

# Vatican spokesman calls charges absurd

VATICAN CITY - Accusing the Vatican of manipulating entries on Wikipedia, a Web site billed as an encyclopedia that anyone can contribute to or edit, "lacks any seriousness and any logic," the Vatican spokesman said.

Jesuit Father Federico Lombardi, the spokesman who also serves as director of Vatican Radio, said Aug. 17 that even if another Web site accurately identified a Vatican Radio computer as the source of a change to the entry on Sinn Fein leader Gerry Adams, the person using the computer was not acting on behalf of the radio agency, let alone the Vatican.

WikiScanner, a new Web site that tries to identify the owners of computers used to make changes in Wikipedia articles, reported in mid-August that Vatican-owned computers were used to make at least 86 edits in Wikipedia articles since 2003. Most were spelling changes, clarifications or updated information.

However, the change that drew attention and controversy regarded the entry on Adams, leader of the predominantly Catholic Sinn Fein party in Northern Ireland. In October 2006, the computer user allegedly deleted references and newspaper links to stories about accusations that Adams' fingerprints were found on a car used in a 1971 murder.

Father Lombardi said it was "absurd" to think someone at the Vatican officially was directed to make the change in the Wikipedia article.

According to Wikipedia itself, the edit that supposedly was made by the Vatican Radio computer Oct. 17, 2006, was reversed three minutes later by another Wikipedia reader.