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## BPD PRESS RELEASE: assault on an officer and vandalism



Murad, Jon

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Phish Alert

**\*UPDATE TO A PREVIOUS ARREST\*****\*NEW ARREST ON NEW CHARGES, INCLUDING ASSAULT ON A POLICE OFFICER\*****\*PUBLIC ASKED FOR INFORMATION ABOUT ADDITIONAL ACTS OF VANDALISM\***

As has previously been reported, a man named Micael Bizuneh, 32, smashed the windshields of six Burlington Police Department (BPD) police cruisers with a very large rock on Monday, May 17, 2021, costing Burlington taxpayers \$2,800. Mr. Bizuneh was taken into custody and charged with felony unlawful mischief. It was determined that Mr. Bizuneh has a long history in Berlin, Barre, and Montpelier, where he was allegedly involved in similar incidents. Officers consulted with a judge who first requested that BPD contact First Call. First Call was not available. The judge then directed that Mr. Bizuneh be released with a citation to appear in court.

At the time of Monday night's incident, Mr. Bizuneh had inactive conditions of release from a previous incident that included a condition "you may not possess any rocks," but those conditions had apparently been superseded by an order of hospitalization. After Mr. Bizuneh was released from One North Avenue with new, similar conditions, officers took him to UVMHC for voluntary evaluation.

During his custody on Monday, Mr. Bizuneh asked an officer how long it would take to repair the windshields. The officer stated it probably wouldn't take too long to which Mr. Bizuneh replied that he would likely be back then.

**This afternoon, Saturday, May 22, Mr. Bizuneh was arrested again for allegedly vandalizing vehicles. *He also assaulted a police officer with bodily fluids.*** The BPD currently has open incidents for damage to at least nine vehicles belonging to Burlington residents, but believes Mr. Bizuneh may be a suspect in as many as thirty incidents.

At approximately 1810 hours on Friday, May 21, a civilian employee of the BPD discovered that his personal vehicle had been "keyed," with a nearly-six-foot gouge scratched into the driver's side. Security camera footage revealed the suspect to be Mr. Bizuneh. Subsequently, Mr. Bizuneh is suspected of having vandalized a large number of vehicles belonging to Burlington residents in several locations along the southern end of North Avenue, as well as at Bank Street and St Paul Street, at College Street and South Champlain Street, and at Park Street and Monroe Street.

Today, Saturday, May 22, officers located Mr. Bizuneh at the COTS daystation at 95 North Avenue. Officers asked to speak to him, and he agreed, and made non-custodial statements admitting to acts of vandalism. He was taken into custody and transported to One North Avenue. As he was being escorted into the building he assaulted a police

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“Mr. Bizuneh told us he would be back, and he was true to his word,” said Acting Chief of Police Jon Murad. “We believe that he has now caused several thousands of dollars of damage. This time, it was not confined to City of Burlington property, it was property belonging to what may turn out to be dozens of Burlington residents. What’s more, there was also an assault on one of Burlington’s officers. She now has to worry about attendant risks such as communicable disease. We’ve arrested Mr. Bizunah twice in the past five days, and this alleged behavior comports with a long history of the same alleged behavior in other parts of the state. I’m hopeful that other parts of our criminal justice system can now find a way not only to provide the treatment this man may need, but to keep our city safe from his alleged destructive acts and the threat he poses to people’s safety.”

The BPD has several open cases associated with this vandalism spree, including 21BU007089, 21BU007102, 21BU007145, 21BU007159, 21BU007160, 21BU007161, 21BU007162, 21BU007165. Others are anticipated. Officers have observed more than two dozen similarly damaged vehicles in the vicinity of these vandalism incidents, but have not yet made contact with complainants. Neighbors who discover damage that is believed to have happened in the past 24 hours and appears to be consistent with these acts—specifically, that their vehicles have been “keyed”—are asked to contact the BPD at (802) 658-2704.

*Information is preliminary and subject to change.*

# # #

**Acting Chief of Police Jon Murad**  
Burlington Police Department  
One North Avenue  
Burlington, VT 05401  
(802) 540-2112

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