Ray Files Libel Suit In Federal Court

ST. LOUIS (UPI) — James Earl Ray, convicted assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has filed a libel suit against the U.S. Justice Department and an Illinois sheriff's deputy for providing false allegations against Ray to the news media.

In the suit, filed yesterday in U.S. District Court in St. Louis, Ray said Justice Department employees and Madison County, Ill., Sheriff's Deputy Conrad "Pete" Baetz provided "false and poisonous" allegations to the media.

Baetz was a former investigator for the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations, which said that Ray and his brother, John Larry Ray, may have robbed an Alton bank in 1967 to finance the King slaying in Memphis.

Ray asked the court to order the defendants to present evidence of the alleged criminal acts and to award him $25,000 in actual damages and $50,000 in punitive damages.

Ray offered to waive the statute of limitations and other rights and stand trial on the alleged criminal offenses. His only condition was that the government refrain from calling as witnesses convicts or ex-convicts from the Missouri and Tennessee prison systems.

MEMPHIS PRESS-SCIMITAR, THURSDAY, JULY 24, 1980