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Vatican denounces press reports on papal transition

by Francis X. Rocca by Catholic News Service

Benedict Resigns

Vatican City — Vatican officials released a pair of unusual statements Saturday condemning some press coverage of the papal transition.

A communique from the Secretariat of State called "deplorable" the "widespread distribution of often unverified, unverifiable or completely false news stories" intended to exert "pressures on the election of the pope."

Earlier in the day, the Vatican spokesman, Jesuit Fr. Federico Lombardi, delivered an editorial on Vatican Radio lamenting "pressures and considerations that are foreign to the spirit with which the church would like to live this period of waiting and preparation."

Lombardi denounced "those who seek to profit from the moment of surprise and disorientation of the spiritually naive to sow confusion and to discredit the church and its governance," and accused such people of using "old tools, such as gossip, misinformation and sometimes slander" to influence the cardinals who will be voting in the upcoming papal election.

Neither Vatican statement specified the news stories in question, but Lombardi's editorial referred to distortions by "those who consider money, sex and power before all else and are used to reading diverse realities from these perspectives."

Articles had appeared in the Italian press earlier in the week portraying the Vatican as divided among political factions, with some officials supposedly subject to blackmail for sexual misdeeds and suggesting a link between bureaucratic infighting and Pope Benedict's historic decision to step down on Thursday.

The stories referred to a confidential internal report on the so-called "Vatileaks" of confidential

documents last year, but included no evidence of access to the contents of that report.

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