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Safety Administration**  
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**March 28, 2018**

Ms. Timian:

This letter is in response to your March 22, 2018, letter regarding NHTSA Recall Number 18V-173 in which you asked for “an explanation as to why these vehicles and the 2017 Levante vehicles were not initially identified when scoping the 2016 recall.” There are different reasons why the 2017 Maserati Levante (“Levante”) and the 2017 Maserati Ghibli and Maserati Quattroporte V6 sedans (“the sedans”) were not included in the original 2016 recall 16V-936 of 2017 Maserati Levante S (“Levante S”) vehicles.

#### **2017 Maserati Levante**

In the U.S., two versions of the Maserati Levante are sold: the base model, Levante, and the sport model, Levante S. Levante S vehicles have different software relating to engine idle control strategy as well as slightly different hardware than Levante vehicles. Originally, the recall condition was only seen on Levante S vehicles. During Maserati’s initial investigation, 24 incidents were confirmed on Levante S vehicles out of a global vehicle population of approximately 1,800 Levante S vehicles. Maserati did not receive its first notice of a similar condition on a Levante vehicle until 11 December 2016, three days before Maserati made its defect determination for Levante S vehicles on 14 December 2016. At that time, Maserati had enough information to determine that a defect that affects motor vehicle safety existed in Levante S vehicles, but not enough information to conclude that the same defect existed in Levante vehicles. This was because initial testing of Levante vehicles did not reveal the defect and there was only a single report of a vehicle within a population of approximately 5,100 Levante vehicles globally.

Maserati chose to move forward with recall 16V-936 for Levante S vehicles in December 2016 while continuing its investigation of Levante vehicles rather than delay the Levante S recall. Between December 2016 and February 2017, Maserati continued its investigation of Levante vehicles. Maserati determined that the original testing that it conducted on Levante S vehicles, after learning of the field issues, did not produce the defect condition on Levante vehicles due to the software and hardware differences between the two models mentioned above. However, because of a second field report, Maserati continued to develop testing protocols that eventually led to confirmation that Levante vehicles also contained a similar defect condition. As a result of this additional information, Maserati made its defect determination for Levante vehicles on 24 February 2017, which became NHTSA Recall Number 17V-161.

For these reasons, Maserati appropriately did not include Levante models in its original filing of recall 16V-936.

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## 2017 Maserati Ghibli and 2017 Maserati Quattroporte V6

There are distinct technical differences between the Levante S and Levante recalls (16V-936 and 17V-161) and the recent recall for the sedans (18V-173). These differences are outlined below and explain why the vehicles within recall 18V-173 were correctly not included in the 2016 recall scope

- Recall 16V-936 & 17V-161 – The issue found in the Levante vehicles is related to very light acceleration followed by a coast-down with light brake pressure. The driver is in stop and go traffic and is creeping along then coasting to a stop. In this situation, the engine RPM may become so low that the engine cannot recover, causing a shift to NEUTRAL and in some cases stalling. The defect condition is an error in the mass airflow control while at very light load resulting in low engine speed.
- Recall 18V-173 – The issue found in the sedans is related to a cold engine with hard acceleration followed by hard braking. The driver is driving aggressively in heavy traffic. In this situation, the variable valve timing mechanism is in transition and the engine cannot recover from the sudden impact of coming off the accelerator and braking aggressively. The defect condition is the inability of the variable valve timing mechanism to respond quickly enough to rapid transient behavior of the driver at low speeds with the engine cold.

Further, during the investigations performed at the time of the original Levante recalls, the sedans were tested using the same maneuver used to identify the issue in the Levante. No issues were seen on the sedans.

Because of this, the sedans affected by recall 18V-173 do not contain the same defect condition that Maserati recalled in Levante S and Levante vehicles and should not have been included in recall 16V-936 or 17V-161.

Sincerely,

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Head of Vehicle Safety & Regulatory Compliance

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