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Jury Finds APD Officers Liable

Former State Cop Awarded \$35,000

By Scott Sandlin Journal Staff Writer

Saul Canizales resigned as a State Police officer after a May 2005 confrontation outside a bar with off-duty Albuquerque Police Department officers led to battery charges. The charges were later dropped.

Canizales won another measure of vindication in federal court Thursday when a jury found the APD officers had wrongfully arrested him, used excessive force against him and violated his Fourth Amendment rights with malicious prosecution.

A civil jury hearing a lawsuit brought by Canizales against Sgt. Todd Armendariz, Officers Angelo Lovato and Shawn Willoughby and Sgt. Mark Garcia cleared Armendariz and found liability for the others.

The jury, which heard testimony before U.S. District Judge James O. Browning, awarded him a total of \$35,000 in damages — \$20,000 compensatory damages and \$5,000 in punitives against each of the others.

Canizales was leaving the bar with a friend and fellow State Police officer when he became involved in a verbal exchange and found himself criminally charged by the APD officers.

Canizales was forced to resign his position and hire an attorney. Although the charges were dropped by the District Attorney's Office, the media exposure of the incident made it difficult for him to find another job, said his attorney, Frances Crockett.

"My client was wrongfully abused, detained, arrested, and as a result has suffered greatly at the hands of these officers who believe they are above the law," she said when she filed the lawsuit in 2007.

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