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NEWS RELEASE

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USMA APRIL FOOLS' JOKE DRAWS ATTENTION TO PROUD TRADITIONS – April 1, 2016

WEST POINT, N.Y. – The U.S. Military Academy had some fun on social media earlier today in an April Fools' Day joke that reported an end to the Army Mascot Mule program, a proud academy tradition dating back to 1899.

The real news, however, is that Paladin, West Point's newest mascot cadet candidate, stepped up to the mascot in the red sash on March 31 and officially reported for duty on his Reception Day.

R-Day is an annual event to receive new cadets to the academy, initiating the beginning of their journey to become a member of the Corps of Cadets. A key aspect of in-processing, requires reporting to the cadet in the red sash, as Paladin did, in order to simulate a memorable event that West Point graduates experience.

"Having a sense of humor on April Fools' Day allowed us to have some fun," said West Point Superintendent Lt. Gen. Robert Caslen. "But the true purpose was to highlight the importance of our mules as part of our traditions here."

The large number of social media attention from alumni and friends demonstrates that our mules are an important and beloved tradition at West Point.

"Traditions that are synonymous with West Point, such as cadet uniforms, class rings, the graduation hat toss and the rendering of a newly-minted second lieutenant's first salute, allow the Corps of Cadets to connect with the U.S. Army and the Long Gray Line in many ways," Caslen said.

The road to Paladin's R-Day at West Point started in Tennessee. He arrived via the generosity of one of our graduates, Steve Townes from the Class of 1975, at Morgan Farm in Highland Falls, New York, in January. He was unnamed but ready to start his Mascot Cadet Basic Training.

According to Sherry Cashman, one of the Army Mule caretakers, Paladin is personable, treat loving and ready for the affection shown to him by cadets, trainers and visitors.

Paladin's Acceptance Day ceremony is scheduled for the Sept. 10 Army West Point Football home opening game vs. Rice.