

MEET THE PRESS, NBC TV, Sunday 1p.m. April 7, 1968

Guest: Ramsey Clark, U.S. Attorney General

Question: (About progress in identifying and apprehending the person or persons who murdered Martin Luther King)

Answer: We have a lead that we are working on. Whether it proves to be the correct lead remains to be seen.

Question: Was your optimistic prediction on Friday of catching the assassin just an attempt to cool things off or did you ^{really} have someone in mind at that time?

Answer: We have a very substantial amount of physical evidence. We remain optimistic, and as I said in Memphis Friday, very hopeful that we can have an early successful conclusion to our investigation, followed by indictment, prosecution and conviction.

Question: Have ballistic tests shown that you do have the murder weapon?

Answer: Ballistic tests have been made and such evidence as they give will be used, in court, and soon, I hope.

Question: Are you certain only one assassin was involved?

Answer: We cannot be absolutely ~~positive~~. Our evidence still points very strongly in that direction. We have no evidence of the involvement of more than one person at this time.

Question: It was said the trail stretched several hundred miles. That could be to Georgia, or Alabama, or also to Illinois or Nebraska. What did you mean by that?

Answer: The trail has lengthened since the press conference on Friday. I do not believe it would be appropriate for me to specify places to which it has taken us. But we are running down every lead and we are devoting every possible investigative resource to solve this very terrible murder.

(The questions above were asked by Carl Stern of NBC News.)

Question: Murder is not a federal offense...and I wonder whether in order to prosecute this case the Justice Department will try to maintain the conspiracy idea. If you don't find more than one person involved in the assassination, will you then give this case to the State of Tennessee, which has (capital punishment)...?

Answer: Federalism requires, and our policy has always been, when a crime of this nature is committed, to defer to the State when there is reason to believe that its laws will be fairly and effectively enforced and prosecutions follow. I have no doubt, no doubt at this time, that on the apprehension of this murderer the authorities of Tennessee would prosecute with all the vigor at their command.

Question: Can you say, with the evidence you now have...what the latest time of the arrest will be?

Answer: No, I cannot. We will do everything we can to make it as soon as possible.

Question: You indicated the search was spreading for the killer of Dr. King. Does that mean you have one man on the run, or tracing a chain of organization that may have supported that assassin?

Answer: Our judgment at this time is that we have evidence of one man on the run. I should say further, though, that we are ~~maintaining~~ tracking down every lead, every possible lead. In a situation like this, you get a lot of bad leads, but we are not turning them off simply because they seem unlikely, and therefore this has spread since the day before yesterday.

Question: We had a description of a man about 5 feet 11 with a long nose and so on. Do we know anything more today, two days later, than we knew two days ago?

Answer: We know quite a bit more today than we knew two days ago and we hope we can show you a picture of exactly what he looks like before too long. That's our purpose and we're working with all of our heart on it.

Question: Do you mean a photograph?

Answer: When we have the man we can have a photograph. I'm sure the press will provide some.

Haynes Johnson: Were FBI agents assigned to watch Martin Luther King in Memphis?

Answer: The federal government has no jurisdiction to provide protection to private citizens. It has a very limited jurisdiction to provide protection to its own citizens. Of course the Secret Service watches the President and a few other public officials and of course we are involved all the time in investigation to develop intelligence and in co-ordination with state and local law enforcement. There was a heavy FBI presence in Memphis before, at, and after this incident, but we have no authority and under our system of government could have no authority for direct protective services.

Question: If there was a federal presence in Memphis at the time, and before, at, and after the assassination, how was it possible for this man to escape?

Answer: The federal presence that was there and has been involved for several years at least...in watching activities around Dr. King and other people...we have to, we've known how dangerous the situation is, but ~~this~~ this was a carefully planned assault. When you look at the physical location, you can see how strategic the position of the assassin was at the time the shot was fired. An escape in an environment such as that, with all the traffic and all the excitement that was in the city before this happened, is something that's quite understandable under the circumstances.

Question: In view of that, sir, why didn't the federal presence there advise

Dr. King against a second floor balcony room where he was so exposed...?

Answer: Dr. King has lived his life realizing the risks...There have been discussions with many people as to how he should conduct himself and he made this decision knowing those risks...You must remember that the local presence always exceeds the federal presence many,many times over...Our presence is a very limited presence.