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MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - Judge W. Preston Battle today insisted the trial of James Earl Ray on charges of murder in the death of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. start on schedule March 3.

But, in an unprecedented action, the Memphis Criminal Court judge ordered the public defender's office to assign as many persons as necessary to work with defense attorney Percy Foreman.

Battle made his ruling after Foreman explained that he "works alone" and it would be impossible to duplicate the \$1.4-million pretrial investigation which he said was conducted by the FBI and was available to the prosecution.

Ray appeared in court and swore under oath that he has neither "money or property" and therefore falls under the indigent category of Tennessee law.

Battle said "this is an unusual case, it is not an ordinary run-of-the-mill case." On that basis he ordered the public defender's office to give Foreman help in preparing Ray's defense.

The trial; 3rd graf a054.

END REPEAT

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MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - The lawyer who took the case little over a month ago is expected to say today when he will be ready to defend James Earl Ray, the man accused of killing Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Houston attorney Percy Foreman goes before Criminal Court Judge W. Preston Battle to say if March 3 can be fixed as the date for the trial to start, or another continuance will be required.

The trial had been set for Nov. 12 but was postponed when Ray suddenly fired Arthur J. Hanes of Birmingham, Ala., and hired Foreman two days before the trial would have begun.

Battle has set tentative trial date for March 3.

Ray is accused of the sniper slaying of King on April 4 when King was in Memphis aiding the city's striking garbage collectors.

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