

Texan aims to open House JFK files

Rep. Gonzalez says 2029 seal is 'abhorrent'

By Michelle Mittelstadt

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WASHINGTON — A Texas congressman says he will formally propose that the government immediately open secret files on the assassination of President Kennedy. Those files are now sealed until 2029. Rep. Henry B. Gonzalez, a Democrat, said he would introduce a resolution to unseal the records when the

House reconvenes later this month.

Last week, Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio and the former chairman of the assassinations committee, told a former panel staff member that he might propose releasing documents sealed by the committee for 50 years in 1979.

The House would have to vote to release the records before then.

Gonzalez, who said he did not to know of the files until a few weeks ago, said the fact that the records had been sealed was "abhorrent."

The decision to seal the records has been harshly criticized by assassination researchers. The debate has raged anew with the recent release of Oliver Stone's movie "JFK."

The film, which reminds viewers that the records are sealed, theorizes that Kennedy's assassination was part of a plot involving elements of the military-industrial complex, the FBI, the CIA, organized crime and anti-Castro Cubans.

The House committee in 1979 published 27 volumes of material on the assassinations of Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. but sent 848 boxes of sealed raw material to the National Archives.

"Ostensibly, the committee promised a couple of witnesses in exchange for receiving their testimony they would seal that testimony," Gonzalez said Monday night. But, "This isn't a national security matter."

The records were sealed at the

recommendation of the committee's counsel, who argued that the raw data contained unsubstantiated allegations, material embarrassing to innocent individuals and some matters of national security.

The assassination committee concluded in 1979 that Kennedy was "probably" assassinated as the result of a conspiracy involving a second gunman. That conclusion was at odds with the Warren Commission, which concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald had acted alone.

Gonzalez said the records' sealing was even more troubling, considering that the House committee suspected that a conspiracy had occurred. "It has compounded the problems," he said.