Vatican
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A small blue car drives through an ornate wrought iron gate. People walk by with umbrellas a

A car enters the Sant'Anna entrance to Vatican City State guarded by Swiss Guards and Vatican gendarmes May 19, 2023. A man forcibly drove past security check points to enter the Vatican May 18 before he was arrested and placed in a Vatican detention cell. (CNS photo/Lola Gomez)



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Vatican City — May 19, 2023
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A man with apparent psychiatric problems forced his way through a Vatican security gate late May 18 by speeding past Swiss Guards and Vatican gendarmes in a vehicle

before being apprehended in a Vatican courtyard.

According to a statement by the Vatican press office, a Vatican police officer fired a bullet at the speeding car's front tires, hitting its fender, yet the driver reached the San Damaso Courtyard of the Apostolic Palace where he exited the vehicle and was arrested.

He did not get near the Domus Sanctae Marthae guesthouse where Pope Francis lives.

The Apostolic Palace houses various offices of the Holy See, the library where the pope typically meets heads of state and the papal apartments -- though Francis has opted to live in the Vatican guesthouse since he became pope in 2013.

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According to the Vatican, the car approached the Sant'Anna entrance to Vatican City State shortly after 8 p.m. and was turned away by the Swiss Guard. The vehicle briefly left the gate before returning at high speed and forcing its way past two security check points. The Vatican said that a gate which could have given him access to the road leading to Pope Francis' residence and St. Peter's Basilica was quickly closed after an alarm was relayed over radio.

The Vatican said that the man, about 40 years old, was examined by Vatican doctors who said he was in a "serious state of psychophysical alteration." He was taken to a detention cell at the barracks of the Vatican gendarme corps, the city-state's police force, where he was to await an appearance before Vatican judicial authorities.

The Italian news agency ANSA identified the man as Simone Baldovino and said he had a history of drug use.

In June 2022, Italian military police shot out the tires of a car near the Vatican that was speeding toward St. Peter's Square while visitors gathered for the pope's Sunday Angelus. The Swiss Guard closed entry points to the Vatican as a precaution but ruled out terrorism as a motive for the threat.