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# WikiLeaks: US sought Vatican help in anti-terror plans

Sarah Delaney  Catholic News Service  | Dec. 16, 2010

**VATICAN CITY** -- The United States sought to engage the Vatican in joint crisis management training in hopes that it would further anti-terrorism cooperation, according to a cable from the U.S. Embassy in Rome released by WikiLeaks.

The cable, dated Dec. 19, 2008, was approved by the outgoing ambassador to Italy, Ronald Spogli.

"The known al-Qaida antipathy to the pope" was cited as one of the reasons the embassy was keen to get the Vatican on board with an anti-terrorism plan.

The dispatch said that while Domenico Giani, the Vatican security chief, had been cool to U.S. offers of direct cooperation in dealing with threats from al-Qaida, he had in the past sought FBI training in specific areas. It said agents from the Vatican gendarme agency had received explosives handling training at FBI headquarters in Quantico, Va.

Classified as "secret," the cable was addressed to the U.S. State Department and titled "Request for Crisis Management Training for Vatican."

It said the U.S. Embassy to the Vatican asked the State Department to explore the designing and funding of "a crisis management tabletop exercise" with Vatican security. Such an exercise would not only help the Vatican respond to crises, the cable said, but could "foster a dialogue with the Vatican on counter-terrorism."

The cable said that Giani had reacted positively to the suggestion. It was not known whether any such "tabletop" exercise was carried out.

Despite requests for specific FBI help, the cable said, Giani had in the past been "reluctant to engage in a comprehensive dialogue with the United States about Vatican capabilities and preparedness to respond to a terrorist attack."

The cable said the United States was particularly concerned because al-Qaida had in the past identified the Catholic Church as an "enemy." It noted that significant numbers of Americans visit Vatican City every day.

But the cable added that the Vatican was sensitive about "being seen to be too close to any one state." Those fears have made developing a dialogue about security with the Vatican "challenging," it said.

The U.S. Embassy to the Vatican has condemned the release of classified State Department documents and refused to comment on the content or authenticity of the information they contain. The Vatican has cautioned that the leaked reports should be read with "prudence," and emphasized that they reflect the perceptions and opinions of the people who wrote them.

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