JFK team won't ignore story that Castro knew of threat

WASHINGTON (AP) - The tee that Oswald made the threat House assassinations committee, in a cautiously worded statement, said yesterday it has been told there may be some support for a report that Fidel Castro knew in advance of an assassination threat against President John F. Kennedy.

Castro has called the report "absurd."

Rep. Louis Stokes, D-Ohio, the committee's chairman, refused to go beyond an ambiguous statement that said an unspecified source had informed the panel that the story might have substance.

Stokes and committee chief counsel G. Robert Blakey stressed that the committee itself was not vouching for the truthfulness of the report, only passing on the opinion of the unnamed source.

Blakey's statement said the story was written by Comer Clark in the tabloid National Enquirer. The story said the Cuban consulate in Mexico City told Castro that Lee Harvey Oswald had threatened Kennedy's life.

Blakey said the committee investigated the writer's reputation for truthfulness and "frankly, it was not good." But Blakey said the committee did not ignore the story because of the information that it was supported by reliable government sources.

The committee's prepared statement said it "has been informed that the substance of the [story] is supported by highly confidential. but reliable, sources available to the U.S. government."

The committee issued the statement as it released an interview with the Cuban president in which Castro vehemently denied the report.

"This is absurd," the committee quoted Castro as saying in the interview. "It has been invented from beginning to end.

"It would have been our moral duty to inform the United States," Castro said.

Castro, two former Cuban consuls in Mexico City and a consulate secretary all denied in statements or testimony to the commitwhen he tried to get a visa for entry into Cuba.

Former Çonsul Alfredo Mirabal Diaz said the story is "completely absurd. It is completely false. It is a lie." And former Consul Eusebio Azcue Lopez said Oswald was angry and discourteous but made no assassination threat.

Earlier yesterday, Azcue said he believes a man who identified himself as Lee Harvey Oswald and angrily demanded a visa for Cuba in 1963 was not the same man named later as John F. Kennedy's assassin.

But Azcue, now retired, told the committee he could be convinced he was wrong by scientific evidence. Committee sourczs said such evidence was forthcoming.

Azcue, testifying through a translator, told the committee the Oswald who came to his consulate in Mexico City was a "cold, hard". man, thinner than Kennedy's accused assassin.

He said the man demanded an

immediate visa for entry to Cuba and became unpleasant when told it would require prior approval. from Havana.

Azcue's recollections have caused speculation that a second man might have posed as Oswald in an elaborate conspiracy scheme.

"Fifteen years have gone by, so it is very difficult for me to guarantee it in a categorical sense." Azcue said, "but my belief is that this gentleman was not, is not, the person who went to the consulate.

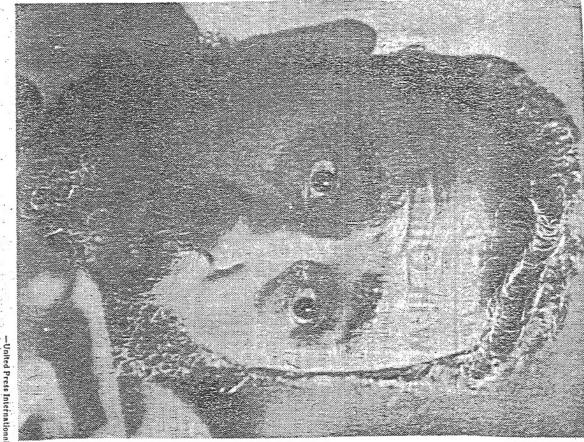
But sources say a handwriting expert will testify that the signature on the visa application was written by the same Oswald named by the Warren Commission as Kennedy's lone assassin. Azcue was asked if such testimony would change his mind.

"Under such circumstances I would have to accept that I was seeing visions," the former consul replied.

The assassinations committee conceded it has "largely been. frustrated" in efforts to follow Oswald's activities during the trip.

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told him to leave, somewhat vio-lently. He mumbled and slammed the door, That was the last time I saw him. The same state of the same sta Asked what happened when Os-wald came to the Cuban consulate the third time. Azcue replied, "He was very troubled because I told him with Azcue. He accused us all of not came is what started the argument We identify ourselves by our actions and our ideas." Mirabal testified that his memory of Oswald is of "a small being true revolutionaries." being persecuted. The second time he application for a visa as if he was tion. He insisted on the urgency of his ate in Mexico City to be a provoca-"I think he was sent to our consuhair, many years and we don't use cards. wald submitted a Communist Party cused us of being discourteous bu-reaucrats. Then I became upset and worked up and said in English, acno to try to get a Soviet visa. Soviet visa I could give him a transit visa without consulting my governsistance" in the probe. nan with narrow shoulders, short USA card. I've been a Communist for pleasant. On each visit he got very unhappiness. He was not friendly or ond gently to Cuba. I told him on his sec-Cuban Interior Ministry, ("He (Oswald) thought I'd be able to solve his problems," Azcue testi-fied but I had to check with Hayana. Blakey told the committee the Soviet Union "declined to be of asment. ton; and Capt, Felipe Villa of the Cuban interests section in Washinginvestigators by President Fidel Cascurity guard to testify yesterday. officials, appeared under heavy sewho, along with three other Cuban He insisted on the need to proceed urthe Dallas assassination took place; Ricardo Escartin, counsellor of the Diaz, who succeeded Azcue before tro were Azcue; Alfredo Mirabal Mirabal said, 'I noticed that Os-"He had a face which reflected This and other discrepanties arose the testimony of the Cuban official. The Cubans made available to the visit that if he already had a no mustache and who appeared I believe he left our consulate 1.11 the



Cuban leader Fidel Castro says he would have had a "moral duty" to report knowledge of an assassination attempt on the life of President Kennedy.