

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Saturday, January 31, 2026

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IDs in Escondido OIS

San Diego – On Tuesday, January 27, 2026, at approximately 2:23 a.m., Escondido Police officers responded to a reentry facility located on the 100 block of S. Elm St. regarding a man who had intentionally harmed himself with a knife. Officers arrived on scene and evacuated the facility. They contacted the subject and saw that he still possessed the knife. He was described as a Hispanic male in his thirties. He is now identified as 34-year-old Marcello Castillo Jr. of Escondido. Officers negotiated with Castillo to surrender for approximately an hour, but he stopped communicating with officers and barricaded himself in a bathroom. Because the negotiations were not successful, and Castillo had not threatened harm to anyone other than himself, officers made the decision to de-escalate the situation by leaving the otherwise vacant facility.

At about 4:20 a.m., officers were called back to the facility because Castillo was no longer barricaded and was now walking around the property with the knife and a stick. A K-9 officer who had been on-scene for the earlier call was the first to arrive back at the location. He armed himself with a less lethal 40mm launcher loaded with a single 40mm rubber projectile and took a position in the alley while he waited for additional officers. Before more officers arrived, Castillo appeared in the alley holding a wooden stick, estimated to be 24" long and about 1" in diameter. The officer commanded Castillo to drop the stick. He refused to drop the stick and charged toward the officer. The officer transitioned to his handgun, yelled for Castillo to stop, and then fired several shots, striking him multiple times. The officer's body-worn camera was activated during the incident. The stick and a knife with a broken blade were located at the scene of the shooting. Castillo was transported to a local hospital, where he remains in critical condition.

The officer involved in this shooting is now identified as Thomas Lussenden. He has been with the Escondido Police Department for 11 years.

San Diego Police Homicide Detectives were called to investigate per the countywide memorandum of understanding regarding officer-involved shootings. Officer-involved shooting investigations are extremely thorough, as is the review process. When Homicide completes its investigation, it will be reviewed by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office to determine if the officer bears any criminal liability for their actions. The Escondido Police Department will conduct an administrative investigation into the officer's discharge of his firearm. The Federal Bureau of Investigations and the United States Attorney's Office will also be monitoring the investigation.

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

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