



DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES MILITARY ACADEMY  
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WEST POINT, NY 10996-1926

MAOR

19 December 2019

MEMORANDUM FOR LTG Darryl Williams, Superintendent, West Point, NY 10996

SUBJECT: Army Regulation (AR) 15-6 Investigation, Executive Summary RE Cadet (CDT) Hand Gestures on ESPN GameDay on 14 December 2019.

1. **SUMMARY:** The evidence strongly supports a finding that (b) (6) and (b) (6) made "OK" hand gestures during the ESPN broadcast of GameDay because they were playing the "circle game" or "gotcha game." There is no evidence that (b) (6) hold any racist or white supremacist views or attempted to communicate such messages by using the "OK" hand gesture on national television.

2. **BACKGROUND:** On 15 December 19, I was appointed as an Investigating Officer to determine the facts and circumstances surrounding the use of the "OK" hand sign by cadets during a live TV broadcast of College Game Day on 14 December 2019. On 17 December 2019, (b) (6) were assigned to assist with the investigation. On 19 Dec 19, I finished my investigation.

3. **FACTS:** On 14 December 2019, ESPN conducted the College GameDay television broadcast before the beginning of the Army/Navy football game. ESPN College GameDay is a college football pre-game show that airs at a different location each week prior to that week's slate of televised college football games. The location of the College GameDay broadcast usually coincides with one of that week's most hotly contested rivalries or matchups. At the 14 DEC Army/Navy GameDay broadcast, (b) (6) displayed the "OK" hand gesture. (See Exhibit 1). This event and these hand gestures drew intense social media attention and coverage from several media outlets, who carried both text and video stories discussing a similar "OK" symbol being sometimes associated with white supremacists and/or white power movements and ideology. (See Exhibits 33,35,36).

4. **FINDINGS:** After review, I find that all of the evidence supports the following:

- a. The three cadets making the "OK" hand gesture were positively identified as (b) (6)
- b. The evidence strongly supports a finding that the cadets were playing the "circle game", an internationally recognized game in which people attempt to trick someone else into looking at an okay-like hand gesture below the waist. Sworn statements from

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statements from all three cadets convey that their intention was to play the "circle game" in order to garner attention from a national audience as well as surrounding cadets.

(b) (6). All three cadets also deny any intention of their "OK" gesture having a meaning associated with white supremacy ideology or any other movement/ideology that is contrary to the Army Values. Sworn statements from these three cadets, surrounding cadets who participated in the broadcast, the cadets' tactical officers, and their cadet chain of command all state that they believe that the gestures were a misplaced joke and not done in support of promoting white supremacist ideology or any other extremist organizations or groups. Searches of the three cadets' social media accounts reinforce this finding. (See Exhibits 2-32). Witness testimony and evidence also indicate that the "circle game" is a widespread activity played in many settings by cadets, students, and others outside of USMA of various ages, and that the "circle game" was played on 14 DEC before the cameras were filming.

c. The evidence and testimony of this investigation also demonstrate that (b) (6) (b) (6) is the cadet who dropped a Coca-Cola can after chugging and crushing it (b) (6) during the live broadcast.

**5. RECOMMENDATION:** After reviewing all of the evidence, I recommend that the command consider:

a. The findings and recommendations should be forwarded to the Commandant, United States Corps of Cadets in order to consider taking appropriate action, if any, against (b) (6)

b. The Academy should develop tactics, techniques, and/or procedures (TTPs) that define leader actions (event briefings, specific directions, etc.) that must be taken prior to public events, such as ESPN GameDay, in order to preserve the value of wide exposure events. In the development of these TTPs, the Academy should look at other recently publicized events in which cadets participated in order to determine if the TTPs should contain other content not specifically discussed in this report.

c. The Academy should ensure that discussions and briefings regarding hate group speech, actions, and symbology are incorporated into Honorable Living events, including Leader Development and Character Development sessions. A significant effort must be made to keep training current in order to address changes in the use of hate group symbology.

6. The point of contact for this memo is the undersigned at (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Investigating Officer