

Vatican Official, Intelligence Operative, Charged with Money Smuggling

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Three men, including a senior Vatican official and a police officer with ties to the Italian Secret Service, have been arrested on charges of plotting to smuggle millions of euros out of Switzerland. Among the men arrested by Italian police on Friday is Monsignor Nunzio Scarano, a senior accountant at the Holy See's Institute for the Works of Religion, which is the Vatican's highest financial institution.

Along with Father Scarano, Italian authorities [arrested](#) Giovanni Maria Zito, an officer in the *Arma dei carabinieri*, Italy's national military police force, who was previously detailed to the country's domestic intelligence service, the *Agenzia Informazioni e Sicurezza Interna* (AISI). The third accused co-conspirator is Giovanni Carezio, a successful securities broker based primarily in the Cayman Islands and Switzerland. All three have been charged with corruption, for plotting to smuggle nearly €20 million (\$26 million) in cash, from Switzerland into Italy.

According to Nello Rossi, chief prosecutor in the corruption investigation, evidence collected from targeted communications interceptions seems to indicate that the smuggled funds belonged to the d'Amico family of shipping magnates, owners of d'Amico International Shipping, which is based in Salerno, Italy. The plan, allegedly hatched last summer by the three men, was to hire a private airplane and use it to carry the €20 million in cash from Locarno, Switzerland, to Italy. The currency was to be carried in suitcases by Zito. As an intelligence officer with diplomatic credentials, Zito was not subject to searches at international borders, and thus would be able to evade financial regulations.

However, Italian prosecutors said the plan fell through when the three plotters "lost their nerve [and] began bickering" amongst each other. Financial corruption scandals are regular occurrences at the Vatican, whose banking institutions are notorious as secretive money-laundering centers frequently [used by the Mafia](#) and other crime syndicates. In a statement last week, the Holy See's spokesman, Monsignor Federico Lombardi, said the Vatican was eager to "confirm its willingness for full collaboration" with Italian authorities and InterPol, and that it would "take the appropriate measures" to assist in any investigation into the matter.

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