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Ray Ld AO25

By JOHN VAN MOL

Associated Press Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray went into federal court today to argue that his confinement in the maximum security section of the Tennessee State Penitentiary here constitutes cruel and inhuman punishment.

Ray, serving 99 years for the sniper slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was transferred during a heavy rainstorm from the prison to a cell in the federal courthouse before dawn today. He was guarded closely by 10 carloads of state and federal officers.

Ray, appearing pale after 18 months behind bars here and in Memphis, was shackled as he was whisked into the courthouse. He claims maximum security confinement violates his rights and is damaging his health.

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Ray 240

By JOHN VAN MOL

Associated Press Writer

NASHVILLE, Tenn. AP - James Earl Ray seeks to persuade a federal judge today that his maximum security confinement at the Tennessee State Penitentiary constitutes "cruel and inhuman punishment."

Ray, serving 99 years for the sniper slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., claims the confinement violates his rights and is damaging his health.

U.S. Dist. Court Judge William E. Miller ruled that Ray should be present at the hearing, but denied a state motion that he be give a physical examination first.

The state maintains Ray's confinement is for his own good and that his health is fine.

Ray contended in a hand-written petition that it is causing him "untild anxiety, apprehension and ill health" to the point that he believes he "cannot cope with it further."

Among those Ray's attorneys subpoenaed for the hearing were a male nurse and doctor from the prison.

Ray's lawyers also sought to call the chief of Vandervilt Hospital's psychology section, but Miller reserved judgment on that until today.

Ray has been under tight security since his arrest in London after King's assassination in Memphis, April 4, 1968. He was held in a special cell in the Shelby County jail while awaiting trial and was brought to the prison March 11, the day after he pleaded guilty.

Ray has remained in maximum security since then except for one trip to Memphis where his bid for a new trial on the basis that his guilty plea was forced upon him was turned down.

An appeal of that ruling was turned down by the state Court of Criminal Appeals. An appeal to the state Supreme Court is pending.

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