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Iran accuses US of seizing nuclear scientist in Saudi Arabia

Iran has accused the US of seizing its nuclear scientist Shahram Amiri while he was making a pilgrimage to Saudi Arabia.

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Mr Amiri, a nuclear researcher at Tehran University, vanished during a visit to the desert kingdom in May.

His disappearance came months before the revelation of a second uranium enrichment facility that Iran has been building near the city of Qom, raising speculation that he may have given the West information on it or other parts of the nuclear programme.

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Manouchehr Mottaki, the Iranian foreign minister, told state media: "We have evidence of a US role in disappearance of the Iranian national ... in Saudi Arabia.

"There is evidence to suggest the United States was involved."

He added: "We consider Saudi Arabia responsible for the situation of Shahram Amiri and we consider Americans to have been involved in his arrest. We will pursue this case."

Iran has asked Saudi Arabia for information on Mr Amiri's whereabouts but has received no reply. Hasan Qashqavi, a foreign ministry spokesman in Tehran, appeared to allege collusion on the part of the Saudi authorities when he said: "Amiri's fate is Saudi Arabia's responsibility".

The newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* reported last week that Mr Mottaki made a formal complaint to the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, about the disappearances of Mr Amiri and three other Iranians in recent years.

Last month, Iran revealed that it was building the new enrichment facility outside Qom, bringing US and European accusations that it had been hiding the project. Tehran denied it sought to deceive the UN nuclear watchdog, saying it revealed the site earlier than required under its deals with the agency.

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