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Assassin Hunt Turns To Mexico

MEMPHIS (UPI) — The assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. may have fled the country, according to indications today. The FBI has asked Mexican authorities to aid in the search.

A police spokesman in Mexico City said yesterday that a drawing of the suspect, a composite of descriptions by persons who saw the white sniper in the Memphis rooming house from where King was shot, has been distributed throughout Mexico and at border crossing points.

The Mexican spokesman refused to divulge any further information.

U.S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark, in Washington, said yesterday the "trail has lengthened" since Friday, the day after King slumped to his death on a motel balcony with a gaping rifle bullet wound in his neck.

The FBI has "one man on the run," Clark said. "We have a name, but whether it is the right name remains to be seen."

"We hope he'll be under arrest quite soon. The focus is sharpening and we are quite close, we think, but that depends on how some of the leads we have develop."

The assassin was described by the landlady who rented him a room the day of the slaying as a man with a sharp nose, square chin, black hair receding on the sides, and "a silly smile." He is about six feet tall and between 26 and 32 years old, witnesses said.

Police said he was cool and quick-acting.

He chose a "flophouse" across the street from the Lorraine, apparently not because it offered any better view than several other buildings in the area, but because it was closer. The fatal shot traveled 205 feet, three inches from the communal bathroom, where the killer stood in a grimy bathtub to take aim, to the balcony where King was standing.

After the slaying, the assassin walked down a hallway and encountered the man who occupied a room next to his.

"Was that a shot?" asked the roomer.

"Yes, it was," the killer coolly replied, and kept walking to his room.

During the confusion, he left the rooming house, dumped the weapon — a 30-06 Remington pump rifle — and a suitcase in a nearby amusement center, got into a car and "just faded away."