

U.S. paid Iranian nuclear scientist \$5 million for aid to CIA, officials say

The Iranian nuclear scientist who claimed to have been abducted by the CIA before departing for his homeland Wednesday was paid more than \$5 million by the agency to provide intelligence on Iran's nuclear program, U.S. officials said.

Shahram Amiri is not obligated to return the money but might be unable to access it after breaking off what U.S. officials described as significant cooperation with the CIA and abruptly returning to Iran. Officials said he might have left out of concern that the Tehran government would harm his family.

"Anything he got is now beyond his reach, thanks to the financial sanctions on Iran," a U.S. official said. "He's gone, but his money's not. We have his information, and the Iranians have him."

Amiri arrived in Tehran early Thursday to a hero's welcome, including personal greetings from several senior government officials. His 7-year-old son broke down in tears as Amiri held him for the first time since his mysterious disappearance in Saudi Arabia 14 months ago.

In brief remarks to reporters at Imam Khomeini International Airport, Amiri said, "I am so happy to be back in the Islamic republic," and he repeated his claims of having been abducted by U.S. agents. He said CIA agents had tried to pressure him into helping them with their propaganda against his homeland and offered him \$50 million to remain in the United States.

Amiri, who flashed victory signs as he stepped into the airport, also said that he knew little of Iran's main nuclear enrichment site. "I'm a simple researcher. A normal person would know more about Natanz than me."

He was greeted by Hassan Qashqavi, a high-ranking Foreign Ministry official, as well as a deputy interior minister and a deputy science minister.