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## Iran trial hears 'apology' from UK embassy worker

Hossein Rassam reported as saying that Britain passed information on post-election protests to US

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British embassy employee Hossein Rassam, who is Iranian, at his trial in Tehran.  
Photograph: Ali Rafiei/AFP/Getty Images

A British embassy worker put on trial by the Iranian authorities was today reported to have admitted that information collected by the embassy on the unrest after the disputed presidential election was sent to Washington.

The Foreign Office expressed its "outrage" as Hossein Rassam, the embassy's chief political analyst, appeared in court alongside Iranian moderates and a French citizen.

The official Iranian news agency IRNA quoted Rassam, who is charged with espionage, as saying that information was handed over to the Americans. "Because the American government lacks facilities to survey Iran events and because of the close relations between Washington and London, the British embassy in Tehran sent its collected vote unrest details to Washington," the Reuters news agency reported Rassam as telling the court.

Reuters reported him as apologising to the Iranian nation and that he "asked the court for forgiveness".

Clotilde Reiss, a French citizen, was charged with "acting against national security by taking part in unrest ... collecting news and information and sending pictures of the unrest abroad", Reuters reported. IRNA said she had confessed her "mistakes" and asked for clemency.

Espionage and acting against national security are punishable by death under Iran's Islamic law. Iran has accused the west of trying to overthrow the country's government and encouraging the widespread protests that followed the election in June.

The opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi says the vote was rigged in favour of the

president, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who was re-elected.

A Foreign Office spokeswoman said of Rassam's trial: "This is completely unacceptable and directly contradicts assurances we had been given repeatedly by senior Iranian officials.

"We deplore these trials and the so-called confessions of prisoners who have been denied their basic human rights.

"Our ambassador in Tehran has demanded early clarification of the position from the Iranian authorities. We will then decide on how to respond to this latest outrage."

Riot police had earlier broken up protests by relatives outside the courtroom.

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