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San Francisco Police Department Voids Search Warrant Issued to Media Collective Website 24-019

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The San Francisco Police Department voided a search warrant issued to the San Francisco Bay Area Independent Media Center, or Indybay, related to an anonymous post on Indybay.org by someone admitting to committing a crime.

When SFPD Chief Bill Scott was made aware of the warrant, he immediately ordered officers to not pursue it over questions about possible First Amendment and Freedom of the Press issues.

The signed warrant was emailed in January to Indybay, but the SFPD never acted on the warrant or searched the organization. The SFPD also informed Indybay it would not continue to pursue the warrant.

The SFPD is committed to supporting the Free Press and has policies and training related to California Evidence Code 1070, also known as the Shield Law, which protects news organizations, journalists, and their confidential sources.

The post in question on Indybay.org was by an anonymous person on a public forum claiming responsibility for felony vandalism of a business. Indybay raised concerns

about issues with the Shield Law after receiving the warrant seeking information on the individual who made the post.

The unusual circumstance brings up interesting questions about the Shield Law and the scope of its protections. The SFPD, however, has no interest in exploring or litigating the issue further.

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