

U.S. plans new review of King slaying

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WASHINGTON — The Justice Department yesterday reopened its investigation into the 1968 assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., but said its new inquiry will be much narrower than the late civil-rights leader's family had hoped.

Attorney General Janet Reno said she directed a review of allegations that convicted assassin James Earl Ray, who died in April, was part of a conspiracy.

King's widow, Coretta Scott King, had asked for a more extensive investigation, but yesterday said she welcomes Reno's decision as "a first step toward revealing the truth."

Last year King's son Dexter embraced Ray in a prison hospital and claimed the federal government had plotted his father's slaying to silence his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Reno's inquiry will focus on claims by Donald Wilson, a former FBI agent who said he removed papers suggesting a conspiracy from Ray's car, and by Lloyd Jowers, a former Memphis bar owner who has claimed he was paid \$100,000 by a produce dealer to arrange the assassination.

In March Wilson said the papers lent credence to Ray's claim that he was set up by a man named "Raoul." But the FBI said Wilson was not part of the team that searched the car. And Tennessee authorities have dismissed Jowers' claim, saying he has changed his story several times.

Barry Kowalski, who prosecuted the Los Angeles police officers who beat Rodney King, will lead the review. Reno and FBI Director Louis Freeh decided the FBI will not participate, officials said. The King family has made no secret of its distrust of the FBI, which spied on the civil-rights leader during the 1960s.

The Rev. Louis Coleman, a Louisville civil-rights activist, welcomed the investigation. "There's always been a belief around the civil-rights community that it was not a one-man effort," he said.

Blaine Hudson, an associate professor of Pan-African Studies at the University of Louisville, also wel-

comed the review but said, "I don't expect to get a definitive analysis of what happened to people like King or (President John F.) Kennedy until probably another generation from now . . . once all of the actors have left the stage." He said the assassination happened in an era when officials who knew of the threat of violence didn't always act to stop it.

Staff writer Darla Carter contributed to this story.