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Vatican to try former ambassador on child porn, sex abuse charges

By **Elliott C. McLaughlin**, CNN

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Former Vatican official faces child sex abuse trial 02:07

Story highlights

NEW: Jozef Wesoloswki drank alcohol and paid children to perform sex acts, newspaper reports

(CNN)— The Pope's former ambassador to the Dominican Republic, Jozef Wesolowski -- accused of offenses related to child abuse -- will be tried at the Vatican beginning next month, the Vatican said Monday.

Wesolowski, 66, is the highest-ranking former

Wesolowski is the highest-ranking ex-Vatican official to be arrested on charges related to child sex abuse

He's accused of having child pornography and other allegations, and his trial begins July 11



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Vatican official to be arrested for allegations related to the sexual abuse of minors and the first to be tried on such charges at the Vatican.

Wesolowski is accused of possession of child pornography as well as offenses related to the sexual abuse of minors during his time as papal nuncio to the Dominican Republic.

Before arriving in the Dominican Republic in 2008, Wesolowski was nuncio to Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. He began his career as a priest in Krakow, Poland, in 1972 and became a bishop in 2000.

In August 2013, the Vatican said it was investigating Wesolowski and removing him from his post, but it did not give a reason. Monsignor Agripino Nunez Collado, a Catholic University rector, said an internal church report linked Wesolowski to child abuse and pedophilia.

"We have formally opened an investigation," Dominican Attorney General Francisco Dominguez Brito told reporters at the time. "Here we have to work with two legal aspects, first national laws and also international laws in his status as a diplomat, which implies other mechanisms of investigation and judgment."



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In January 2014, Vatican spokesman Federico Lombardi [confirmed to the National Catholic Reporter](#) that the Vatican's criminal court was investigating Wesolowski. Pope Francis had announced in July 2013 that he was extending the court's jurisdiction in sex abuse cases to include papal diplomats, making Wesolowski's case the first test of the ruling, the newspaper reported.

The Holy See defrocked Wesolowski in June of 2014.

Wesolowski is not only charged with offenses during his five years as nuncio of Dominican Republic, but also with child pornography charges committed in Rome between August 2013, when he was recalled, and September 2014, when he was arrested, a Vatican statement said. He also faces charges in the Dominican Republic and in his native Poland, [Vatican Radio reported](#) in August.

Per the pornography allegations, Italy's [Corriere della Sera reported](#) in September that Wesolowski's laptop contained more than 100,000 files with pornographic images and videos,

some showing naked teens, between the ages of 13 and 17, forced to have sexual relations with each other or with adults. Some had been downloaded from the Internet and others appeared to have been taken by the victims, the paper reported.

Three minors and their mothers are among the prosecution's witnesses, according to Corriere della Sera. When Wesolowski was presented with a detention order in September, the paper reported, he issued a statement: "I can clear my position and explain the mistake."

Though the Vatican provided few details on the sex abuse charges, Dominican investigative journalist Nuria Esperanza Piera Gainza reported in 2013 that her sources alleged Wesolowski was a regular in Santo Domingo's Colonial Zone, where he would drink alcohol and pay children to perform sexual acts in the Monument to Friar Antonio de Montesinos, on the outskirts of the zone.

"This will be a delicate and detailed procedure, requiring the most careful observations and insights from all parties involved in the trial," the Vatican said.



Vatican on clerical sex abuse 04:24

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Wesolowski's trial will involve information technology experts and international legal experts to evaluate evidence gathered in Santo Domingo, the capital of the Dominican Republic. The first hearing is scheduled for July 11.

It's been reported that rather than being held in an Italian prison or Vatican detention cell, Wesolowski is under house arrest at a Vatican apartment for medical reasons.

The church's sexual abuse guidelines allow local dioceses to make the initial decisions on the removal of accused priests. Papal nuncios,

however, are appointed and supervised by the Vatican.

Before he was elected pope, Francis said he supported a "zero tolerance" approach to clergy sexual abuse.

In 2012, when Francis was still Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio, he said that when he was asked for advice by another bishop, "I told him to take away the priests' licenses, not to allow them to exercise the priesthood any more, and to begin a canonical trial in that diocese's court."

Shortly after his election to the papacy, Francis told a senior Vatican official to "act decisively" against sexual abuse and carry out "due proceedings against the guilty."

In July 2013, the pope made it a crime to abuse children sexually or physically on Vatican grounds. The acts were already crimes under church law, but are now specifically outlawed within the Vatican city-state, which is home to hundreds of people.

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