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SHERIFF BILL GORE STATEMENT ON PROTESTS

The San Diego County Sheriff's Department supports the public's right to free speech and assembly. We encourage the peaceful gathering of people. We respect your right to be heard.

We understand the anger and frustration over the death of a man in police custody in Minnesota last week. We condemn the actions that led to the death of George Floyd. After a quick review of facts, Minneapolis Police Department Chief Medaria Arradondo took swift action in firing the officers involved. One officer is now facing murder charges and investigations are underway on local, state and federal levels. We must now allow the justice system to run its course.

Violence and vandalism will not make this process any faster.

We are asking all who plan to protest to do so peacefully.

There is a difference between protesting and rioting. There are people at these rallies exploiting the situation to discredit those peacefully assembled by looting businesses and setting fires to buildings. When demonstrations threaten life and property, law enforcement must act to restore safety in our communities. That is why deputies came to the assistance of the City of La Mesa on Saturday, May 30th.

The situation became hostile when people started vandalizing the police station, as well as throwing rocks, bricks and bottles at La Mesa Police Officers and deputies. The rocks broke windows endangering people working inside. Several of my deputies were hit by these rocks.

La Mesa Police Officers then declared the gathering as an unlawful assembly. We made repeated announcements for the crowd to disperse, but the pelting of rocks and bricks

continued throughout the night. We did not deploy tear gas and other less lethal options until after people began to vandalize property and threw rocks twice the size of a fist and bricks at officers and deputies.

Several businesses were looted and damaged including two banks which burned to the ground. La Mesa City Hall also sustained fire damage as the rioters broke in and tried to burn it down.

The next day, protests turned violent outside the County Administration Center and downtown San Diego. Again, deputies followed their training in managing crowds and maintaining public safety as the vandalism and looting continued.

Dozens of deputies have sustained injuries from these incidents, but thankfully no one was hospitalized. So far, dozens of people have been arrested on charges of possession of Molotov cocktail, a felon in possession of ammunition, possession of fireworks, looting and delaying a peace officer.

All our policies and procedures related to use of force and training can be found at www.sdsheriff.net (sections 8, 10, addendum F and SB 978 documents).

We ask our community for patience and calm during these challenging times. These acts of violence distract from the message of honoring the memory of George Floyd.

There have been peaceful demonstrations in other Sheriff's jurisdiction including Poway, Fallbrook and Cardiff. As displayed in these communities, please follow the law to make any enforcement action unnecessary. We are committed and resolved to maintaining order and keeping everyone safe.

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