

March 28, 2023

Nicolo Laurent  
Chief Executive Officer  
Riot Games, Inc.  
12333 W. Olympic Blvd.  
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Dear Mr. Laurent:

I write to request information regarding Riot Games' actions to identify and remove content that broadcasts or promotes terrorism, violent extremism, hate crimes, or drug trafficking, as well as any efforts Riot Games has made to address the use of its platforms by those who perpetrate such acts.

Last May, a gunman committed a horrific and premeditated act of domestic terrorism that killed ten and injured three more at a Tops Friendly Markets in Buffalo, New York. The perpetrator not only livestreamed this act of white supremacist violence against the Black community on the Twitch platform, he also reportedly used a private, invite-only Discord server to detail his plan to attack for months.<sup>1</sup> I subsequently pressed these social media platforms on their roles in promoting extremist content.<sup>2</sup> It is becoming increasingly clear that extremists are using online games themselves, and not just social media, as instruments to radicalize and recruit; the Buffalo gunman himself noted on his Discord server that "playing Apocalypse Rising on Roblox gave [him] interests in survival and guns" and that he "probably wouldn't be as nationalistic if it weren't for Blood and Iron on roblox [sic]."<sup>3</sup>

Riot Games' *Valorant* and *League of Legends*, like many online games, offers its users the opportunity to do more than play and enjoy a game, but also to create and foster individual and community relationships through the social elements provided. As positive as these attributes can be, for years extremists have exploited the community-building aspects of games to spread propaganda, radicalize and recruit users, and mobilize for terrorist activities. For instance, surveys conducted by watchdog research groups have found that 34 percent of adults, 25 percent of minors aged 13 to 17, and 11 percent of minors aged 10 to 12 have encountered

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<sup>1</sup> Jonah E. Bromwich, *Before Massacre Began, Suspect Invited Others to Review His Plan*, N.Y. TIMES (May 17, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/17/nyregion/buffalo-shooting-discord-chat-plans.html?referringSource=articleShare>.

<sup>2</sup> Press Release, U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, Office of the Chair, Durbin Presses Social Media Platforms on their Roles in Promoting Extremist Context (May 19, 2022), <https://www.durbin.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/durbin-presses-social-media-platforms-on-their-roles-in-promoting-extremist-context>.

<sup>3</sup> See Ben Goggin (@BenjaminGoggin), TWITTER (May 18, 2022, 12:41 PM), <https://twitter.com/BenjaminGoggin/status/1526966284294012929>.

white-supremacist extremism in *Valorant*.<sup>4</sup> For *League of Legends*, those totals include 28 percent of adults, 18 percent of minors aged 13 to 17, and 24 percent of minors aged 10 to 12.<sup>5</sup>

Despite these issues, Riot Games does not appear to explicitly address terrorism, violent extremism, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior in its user rules, *Valorant*'s community code, or *League of Legends*' code of conduct. Riot Games also does not appear to produce transparency reports. Given the complexity of this kind of moderation, and the continued role of Riot Games and online games in facilitating the proliferation of violent extremism, it is crucial that Congress better understand what Riot Games is doing to address efforts by violent extremists and other malicious actors to use its platforms to recruit, organize, and amplify violence and threats of violence. For this reason, please respond to the following requests as soon as possible, but no later than April 18, 2023:

1. Please produce Riot Games' user rules, *Valorant*'s community code, and *League of Legends*' code of conduct (collectively the "aforementioned policies"), from January 1, 2017 to present, including any changes regarding its policies on terrorism, violent extremism, threats, bullying, harassment, discrimination, use of slurs and other hate speech, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior.<sup>6</sup>
2. Please explain why the code of conduct does not explicitly address terrorism, violent extremism, and harmful off-platform speech or behavior.
3. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how Riot Games identifies content that violates the aforementioned policies, including in *Valorant* and *League of Legends*.
4. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, Riot Games' process for removing content that violates the aforementioned policies, including the average time between when such content is posted and when it is removed.
5. Please quantify how much content on *Valorant* and *League of Legends* has been found to violate the aforementioned policies since January 2020, broken down by month.
6. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how Riot Games enforces compliance with the aforementioned policies; the consequences users face

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<sup>4</sup> *Hate is No Game: Hate and Harassment in Online Games 2022*, ADL CTR. FOR TECH. & SOC'Y 22-23 (Dec. 6, 2022), <https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/documents/2022-12/Hate-and-Harassment-in-Online-Games-120622-v2.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> As defined by Riot Games. See *Riot Games Terms of Service*, RIOT GAMES, <https://www.riotgames.com/en/terms-of-service> (last visited March 27, 2023); *Valorant Community Code*, PLAY VALORANT, <https://playvalorant.com/en-us/news/announcements/valorant-community-code/> (last visited March 27, 2023); *League of Legends Code of Conduct*, LEAGUE OF LEGENDS, <https://www.leagueoflegends.com/en-us/event/league-of-legends-code-of-conduct/> (last visited March 27, 2023).

for violating these policies; whether penalties are escalated for repeat offenders; and what steps are taken to prevent users from circumventing penalties, such as banned users simply creating new accounts.

7. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts, if any, Riot Games engages in to identify and disrupt known extremist groups' use of the platform to radicalize and recruit.
8. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts, if any, Riot Games engages in to identify, monitor, and disrupt emerging extremist networks on the platform.
9. Please provide, and produce documents sufficient to show, what percentage of Riot Games' yearly budget supports efforts to identify violations of and enforce compliance with the aforementioned policies. Please breakout the yearly budget and percentage dedicated to these efforts for *Valorant* and *League of Legends*, respectively.
10. Please provide, and produce documents sufficient to show, how many employees and/or contractors have roles where identifying violations of and enforcing compliance with the aforementioned policies is their primary responsibility.
11. Please explain in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, how those employees and/or contractors who identify violations of, and enforce compliance with, the aforementioned policies fit into the overall Riot Games organizational structure, and what role, if any, these employees and/or contractors play in the development of new products.
12. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, Riot Games' guidelines and parameters for recommending content to users, including both the curation of search results and targeted promotions based on user data.
13. Please describe in detail any actions planned, in progress, or completed by Riot Games to detect and prevent the use of its platforms for broadcasting or promoting domestic terrorism and violent extremism.
14. Please describe in detail any actions planned, in progress, or completed by Riot Games to coordinate with federal, state, local, and tribal governments and agencies to detect, prevent, or investigate violence or threats, including domestic terrorism and violent extremism.
15. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, what efforts Riot Games engages in internally, or allows externally, to systematically analyze the use of its platforms by extremists or other malicious actors to radicalize and recruit.

16. Please describe in detail, and produce documents sufficient to show, any industry efforts Riot Games is engaged in regarding the development of best practices or industry standards concerning the use of online gaming platforms by extremists to radicalize and recruit.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. I look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Dick Durbin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Richard J. Durbin  
Chair

cc: The Honorable Lindsey Graham  
Ranking Member