

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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San Diego Police Investigating Felony Vandalism in Park Dedicated in Honor of Fallen SDPD Officer

SDPD SEEKING INFORMATION LEADING TO THE ARREST OF PERSON(S) WHO CAUSED MORE THAN \$100,000 IN DAMAGES TO THE PARK

San Diego — The San Diego Police Department (SDPD) is investigating a felony vandalism that occurred overnight in the Officer Austin Machitar Memorial Park in Clairemont.

Damage to the park is estimated at over \$100,000 and includes damage to the concrete memorial and marquee signs, graffiti on sidewalks and the recreation center, removal of stones near the memorial sign, damage to plants and trees, and other minor damage. The memorial sign is considered a total loss and will need to be replaced.

"This was more than vandalism — it was disrespect to the officers who protect this city," Police Chief Scott Wahl said. "Too much rhetoric today aims to divide police from the communities we serve. We know this does not reflect the values of the broader San Diego community, and we ask our residents to continue showing the support that outshines this kind of negativity toward our officers who serve with courage and professionalism every day."

"I am furious that someone would vandalize and desecrate a memorial to a hero who gave his life in service of our city. This is not who we are as San Diegans," Mayor Todd Gloria said. "We respect and honor those who protect our communities, and we will never tolerate this kind of hateful, criminal behavior. The San Diego Police Department will use every available resource to find those responsible and hold them fully accountable for this crime."

The incident occurred just days after a ceremony dedicating the park in honor of fallen SDPD Officer Austin Machitar, which was attended by hundreds of family, friends, community members, elected officials and SDPD personnel.

SDPD is seeking the public's help with identifying those responsible for the damage. Crime Stoppers will be offering a \$1,500 reward for information leading to an arrest. Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to call the San Diego Police Department at (619) 531-2000 or Crime Stoppers at (888) 580-8477.

The San Diego Police Officers Association (SDPOA) donated the funds for new signage and related park updates that were unveiled during Sunday's ceremony.

"It is maddening that we have one of our memorials for a fallen officer vandalized just days after coming together to celebrate and honor him," said Lieutenant Jared Wilson, President of the SDPOA. "The San Diego Police Officers Association will work tirelessly to replace what was lost today and ensure that Austin's memory is not tarnished without punishment. Please keep our officers and Austin's family in your thoughts as we deal with yet another reminder of the challenges our officers face every day in the line of duty."

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