

Navy, tanker drivers clash over death of 'conductor'

By Philip Nwosu and Christopher Oji

PANDEMONIUM broke out at the Kirikiri area of Lagos as Petrol Tanker drivers engage armed personnel of the Nigerian Navy in a brawl following the death of the conductor of a tanker.

Witnesses told *Crime Watch Today* that the incident, which occurred in the early hours of yesterday, started when naval personnel deployed to ensure free flow of traffic at the Kirikiri area wanted to prevent a loaded petrol tanker from causing obstruction on the bridge.

It was gathered that while the driver was trying to remove the 'no parking' zone, in panic, he mistakenly ran over his conductor who fell off the vehicle without his knowledge.

The tanker driver who was identified as Ibrahim Salami has been detained at the Agboju Police Station in the Amuwo Odofin area of the metropolis, while the body of the deceased conductor, identified as Abbas Kasali, has been deposited at the

morgue of the Nigerian Navy Reference Hospital, Navy Town, Ojo.

Meanwhile, the death of the conductor did not go down well with the tanker drivers and members of the National Union of Petroleum and Natural Gas Workers (NUPENG), who mobilized to vent their anger on the navy personnel.

The tanker drivers who came in their thousands allegedly threw stones and haul sticks at the naval personnel insisting that for their anger to subside, they would kill the naval personnel in retaliation.

The Navy told *Crime Watch Today* that they had to deploy their men in phases to prevent further degeneration of the crisis and protect the lives of naval personnel deployed to keep traffic duties at the KiriKiri area.

The rampaging tanker drivers allegedly attacked men of the Nigeria Police, Navy and men of the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) who beat a retreat while trying to protect themselves from the stone being thrown at tanker drivers

Despite their efforts, it was gathered that some men of Nigerian Navy were injured by the rampaging drivers who threatened to disrupt the peace within the Kirikiri area.

An official of the Nigerian Navy Ship (NNS) Wey, who spoke on condition of anonymity said that the conductor was not killed as a result of a bullet from the force's personnel, but as result of a mistake from the driver of his own truck.

He said that the Force had taken the decision to stop tanker drivers from parking on the bridge, adding that the decision was to ensure free-flow of traffic within the area.

He denied the allegation that the naval personnel deployed to the area always demand a tip of N500 and that because the driver refused to pay, he was chased by the personnel.

Abdul Isa, a tanker driver had alleged that the driver of the truck was trying to run away from naval personnel who were demanding N500 from him.

He further alleged that

in an attempt to flee from the approaching security personnel made him to ram into an Okada rider and his passenger.

Another witness said that the truck driver had parked by the side of the bridge, thereby preventing other road users, access to the road. "In an attempt to flee from an approaching naval officer who had earlier warned him to stay away, and without knowing that his conductor was at the back of the truck, ran over him.

"The truck later rammed into another car, parked by the side of the bridge before it rammed into a street light" the witness said.

The witness further claimed that some naval personnel who witnessed the incident pursued the driver of the truck.

"They apprehended him and brought him back to the accident scene where they gave him the beating of his life. The driver was later taken to a nearby hospital where he was admitted" he added.

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