

NARTO accuses Anambra govt of fuelling Onitsha crisis

By Tony Edike

ENUGU—THE leadership of the embattled Nigeria Association of Road Transport Owners (NARTO) in Anambra State alleged at the weekend that the recent crisis in the commercial city of Onitsha was masterminded by the state government with a view to taking over the management of various motor parks in the town illegally.

Legal Adviser to the union, Mr. Tagbo Ike, who made the allegation while speaking with reporters in Enugu also said that the invitation by the Anambra State Government of military men to take charge of security in and around the motor parks was part of the grand designs to scare away NARTO members, who, he claimed, are original managers of the parks, insisting that the government and not the union should be held responsible for the mayhem.

Tracing the genesis of the crisis that degenerated to the recent violence, Ike said that NARTO was dully assigned the management and control of

the motor parks by the former elected Local Government Councils in the state who had the powers to establish, maintain and regulate motor parks as stipulated by the 1999 Constitution in the Fourth schedule paragraph one sub-paragraph E.

He recalled that the Anambra State House of Assembly had in year 2000 passed a legislation giving NARTO the right to operate the parks, adding that the union had in the process of securing the mandate obtained a loan from one Chief Anthony Ezeweputa but along the line the union failed to repay the loan.

This, he said, forced Ezeweputa to take a legal action against the union and the court later gave a "consent judgment" which authorized the plaintiff (Ezeweputa) approval to manage the parks in conjunction with the union for a period of four years to enable him recover his money.

The creditor therefore took over the management of the parks since 2003 and the deal is expected to expire in August next year.