

Jury clears Newark Airport customs agents in ‘rape table’ hazing

By [Joe Tacopino](#)

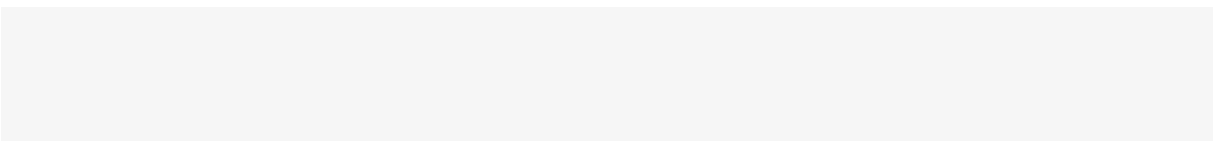
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Parmenio Perez (left) and Michael PapagniRichard Harbus for The New York Post

Two US Customs and Border Protection officers were acquitted Thursday of charges they'd violently hazed fellow workers on a so-called "rape table" at Newark Airport.

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Lawyers for Michael Papagni, 33, of Staten Island, and Parmenio Perez, 41, of Hawthorne, NJ, had argued that any physical contact was merely “horseplay,” and never rose to the level of assault.

“We’re thrilled that the jury saw this for what it was,” Papagni’s lawyer, Joseph Tacopina, told The Post.

“Co-workers engaging in horseplay is not a federal crime. It’s been a tough year and a half for Mike and now he gets his life back.”

Prosecutors had told jurors that the conduct was more than just a prank. One female officer testified she feared for her life, and another said he thought he would suffocate when coworkers covered his head with a plastic bag.

The 2016 accusations stem from a second-floor conference room in Terminal C, where workers claimed multiple armed officers had thrown them, or threatened to throw them, on a so-called “rape table,” where they’d be forced to endure simulated sex acts.

Deliberations had begun on Wednesday.

A third officer, Tito Catota, 38, of Lyndhurst, NJ, pleaded guilty last year to assault.

Additional reporting by Laura Italiano