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Date: 23 June 2021

Dear Mr Watkins,

As you are aware, on account of your contribution, Tortoise Media, a UK based news organisation, is producing a multi-part investigative podcast series for Audible. It is currently scheduled to be published in August 2021. The series sets out to explore who the online figure behind the conspiracy theory QAnon is and who is writing the Q posts. Furthermore, the series examines the development of the conspiracy theory - from the first Q posts on 4Chan in 2017 to its influence on politics and society in the following years. The series features contributions from people close to the QAnon movement and individuals who have been impacted by it's spread.

We thank you for your contribution and agreeing to be interviewed by the podcast's presenter, Nicky Woolf. We are now writing to give you the opportunity to respond by way of a written statement to material in the podcast we intend to broadcast.

## **BACKGROUND**

A focus of the podcast series is the identification of the author/s of the Q posts on 4Chan/8Chan/8Kun. During our investigation, allegations have been made in relation to your involvement in the Q posts and the wider QAnon movement.

## **MATERIAL FOR BROADCAST REQUIRING YOUR RESPONSE**

We interview people who know you and/or have reported on your businesses. We would like your response to the following evidence and allegations, which we will fairly and accurately reflect in the podcast:

- 1) We interview a former employee of your company, 8Chan, Frederick Brennan who worked as an 8Chan administrator. He tells us that in 2016 his relationship with you began to break down. He tells us that he resigned as an 8Chan Administrator and moved to work in a different part of the company, but after a year or so the

relationship between you worsened and Fredrick felt like he was being pushed out by you. Fredrick tells us:

*“I was staying in a condo that was in Jim's name. He leased it. It was one of the benefits of my employment. And when I said that I wanted to take a week off, Jim Watkins stormed up to my room. He didn't ask permission to enter. He just entered. And when I told him I wanted him to leave, he said his name was on the lease, so he didn't have to leave. Uh, I wasn't dressed. I was naked and I was in bed and he just stood in my doorway and he yelled at me for like a half hour . And after that, that's when I decided I had to quit.....And when he was so angry, I thought he might hit me to be honest, or at least punch the wall. So I was really scared because I just, I just said when he was in my doorway, I just said, I just said everything he wanted, so he would leave.”*

- 2) You told our presenter Nicky Woolf that you do not have the password for Q's tripcode and therefore cannot post as Q. However, Frederick Brennan has told us that as the owner of 8Chan/8Kun you do not need the password to post and therefore you would be able to post as Q. because as the site's owner, you have ultimate editorial control, including the power to take over a tripcode and post as Q.
- 3) That you, or someone controlled by you, took over control of Q in early 2018 when Paul Furber started his new Qanon board on 8chan (/CBTS) and that only you or Ron Watkins have the ability to take over the writing of Q posts. Alternatively, that you or someone employed by your business, directly or indirectly compromised the Q account allowing another 8Chan user to post as Q.
- 4) Fredrick Brennan tells us that he believes that you personally authored the Q post on April 16 2020 which reads, “Clear your mind. Heal.Q” and links to a YouTube video titled ‘Above & Beyond - Great Falls’.

Frederick Brennan: “The one [Q drop] that I think is most likely [Jim Watkins] , like out of all of them, is the one that is just like one word 'heal'. And it has that spinning donut shape that looks kind of like a twisted pretzel or whatever. And it's like binaural beats which Jim is really really into... It's this woo woo theory that by listening to certain sounds really, not really music but some of it's like music, on your headphones that that will somehow heal you.....Yeah He believes that the binaural beats can put you into different moods you know he uses them to calm down. He uses them to kind of get work done He's very, he has a whole folder thing. It seems really stupid.”

5) Fredrick Brennan tells us that he believes that your involvement in QAnon is motivated by ideology and power.

6) Fredrick Brennan tells us that he believes that the use of a pen as an identifying marker by the person posting as Q, suggests your involvement due to your pen collection hobby.

*Frederick Brennan: "Q does another kind of verification where he posts a certain watch and a certain pen And this is not really, like the big Q believers they don't take this as verification, they see it as just helping the normies as they would call it understand. But I mean a watch and a pen like to me that screams Jim and Ron. Ron collected watches - big time"*

7) We report in the series that thousands of people's lives have been ruined by the QAnon belief system and that whoever is behind the Q posts has whipped the QAnon movement into an inferno, leading to the events of 6<sup>th</sup> January 2021. As one of the people suspected of being Q and / or behind the posts, the responsibility for these events would fall to you.

We are approaching the end of our edit and we require your response to these allegations by 30 June 2021 so that we can fairly reflect your response in the podcast.

Yours sincerely,

Gary Marshall  
[Producer]