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States Rights Leader Says Ray Will Try to Change Guilty Plea

SAVANNAH, Ga. (AP) — Edward R. Fields, chairman of the National States Rights party, said Tuesday James Earl Ray definitely will try to change his plea of guilty to the charge of killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Fields said Ray will try to

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plead innocent and seek a new trial. The head of the militantly segregationist NSRP said he was acting as spokesman for J. B. Stoner, who said last week he would represent Ray in a libel action against several national magazines.

Shortly afterward Stoner said Fields was mistaken.

Stoner said he was "attorney for Mr. Ray only on civil matters."

Asked whether he would represent Ray in efforts to win a new trial, he said: "I have no present plans. I have some information on the subject but at the present time I'd rather not comment on it."

Ray pleaded guilty March 10 to last year's sniper-slaying of King in Memphis, Tenn. He was sentenced to 99 years.

Since his sentencing, there have been reports that Ray wanted to change his plea to innocent and face a first degree murder trial.

Stoner conferred with Ray in the prison Saturday.

Memphis court officials said Tuesday nothing had been filed in connection with the Ray case since his brief trial ended after his guilty plea.

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