

Gizmodo editor's home raided in iPhone prototype probe

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The iPhone 3GS is displayed at an Apple store in 2009. Gizmodo said Monday that police had raided the home of an editor for the gadget blog who published details last week of a secret next-generation iPhone prototype.

Gizmodo said Monday that California police raided the home of an editor for the gadget blog who revealed details last week of a secret next-generation iPhone prototype.

Gizmodo published excerpts from a search warrant that gave police permission to seize property from editor Jason Chen's home that was "used as the means of committing a felony" or "tends to show that a felony has been committed."

The search warrant signed by a local judge specifically authorized the seizure of "printed documents, images and/or notations pertaining to the

sale and/or purchase of the stolen iPhone prototype."

Gizmodo last week said it purchased the iPhone prototype for 5,000 dollars from an unidentified person who found it in a California bar, where it had been lost by a 27-year-old Apple software engineer named Gray Powell.

Chen said in a post on the Gizmodo website on Monday that he and his wife returned from having dinner out on Friday to find police searching their home in the northern California county of San Mateo.

"The officers had a computer and were cataloging all the items they took from my home," Chen said. "They told me they were here for a few hours already and had to break the front door open because I wasn't home to open the door."

The officers, members of the California Rapid Enforcement Allied Computer Team, took four computers and two computer servers from the couple's house, according to the posting.

Gizmodo has said it returned the iPhone prototype to Apple after the notoriously secretive company asked for it back.

Gizmodo also published a letter from a lawyer for its owner, Gawker Media, objecting to the raid on Chen's home and arguing that a "search warrant may not be validly issued to confiscate the property of a journalist."

"We expect the immediate return of the materials that you confiscated from Mr. Chen," said the letter from Gaby Darbyshire, who is also Gawker's chief operating officer.

According to Gizmodo, Powell, the Apple engineer, was celebrating his

27th birthday at a beer garden in Redwood City, about 20 miles (32 kilometers) from Apple headquarters in Cupertino, on the night of March 18.

Gizmodo said Powell forgot the prototype phone, which had been disguised to resemble the previous model iPhone, the iPhone 3GS, on a bar stool when he left the establishment.

Gizmodo said the phone ended up with a person who had been sitting next to Powell at the bar after no one else claimed it.

"Weeks later, Gizmodo got it," the technology blog said.

Nick Denton, founder of the Gawker blog network, said on his Twitter feed that 5,000 dollars was paid for the phone.

"Yes, we'll do anything for a story," Denton said. "We're proud practitioners of checkbook journalism."

According to Gizmodo, features of the new phone, expected to be unveiled later this year, include a front-facing video camera for video chat, a flash and an improved regular camera with a larger lens.

It also has a flat back instead of curved back, is thinner than the 3GS, is three grams heavier and has a battery that is 16 percent larger.

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