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TITLE: The Magnitsky Human Rights Awards 2018 - Eliot Higgins

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SPEAKER

MARCUS KOLGA - M

ELLIOT HIGGINS: E

M: Thank you, ladies, gentlemen, friends, In this era where facts and proof the Kremlin's leading information war against our democracies, our societies. The work of journalists has never been more crucial than it is today. Among the most important are the fact checkers and investigative journalists who expose the corruption, human rights violations, disinformation and lies of regimes who steal, torture and kill with human rights violations, disinformation and lies of regimes who steal, torture and kill with impunity. The ground breaking work of Bellingcat, an international citizen based investigative journalism platform and its founder, Eliot Higgins, have heroically exposed the truth behind mass human rights violations and acts of terror committed were sponsored by the Kremlin and its allies. Using open source information, videos, satellites, maps and images, Eliot and his team at Bellingcat revealed that a Russian ground terror missile was used in 2014 by Kremlin sponsored terrorists in Eastern-Ukraine to shoot down a civilian airliner, Malaysian Airlines, MH17 with 293 people on board.

Without knowing Bellingcat's reporting awareness about the Syrian regimes monstrous use of chemical weapons and other atrocities against the civilian population would remain otherwise completely unknown and shrouded by the lives of Syrian and Russian State media. Most recently Bellingcat discovered the identities of GRU assassins despatched by Vladimir Putin to this country to poison [unclear 1:43] with a deadly military nerve agent leaving one civilian dead. In the process of identifying the agents, Bellingcat thankfully exposed much of the GRUs operations and tactics protecting the integrity of our collective security and the lives of other whistle blowers, activists and critics of Vladimir Putin. Ladies and gentleman, it is an incredible honour for me to present the 2018 Magnitsky award for investigative journalism to award winning investigative journalist, Eliot Higgins, founder of Bellingcat.

E: Thank you very much. People often ask me where the name Bellingcat comes from. It's from a fable; it's about a group of mice who were very terrified of a cat. It was a large and ferocious cat and they had a little meeting, a little mouse meeting. They all came together and they came up with an idea, put a bell around the cat's neck, but they then realised they didn't have a plan to do that. So at Bellingcat we are teaching the mice how to bell the cat and it's the mice I would like to accept the award on today and the mice are the community that has grown up around the work of Bellingcat who contribute in small ways and big. Often we think about Twitter as being a cesspool of arguments, anger, racism, but there's a community that has grown up around the work of Bellingcat that have contributed in so many ways to the work that we are doing. The mention earlier of the Ukrainian buck or the Russian buck we found in Ukraine that shot down the MH17 there was one person on Twitter who made an observation that we looked into and it allowed us to piece together all this evidence the we could use to prove it.

When Russia started bombing Syria it was a small group of people on Twitter who started finding out where those bombings were happening proving Russia was lying about bombing ISIS repeatedly. And most recently we have been working on projects where we have helped the mice and got them involved with these different ideas. Europol's tracing object stop child abuse campaign where they took images from child abuse imagery, small objects and asked the public to

identify them. We used our network, we amplified that message and around 70% of those objects have been identified in these child abuse cases. So it's the great work of not only Bellingcat, but the amazing work of those people who follow Bellingcat's work who contribute in every way big and small that I am accepting this award for tonight. Thank you.

END OF TRANSCRIPT