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MEMPHIS, Tenn. AP - Charles G. Stevens, identified as a key witness against James Earl Ray in the slaying of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., has been taken into protective custody.

"He wasn't as impressed at the danger as police and the district attorney general's staff were," a source said in confirming that Stevens had been talked into submitting to protective custody. Stevens is expected to remain in custody for several months, since Ray's trial is not anticipated before late fall.

Ray is expected to appeal the London court's order that he can be extradited to the United States. It was during the extradition hearing last week that an attorney said Stevens saw Ray in the rooming house from which police say the fatal bullet was fired.

Stevens had lived in the rooming house at the time, but he had not been found by newsmen in recent weeks. The source said that police approached him Wednesday about being taken into protective custody.

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