Atlanta City Map, Thumbprint Identified James Earl Ray

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WASHINGTON.—On a carefully marked city map found in a hippie-inhabited boarding house in Atlanta, FBI agents found a thumb-print that enabled them positively to identify the suspected slayer of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

They found the map April 14—10 days after Dr. King was murdered in Memphis. Since then the trail of the suspect, James Earl Ray, has dead-ended.

Although thousands of tips have been tracked down by agents in the FBI's 6,600-man force with no success since the map was found, federal officials do not subscribe to the theory Ray may be dead—the victim of someone who hired him to kill King.

"We have no indication he is dead," said an official. "We figure he is alive—somewhere."

On the city map of Atlanta which bore Ray's thumbprint, four key locations had been circled in pencil—Dr. King's Atlanta residence, the office of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference which he headed, the boarding house where the map was found, and the parking lot where Ray abandoned a white Mustang the morning after Dr. King was killed.

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THE FBI BELIEVES Ray drove the Mustang to Atlanta during the night after the murder, abandoned the car about dawn the next day, took two taxi rides to locations near Peachtree Street—and then vanished.

Agents found the abandoned car April 11. It bore license tags issued to Eric Starvo Galt—a name the FBI said Ray used to mask his true identity.

Two days later, agents combing Atlanta for the mysterious "Galt" got a tip that he had previously rented a room at a boarding house known to be a popular hangout for hippies.

They immediately staked out the rooming house and early the next day went to the room where they had been told "Galt" might be found.

There they found a TV set they later learned "Galt" had obtained in a trade with a girl friend in Los Angeles and the map bearing the thumbprint. Whether "Galt" had used the room after Dr. King's death is not known.

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THE MAP WITH THE THUMBPRINT was flown to FBI laboratories here. After a painstaking, round-the-clock search of the fingerprints of 53,000 wanted criminals on file here, lab technicians hit pay dirt on April 19.

By matching the thumbprint on the map to one in their files they determined that Eric Starvo Galt was really James Earl Ray, an habitual criminal who had escaped from the Missouri State Penitentiary on April 23, 1967. Galt was only one of several aliases he had used.

After the thumbprint found in Atlanta was matched to Ray's thumbprint here, the FBI also was able to match up other partial prints Ray had left on the white Mustang and on the rifle from which a single, fatal shot was fired at Dr. King.

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RAY, WHO WAS SAID to be penniless when he escaped from the Missouri Penitentiary, is known to have spent more than $4,000 during the 11 months between the time of his escape and Dr. King's murder. He paid $1,195 cash for the Mustang in Birmingham, $700 for bartending and dance lessons in Hollywood, Calif., and traveled more than 19,000 miles—including trips to Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, and Montreal, Canada.

The FBI has found no evidence Galt held a job during this period, nor has it found that Galt was hired by anyone to kill King, though the possibility of such a conspiracy has not been ruled out.

The suspicion is that Galt, a convicted thief and armed robber, plied his trade as a second-rate criminal to get the cash he spent.