

# Christian Heavy Metal Singer Pleads Not Guilty in Calif. Murder-for-Hire Case

Heavy metal singer Tim Lambesis, the frontman for Christian rock band As I Lay Dying, pleaded not guilty on Thursday to a charge of soliciting the murder of his estranged wife.

North San Diego County Superior Court Judge Martin Staven set bail for Lambesis at \$3 million. He ordered Lambesis to surrender his passport, stay away from his wife Meggan and their three children and remain in San Diego county except to meet with his attorney.

If convicted, Lambesis faces up to nine years in prison.

Lambesis, 32, was arrested at a bookstore in Oceanside, north of San Diego, on Tuesday after he tried to hire an undercover sheriff's deputy to kill Meggan Lambesis, according to Deputy District Attorney Claudia Grasso. Meggan Lambesis had filed for divorce in September after eight years of marriage, according to court records.

The singer gave the man he knew as 'Red' an envelope containing \$1,000 in cash, photos of his wife, her address and codes to get through the security gates of her home, and a list of dates that would work well because he would have their three adopted children with him, Grasso said.

"The children would be his alibi," Grasso said at a news conference after the hearing, which was attended by more than 40 of Lambesis' friends, family and fans.

Lambesis' attorney, Anthony Salerno, said his client was set up. "If I had to hang a tag on it, I'd call it a scumbag snitch set-up," Salerno said. "Law enforcement was fed

something by someone who effectively orchestrated the whole thing ... He did not intend to harm anybody.”

Lambesis sent his wife an email in August while he was on tour, telling her he no longer loved her or believed in God, Grasso said. His wife also found he was having an affair and “there had been a string of other women,” she said.

The prosecutor said Lambesis asked an acquaintance from his gym if he could find someone to kill his wife.

The gym friend arranged for him to meet with an undercover Sheriff’s Department detective on Tuesday, to whom Lambesis gave the envelope of cash and information, Grasso said.

Salerno said he believed Lambesis did not want to harm his wife and had never done so in the past, noting the singer has no history of domestic violence or any arrests.

“Tim was mostly disappointed that it was going the way it was, he didn’t feel it was good for his children,” Salerno said. “The rest, I think will come out, that he was set up.”

He also told the court that the restrictions on Lambesis to stay in San Diego County will affect the band’s ability to tour and earn a living.

“The band has a tour scheduled,” Salerno told the judge. “There’s many people who depend on him. If he can’t go that would be to the detriment of many, many people.”

Lambesis is due to return to court for a preliminary hearing on July 10.

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