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Wife denounces kidnapping of alleged Argentine spy

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SAN JOSE, Costa Rica

The wife of an Argentine kidnapped in Costa Rica three months ago accused Nicaragua Tuesday of holding her husband and using him to produce a pro-leftist propaganda videotape.

The tape was shown to journalists in Mexico City last week and purported to show Hector Frances as an Argentine intelligence agent stationed in Costa Rica who had deserted to the Nicaraguan side.

But Frances' wife in San Jose denied the claim.

"My husband was never a revolutionary, and he doesn't have any revolutionary friends. Only under extreme tension and pressure would he have said the things he did on the tape," said Clara de Frances.

Mrs. de Frances said she had received information that her husband was being held in Nicaragua.

"I know his kidnapping was ordered by the head of security for the Sandinista regime, Lenin Cerna," she said.

Hector Frances had lived in Costa Rica for a year under a tourist visa, traveling frequently to Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador. He was kidnapped outside his home by gunmen last September.

Mrs. de Frances claimed at the time of the kidnapping that he worked as an architect, but police were not able to confirm that.

The videotape said the CIA, with Argentine military assistance, was funding an invasion of Nicaragua that began in October when 800 rightist guerrillas infiltrated into Nueva Segovia province, across the border from Honduras.