

» Print

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: www.reutersreprints.com.

Argentina says dead prosecutor tricked into accusing Fernandez

4:21pm EST

By [Hugh Bronstein](#)

BUENOS AIRES (Reuters) - A prosecutor who accused Argentina's president of trying to derail the investigation into a 1994 bombing, and who died in mysterious circumstances on Sunday, was misled to believe there was a conspiracy to whitewash the crime, the government said on Wednesday.

State prosecutor Alberto Nisman, the lead investigator into the 1994 car bomb attack that killed 85 people at a Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, was found dead in his apartment late on Sunday, hours before he was scheduled to present his case to Congress.

A 22-caliber pistol was found at his side and Nisman appears to have committed suicide, but many of the details of the case are unclear and allegations of foul play have surged. He died just a few days after accusing President Cristina Fernandez of trying to hamper his probe.

A top government official said on Wednesday that Nisman was tricked into believing that two men who formed the backbone of his case against President Cristina Fernandez were government spies.

"They sold him on a connection that did not exist," said Anibal Fernandez, the president's chief of staff.

Asked by a reporter if Nisman had been "totally naive", Fernandez replied: "You said it better than me."

Antonio Stiusso, a senior Argentine spy, was fired in a December shake-up of the intelligence service, where one of his duties had been to help Nisman with the investigation into the 1994 bombing.

Chief of Staff Fernandez said it was Stiusso who falsely told Nisman that the two men who helped him build a case against the president were state intelligence agents.

The government has suggested Nisman's death may have been linked to a struggle within the state intelligence services but it has not provided details and no one has yet been detained.

Argentine courts accuse Iran of sponsoring the 1994 bombing and secured Interpol arrest warrants for five Iranians. Iran's government has denied any involvement.

Nisman said last week that Fernandez wanted to whitewash the bombing and normalize relations with Iran in order to trade Argentine grains for Iranian oil. Argentina has a \$7 billion annual energy gap, complicating the government's efforts to jumpstart a faltering economy.

"Fernandez was determined to use intelligence personnel to carry out the conspiracy," Nisman said in his complaint.

Fernandez and her ministers dismissed Nisman's charges as ridiculous.

A source who worked for years on the investigation with Nisman told Reuters that the lead prosecutor was sure of himself last week as he prepared to take his case to Congress.

"He was very determined ... No one (on the investigative team) believes he committed suicide," the source said, echoing the opinion of Nisman's ex wife and others who knew him.

Investigators have said Nisman was alone when he died, and that the two doors to the apartment were locked from the inside but local media reported on Wednesday that an air conditioning duct leading to the apartment was being looked at as a third possible way into Nisman's home.

(Additional reporting by [Eliana Raszewski](#), [Nicolas Misculin](#) and [Sarah Marsh](#); Editing by [Kieran Murray](#))



© Thomson Reuters 2015. All rights reserved. Users may download and print extracts of content from this website for their own personal and non-commercial use only. Republication or redistribution of Thomson Reuters content, including by framing or similar means, is expressly prohibited without the prior written consent of Thomson Reuters. Thomson Reuters and its logo are registered trademarks or trademarks of the Thomson Reuters group of companies around the world.

Thomson Reuters journalists are subject to an Editorial Handbook which requires fair presentation and disclosure of relevant interests.

This copy is for your personal, non-commercial use only. To order presentation-ready copies for distribution to colleagues, clients or customers, use the Reprints tool at the top of any article or visit: www.reutersreprints.com.