

HAITIANS BUYING PISTOLS IN MIAMI

257 Revolvers Purchased by Aide of Consulate

By TAD SZULC

Special to The New York Times

MIAMI, Dec. 29—The Consulate General of Haiti in Miami has purchased at least 257 revolvers from local dealers in the last two years. Miami police records, examined today, showed that all weapons were registered as "gifts," but some Federal officials believe the revolvers may have subsequently been smuggled to Haiti without export licenses.

The revolvers were purchased by Eli André, an aide to the Haitian Consul General. Rudolph Baboun, who is being investigated by United States authorities for his alleged part in the smuggling of two T-28 aircraft to Haiti last September. The last two revolvers were purchased by the Haitian Consulate on Dec. 18.

The United States has refused for several years to authorize the export of weapons to the regime of President François Duvalier in Haiti.

Investigated Before

At the same time, it was disclosed by authorities here that Mr. Baboun had been investigated at least once before in connection with another reported illegal shipment of arms to Haiti.

This investigation centered on information obtained by United States authorities about the transporting to Haiti of 600 surplus M-1 rifles without the required export licenses in December, 1962.

United States Customs agents searched the Haitian Coast Guard cutter Dessalines, which had just arrived in Miami, but failed to find the arms. According to information given United States authorities, the rifles were to be transported to Haiti aboard the Dessalines.

No prosecution was ordered then against Mr. Baboun, because officials said they lacked evidence. Subsequently, the Haitian Government protested the search aboard their cutter. Qualified sources indicated, however, that the 600 rifles had ultimately found their way to Haiti.

A lack of sufficient evidence for a case against Mr. Baboun and his associates was also the reason given yesterday by the State Department in commenting on the case of the two T-28 bomber-fighter trainer aircraft. The State Department said that an investigation into the smuggling of the war planes was continuing.

Mystery Witness' Mentioned

Law-enforcement officials however, reiterated today their earlier insistence that this case could never be prosecuted unless the United States Government were willing to produce a key "mystery witness."

It was understood that while agents of the Bureau of Customs had interrogated this witness twice last October in Miami, the Government was not prepared to let him testify because his testimony might disclose techniques employed by the Central Intelligence Agency.

This witness is an armorer who went to Haiti in September to install weapons on the two T-28's. In the judgment of United States officials, he is the only man who can identify, in court, the aircraft now in Haiti as the same ones that were allegedly purchased in Miami by Mr. Baboun's associates.

It was reliably reported that this armorer was a former employe of the C.I.A. While this allegation was disputed by some quarters in Washington, officials here insisted again today that the man had indeed been employed by the C.I.A. in the past.

There is also a controversy over whether the agency had demanded the holding back of testimony by this witness, and to whom such a request might have been made.

There is no controversy, however, among the Government agencies over the fact that a "mystery witness" does exist and that without his testimony there may be no possibility of a successful prosecution if a violation of the ban on exports of arms without licenses is involved.

The existence of such a witness was also confirmed by Randall Lee Ethridge, a professional pilot with extensive Haitian connections, who had been earlier identified as one of the key persons in the T-28 affair.

Mr. Ethridge was said to have been the man who hired the armorer. He was also reported to have awaited in Haiti for the arrival of the smuggled aircraft last September.

Interviewed yesterday at a farm near Palm Beach, Fla., Mr. Ethridge said that, "Of course, there is a lay-off guy in this case."

But, he said, "I'm not going to tell you who he is."