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IRAQ: For Jose Nazario, the trial and the war are over



A civilian jury Thursday acquitted former Marine Sgt. Jose Luis Nazario in the killings of four Iraqi prisoners during the battle in Fallouja in November 2004. As one of his lawyers told a reporter, the war in Iraq is finally over for Nazario.

Jurors said the U.S. attorney's office left too many unanswered questions and failed to provide any witnesses who saw Nazario shoot any of the Iraqis. Several jurors also said they were uneasy with the notion of civilians sitting in judgment of an action taken by a Marine during combat.

"Who are we to decide what men in war are doing?" juror Nicole Peters, a high school guidance counselor, told

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author and journalist Nathaniel R. Helms, who was covering the trial for www.defendourmarines.com.

For Nazario, the case is over. Not for Sgt. Ryan Weemer and Sgt. Jermaine Nelson. Both face courts martial at Camp Pendleton on murder charges, as well as a Sept. 29 hearing before District Judge Stephen Larson to decide if they should be sentenced to jail for refusing to testify at Nazario's trial.

During the trial, Larson promised Weemer and Nelson that their testimony could not be used against them in their courts martial. Still they wouldn't budge. He made one last attempt, noting that the Marine Corps prides itself on honor and that Weemer and Nelson could show honor by testifying.

"It's my understanding that a Marine has something other than his life, and that's his honor and integrity," Larson said to Weemer. "The court is calling on his honor and integrity, and the Constitution he has sworn to uphold and defend."

Final note: In the audience for several days of the trial was Larson's father, a former Marine.

For more on the verdict, [see the story in The Times](#).

-- Tony Perry, San Diego

Photo: Jose Nazario. Credit: Associated Press



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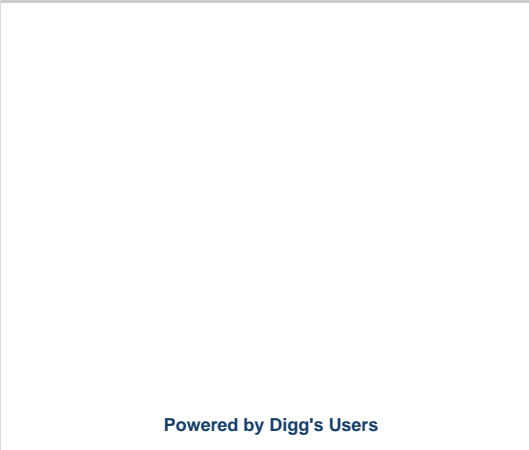
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