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By Associated Press

Atlanta and New York

While the nation mourned the death of Dr. Martin L. King yesterday at the hands of an assassin, the FBI sought for the suspected slayer of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., entered its files with no sign of success.

While the FBI will make no comment on the case, a Justice Department official conceded that while some investigations have paid off well for the police there — that Dr. King's assassin may never be found and may be dead.

While the FBI continued to seek a worldwide audience for the suspect, James Earl Ray, the Justice official said:

"The chances of capturing Ray have dimmed with time because time dries recollections and obscures evidence. And it is not unlikely, despite a host of evidence, that Ray was killed by someone who may have conspired with him against Dr. King."

The statement of the official, who would not permit use of his name, conflicts sharply with

Attorney General Ramsey Clark's earlier public pronouncements that he believed Ray was alive and would be caught.

Dr. King was struck by a sniper's bullet as he stood talking on a Memphis motel balcony April 4 — nine weeks ago last Thursday. The FBI traced Ray to Atlanta where agents were told he was seen the day after the murder. There the trail ends.

At Henry W. Ford in Atlanta, Ray managed to board a plane headed south to Miami where he boarded another plane that took him out of the country. Officials of virtually all free world nations have been alerted to watch for him. A meticulous FBI check of airlines serving Atlanta turned up nothing.

The FBI, deluged with tips about Ray in the weeks immediately following Dr. King's death, still gets hundreds every week, but not as many as before.

"All it needs," said a more optimistic official, "is one — the right one. And it could come any hour of any day."

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The Daily News
may hope some
red faces

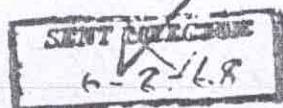
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