

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Officers and Decedent Identified in El Cajon In-Custody Death

San Diego — On January 4, 2026, at about 6 a.m., El Cajon Police responded to a report of a male running in traffic and yelling for help in the area of Magnolia Ave. and West Chase Ave. When officers arrived and contacted the man, he refused to follow their verbal commands and laid face down in the street. Officers handcuffed the man and based on his resistance, also applied soft restraints to his ankles. Officers then called paramedics to evaluate the man.

While officers awaited the arrival of medics, the man became non-responsive. Narcan was administered by the officers, as was CPR, but the man did not regain consciousness. He was transported to a local hospital by paramedics, but his condition did not improve. On January 17, 2026, the hospital notified the El Cajon Police Department that the man had died. The decedent is described as a 52-year-old Vietnamese man. He has been identified as 52-year-old Qui Ly of Portsmouth, VA.

Due to force being used to subdue the man, and out of an abundance of caution, the death is being investigated as an in-custody death. The officers involved in the detention are Brian Valadez, Alma Benevidez, Malala Sapini, Ian Gilliom and Sergeant James Juns. Juns has been with the El Cajon Police Department for 24 years, Valdez 4 years, Benevidez 3 years, Sapini 2.5 years, and Gilliom 1.5 years.

Per the Countywide Memorandum of Understanding, the San Diego Police Homicide Unit was notified and will conduct the in-custody death investigation. Detectives will be working with the Medical Examiner's Office to determine if the use of force played any role in the man's death.

The investigation and review process for in-custody deaths are extremely thorough. When the Homicide Unit completes its investigation, it will be reviewed by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office to determine if the officers bear any criminal liability for their actions. The El Cajon Police Department will conduct an administrative investigation into the actions of the officers. The Federal Bureau of Investigations and the United States Attorney's Office will also be monitoring the investigation.

Anyone with information regarding this death is asked to call the Homicide Unit at (619) 531-2293 or Crime Stoppers at (888) 580-8477.

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