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A Vatican police officer keeps watch March 16, 2023, during the trial of Cardinal Angelo Becci

A Vatican police officer keeps watch March 16, 2023, during the trial of Cardinal Angelo Becciu and nine other defendants on charges of financial malfeasance. The trial is being held in a makeshift courtroom at the Vatican Museums. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)

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The Vatican's chief prosecuting attorney began his closing arguments outlining final charges against 10 defendants, including a cardinal, stemming from an investigation launched in 2019 by internal reports of suspicious financial activity.

Now, Alessandro Diddi, the prosecutor, was set to present his case over the course of at least six hearings starting July 18, marking the final stage of a two-year-long Vatican trialinvestigating the mismanagement of Vatican funds.

The alleged financial crimes his office is directing against the list of defendants include multiple charges of fraud, embezzlement, bribery, extortion, abuse of office, incitement to break the law, money laundering and the publication of confidential

documents.

Among the defendants are some former officials of the Vatican Secretariat of State, "who did not know how to interpret the spirit and ideals of the church," which includes being bound by canon law to administer church assets with care, vigilance and due diligence, Diddi told the Vatican tribunal July 19, according to Vatican News.

Diddi referred specifically to the defendant, Cardinal Angelo Becciu, who held the No. 3 position in the Secretariat of State as the substitute secretary for general affairs from 2011 to 2018 -- the time period when the failed investment in a property in London was made.

Diddi focused his arguments July 19 on the Vatican Secretariat of State's investment from 2014 to 2018 in an overvalued property on Sloane Avenue in London, which resulted in a "huge sinkhole" with the Vatican losing more than $200 million on the deal, he said.

Diddi said Becciu was the "mastermind" behind the investment and "passively" watched the "dissolution" of Vatican resources.

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Diddi also told the tribunal July 18 that Becciu allegedly "meddled heavily" into the investigation and teamed up with other defendants to lead "press campaigns against the magistrates who were carrying out the investigations."

He also clarified that the funds used to invest in the Sloane property deal did not come from the papal charity, Peter's Pence, as originally suspected by the Vatican's auditor, but from profits from the Vatican bank.

Diddi was expected to devote a July 20 hearing to the alleged roles played by the Vatican's financial watchdog agency, and its former president, René Brüllhart, and director, Tommaso Di Ruzza, who are among the defendants facing charges of abuse of office.