

USATODAY NEWS

DALLAS (AP) – A Texas teenager who was deported to Colombia after claiming to be an illegal immigrant was returned to the [United States](#) and remains at the center of an international mystery over how a minor could be sent to a country where she is not a citizen.



By Mike Fuentes, AP

Jakadrien Turner, center, walks with her grandmother Lorene Turner, left, and mother Johnisa Turner at DFW Airport in Fort Worth.

By Mike Fuentes, AP

Jakadrien Turner, center, walks with her grandmother Lorene Turner, left, and mother Johnisa Turner at DFW Airport in Fort Worth.

Jakadrien Lorece Turner's family has questioned why [U.S.](#) officials didn't do more to verify her identity and say the 15-year-old is not fluent in Spanish and had no ties to Colombia. While many facts of the case remain unclear, U.S. and Colombian officials have pointed fingers over who is responsible.

Jakadrien arrived in Dallas on Friday evening and was reunited with her family. She was flanked by her mother, grandmother and law enforcement when she emerged from the international gate at [Dallas-Fort Worth International Airport](#) shortly before 10 p.m.

"She's happy to be home," the family's attorney, [Ray Jackson](#), said, adding that the family would not be issuing any statements Friday night.

He said the family was "ecstatic" to have Jakadrien back in Texas and they plan to "do what we can to make sure she gets back to a normal life."

Immigration experts say that while cases of mistaken identity are rare, people can slip through the cracks, especially if they don't have legal help or family members working on their behalf. But they say U.S. immigration authorities had the responsibility to determine if a person is a citizen.

Jakadrien's saga began when the teen ran away more than a year ago. Houston police said the girl was arrested on April 2, 2011, for misdemeanor theft in that city and claimed to be Tika Lanay Cortez, a Colombian woman born in 1990. It was unclear if she has been living under that name. Houston police said in a statement that her name was run through a database to determine if she was wanted by Immigration and Customs Enforcement but the results were negative. She was then turned over to the [Harris County](#) jail and booked on the theft charge.

The county sheriff's office said it ran her through the available databases and did the interviews necessary to establish her identity and immigration status in the country, with negative results. A sheriff's office employee recommended that an immigration detainer be put on her, and upon her release from jail she was turned over to ICE.

U.S. immigration officials insist they followed procedure and found nothing to indicate that the girl wasn't a Colombian woman living illegally in the country.

An ICE official said the teen claimed to be Cortez throughout the criminal proceedings in Houston and the ensuing deportation process, in which an immigration judge ultimately ordered her back to Colombia.

Standard procedure before any deportation is to coordinate with the other country in order to establish that person is from there, the ICE official said.

The ICE official, speaking on condition of anonymity due to not being authorized to discuss additional details of the case, said the teenager was interviewed by a representative from the Colombian consulate and that country's government issued her a travel document to enter Colombia.

Jakadrien was issued travel documents at the request of U.S. officials using information they provided, the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs said. Colombian officials are investigating what kind of verification was conducted by its Houston consulate to issue the temporary passport. The girl was given Colombian citizenship upon arriving in that country, the ICE official said. According to the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the girl was enrolled in the country's "Welcome Home" program after she arrived there. She was given shelter, psychological assistance and a job at a call center, a statement from the agency said.

"If she looked like an adult, and she told them she was a 21-year-old Colombian citizen, and she didn't show up in their databases, this was inevitable," said Albert Armendariz, an immigration attorney from [El Paso](#).

Jakadrien's family says they have no idea why she ended up in Colombia. Johnisa Turner said the girl is a U.S. citizen who was born in Dallas and was not fluent in Spanish. She said neither she nor the teen's father had ties to Colombia. Jakadrien's grandmother, Lorene Turner, called the deportation a "big mistake somebody made."

Copyright 2012 The Associated Press. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.