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With Ray Biographer 270

NASHVILLE, Tenn. AP - The Nashville Tennessean said Monday James Earl Ray will claim he was only a "decoy" in a plot to kill Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in answer to the state's circumstantial case that he was the lone assassin.

In a dispatch written by reporter Jim Squires from Memphis where King was shot to death April 4, the Tennessean story said "sources close to the case say that Ray's defense will contend at his trial next month he was promised '\$12,000 to \$15,000' to lead police away from the real killers and become the lure in the greatest manhunt in history."

The prosecution, however, will subpoena witnesses to support its claim that Ray acted alone in the murder and that there is no evidence to support a conspiracy theory, the newspaper said.

The Tennessean said Dist. Atty. Gen. Phil Canale of Memphis and defense attorney Arthur Hanes, both under a strict court order against public statements, declined to comment about reports concerning their trial strategy.

The newspaper said numerous sources indicate "the defense will claim Ray played only a small part in a master plot so complex and far-reaching that even Ray does not know who masterminded it."

The Tennessean story added that "the state has a long list of witnesses they want to put on to show Ray didn't associate with any particular groups of men...to show it wasn't a conspiracy."

The story went on:

"The path left by Hanes and his investigators in preparing the defense indicates Ray will concede as true much of what the FBI has disclosed about his movements before and after King was gunned down on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel.

"But it will dispute prosecution claims the fatal shots were fired by Ray from a second floor bathroom window in a seedy flop house...205 feet away from the motel.

"Instead, the defense will attempt to show that the shots that killed King came from somewhere else, possibly fired by one or more persons from the ground level near the boarding house."

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The Tennessean said the defense theory is that all of Ray's movements in Memphis were to set him up as the killer. It said the defense will contend Ray was hired to go to Memphis, leave behind certain evidence, including a rifle, and then, as "the decoy," speed away in a white Mustang which was found in Atlanta.

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