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By BILL JOHNSON

Associated Press Writer

MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - The cloak of secrecy around James Earl Ray was buttoned even tighter Tuesday under a new court order forbidding attorneys and other court officers from making virtually any comments in the case.

The order handed down by Judge W. Preston Battle forbids those connected with the case regardless of how remotely from granting interviews or holding press conferences.

It enjoined them from making any out-of-court comments on a specific list of subjects or "any and all other statements which may be prejudicial to a fair trial by an impartial jury in this case."

Specifically ruled out were any comments on legal strategy.

Battle, the judge who will preside over Ray's trial for murder in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., acted after a committee of eight attorneys reported it found "probable cause" to believe his previous no-publicity edict had been violated.

The committee's report said these probable violations arose from statements made by U.S. Atty. Gen. Ramsey Clark; Sheriff William W. Morris Jr.; Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ray's attorney, and Memphis attorney Russell X. Thompson.

Battle's order said further inquiry into and disposition of the alleged violations - apparently meaning possible contempt of court citations - would be reserved until later "in the interest of preserving the constitutional rights of all concerned and protecting the orderly preparation and progress of the trial."

He did not indicate what he would do to subsequent violators.

Battle had named the committee of attorneys on Sunday, one day after Hanes in an airport press conference here had charged that Ray's rights were being violated by the tight security precautions at the county jail.

Hanes also said King was slain here April 4 as part of a "Communist left-wing conspiracy" and that Ray was a victim of the same plot.

Morris was mentioned for statements he made during a press conference in which he discussed the cost of providing security for Ray "and the prisoner's demeanor and attitude while in confinement."

The report pointed out that Clark, as U.S. Attorney General, is a "law enforcement officer" or "a lawyer participating in this case" through staff investigators. It said his statement "to the effect that there was no evidence of a conspiracy in the shooting" of King also probably violated the order.

The order, which Battle said was intended as a supplement to his earlier order "to avoid any possible misunderstanding," was directed specifically to all attorneys in the case; all law enforcement officers; all public officials who will participate in the trial in any manner; and all employees of the criminal courts building.

It specifically enjoined out-of-court statements about the case on Ray's guilt or innocence; plans, techniques or strategy for the trial; the jurors or potential jurors; the merits of the case or any evidence; the credibility or information about any witnesses, or the treatment, acts and attitude of Ray.

Ray's trial is set for Nov. 12.

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