

## ATTORNEY SAYS WOMAN TOOK INFANT TO ADOPT

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**Byline:** COLLEEN JENKINS, Times Staff Writer

**Dateline:** TAMPA

**Highlight:** Amalia Tabata Pereira, accused of stealing an infant, asked to get her bail reduced.

### **Body**

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The wife of a minor league baseball player wanted to adopt the baby she is accused of stealing, her attorney said Tuesday.

Amalia Tabata Pereira, 43, has been jailed for two weeks, ever since authorities said she posed as an immigration official and threatened a Mexican mother in Plant City with deportation if she didn't give her 2-month-old girl to Pereira.

She was hoping Tuesday to get her \$750,000 bail reduced.

But Assistant State Attorney Jennifer Gabbard said the steep bail was appropriate for the case's "unusual and egregious" set of facts. They include Pereira leaving the county with the baby and telling her 20-year-old husband, Jose Tabata, an outfielder in the Pittsburgh Pirates' farm system, that the child was theirs.

The prosecutor said the Hillsborough State Attorney's Office plans to upgrade a false imprisonment charge against Pereira to kidnapping, a first-degree felony punishable by life in prison.

She also is charged with interference with child custody and impersonating a public officer.

"She took advantage of their immigration status," Gabbard said.

Pereira previously served nearly three years in prison after being convicted of charges including arson, grand theft and filing a false crime report. She was released in 2003.

William Malachowski, an assistant public defender, called the latest allegations "inflated."

Pereira, a mother of four, returned the baby to law enforcement a day after her encounter with the child's mother outside the Plant City Health Center. She did so as soon as she learned there was an Amber Alert for the missing child, he said.

Authorities have no proof, he said, that his client impersonated an immigration official.

"Well, what did she do, find the baby on the side of the road?" Hillsborough Judge Walter Heinrich asked.

"She was looking to adopt the baby," the attorney said.

The judge turned to the prosecutor. Was there any evidence of an adoption in the works?

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"No sir," Gabbard **said**. "There was nothing about any **adoption**."

"Well, I guess we'll see in the future," the judge **said**. "Motion denied."

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## Graphic

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PHOTO: Amalia Tabata Pereira, 43, could be charged with kidnapping.

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