



OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COUNTY OF TULARE

Tim Ward, *District Attorney*

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**PRESS RELEASE**

1/7/19

**TCDA CRIMINAL INVESTIGATORS REUNITE CHILD WITH FATHER  
IN NEW ZEALAND**

The holidays were made brighter for a father in New Zealand when criminal investigators from the Bureau of Investigations reunited him with his five-year-old son.

Tu'ineau Domingo Langi filed a request for the return of his son with the Central Authority of New Zealand. His ex-wife, Lata Langi Falekanono had met a Tulare resident on Facebook and began a long distance romance. In September 2017, Ms. Falekanono flew to California to be with her new boyfriend. In 2018, she asked her ex-husband if she could take their son to America for her wedding. Mr. Langi was reluctant at first, but then agreed to allow his ex-wife to bring their son to America for the wedding. Ms. Falekanono assured Mr. Langi she would return their son to New Zealand and showed him a copy of the travel itinerary, demonstrating her plan to return the boy on June 23, 2018. Just days before the expected return date, Ms. Falekanono sent her ex-husband a text message telling him she was not going to return the boy to him.

In 1988, the United States signed an international treaty, the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. This treaty is now in effect between the United States and 77 additional countries. The goal of this treaty is to return children to the country where they were wrongfully taken or retained. In this case, there will likely be custody hearings in New Zealand regarding this matter.

On December 18, 2018, Ms. Falekaono appeared in Superior Court and Mr. Langi was present via telephone from New Zealand. Tulare Superior Court Judge Tara James ordered the return of the minor child to his father in New Zealand. Investigators from the Child Abduction Unit immediately booked flights to New Zealand and returned the boy to his father and extended family in Auckland, New Zealand.

While the Child Abduction Unit is very active and has returned children to their custodial parent(s) all over the United States and Mexico, this is certainly the farthest destination they have traveled for a happy reunion.

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