

Beat: Politics

CASE AGAINST ARGENTINE PRESIDENT

PROSECUTOR REAFFIRMS ACCUSATIONS

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USPA NEWS - The prosecutor who inherited a high-profile case against Argentine President Cristina Fernandez on Friday reaffirmed the accusations, formally renewing the investigation into whether the president helped Iranian officials cover up their alleged role in the 1994 bombing of a Jewish community center.

Prosecutor Gerardo Pollicita's decision to go forward with the case was significant because it sets the stage for a close examination of the investigation that prosecutor Alberto Nisman was building before he was found dead Jan. 18. The next day, Nisman was scheduled to elaborate his accusations to Congress.

Nisman accused Fernandez, Foreign Minister Hector Timerman and others in her administration of brokering the cover-up in exchange for favorable deals on oil and other goods from Iran. Fernandez and Timerman have strongly denied the accusations, and Iran has repeatedly denied involvement in the bombing, which killed 85 people.

In his statement released Friday afternoon, Pollicita recounted Nisman's accusations without providing analysis of them. He concluded that an investigation is necessary to "achieve a degree of understanding to prove or disprove the factual and dogmatic extremes expressed in the preceding paragraphs."

Pollicita will present his findings to judge Daniel Rafecas, the federal magistrate assigned to the case who will ultimately decide whether to dismiss it or send it on to trial.

Even before Pollicita's decision, amid rumors that it was coming, the administration was moving to both reject and minimize it. Cabinet chief Jorge Capitanich called the move a "judicial coup" during his daily press briefing.

"The Argentine people should know that we're talking about a vulgar lie, of an enormous media operation, of a strategy of political destabilization and the biggest judicial coup d'etat in the history of Argentina to cover the real perpetrators of the crime," he said.

Similarly, Presidential spokesman Anibal Fernandez said moving the case forward was a "clear maneuver to destabilize democracy" but that ultimately "it has no legal value. It does not matter."

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