

Jury: Former Hartford Officer Not Guilty Of Jail Assault

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HARTFORD — — A jury on Monday found a former Hartford police officer not guilty of assaulting a prisoner in 2009, the officer's lawyer said.

Rhashim Campbell, who was fired from his job after his arrest, was found not guilty of both third-degree assault and tampering with physical evidence, a charge that stemmed from an allegation that he falsified his report of the jail-cell clash. The jury deliberated for an hour and a half, according to the lawyer,

"He's pretty ecstatic," Bonanno said of Campbell, who had been on the force for five years before being terminated. Campbell had appealed his firing before the labor commission prior to the May 3 start of his criminal trial at Superior Court, Bonanno said.

"I think the jury arrived at a not-guilty verdict because the evidence the state had wasn't sufficient to meet its burden of proof," Bonanno said. "I believe the jury did not find the complainant's testimony credible."

The prosecutor, Hartford State's Attorney Gail Hardy, could not be reached for comment Monday night.

The incident, which happened on Nov. 1, 2009, was captured on surveillance video. It happened after prisoner Michael Stewart reached between the bars of his jail cell and touched Campbell in the back of the head in an act that has been described as anything from a "tap" to a "swipe."

The jury saw the video, which shows Campbell going into the cell after Stewart. Campbell pushes and pulls Stewart into a corner, where a second officer joins them. It was hard to tell what the officers are doing on the video, which was displayed on a large screen in the courtroom.

"I believe many of the things that then-Sgt. [Robert] Ford stated on the arrest warrant were not displayed or depicted on the video," Bonanno said. Ford was an internal affairs investigator.

"On behalf of Rhashim Campbell, we thank the jury for seeing the truth," Bonanno said.