

# Battle Over Tipper Associations' Welfare Funds Claims 2 Lives In Anambra

One of the victims of the clash



By [Titus Eleweke](#)

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The battle between the Great Tipper Association of Nigeria and Anambra State Tipper Association (ASTA) and others, over the control of welfare funds of the associations, has claimed two lives.

The groups have been at loggerheads over who collects welfare funds from members of the Tipper drivers' association.

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However, the Anambra State government says it recognizes and backs ASTA in the collection of the welfare fund from all members operating in the state.

Last week, there was a clash between the groups in Onitsha over the lingering issue when ASTA members tried to collect the welfare fund from the other group. Two persons – Sunday Anaekwe and another simply identified as Nwa mazi, lost their lives in the clash.

Confirming the incident to Daily Trust, the spokesperson of the Anambra State Police Command, CSP Haruna Mohammed, said there was a fight among various tipper drivers' associations at the dredging site in Onitsha which resulted in the death of two persons.

According to him, the police have commenced investigation into the matter, after which the culprits would be charged to court.

## Argument

Speaking on the matter, the chairman of ASTA, Prince Augustine Akaigwe, said there was no problem within tipper associations in Anambra State except that Great Tipper Association and Anambra/Imo Tipper Driver Association of Nigeria ANAIMO refused to join the umbrella body of the union.

According to him, Great Tipper Association and sand miner entered into an agreement to be collecting N500 from every tipper in the state, and as chairman of ASTA recognised by government, "I said they cannot collect money from 21 unions and share between two unions. They were asked to stop the collection because they cannot collect money from tipper drivers and share with sand miners. The money is supposed to be for the welfare of tipper drivers and not for sand miners. We went to court and got an injunction stopping them but they did not obey the court order," he said.

Another member of the ASTA, Hon. Stanley Nkwoka, said to be one of the Special Advisers to the governor of Anambra State on transport, said "This is not the first or second time they have attacked us, and unfortunately during the last attack, they killed two of our members – Nwa mazi and Sunday Anaekwe.

"We have over 20 unions of tipper associations in Anambra State and so the state government decided to harmonise it the same way it did to market unions, Okada and drivers' union. We held meetings, signed an agreement and sent to the governor, promising to abide by the law of the state. Every other union signed the agreement apart from the Great Tippers and ANAIMO. The great tipper refused to sign the agreement because they are being sponsored," he said.

However, President of Great Tipper Association of Nigeria, Mr. Ebuka Unekwe, said Stanley Nkwoka is not a member of any tipper union in the state, noting that he only mobilises touts to beat up anyone who refuses to pay the illegal money. "Nkwoka is not a tipper driver and does not own a tipper. I don't know his interest in tipper welfare if not to cause trouble and confusion," he said.

## Legal body

He said that Great Tipper Association is not the same with ASTA and therefore they are not answerable to them, noting that great tipper has a corporate seal and exists as a legal body recognised by law.

He accused Nkwoka of using late Sunday Anaekwe to terrorise their members, regretting that the young man died in the process of Nkwoka's ill ambition.

"Last week Wednesday, Anaekwe came to Bridge head beach, shooting sporadically in the air and drove away our members. Some Ogbaru youths asked him to stop disturbing and scaring away people who came to buy sand, he refused and a fight broke out in the process," he said.

The secretary of Great Tipper Association of Nigeria, Anambra State chapter, Comrade Jerry Efejika, said the money in contention was not for government but for tipper drivers' welfare and can only be collected by each union.

"We told government that we are Great Tippers and ANAIMO and we are not part of the ASTA, so they should not disturb our members on welfare levy. We also told government that if ASTA wants to collect welfare levies, they should collect from their members only and stop collecting from others unless with their consent.

During our meeting at Nanka, they attacked and destroyed our vehicles. Nkwoka summoned us at SCID Awka and we went there and the officer in charge told us to go and make peace. I also told him that ASTA should manage their welfare and let

great tipper manage their own. The officer said since government has given authority to them to collect the money, we should pay, but I keep asking: Why is government still interested in collecting welfare money from our members after collecting IGR from us?"

He accused the Commissioner for Transport, Mr. Afam Mbanefo, of fuelling the crisis because of his personal interest.

"There is one agreement they claimed to have signed, we did not sign it because we are not their members and their agreement is not binding on our members. After signing their purported agreement, they started harassing and intimidating our members and collecting welfare money from them. They said they must collect the money from us since Anambra government has given them the mandate to be collect the money. My question is: does government have the right to force someone to belong to a union?"

Reacting to the crisis, the State Commissioner for Transport, Mr Afam Mbanefo said that what the ministry did was to harmonise the multiple tippers association in the state for easy operations.

The Commissioner, who spoke through the Public Relations Officer of the Ministry, Mr Emeka Ilozor, said the ministry discovered that there were over 18 tipper drivers' associations in the state and decided to invite them for harmonisation in order to have one umbrella body for easy management.

"Government has no interest in the money meant for welfare of tipper associations. The ministry's interest is to have all the unions under one umbrella, he said.

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