

Dear Mr. Watson,

My name is Anass Iddou, and I am a journalist with Mediapart, a french newspaper.

I am currently working on an article about the acquisition of the Yoo houseboat by Sea Shepherd France and its subsequent use.

As part of this reporting, we have reviewed a number of documents relating to this operation and would like to give you the opportunity to provide your account of the facts. According to the documents in our possession, Sea Shepherd France mobilized €1.07 million to finance the acquisition of the Yoo houseboat, which was purchased for €1.04 million in November 2023. The transaction was carried out through an employee of the association, who is described as a “nominee” in the loan agreement concluded with Sea Shepherd France.

We would particularly appreciate your comments on the following points:

- **What role did you play in the decision to acquire the Yoo houseboat? Were you involved in the discussions that led to its purchase?**

I was not involved in that transaction. It was a decision made by Sea Shepherd France, which had been looking for some time for a place where it could hold meetings, store documents, and provide a base for team members who did not live in Paris but needed to come there regularly.

- **Were you aware that the acquisition was financed through a €1.07 million loan granted by Sea Shepherd France to one of its employees?**

I am not aware of the administrative details, and generally speaking, administrative matters are not something I am particularly interested in. I know that Sea Shepherd France worked on this project with the assistance of legal advisers in order to do things properly, and that, in order to comply with the port’s rules, there needed to be a nominal “owner” on paper.

- **According to a lease agreement signed on January 1, 2024, the houseboat was rented to you as your principal residence. Can you confirm whether you are the tenant of the Yoo under this arrangement?**

That document was necessary in order to comply with port regulations. My name appears on it, but it could just as easily have been someone else’s. I already had my primary residence in Paris at the time. Later on, my family and I moved to Marseille, in particular so that my son Tiger could attend a prominent chess school there. Since then, I have had a room on the houseboat when I am in Paris. The others call it the captain’s cabin, although it is a bit larger than what I am used to having on my ships. There is a fair amount of coming and going, because we hold quite a few work meetings there, but overall it remains a rather quiet place.

- **Have you paid rent either to the registered owner of the houseboat or to Sea Shepherd France since the signing of this lease? If so, under what arrangements?**

I contribute to the rent payments associated with my occupancy of the place. I also contribute financially to the payment of water, electricity and Internet connection bills, as well as to various maintenance work, because at one point I was spending a great deal of time on board - more than the others. It was only normal for me to contribute, even though money was tight. I have two young children and had to pay rent in Marseille, in addition to all the usual living expenses.

- **The accounting documents and internal communications we have reviewed contain no record of any rent payments made by you. Would you like to comment on this?**

I am not sure what « accounting documents or internal communications » you are referring to but I have responded to your question above.

- **According to our information, Sea Shepherd France has also covered expenses related to the houseboat, including operating costs, fees paid to Haropa Port, as well as renovation work and repairs. Would you confirm or dispute this information ?**

Who else would have paid those expenses? The houseboat is first and foremost a place of work and an investment for the organization. Like any boat, it requires maintenance. Nothing extraordinary was done - only the bare minimum necessary to ensure the safety and proper condition of the vessel, so that it would be adequately maintained.

- **How do you explain Sea Shepherd France having devoted more than €1 million to an operation which, at first glance, appears to fall outside the association's statutory missions of protecting the oceans and marine biodiversity?**

I assume the misunderstanding comes from the phrase "at first glance." You seem to have a distorted view of the situation as it actually exists here.

Sea Shepherd France operated for many years without a real place to work or meet. To be honest, I find that quite impressive. The Sea Shepherd France team is spread throughout the country, and Paris is the organization's nerve center.

It made sense to use a boat as the organization's central base rather than spend money on hotel rooms, office rentals, or meeting rooms. Every organization of a certain size has this kind of facility.

I very much appreciate having a place where I can stay and work when I am in Paris. I do a great deal of work for Sea Shepherd France without receiving a salary. I am not complaining about that — on the contrary, I am happy to do it.

Contrary to what you suggest, this place makes our mission on behalf of the ocean more achievable, not less. Sea Shepherd France has never been more active and has never conducted as many campaigns with as many people as it has over the past three years, despite the turmoil caused by internal betrayals within the movement.

This houseboat has in no way hindered our commitment. It simply allows us to work under better conditions, and it gives me, as well as others, a place to stay when we are in Paris. I see absolutely nothing wrong with that.