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## Perseverance reunites mom with abducted children

### Police, agencies, courts join to get youngsters back from Mexico

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Janet Rodriguez was desperate. It had been 16 months since she had been able to see and hold her young son -- not since her ex-boyfriend, the boy's father, whisked him away to Mexico.

Now, she faced a decision. Her ex-boyfriend told her the only way she would ever see her son was to let him see their daughter.

She agreed. But police say it was a cruel trick: Hiram Pazos instead abducted the girl.

That was nine months ago, and Rodriguez had not seen either of her children since.

Until Wednesday.

At a private room at Indianapolis International Airport, their improbable reunion took place, thanks in great part to a police detective's determination, collaboration with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, the cooperation of Mexican police and courts, intervention by Sen. Evan Bayh, D-Ind. -- and a mother's trust in the system.

"I am really happy," Rodriguez, 28, said through a family friend. She agreed to a brief interview at the airport primarily because she wanted to assure local Hispanics that they can trust police.

She came to the United States in 2002. Her children were born in Illinois.

Their father did not have custody rights when he took Hiram on Feb. 26, 2007, and Abif on June 11, 2008. Hiram is now 5, and Abif is 4.

He tried to lure Rodriguez from her home in Indianapolis to see them in Mexico. Once, he even sent word that their son was critically ill.

"Oh, she was just beside herself," said Detective Chester Price of the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department's missing persons unit.

She yearned to go to Mexico, to believe Pazos' assurances, but Price implored her to stay in Indianapolis. There was no telling what Pazos might do to her in Mexico, he said.

And in Mexico, he could not protect her.

She decided to trust him. She stayed here, kept a low profile and cooperated with Price, who didn't want to spook the father into going even further underground.

Price won't go into details -- criminal charges against Pazos remain -- but said he believes Pazos was moving the children to different locations in Mexico.

After months of Price's snooping and searching, pleading and pushing, using confidential informants and official actions, a Mexican court abruptly held a hearing March 19 and ruled in Rodriguez's favor. The court ordered a representative to pick up the children the next day.

Luckily, Rodriguez's mother, Rosa Elva Linares, was visiting family in Mexico. She was able to fly to Mexico City to get the children and drive them to Tijuana.

On Wednesday, they got on a plane in Sacramento, Calif., and flew to Indianapolis.

At first, Price said, the children were a bit tentative during their reunion in an airport conference room. But within minutes, they were in their mama's arms.

"It was a very joyful reunion," Price said. "There were a lot of tears."

Marion County Deputy Prosecutor David Wyser said the office plans to pursue Pazos' extradition and prosecution, but it could take years to resolve.

Warrants for Pazos' arrest on four felonies -- two counts each of criminal confinement and interfering with a custody order -- remain in effect.

Still, Rodriguez worries. Pazos has threatened her, she said.

But Wednesday, her focus was on her children, who fidgeted and clung to her.

"They're going to make a big party this afternoon, and then go home," Rodriguez said.

And in the next few days, she has some shopping to do.

"Si, mucha ropa," Rodriguez said, giggling a little. She'll have to buy "many clothes."

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