

Ray Sues for Release of FBI Wiretaps on King

By Allan Frank
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James Earl Ray has sued the National Archives in an effort to force the release of tapes he says were made by the FBI of telephone conversations of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.

Ray claims the tapes would help exonerate him. Those tapes, which he quotes journalists as saying were compiled by the FBI from 1963 to 1968,

were ordered transferred from the FBI to the archives and sealed for 50 years last year by U.S. District Judge John Lewis Smith Jr. in order to protect the privacy of the King family and people who were overheard during the surveillance.

In a five-page civil complaint Ray apparently wrote himself at Brushy Mountain Prison in Petros, Tenn., Ray claimed the tapes should be examined by the House Select Committee on Assassinations.

HOWEVER, the committee already has looked at transcripts of tapes made by the FBI of King's telephone conversations from 1963 to 1966 which were released by the archives on an order by Smith about a month ago.

A government source familiar with the FBI transcripts said the surveillance stopped in 1966, not 1968, and that there is no possible relationship between James Earl Ray and what was in those tapes.

Ray's suit, which was filed yesterday and will be considered by U.S. District Judge Harold Greene,

said that the assassinations committee should join him in the suit against the archives. The government source said the committee already has seen the tape transcripts and is unlikely to take up Ray's invitation to become co-plaintiffs.

THE COMPLAINT was submitted by mail to the court by his brother Jerry, who told the assassinations committee, "I think on behalf of James, if we get the FBI files out of the archives, we'll find out who did kill Martin Luther King."

Ray asked the court to ignore the numerous technical and grammatical errors in his filing and asked Green to regard the suit "in the law and spirit that the court's judge's colleague, Hon. John Sirica, approached and adjudicated the Watergate affair."

The convicted killer of King also said without any elaboration, "The purpose of the National Archives is to preserve records and make them available to scholars and the general public, not to cover up political murders and perpetuate the blackmailing of politicians."