

Vatican to cooperate in investigation of monsignor arrested for fraud

Cindy Wooden Catholic News Service | Jun. 28, 2013
Vatican City

An Italian monsignor, already suspended from his Vatican accounting job while under investigation for money laundering, was arrested Friday on charges of fraud, corruption and slander in a separate case.

Msgr. Nunzio Scarano, a priest of the archdiocese of Salerno-Campagna-Acero, was head of the analytical accounting service at the Administration of the Patrimony of the Holy See, the Vatican office that oversees Vatican property and investments.

Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman, said Scarano was suspended in May, "as soon as his superiors were informed that he was under investigation." Vatican rules call for the suspension of any employee who is the subject of a criminal investigation, he said Friday.

The spokesman also said, "The Holy See has not yet received any request on this matter from the proper Italian authorities, but confirms it is ready to collaborate fully."

The Vatican's Financial Intelligence Authority, which monitors the legality and transparency of Vatican financial activity and of Vatican bank accounts, "is following the problem in order to take, if necessary, appropriate measures," Lombardi said; he would not say if Scarano was already under investigation by the FIA.

Along with an Italian financier and a former Italian secret service agent, Scarano was arrested as part of the Rome district attorney's investigations into an alleged plot to bring 20 million euros (\$26 million) from Switzerland to Italy aboard an Italian government plane without declaring the money to Italian authorities. News reports said the monsignor claimed he was trying to help Italian friends recover money they had given the financier to invest and that he had promised to pay the secret service agent to arrange the flight.

The arrest came just a few days after news broke that Scarano also was under investigation by the Salerno branch of the Italian finance police on suspicion of money laundering after several claims that he gave people cash in exchange for checks marked as donations.

The monsignor has said he didn't want to deposit his own money because he didn't want bank employees to know how much money he had.

In addition to an account at an Italian bank, Scarano also reportedly has an account at the Vatican bank, formally called the Institute for the Works of Religion. Lombardi said as a Vatican employee, the monsignor had the right to have an account there.

The Vatican spokesman said Scarano's case is unlikely to be investigated by the new pontifical commission Pope Francis officially established Monday to review the activities and mission of the Vatican bank. "The commission has a wider purpose" than problems potentially connected to an individual account, Lombardi said.

Suspicious account activity is investigated by the Financial Intelligence Authority, which can turn cases over to the Vatican court system for criminal investigations and potential prosecution.

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