Woman who built intelligence network for Cardinal Becciu arrested

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A woman who paid half a million euros to build a secret “intelligence network” for the cardinal at the centre of a Vatican financial scandal has reportedly been arrested in Milan on an international warrant issued by Interpol.

Italian media, including major newspapers, are reporting that [Cecilia Marogna, 39,](https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/the-times/vatican-cash-used-on-luxury-handbags/news-story/0a6ba81bb96c0dce24bdddcdf3506e26) has been held by the Guardia di Finanza although there is no independent corroboration of the arrest.

Cardinal Becciu, the second most senior official in the Vatican’s powerful Secretariat of State between 2011 and 2018, was effectively sacked by the Pope on September 24 in the wake of Vatican investigations of a failed, multi-million pound luxury property deal in London’s exclusive Chelsea.

The Holy See announced the shock removal, stating that Pope Francis had “accepted Becciu’s resignation from the rights and privileges as a cardinal, and from his curial office.”

Cardinal Becciu’s links with a series of financial scandals include the Secretariat’s investment of hundreds of millions of euros with an Italian businessman, Raffaele Mincione, and the purchase of the London apartment complex as well as a series of convoluted financial transactions around the purchase of an Italian hospital which collapsed under €800 million debts said to be the result of both theft and fraud in 2013.

It has been alleged that Marogna, who comes from the disgraced Cardinal’s native Sardinia, was paid between €500,000 and €600,000 by the Holy See’s Secretariat of State on the orders of Cardinal Becciu who allegedly employed her to create a network of secretive intelligence networks about Catholic agencies working in dangerous areas including Africa and the Middle East.

Claims included documentation that some €200,000 of the money paid had been spent on designer clothes and expensive handbags, including €8,000 on Chanel and €2,200 at Prada.

First aired on a TV program known as La Iene, the claims included information about documents showing that the payments were made to a phantom Slovenian company, Logsic, owned or run by Marogna.

The payments are alleged to have been signed off by Monsignor Alberto Perlasca, Cardinal Becciu’s former assistant, who is believed to be at the centre of allegations of a fund sent to interfere in the case against Cardinal George Pell.

In a further twist on the continuing saga, the Catholic News Agency reported that Ms Marogna’s arrest came not long after the much followed Vatican blog ‘Il Sismografo’ alleged the respected former anti mafia prosecutor, Giuseppe Pignatone, who was appointed by Pope Francis last year to head the Vatican tribunal, may have abused his office by leaking information to aid a campaign against Cardinal Becciu by Italian media organisations.

Her arrest is the second in the wake of the investigation into the Secretariat’s financial affairs after Gianluigi Torzi, a money broker, was arrested and charged with extortion and money laundering over his role in the purchase of the London building.