

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## Deputy-Involved Shooting in San Marcos

**San Marcos** – On Wednesday, February 18, 2026, shortly after 9 p.m., a San Diego Sheriff's deputy and Palomar College officer-involved shooting occurred in the 600 block of North Twin Oaks Valley Rd. in San Marcos.

A San Diego County Sheriff's Deputy assigned to the San Marcos station was on patrol when he conducted a traffic stop on a red Hyundai Sonata for a vehicle code violation. The vehicle was occupied by a 21-year-old woman in the driver's seat and a 33-year-old man in the front passenger seat.

During the traffic stop, the deputy conducted a record check of the vehicle's license plate and VIN, which appeared inconsistent with DMV registration records. The deputy also observed damage to the steering column, suggesting the vehicle might be stolen. The deputy then requested additional deputies to assist him with the investigation.

As multiple deputies and a Palomar College Reserve Police officer arrived to assist, the front passenger abruptly rolled up his window and ignored commands to keep it down. The passenger then reached toward the floorboard and armed himself with a semiautomatic handgun. Despite repeated commands to drop the weapon, the passenger did not comply.

Deputies positioned on the driver's side safely removed the female driver from the vehicle and **escorted her to safety**. The passenger continued to ignore commands and began to raise the firearm. **In response** to this, three deputies discharged their tasers, which appeared ineffective. The passenger then fired two rounds from the cabin of the vehicle, which prompted five deputies and one Palomar College Reserve Police officer to **discharge their weapons, striking the passenger**. The deputies involved have been identified as Sean Dwyer (employed 5 years), Justin Tesar (employed 7 years), Jake Brown (employed 6 years), Chalit Caranto (employed 5 years), and Thomas Cook (employed 7 years). The Palomar College Reserve Police Officer has been identified as Kyle Hodges, who has been employed for 4 years.

Deputies removed the passenger from the vehicle and attempted life-saving measures; however, he **did not survive**. The decedent has been identified as 33-year-old Andre Raphael Mendez of Oceanside.

Per the countywide memorandum of understanding regarding officer-involved shootings, San Diego Police Department Homicide Detectives responded and assumed responsibility for the investigation.

Officer-involved shooting investigations are comprehensive and involve multiple layers of review. When SDPD Homicide completes its investigation, it will be reviewed by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office to determine if the deputy and officer bear any criminal liability for their actions. The San Diego County Sheriff's Office and Palomar College Police Department will review the investigation for any violations of policy. 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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