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Robert Varley, Register Staff

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A Wallingford Marine reservist beat all six counts Thursday at an Iraq court-martial with the help of a New Haven lawyer.

Staff Sgt. Brian H. Musco, 35, a 17-year veteran on his third tour of duty in the Middle East, was facing charges of dereliction of duties and conduct unbecoming his position.

A Navy investigation alleged Musco didn't report that he received a stolen television set from his subordinates and condoned the thievery.

His attorney, Walter C. Bansley III, a retired 20-year Marine veteran and former Marine attorney, traveled to Al Asad Air Base to represent Musco for free. Bansley was the inspiration for the attorney character portrayed by Tom Cruise in the hit film "A Few Good Men."

"I feel wonderful and thrilled that my son's name and reputation is intact, as it should be," said Musco's mother, Priscilla, of the Northford section of North Branford. "I can't say 'thank you' enough to (Bansley). ... This man knows his military law, and I guess now I can really understand why they made the movie about him."

Musco, married and a father of three, faced the possibility of having his military career end with a bad conduct discharge and 12 months in confinement if convicted.

The court-martial got under way Monday. The military judge, Marine Maj. Michael Gilbert, had already dismissed a charge of fraternization against Musco, Bansley said via e-mail Thursday.

Bansley described it as an "unbelievably complex case tried under unusually different circumstances." It ended when the judge found Musco innocent of the remaining five charges and specifications that alleged dereliction of duty, larceny, receiving stolen property, wrongful concealment and conduct prejudicial to the order and discipline.

Capt. Chris Logan, media officer for the Marine Reserves, could not speak specifically about Musco's case, but said an innocent court-martial verdict had all the same significance as a civilian trial.

Musco, who is an electrician by trade, served as truck master in the Transportation Company, Combat Logistics Battalion, 2nd Force Service Support Group in Anbar Province.

Bansley footed the commercial airfare to the Middle East himself and took three weeks away from his law practice.

"Once a Marine, always a Marine; the Marine Corps' motto of Semper Fidelis (always faithful) is not just a motto, but a code of loyalty that civilians simply cannot understand," he said to explain why he went to Musco's aid.

The two met at a Marine Corps birthday ball 10 years ago.

Bansley said Musco believed he had been singled out for court-martial because of his intense loyalty to his Marine Corps unit from New Haven.

Fellow Marines even made T-shirts emblazoned with the corps' eagle, globe and anchor, and "Free Musco," he said.

Bansley is planning to return to work next week. Coincidentally, Musco and his 39 Connecticut Marines are poised to return to the United States as scheduled within the next two weeks.

"I'm sure the first thing I will do when I see my son is to stand proudly, cry of course, and wait my turn to give him the biggest hug and kiss he has ever had from his mom," Priscilla Musco said.