

Lawyer leaves Vatileaks accused's defense team over strategy differences

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VATICAN CITY -- Carlo Fusco, the lawyer for the papal assistant charged with stealing Vatican documents, has left his client's defense team, citing a difference over defense strategies.

Fusco told news agencies Thursday that he and Paolo Gabriele, who was arrested in May and formally charged with aggravated theft Aug. 13, spoke at length Aug. 23 and, in the end, "Paolo and I continued to have differences over the strategy to use."

"Whoever succeeds me will do what he thinks is best, obviously," Fusco said. "I'm sorry to leave, but I could not continue. There were just too many differences," he told the Italian agency AdnKronos.

Fusco and Gabriele have been friends since childhood and the lawyer began representing him almost immediately after Gabriele's arrest. A Vatican court said police found letters, documents and objects taken from Pope Benedict XVI's office in Gabriele's Vatican apartment.

In July, when Gabriele was released from a Vatican security cell and allowed to return to his apartment under house arrest, Fusco had said everything his client did, he did out of love for the pope and the church. At that time, Fusco added that whether anything Gabriele did was illegal would be up to a court to determine.

The Vatican court is expected to set a trial date after its summer recess, which ends in late September.

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