



MEMORANDUM

**To: Chief Executives
Club Presidents**

From: Commissioner Goodell

Date: September 10, 2014

Re: Investigation of Ray Rice Incident

As you know, there has been a good deal of speculation about the investigatory process that preceded the decision to suspend Ray Rice for his involvement in an incident of domestic violence last February. I want to use this opportunity to address this matter and provide a full understanding of the process that was followed.

First, we did not see video of what took place inside the elevator until it was publicly released on Monday. When the new video evidence became available, we acted promptly and imposed an indefinite suspension on Mr. Rice.

Second, on multiple occasions, we asked the proper law enforcement authorities to share with us all relevant information, including any video of the incident. Those requests were made to different law enforcement entities, including the New Jersey State Police, the Atlantic City Police Department, the Atlantic County Police Department and the Atlantic County Solicitor's Office. The requests were first made in February following the incident, and were again made following Mr. Rice's entry into the pre-trial diversion program. None of the law enforcement entities we approached was permitted to provide any video or other investigatory material to us. As is customary in disciplinary cases, the suspension imposed on Mr. Rice in July was based on the information available to us at that time.

Our understanding of New Jersey law is that casino security is regulated by the Division of Gaming Enforcement in the State Attorney General's office. Once a criminal investigation begins, law enforcement authorities do not share investigatory material (such as the videos here) with private parties such as the NFL. In addition, the state's Open Public Records Act excludes material that is generated in the context of an active law enforcement proceeding. The law enforcement agencies did nothing wrong here; they simply followed their customary procedures. As the New Jersey Attorney General's office said yesterday, "It would have been illegal for law enforcement to provide [the] Rice video to [the] NFL."

We did not ask the Atlantic City casino directly for the video. Again, our understanding of New Jersey law is that the casino is prohibited from turning over material to a third party during a law enforcement proceeding, and that doing so would have subjected individuals to prosecution for interference with a criminal investigation. Moreover, our longstanding policy in matters like this – where there is a criminal investigation being directed by law enforcement and prosecutors – is to cooperate with law enforcement and take no action to interfere with the criminal justice system. In addition, in the context of an ongoing criminal investigation, information obtained outside of law enforcement that has not been tested by prosecutors or by the court system is not necessarily a reliable basis for imposing league discipline.

Finally, it is our understanding that the criminal proceedings involving Mr. Rice are considered an open matter, and that so long as he is in the pretrial diversion program, no information will be made available to third parties or the public.

As always, we will continuously examine our procedures. I believe that we took a significant step forward with the enhanced policies on domestic violence and sexual assault that were announced last month. I also know that we will be judged on our actions going forward. I am confident that those actions will demonstrate our commitment to address this issue seriously and effectively, and will reflect well on the NFL, all member clubs, and everyone who is a part of our league.