



Saudi pirate beoutQ steals opening games of Premier League and Ligue 1 as Cisco, NAGRA and Overon conclusively confirm that pirate channels are distributed on Riyadh-based Arabsat

LONDON, PARIS, DOHA, NEW YORK – August 16, 2018 – Pressure has intensified on Saudi Arabia to end the industrial-scale piracy of world sport as three of the world's leading digital security, media solutions and technology companies, Cisco Systems, NAGRA and Overon, have today independently and definitively confirmed that the Saudi-based pirate TV channel beoutQ – which has orchestrated a plague of piracy on world sport over the past year – is being distributed on the satellite provider Arabsat. This technical evidence establishes beyond any doubt the involvement of Riyadh-based Arabsat in the most widespread piracy of sports broadcasting that the world has ever seen.

Having stolen every single game of the recent FIFA World Cup in Russia, the spectre of Saudi piracy returned with renewed vigour this weekend. Two of European football's highest profile leagues, the English Premier League and France's Ligue 1, kicked off their widely anticipated 2018/19 seasons but their broadcasts were, once again, stolen and distributed illegally across Saudi Arabia. Starting with the Premier League's curtain-raiser of Manchester United v Leicester City on Friday through to Manchester City v Arsenal on Sunday, all 10 of the Premier League's games were illegally broadcast live by beoutQ and Arabsat; while 6 of the 10 opening games of Ligue 1, including PSG v Caen, were also stolen. The pirate channel also brazenly promoted coverage of upcoming games it will show from LaLiga and the Bundesliga, both which start in the coming weeks, as a sign of beoutQ's endless pipeline of piracy.

beoutQ's audacious announcement that it was back to its worst this weekend coincided with the latest incontrovertible evidence and reports presented by Cisco (the world's foremost technology provider), NAGRA (the Swiss-based leading provider of pay-TV security solutions) and Overon (the leader of innovation technology for broadcast services), that explain in technical detail how Arabsat satellites have been, and still are, transmitting beoutQ's pirate channels. Since August 2017, beoutQ has been stealing the broadcast feed of some of the most internationally-renowned sports brands and rights holders in the world, pirating everything from the Olympic Games, Formula 1 and Wimbledon tennis, to the UEFA Champions League, the English Premier League and LaLiga. Every single game of the recent FIFA World Cup 2018 in Russia was broadcast illegally in Saudi Arabia by beoutQ, making it one of the most pirated sports events in history and prompting – in a unique step – the governing body of world football to call for legal action in Saudi Arabia.

Despite demands from bodies across sport for Arabsat to end its support of this piracy, the Riyadh-based satellite provider has adamantly refused to do so, even though it has the ability to simply switch off beoutQ's transmissions on Arabsat satellites. Indeed, before the Saudi-led blockade against Qatar, Arabsat routinely switched off pirate operations in accordance with international law, yet the political motivations behind its refusal to end beoutQ's theft of Qatar-headquartered beIN SPORTS are manifestly clear. In addition to pirating the world's most valuable sports content, it is no coincidence that beoutQ also distributes a stream of anti-Qatar propaganda.

Arabsat is a major regional satellite operator headquartered in Saudi Arabia; it is owned by the governments of the Arab League and its largest shareholder is Saudi Arabia; and Arabsat's CEO is a Saudi national. The fact that beoutQ itself – on its own Facebook and other social media channels – lists the specific Arabsat frequencies on which it is available makes a mockery of Arabsat's recent statements that beoutQ has never been transmitted by the satellite provider.

The latest reports by Cisco, NAGRA and Overon follow a quite remarkable and coordinated outburst of statements, disinformation and abuse directed at the global broadcaster beIN SPORTS – together with other parties that called for an end to Saudi piracy, such as UEFA and the governing bodies of world tennis – by the Saudi Ministry of Media in recent months, denying that beoutQ is based in Saudi Arabia. This is despite overwhelming evidence placing beoutQ firmly in Saudi Arabia, including the fact that the beoutq.se website is geo-blocked to Saudi Arabia and satellite subscriptions must be validated from a Saudi IP address; its subscriptions are priced in Saudi riyals only; and its channels carry advertising for numerous Saudi brands. Indeed, even the name "beoutQ" is manifestly intended to mean "be out Qatar" – a reference to the Saudi-led blockade against Qatar. In response, Saudi Arabia has bizarrely alleged the channel is based in Colombia and Cuba.



While the Saudi government asserts that it has made “relentless efforts” to combat piracy, the reality is that beoutQ set-top boxes have been widely and openly sold across Saudi Arabia from dealers regulated by the Saudi regulatory authority (GCAM), including at dealers which have been openly publicized by beoutQ, and beoutQ’s pirate channels continue to be viewed in cafes, bars, hotels, restaurants, airport lounges, public places and in homes right across the country. Early this year, for the first time in more than 10 years, the US Government placed Saudi Arabia on its 2018 Special 301 Watch List, noting concerns over the deteriorating environment for the protection of intellectual property.

Tom Keaveny, Managing Director of beIN MEDIA GROUP, MENA said, *“The political games being played by Arabsat, beoutQ and its Saudi backers in stealing our content have consequences that affect the future of world sport, not just beIN SPORTS. That is why the international sports community – from FIFA to UEFA, Formula 1 to world tennis, together with a host of other global broadcasters – have all taken a stand and publicly condemned this Saudi-based piracy. beoutQ and its Saudi backers seem to think they can operate beyond the reproach of the rule of law and the international norms that everyone else respects.”*

Sophie Jordan, Executive Director of Legal Affairs - General Legal Counsel of beIN MEDIA GROUP said, *“The evidence is irrefutable:- the illegal channel beoutQ is backed by Saudi nationals and openly promoted by leading Saudi figures; it is operating with the tacit consent of the Saudi government and its World Cup pirate feeds were viewed on public screens under the responsibility of Saudi authorities across the country; it is broadcast on the Riyadh-based satellite provider Arabsat; on a daily basis it is carrying out - in broad daylight - a mass-scale theft of highly valuable intellectual property rights. It is time for Arabsat to switch off the pirate transmissions it has supported for almost a year; it is time for Arabsat to be made accountable for facilitating the largest pay tv piracy organization in the history of pay-TV.”*

NOTES TO EDITORS

About beIN MEDIA GROUP

beIN MEDIA GROUP is one of the world’s foremost media groups, bringing an unrivalled array of entertainment, live sport action, and major international events to millions of viewers in MENA, Turkey, France, Spain, the USA, Canada, and the APAC region. beIN MEDIA GROUP’s sports network, beIN SPORTS, covers the best and most exciting sports in the world including football (all top global leagues and competitions), basketball (NBA and Euroleague), American football (NFL), cricket, rugby, tennis, cycling, volleyball, motor sports, college sports and more. In addition to its global sports network, beIN MEDIA GROUP is a major player in entertainment through production and distribution as well as in the digital space. In November 2015, a new platform was launched in MENA, beIN MENA, which offers a complete spectrum of entertainment including blockbuster movies, series kids programs, and factual entertainment – all delivered through state of art technology. Through its iconic MIRAMAX film studio, beIN also holds an extensive library of legendary Hollywood blockbusters and a growing presence in series and movies production. beIN MEDIA GROUP acquired Digiturk the leading pay-TV operator in Turkey, in August 2016.

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