Foreman Version

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Lawyer Percy Foreman says James Earl Ray readily pleaded guilty to the murder of Martin Luther King Jr. because Ray believed he could escape from jail within two years.

Foreman's assertion came in a deposition read in U.S. District Court in Memphis yesterday in a hearing to determine whether Ray may withdraw the plea and go to trial. Ray claims he said he was guilty only under heavy pressure from Foreman, then his lawyer.

Foreman said in the deposition that he was convinced Ray acted alone out of a hatred for blacks and a desire to become the "champion of the white race."

The hearing ended yesterday. U.S. District Judge Robert McRae Jr., didn't say when he might rule but indicated he would be working on the case at least through the Christmas holidays.