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Dallas, Feb. 12 (AP)- Lawyer Joe Tonahill said a New York law firm is attempting to take over the defense of Jack Ruby.

Tonahill, the Jasper, Tex., lawyer with the longest tenure of the continually changing Ruby staff, said the firm of Kunstler, Kunstler and Kinoy of New York informed him by letter it is now Ruby's chief counsel.

Tonahill said copies of the letter were also sent to lawyers Phil Burleson of Dallas, Sol Dann of Detroit, Charles Bellows of Chicago and Early Ruby of Detroit, Jack Ruby's brother.

The letter, signed by William M. Kunstler, demanded that the other lawyers withdraw, Tonahill said.

Ruby is under death sentence for killing Lee Harvey Oswald, President Kennedy's assassin.

Tonahill said he told the New York firm "the integrity of the Ruby appeal has already suffered immeasurably because of interference." Tonahill refused to withdraw.

The Texas Criminal Court of Appeals is expected to consider the Ruby appeal this year.

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