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Ray-Court 230

LONDON AP - James Earl Ray appears in court Tuesday for a routine custody hearing while British lawyers prepare his appeal against an order extraditing him to the United States to stand trial as the accused assassin of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The court-appointed lawyers expect to file the appeal on Wednesday in Britain's High Court, on the grounds that the Negro civil rights leader's murder was a political crime and therefore Ray is barred from extradition under British law. A hearing is tentatively set for July 29.

The hearing in Bow Street Magistrates Court Tuesday is expected to be brief. Under British court procedure, defendants held without bail must be produced in court every seven days to be given a chance to state any objections before a judge.

Arrested at London Airport June 8, Ray is held on charges of entering the country on a forged Canadian passport and carrying an unlicensed pistol. The British police are not expected to drop these charges until he is out of the country and in U.S. custody.

Ray's extradition was ordered on July 2 by Chief Magistrate Frank Milton, and Ray was given 15 days until this Wednesday to appeal to the High Court. If he decides not to press the appeal he could be on a plane to the United States on Wednesday night or Thursday.

But his British lawyers expect to go ahead with the case to give his American lawyer, Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ala., more time to prepare his defense in the United States.  
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