

LOCKED DOORS, OPEN QUESTIONS: CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS, RADIOACTIVE MATERIALS, AND THE CRISIS OF TRUST AT HUNTERS POINT

As new discoveries emerge inside a secured Navy building, Bayview-Hunters Point residents are asking whether the latest revelations represent an isolated incident—or another chapter in a decades-long struggle for accountability.

By Malik Washington
Destination Freedom Media Group / The Davis Vanguard



In the City of San Francisco, we are relying on strong, intelligent, and capable Black women to protect us from a government that does not have our best interests in mind.

Photo credit: (background) <https://localnewsmatters.org/2026/03/09/navy-begins-hazardous-materials-removal-for-hunters-point-shipyard-demolition-project/>

Top left: Dr. Veronica Hunnicutt; top right: Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai;

bottom: Dr. Carolyn Scott

This is not the first time I have attended a community meeting in Hunters Point, San Francisco, where federal officials found themselves on the hot seat.

It was a breezy Monday evening. The air outside was cool, but inside 451 Galvez Avenue the temperature felt considerably warmer.

Questions came quickly. Answers sometimes came slowly.

What became clear over the course of the evening was that community advocates Dr. Veronica Hunnicutt and Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai take their responsibilities seriously. They were not there to perform. They were there to press for answers on behalf of a community that has spent decades living with the consequences of environmental contamination, disputed cleanup efforts, and repeated promises of transparency.

As I listened to the discussion unfold, I found myself thinking about something Dr. Carolyn Scott said just days earlier during the Rafiki Coalition's 40th Anniversary Gala.

"There must be a commitment to integrity in our community and in the way we serve our community."

That statement lingered in my mind throughout the meeting.

Because what unfolded that evening was ultimately not just a discussion about radioactive materials, laboratory testing, criminal investigations, or environmental remediation.

It was a discussion about integrity.
Integrity in government.
Integrity in science.
Integrity in environmental oversight.

And integrity in the promises made to a community that has spent decades demanding answers about what happened at Hunters Point.

Before going any further, let me be clear about my purpose. I am not here to berate anyone. I am not here to attack anyone. I am here to report what I saw, what I heard, and what was placed on the public record.

And what was placed on the record that evening raised questions that deserve serious attention.

A secured Navy building.
Radiological materials.
Decades-old chemical containers.
A disputed plutonium-239 detection.

Hundreds of environmental soil samples under review.
And multiple criminal investigative agencies now examining what happened.

For Bayview-Hunters Point residents, it was not simply another update on a Superfund cleanup. It was another reminder that one of America's most controversial environmental remediation projects continues to generate new questions long after many believed the hardest questions had already been answered. And increasingly, those questions are not about science alone.

They are about trust.

What also became clear that evening was that the community was not prepared to accept broad assurances without detailed explanations.

Throughout the meeting, Dr. Veronica Hunnicutt directed a series of painstakingly detailed and often excruciatingly rigorous questions toward Michael Pound of the U.S. Navy, Michael Collins of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and Jeff Bale of RSI.

Her inquiries moved beyond general updates and into the specifics of contractor oversight, chain-of-custody issues, inventory procedures, radiological discoveries, laboratory validation concerns, environmental testing protocols, and the timeline of disclosures made to regulators and the public. Again and again, Hunnicutt pressed for details.

Who performed the testing?
Which contractors were involved?
What parcels were affected?
How many samples were under review?
What records existed?
Which agencies had been notified and when?

Notably, Michael Pound was the sole representative of the U.S. Navy present at the meeting. As a result, many of the community's questions regarding Navy oversight, contractor management, radiological discoveries, laboratory controversies, and disclosure timelines were directed squarely at him.

At several points, the exchange underscored a larger tension that ran throughout the evening: a community seeking precision from institutions that often spoke in broad conclusions.

BEHIND LOCKED DOORS

At the center of the latest controversy is Building 400A, a structure located within the former Hunters Point Naval Shipyard. According to Navy Base Realignment and Closure Director Michael Pound, the building was protected by high-security locks intended to prevent unauthorized access.

Inside, however, investigators discovered radiological materials, calibration sources, laboratory equipment, liquid scintillation materials used in radiological analysis, electron-capture detector components, and approximately 70 chemical containers. Many of the radioactive sources were described as sealed devices no larger than a button or half-dollar. Some of the chemical containers reportedly dated back decades.

The Navy has emphasized that the materials are not believed to be connected to the historic contamination that made Hunters Point a Superfund site. That distinction matters. But it does not answer the question that immediately surfaced among community members.

If the building was so secure, how did these materials remain there long enough to trigger investigations by federal and state authorities?

The tighter the security described by officials, the more difficult it becomes to explain how the discovery occurred at all.



These three men have been sent into our community to mislead and gaslight us. Not only are they downplaying the seriousness of the contamination, they are attempting to lock us out of opportunities while refusing to offer any compensation for historical and present wrongs.

Photo credits: Malik Washington
photos of Jeff Bale, RSI (top left); Michael Pound US Navy (top right) and
Michael Collins EPA (bottom); background:

<https://localnewsmatters.org/2026/03/09/navy-begins-hazardous-materials-removal-for-hunters-point-shipyard-demolition-project/>

THE CONTRACTOR QUESTION

As committee members pressed for answers, attention repeatedly returned to RSI and its acquisition of Enviro-Chem. The Navy confirmed that RSI is conducting the inventory of the radiological materials discovered inside Building 400A. That disclosure generated immediate concern. RSI acquired Enviro-Chem in 2023. According to RSI Vice President Jeff Bale, Building 400A was never disclosed during the acquisition process.

"We had no knowledge that that building existed."

According to Bale, RSI knew about Building 400, where the company stores equipment used in its ongoing Navy work, but not about Building 400A. When the discovery was reported in April, Bale said he immediately traveled to San Francisco and has spent weeks overseeing the response. The explanation did little to quiet questions from committee members. At one point during the discussion, Dr. Veronica Hunnicutt delivered one of the sharpest critiques of the Navy's handling of the discovery.

"The U.S. Navy has abdicated its responsibilities by letting RSI conduct the inventory."

Her criticism reflected a broader concern expressed throughout the evening: whether a contractor connected through acquisition to the entity believed to have stored the materials should also be responsible for documenting them.

Neither the Navy nor regulators have accused RSI of placing the materials in the building. Officials stated that the materials appear to have been brought there years earlier by individuals associated with Enviro-Chem before its acquisition. Yet the optics remain difficult to ignore. The company connected through acquisition to the entity believed to have stored the materials is now helping document the inventory.

For a community that has already endured the fallout of the Tetra Tech scandal, questions about oversight and independence are unavoidable.

WHEN CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS ARRIVE

Perhaps the most consequential revelation of the evening was confirmation that multiple criminal investigative agencies are now examining the matter.

The Naval Criminal Investigative Service is conducting an investigation. The Environmental Protection Agency's Criminal Investigation Division is conducting a separate review.

The California Department of Toxic Substances Control confirmed that its Office of Criminal Investigation is also evaluating the situation and may pursue independent action if state violations are identified.

Officials repeatedly cautioned that the existence of an investigation does not imply criminal wrongdoing. That is an important distinction. At the same time, criminal investigators do not typically become involved in routine administrative matters. Their presence signals that regulators view the discovery as serious enough to warrant scrutiny beyond ordinary environmental oversight.

HUNTERS POINT IS NOT AN ORDINARY WORKSITE

It is a former Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory site.

It is one of the most scrutinized Superfund projects in America.

And it sits beside neighborhoods where generations of families have lived, worked, raised children, battled illness, and buried loved ones while waiting for the promises of cleanup to become reality.

Trust alone is not a safety protocol.

THE PLUTONIUM QUESTION

While Building 400A dominated much of the discussion, another controversy continued to cast a long shadow over the meeting. The plutonium-239 detection that exceeded the dust-monitoring action level.

Pound addressed a March 2025 air sample that triggered additional review under the cleanup program's monitoring protocols. The Navy has maintained that no health-based thresholds were exceeded and that no public health threat was identified.

According to Pound, EPA's National Analytical Radiological Environmental Laboratory concluded that the elevated plutonium result was likely the product of laboratory contamination rather than contamination originating at Hunters Point.

Yet the issue remains contested.

Bio-monitoring expert, Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai challenged what she viewed as a recurring pattern in the Navy's public messaging. Sumchai argued that federal officials cannot simultaneously acknowledge unresolved questions surrounding laboratory contamination, disputed analytical results, and hundreds of soil samples currently undergoing reanalysis while also offering categorical assurances that health impacts can be ruled out.

Her argument was not that contamination has been definitively proven. Rather, it was that scientific uncertainty cuts both ways. If regulators are still evaluating laboratory performance, reanalyzing hundreds of samples, and reviewing disputed findings, she argued, then declarations of safety should be made with the same level of caution applied to declarations of risk.

The point resonated with many in attendance because it struck at the heart of the larger credibility challenge facing the cleanup effort. Trust, once damaged, is not restored through technical assurances. It is restored through evidence.

QUESTIONS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

Another notable exchange focused not on radiological materials, but on communication between federal officials and local government. During the meeting, Michael Pound testified that the Navy met with District 10 Supervisor Shamann Walton in May 2026 to discuss the discovery of the radiological materials. The statement immediately drew attention because questions had already been raised about when elected officials and community stakeholders were informed.

Dr. Ahimsa Porter Sumchai responded by stating that Supervisor Walton's office had reported no record of such a meeting.

The discrepancy was not resolved during the meeting. If both statements are accurate, additional clarification may be necessary regarding who attended the meeting, what information was shared, whether formal records exist, and how the communication was documented.

For residents who have repeatedly raised concerns about delayed disclosures and transparency, the exchange underscored another recurring challenge: establishing a clear public record of who knew what, and when.

SEVEN HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO QUESTIONS

Lost amid discussion of criminal investigations and radioactive materials was another disclosure that may ultimately prove just as significant. Pound confirmed that 732 soil samples are currently under review because of laboratory data-validation concerns. Most are associated with Parcels B and C, though multiple project areas are involved.

The issue was identified in March 2026. Regulators were notified the following day.

The samples are now being reanalyzed by a different laboratory, with new results expected later this year. The Navy has repeatedly emphasized that no public-health threat has been identified. That assurance may ultimately prove correct. But residents are asking a different question.

How many major cleanup controversies can be attributed to laboratory problems before confidence in the underlying process begins to erode?

The plutonium controversy involved claims of laboratory contamination. Now hundreds of soil samples require reanalysis because of laboratory validation concerns. Neither issue necessarily establishes contamination. Neither establishes misconduct. But together they contribute to a growing perception that the public is repeatedly being asked to trust information that later requires qualification, revision, or explanation.

A COMMUNITY RUNNING OUT OF PATIENCE

By the close of the meeting, the contrast was difficult to miss. Navy officials emphasized protocols, reviews, audits, inspections, and ongoing evaluations. Community advocates focused on unanswered questions.

Hunnicuttt demanded specifics from the agencies and contractors charged with explaining the latest discoveries.

Sumchai challenged conclusions she believes move beyond what the available evidence can presently support.

Neither woman appeared interested in rhetoric for its own sake.

Their questions reflected a deeper concern shared by many Bayview-Hunters Point residents:

**That accountability requires more than assurances.
And that public trust must be earned through transparency, consistency,
and verifiable facts.**

The challenge facing the Navy today is larger than Building 400A; larger than plutonium-239; larger than the criminal investigations now underway.

The challenge is credibility.

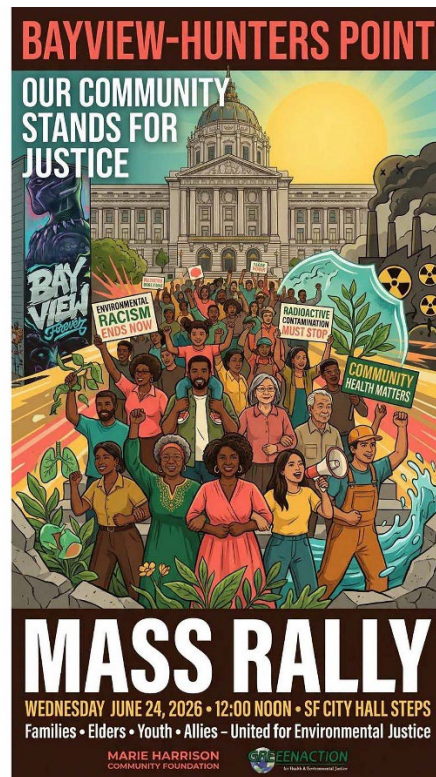
Radiological materials can be inventoried.
Chemical containers can be removed.
Buildings can be inspected.
Soil samples can be reanalyzed.

But credibility is harder to remediate. And credibility has become one of the most important unresolved issues at Hunters Point.

A CALL FOR ACCOUNTABILITY

The questions raised during the meeting are not ending when the lights are turned off at 451 Galvez Avenue. Community members, environmental justice advocates, faith

leaders, labor leaders, public-health advocates, and concerned residents will bring those concerns directly to San Francisco City Hall on Wednesday, June 24, 2026, at 12:00 noon.



The rally, organized by the Marie Harrison Community Foundation, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, and community allies, will call attention to the latest revelations involving radioactive and toxic materials discovered at the Hunters Point Shipyard and urge city leaders to support community demands for transparency, accountability, independent oversight, comprehensive testing, public-health protections, and environmental justice.

Organizers are encouraging residents from throughout San Francisco and the Bay Area to attend. For many community members, the issue extends beyond a single building, a single laboratory result, or a single investigation. It is about whether the people most affected by environmental decisions will finally be heard.

THE QUESTION THAT REMAINS

For decades, Bayview-Hunters Point residents have been told to trust the process. Yet trust is not built through PowerPoint presentations, technical memoranda, or carefully worded assurances. Trust is built when questions are answered fully, records are disclosed promptly, and accountability applies equally to agencies, contractors, and regulators alike.

The investigations continue.

The laboratory reviews continue.

The inventory continues.
And so does the community's search for answers.

Until those answers arrive, one question will continue to echo through meetings like the one held at 451 Galvez Avenue:

What else remains undiscovered?

Here's our song/video for this article:

Patti LaBelle - Lady Marmalade (1975) HD 0815007

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t4LWIP7SAjY&list=RDt4LWIP7SAjY&start_radio

=1

Hunters Point Resource List

1. [EPA Superfund Site Profile / Cleanup Background for Hunters Point Naval Shipyard](#)

Link:

<https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.cleanup&id=0902722>

Official EPA background on the site, contamination history, and the role of the Naval Radiological Defense Laboratory.

2. [San Francisco official overview: Hunters Point Naval Shipyard – Learn More](#)

Link: <https://www.sf.gov/hpns-cleanup-learn>

City overview explaining agency roles, cleanup responsibilities, and public-health oversight.

3. [U.S. Navy bulletin on discovery of unauthorized storage of radiological materials](#)

Link: <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USNAVFAC/bulletins/4174021>

Primary official notice describing the April 2026 discovery of radiological materials and chemicals in a secure building.

4. [Local News Matters: Navy discovers unauthorized radiological material at former Hunters Point...](#)

Link: <https://localnewsmatters.org/2026/05/15/hunters-point-radiological-material-discovery/>

Independent news corroboration of the Navy bulletin and community reaction.

5. [U.S. Navy Fact Sheet: Parcel C Air Monitoring / Pu-239 detection](#)

Link: <https://www.bracpmo.navy.mil/BRAC-Bases/California/Former-Naval-Shipyard-Hunters-Point/Timely-Topics/Display/Article/4330388/hunters-point-naval-shipyard-parcel-c-air-monitoring-fact-sheet-november-2025/>

Official Navy explanation of the reported plutonium-239 air-monitoring result and action-level context.

6. [EPA's April 2026 review of air monitoring data at Hunters Point](#)

Link: https://media.api.sf.gov/documents/100047812.cleaned_1.pdf

Technical EPA review concluding the Pu-239 detection was very likely caused by laboratory error rather than site conditions.

7. [San Francisco Public Press: timeline and disclosure dispute over plutonium finding](#)

Link: <https://www.sfpublicpress.org/city-sat-on-plutonium-findings-then-faulted-navy-over-delay/>

Reporting on the timeline, disclosure delays, and disagreements between the Navy and city officials.

8. [U.S. Navy Radiological Cleanup page](#)

Link: <https://www.bracpmo.navy.mil/BRAC-Bases/California/Former-Naval-Shipyard-Hunters-Point/Radiological-Cleanup/>

Official Navy overview of radiological cleanup, Tetra Tech sampling issues, and retesting.

9. [Department of Justice: U.S. joins lawsuits against Tetra Tech EC Inc.](#)

Link: <https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/united-states-joins-lawsuits-against-tetra-tech-ec-inc-alleging-false-claims-connection>

Federal legal background on alleged false claims, sample substitution, and falsified radiological data.

10. [Greenaction / Marie Harrison Community Foundation June 24, 2026 call to action](#)

Link: <https://greenaction.org/2026/06/06/june-2026-bayview-hunters-point-community-call-to-action-and-demands-issued-by-greenaction-and-the-marie-harrison-community-foundation-inc/>

Organizing notice for the City Hall rally focused on health, justice, transparency, and full cleanup.

11. [EPA-linked Second Amended Complaint in Greenaction litigation](#)

Link: <https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2025-04/second-amended-complaint.pdf>

Legal pleading laying out the community-plaintiff view of the site's radiological history and cleanup disputes.

12. [EPA Superfund schedule / ongoing cleanup records portal for Hunters Point](#)

Link:

<https://cumulis.epa.gov/supercpad/SiteProfiles/index.cfm?fuseaction=second.schedule&id=0902722>



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Malik Washington is a San Francisco-based journalist and co-founder of Destination Freedom Media Group, an independent nonprofit newsroom dedicated to accountability reporting at the intersection of civil rights, public integrity, disability justice, structural accountability within American institutions, and community survival. He has been a published journalist for over 14 years.

His work—published in partnership with the Davis Vanguard—focuses on government power, criminal justice, environmental justice, and the human consequences of policy decisions too often insulated from public scrutiny. Washington’s reporting amplifies the voices of impacted communities while insisting on documentary evidence, transparency, and the unvarnished truth—especially when institutions demand silence.

His work appears on platforms such as Muck Rack and Black Voice News, examining the intersection of justice, governance, and community.

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