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Sprague Quits Probe Of JFK, King Deaths

WASHINGTON (UPI) — Richard Sprague has resigned as chief counsel of the troubled House Assassinations Committee to boost chances for House approval of further investigation into the deaths of John Kennedy and the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

The move by the controversial Sprague, who prosecuted the Yablonski murder case, came only hours after the

apparent Florida suicide yesterday of a "crucial witness" in the Kennedy assassination.

A close House vote was expected later today on whether to continue the life of the committee, which is scheduled to expire tomorrow.

A committee spokesman indicated Sprague's resignation was aimed at influencing the House to approve continuation of a probe into the assassinations.

Sprague recently won a bitter power battle with former committee Chairman Henry Gonzalez, D-Tex., and forced Gonzalez's resignation. Gonzalez fired Sprague, but the counsel stayed on the job with support of other committee members.

Sprague submitted a brief letter of resignation to committee Chairman Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, shortly after a meeting with Stokes and other committee members.

"I am hereby submitting my resignation effective immediately as chief counsel and staff director of the Committee on Assassinations. I do so with the hope that the Congress can now proceed with the challenge of seeing that these investigations are pursued promptly," Sprague said.

In Palm Beach, police said a Russian-born college teacher—apparently distressed that he would be asked to testify before the committee—shot himself to death.

George de Mohrenchild, 65, earlier quoted as saying he had prior knowledge of Kennedy's murder, apparently shot himself with a 20-gauge shotgun after learning a committee staff investigator tried to reach him by telephone, police said.