

Study links Vatican Radio's waves to cancer risk: Report

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A court-ordered study has found that electromagnetic waves beamed by Vatican Radio leave residents living near the station's antennas at a higher risk of cancer, a report says.

Photograph by: John Kenney, Montreal Gazette

VATICAN CITY - A court-ordered study has found that electromagnetic waves beamed by Vatican Radio leave residents living near the station's antennas at a higher risk of cancer, Italian media said Wednesday.

"There has been an important, coherent and meaningful correlation between exposure to Vatican Radio's structures and the risk of leukaemia and lymphoma in children," the report said, according to the daily La Stampa.

The report also warned of "important risks" of dying of cancer for people who had resided at least 10 years within a nine-kilometre (5.5-mile) radius of the radio's giant antenna towers near Cesano, some 20 kilometres north of Rome.

The radio's director, Federico Lombardi, disputed the report, saying: "Vatican Radio is astonished to hear the news on the results of the study."

Lombardi, who is also the Vatican spokesman, added: "Vatican Radio has always observed international directives on electromagnetic emissions and since 2001 has observed more restrictive norms set by Italy to allay the concerns of the neighbouring populations."

Speaking on Vatican Radio, he said: "According to international scientific literature on the matter, the

existence of a causal link like the one apparently hypothesised by the report had never been established."

A Rome judge ordered the report in 2005 as part of an investigation into a complaint filed in 2001 by Cesano residents who alleged health hazards posed by the electromagnetic waves.

Vatican Radio's then-president Roberto Tucci and director Pasquale Borgomeo were among defendants in a case that was thrown out last year after the statute of limitations expired.

At the time, Lombardi said he was not satisfied with the result since he had expected an acquittal.

The Vatican spokesman said the Holy See would soon publish its own experts' conclusion in the case.

A 2001 investigation by Italy's environment ministry showed that magnetic fields in the area were six times more powerful than allowed, while Rome's Lazio region estimated that the rate of deaths from leukaemia among children in the Cesano area was three times higher than in adjoining areas.

Vatican City, the world's smallest state, is an enclave of Rome covering 0.44 square kilometres (0.17 square miles).

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