

## 2nd man accused of raping NJ girl appears in court

AARON MORRISON · Associated Press Writer · April 9, 2010

TRENTON, N.J. (AP) — A second man accused of participating in the gang-rape of a 7-year-old New Jersey girl appeared to cry Friday during a hearing where a judge set his bail at \$300,000.

Timear Lewis, 19, appeared by video link to face aggravated assault and child endangerment charges while public defender Chauvron Regis unsuccessfully sought to lower the amount.

"He is a lifelong resident of Trenton and has no where else to go," Regis said. "He is not a flight risk."

Lewis seemed to cry when relatives entered the courtroom.

Lewis' mother, Terry, left without commenting. A day earlier, she had convinced the girl's stepfather to speak in her son's defense outside the Mercer County Courthouse.

Terry Lewis claimed on Thursday that her son had been the first person to ask why the 7-year-old girl was present at the March 28 party, where police said the child's 15-year-old stepsister sold her to have sex.

"Before I die, before my last breath, my son will be vindicated. He was there, but he didn't touch anyone," Terry Lewis said.

Besides Lewis, 20-year-old Gregory Leary is being

held on \$500,000 bail, accused of having sex with both the 7-year-old and the teenage girls.

Three boys ages 13, 14 and 17 also are charged.

The 7-year-old girl's stepfather claims Lewis, Leary and the 17-year-old boy tried to help the girl.

The Associated Press generally does not identify people alleging sex crimes and is not naming the stepfather to avoid identifying the girl.

Trenton Mayor Doug Palmer said he remains confident in the case built by investigators.

"Talking to the police and the prosecutor's office, they are very confident in the arrests that were made," Palmer said on Friday. "In a case of this magnitude, no one wants to do the wrong thing."

Palmer met with the 7-year-old girl and members of her family at City Hall last week, but did not meet the stepfather. The two spoke on the phone and the stepfather was upset about the crime against his stepdaughter, Palmer said.

Trenton community activists are organizing a Saturday rally at a local church to urge a stop to violence against children.

Associated Press writer Beth DeFalco contributed to this report.

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