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Pope hosts top-level meeting on leaks in Vatican

by Cindy Wooden by Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY -- Although technically on vacation, Pope Benedict XVI hosted a top-level meeting of Vatican officials involved in investigating and responding to the leak of Vatican documents.

The meeting Thursday included the commission of cardinals appointed to conduct an administrative review of Vatican offices and procedures, as well as the judges involved in the criminal case against the pope's personal assistant. The meeting also included the head of the Vatican police and representatives of the Vatican secretariat of state, said Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, Vatican spokesman.

Greg Burke, the former U.S. journalist appointed by the pope to advise the Vatican secretary of state on communications strategy, also participated, he said.

"The Holy Father was informed about the conclusions" of the investigation carried out since late April by the cardinals' commission, and about the status of the official investigation of his former valet, Paolo Gabriele, Lombardi said Friday.

The pope thanked the cardinals for their report and "asked the Vatican magistrates to continue their work with diligence," Lombardi said in a statement.

The spokesman said the conclusions of the criminal investigation of Gabriele and the Vatican judge's decision on whether to indict Gabriele and put him on trial are expected to be published Aug. 6 or 7.

A parallel, wide-ranging inquiry of leaks was conducted by retired Spanish Cardinal Julian Herranz, retired Slovakian Cardinal Jozef Tomko and retired Italian Cardinal Salvatore De Giorgi. Pope Benedict had asked the cardinals, all former Vatican officials, to help him understand the reasons behind the leaks and the problems they appear to indicate.

The cardinals' commission was formed about a month before Vatican police arrested Gabriele; confidential letters and documents addressed to the pope and other Vatican officials were allegedly found in his Vatican apartment. Similar documents had been published in the Italian media beginning in January. Many of the documents published in the press dealt with allegations of corruption, abuse of power and a lack of financial transparency at the Vatican.

Gabriele was granted house arrest July 21 after 60 days in Vatican custody. His lawyers have told reporters that what their client did, he did out of love for the pope and the church. They said, he has written to the pope asking forgiveness. The lawyers added, however, that whether anything Gabriele did was a crime will be up to Vatican magistrates or a Vatican court to determine.

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