Administration, Campus Police Address Rising Auto Thefts

By Rahuml

Between Sept. 10 and Oct. 20, 12 cars were stolen on campus and 10 were broken into, according to the Campus Police. Many of these incidents occurred in the Albany St. and Westgate parking lots, according to Chief of Campus Police Anne Glavin. Most of the incidents occurred during the daytime on weekends, she added. The Campus Police have taken actions to counter this rising problem, Glavin said. Plainclothes officers have been added to various locations, she said, though she would not specify the number or locations of those officers. This operation resulted in the arrest of two individuals attempting to steal a motor vehicle last weekend at the Albany St. lot, she said. She added that no vehicles have been stolen since the plainclothes patrols were initiated a few weeks ago.

In addition, the Campus Police and the MIT administration are in the process of installing card-operated gates and new fences at the Westgate lot. If this system proves effective, similar measures may be implemented at the other parking lots.

There has been great support for the card and gate system from many students, according to Glavin. Phil R. Climaco '94, a frequent user of the Westgate lot, said, "I have always been concerned about the security of my car on campus due to the lack of security in the parking lots. I am glad to see that MIT is finally taking some action about this problem."

Thefts increase in last decade

The number of stolen vehicles has risen significantly in the past few years, according to last year’s Campus Police annual report. The number of motor vehicle thefts has increased from 21 in 1985 to 66 last year, according to the report. Fifty-two vehicles have been stolen so far this year, Glavin said.

However, the recent increase in thefts within the past few months should not be viewed as a growing trend, Glavin said. She described the pattern of stolen vehicles at MIT as a "roller coaster" within any given year. But "even one car stolen is a problem," Glavin added.

Most of the stolen cars have been ones with very weak anti-theft protection, Glavin said. She added, though, that no anti-theft device will completely stop a professional thief from stealing a car. She suggested that installing multiple anti-theft devices in a vehicle, such as an electronic system in addition to a steering lock, creates the most effective deterrent.

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