

Two Customs officials die chasing 'smugglers' in Akwa Ibom

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From Bassey Anthony, Uyo

Two Customs officials have reportedly died in a ghastly auto crash while pursuing suspected rice smugglers along the East-West Road linking Eket and Oron local government areas.

Customs officials on Sunday evening were reportedly chasing a Sienna bus with registration number APP 784 FM suspected to be laden with bags of smuggled rice.

Eyewitnesses said the Customs Hilux vehicle marked "Strike Force Team Zone C" hit the Sienna bus from behind and somersaulted, leading to the death of the two officials.

A source who does not want his name in print, said that no single grain of rice was found on the Sienna bus when the incident occurred.

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"When I inspected the Sienna bus no single grain of rice was in the bus. The bus was returning from a church in Oron," he said.

He said two other Customs officers and the driver of the Sienna sustained serious injuries and were rushed to hospital.

Police spokesman Nnudam Frederick said he was yet to be briefed.

"I have not been briefed from police officers in Oron concerning the death of two Custom Officers. I am not in the picture and I am not aware of the incident in Oron," he said.