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Gunrunner Is Fired, Called an Enemy Agent

By Alexander Mitchell
London Sunday Times

LONDON—Biafra and one Hank Warton, until a month ago its sole supplier of arms, have broken up their alliance.

The reasons for the divorce, which for the beleaguered rebels of Nigeria could hardly have come at a worse time, are surrounded in mystery, but include Biafra accusations of a double-cross by Warton.

This is strongly denied by Warton, an American gunrunner from Miami whose battered Super Constellations flying from Portugal provided Biafra's sole lifeline for so long.

He claimed in Madrid last week that the Biafrans owed him a million dollars.

"I let my heart get in the way of my head. I started to make trips without getting paid. Then there was all the extras—the airport fees, maintenance costs. These things mount up," he said.

A month ago he flew to Biafra via Sao Tome, the Portuguese island just off the Nigerian coast which is the main springboard for supplies to Biafra, to have a showdown with Biafra's leader, Col. Odumegwu Ojukwu. He was told that no further money would be paid to him.

Suspicious Arrest

Back on Sao Tome, Warton was picked up by the Portuguese police. Plastic bombs had been found at Lisbon airport (departure point of Warton's planes to Biafra) and Warton had somehow become a suspect.

The likelier explanation is that the Biafrans contacted the Portuguese authorities and asked them to get Warton out of the way.

The Biafrans say they dumped Warton because they believe he was secretly working for the enemy and they accuse him of sabotaging their arms shipments.

Certainly arms deliveries became very irregular during the crucial weeks from July to September when the

federal troops launched their much vaunted "quick kill."

But his conflict with the Biafrans really came to a head last month when one of Warton's planes ran into engine difficulties while flying the Biafra air corridor and the entire cargo was discharged into the sea.

Warton, naturally, denies that he has double-crossed the Biafrans. "I've been with them right from the start—since October 1966," he says. But he admits that on two occasions he has been approached by British agents and offered bribes to switch allegiances.

Warton's secret visits to London—two in the past two weeks—have not gone unnoticed to the Biafrans. Warton says, "I have some private business to do in Britain," while the Foreign Office said on Friday: "We did not know he was here."

Better Than Most

But Hank Warton's record with the Biafrans looks exemplary when placed alongside the activities of other international arms dealers who have been involved with the war.

Documents show the treachery of the gun runners and the utter naivete of the Biafrans.

Soon after last year's secession, for instance, the Biafrans were anxious to score a psychological as well as an important strategic victory by sinking the federal frigate Nigeria which was blockading Port Harcourt.

Several schemes were submitted to the Biafran High Command. One of the most startling versions was put by a London businessman who wanted to ram the ship with a smaller craft constructed with a napalm warhead. The floating torpedo was to be directed by remote control radio.

The businessman asked more than a million dollars to get the job done.

While the Biafrans were studying this proposal, another group of dealers were

planning to sell them a torpedo. After convincing the Biafrans that a single torpedo would solve the blockade, they found there were no spare torpedoes lying around Europe's arms markets.

Undaunted, they approached a film company to negotiate the construction of a dummy torpedo—a film prop—which was to be made out of steel and fitted with all the correct-looking mechanisms.

The Biafrans were offered this alternative for \$290,000, the film company thought it could do the job for \$4800.

Neither of these schemes was launched. Port Harcourt fell to the federals a few weeks later and Biafra lost its access to the gulf.

Meanwhile, the supply of arms to Biafra is now reaching an all-time high. The gap left by the break with Warton has been filled by new operators—Aero Lessor of Florida with Cuban emigrant pilots, Transavia of Amsterdam, Transair of Stockholm.

A Biafran official in Lisbon said last week more guns and munitions had been landed in Biafra during the past three weeks than for the previous three months.

Nigerian Colonel Criticizes Observers

PORT HARCOURT, Nigeria, Oct. 28 (AP)—Col. Benjamin A. Adekunle of the Nigerian army accused a team of international observers of hindering his war effort against Biafra and today ordered newsmen accompanying the team to leave Port Harcourt. The seven correspondents departed for Lagos, the Nigerian capital.

Adekunle confrontation with the military observers came Saturday and Sunday after the team had taken a two-day, 500-mile trip to the southeastern front to check reports that Nigerians massacred hundreds of Biafran civilians at Urua Inyang.