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PUBLISHED: OCTOBER 16, 2009 10:33AM

### Bulgaria asked to return suspect in parental kidnapping of Titusville boy

By LISA THOMPSON  
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Former local resident and world-traveling software developer Chad Zachary Hower left the country with his 10-year-old son amid a custody dispute three years ago.

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One of Hower's lawyers called the actions a lawful exercise of Hower's custody of the boy, Aarys Oberlander-Hower.

The federal government, in an indictment unsealed Wednesday, called Hower's actions "parental kidnapping."

Hower, a former Titusville resident, was arrested Tuesday in Bulgaria, where he had been scheduled to speak at a conference on Microsoft technologies.

But whether he or his son will be returned to the United States remains to be seen.

The U.S. Attorney's Office said Thursday it is waiting to see whether the Bulgarian government will agree to extradite Hower, 34. The lead prosecutor, Assistant U.S. Attorney Christian Trabold, meanwhile, declined to comment on the

whereabouts of the child, now 13, who was last seen in Titusville in November 2006.

A letter by Hower's lawyer, Neil J. Saltzman of New York, N.Y., which was posted online in 2008, claims the child's mother is named Nancy Oberlander and that she and Hower divorced in Tennessee in 2002. It states further that she moved to Pennsylvania in 2004 and sought to gain custody of the boy through the Venango County courts.

Attempts to locate her for comment Thursday were not successful.

Saltzman indicated in an e-mail to the Times-News on Thursday that he might comment on the case after he has the opportunity to speak with Hower.

The indictment filed in U.S. District Court in Erie charges Hower with one felony count of international parental kidnapping, which is punishable by up to three years in federal prison and a \$250,000 fine.

It charges that Hower removed his son from the country in November 2006 to obstruct the lawful exercise of parental rights.

The indictment and a warrant for Hower's arrest were filed under seal in May. The documents were unsealed Wednesday after Hower was taken into custody in Bulgaria.

Hower, a self-described "eccentric software developer" and public speaker, maintained a blog called Kudzu World, where he wrote extensively on technical software topics and his travel experiences.

Hower said he worked for Microsoft until September 2006, when he blogged that he had a "family issue" that would not permit him to continue his position at Microsoft.

A profile of Hower for the conference this week in Sofia, Bulgaria, said he had visited dozens of countries and had lived in Cyprus, Jordan, Russia and Turkey.

Aarys' photo is posted on numerous sites devoted to missing children. On one, called Between Life and Death: A Few Missing People, a letter from Saltzman was posted in which Saltzman protested that Aarys was not "missing." He said Hower had been awarded custody of the boy by the courts in Knox County, Tenn., in 2005.

He claimed that order remained in effect despite the child's mother's attempt in 2006 to gain custody of the child in Venango

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