri was CIA's long time informant and that "CIA officials pushed for Amiri to flee the country out of fear that his disclosures might have exposed him to Tehran as a spy". [According to New York Times](#) the U.S. officials told them that "Amiri visited Saudi Arabia where the CIA arranged to spirit him out of that country". So there are three different explanations of Amiri's disappearance. Two of them were authored by the CIA in different times of Amiri's stay in the USA and apparently invented to better suit the pace of the change of the situation.

Even if Amiri decided to leave for the USA in Saudi Arabia, he could have arranged for his family to join him on his trip to the USA. ABC News wrote that Saudi Arabia cooperated with the CIA in Amiri's case. When Amiri published his first video, CIA told to ABC News that Amiri started phoning his family at the beginning of this year and when he called the second time Iranian intelligence service answered the phone and threatened him that if he did not record a video where he would say that he was abducted by the CIA, it would harm his son ([Amiri's wife denied](#) that Amiri was phoning them, Amiri himself in the third video [said](#) "I am not free and I'm not allowed to contact my family"). If this story was true, it would mean that Amiri cared for his family so much that he would make a false video and return to Iran to protect them. But then why he did not bring his family along with him to the USA, when he had plenty of time to do so? On the video recording from his arrival back to Iran it is [evident](#) that he loves his son. When Amiri was back to Iran "the officials" [told Global Security Newswire](#) that once in the USA Amiri did not try to bring his family there. [New York Times](#) wrote on July 16: "It is unclear whether Mr. Amiri tried to bring his wife and child with him". On July 21st the Wall street Journal wrote that "U.S. officials said he changed his mind in part because of fears for his family". So again there is multitude of stories on Amiri's relationship to his family. The one where he did not care for his family is the only one which fits the CIA story of Amiri's defection.

When the CIA informed ABC News that Amiri is in the USA it did not tell them about any detailed information he would bring to the USA. All U.S. media reporting on the story by ABC News quoted its formulation: "Amiri helped to confirm the assessment of U.S. intelligence services on Iranian nuclear program". It was a pretty vague statement. To add significance to this statement the ABC News quoted not the CIA, but unspecified "one Iranian website" that "reported that Amiri worked at the Qom facility prior to his defection" - this website was evidently the official Libyan News agency JANA which Saudi-owned newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat described as an Iranian website. The [ABC News suggested](#) as well, that president

Obama learned about the Qom facility from Amiri and not from IAEA, but they avoided saying this explicitly. In April of this year the [Washington Post already wrote](#) that according to intelligence officials and Europe-based diplomats Amiri told CIA about the Qom facility. But on the construction of the Qom facility informed Iran IAEA four days before [Barak Obama announced](#) it to the world in September 2009 so there is no serious reason to believe that USA knew about the Qom facility before Iran's information to the IAEA. If the USA knew about Qom facility from Shahram Amiri prior to Iran's giving that information to IAEA, they would ask the IAEA to verify in Iran Amiri's information and this would happen longtime before Iran informed the IAEA. Amiri had been staying in the USA the fourth month at this time.

Two days before the U.N. security council voted in sanctions against Iran the [New York Times wrote](#) that the USA hold classified intelligence briefings for foreign ministers and leaders as a "part of a lobbying effort to secure votes for the sanctions" and that Shahram Amiri "was one of the sources".

Already on January 10th, 2010 the British [Guardian wrote](#): "Washington is distancing itself from a controversial National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), produced by several US spy agencies in 2007, which suggested Iran had suspended work on weapons design four years earlier. After reviewing new documents that have leaked out of Iran and debriefing defectors lured to the west, Mr Obama's advisers say they believe the work on weapons design is continuing on a smaller scale - the same assessment reached by Britain, France, Germany and Israel, the New York Times reported. The key sources of new intelligence are likely to include two recent Iranian defectors - Ali Reza Agari, a Revolutionary Guards general who vanished in Istanbul in 2007, and Shahram Amiri, a leading Iranian nuclear scientist, who disappeared while on a pilgrimage to Mecca last summer". So the evidence for the new round of sanctions against Iran was based mainly on information from two people who were, according to Iran, abducted. Ali Reza Asgari is still not accounted for, but similarly to Amiri's case an Israeli journalist already [wrote](#) in the book that Asgari supplied to the West information on Qom facility. Were those publications on informations Amiri and Asgari provided to the Western intelligence services meant to prevent them from returning to Iran?

On June 9th the new sanctions were passed in the U.N. Security Council. Already on June 14th Amiri recorded a video where [he said](#) that he was abducted by the CIA and tortured to provide evidence of the Iranian nuclear weapon development. No one can contest the possibility that he reacted against the fact that he was used by U.S. authorities ultimately for the invasion of his country. Than CIA managed to convince him to record another video where he said that he is happily living in the USA, but it did not manage to convince him to say that he was giving the USA information on Iranian nuclear weapon program. On the video [he said](#): "I am not involved in weapons research and have no experience and knowledge in this field" (and that he never abandoned his family which is another way to say that he was abducted). Then he recorded a third video where he said that if anything happens to him and he does not return to Iran, it will be the responsibility of US intelligence agencies. This video was broadcasted on Iranian television on June 30th. In response the [ABC News](#), which in 2001 published a false information on Iraqi provenience of anthrax attacks powder, wrote that Amiri was "a star scientist for the Iranian nuclear program" and went on "U.S officials say,Amiri was a key CIA spy inside the Iranian nuclear weapons program and helped reverse the CIA understanding of the Iranian program. Amiri directly contradicted the 2007 National Intelligence Estimate which concluded that Tehran had suspended their nuclear weapons program in 2003"). On July 16th [The New York Times](#)

[wrote](#): “The scientist, [Shahram Amiri](#), described to American intelligence officers details of how a university in Tehran became the covert headquarters for the country’s nuclear efforts, the officials confirmed”. If, when Amiri published his third video, the CIA really wanted to persuade anybody that it did not abduct Amiri and that he gave them the information they were passing to media and foreign officials, they would have to place on YouTube some recording of his explanations which they certainly would have made during his questioning. But if Amiri did not say what they claimed he had said, they had nothing to publish.

After Amiri had returned to Iran the statements of ABC News and other U.S. media about Amiri’s abilities and testimonies were placed in question. Amiri himself, after his arrival to Iran, said that he specialized in health physics. The same information published already in October 2009 British Guardian saying that “AP is reporting relatives as saying he researched medical isotopes at a Tehran university”. Amiri’s family told Saudi-owned newspaper Al-Sharq al-Awsat in October 2009 that he was a nuclear expert working for a university in Tehran where he researched medical uses for nuclear technology. [New York Times wrote](#): “Mr. Amiri, a specialist in measuring radioactive materials, is not believed to have been central to any of Iran’s efforts at weapons design”, [BBC News wrote](#) that “unnamed U.S. officials told reporters he was indeed a low-level scientist but they had hoped to use him to find a way of getting to more highly placed Iranian officials” and finally Philip Giraldo, former CIA counterterrorist agent, relying on the information of his former colleagues from the CIA, [wrote in the American Conservative](#): “Amiri, who had no access to the actual Iranian nuclear program, was considered a low-level source who only was able to recount conversations with other scientists suggesting that there was no nuclear-weapons program”. The claims by the CIA what Amiri had said, never confirmed by Amiri himself, even when he was evidently pressured by the CIA to record his second video, cannot be trusted if his disappearance is wrapped up in so many conflicting stories and even false reports. If Amiri came freely to the USA to tell the CIA about the secret Iranian work on nuclear bomb, there was no reason to keep his message and his stay in the USA in secret for nine months. He could have told this story to the CIA shortly after he arrived to the USA and it could have been verified by the IAEA and then widely published.

In 2004 a former CIA agent filed a lawsuit against CIA. The agent managed to recruit an informant who had access to sensitive information on Iranian nuclear program and provided evidence that Iran had halted its nuclear weapon program. The CIA agent was fired from the CIA for not being willing to suppress this information. His attorney Roy Krieger [said in the court](#): “On five occasions he was ordered to either falsify his reporting on WMD in the Near East, or not to file his reports at all”. Last winter [Washington Post](#) and [The Times](#) reported on a blank sheet of paper with only handwriting on it as if such a piece of paper could be evidence that Iran is working on a neutron initiator for nuclear explosion. We all remember that information presented by the USA before the invasion of Iraq was completely falsified. The case of Ashram Amiri suggests that the USA are developing a new generation of falsified information, this time on Iranian nuclear weapon program.

It may not be an accident that since Amiri’s return to Iran [Russia renewed supplies of refined oil to Iran](#) and that Russian Energy Minister Sergei Shmatko [said](#) that international sanctions against Iran will not hinder plans. China as well started a new round of talks on developing bilateral oil trade and exchange.

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