

3 Customs officers killed by smugglers in Oct - Comptroller General, Ali

By Steve Agbota

THE Nigeria Customs Service (NCS) has said that

no fewer than three officers were killed by suspected smugglers during the anti-smuggling war in the month of October 2021.

Comptroller General of Customs, Hameed Ali, who made the disclosure in a statement signed by the Customs Public Relations Officer, Joseph Attah, at the weekend, alleged a conspiracy of silence concerning the death of Customs anti smuggling operatives.

He said: "In no distant past, we heard loud voices criticising NCS about injuries and purported killings of some Nigerians, in clear cases of violence against officers performing their legitimate duties.

"Those voices seem no longer loud in condemning the murder of Customs officers.

The service, within October 2021, lost three operatives with many sustaining serious injuries.

"Premised on trump up charges of " invasion and burning of houses at a village", some supposedly responsible individuals are going to town with write ups that sweep officers' death under the carpet, while dwelling on an allegation that has been debunked by the NCS with verifiable evidence."

Ali said Nigerians must rise against smugglers' increasing tendency to resort to violence to pull through their criminal acts.

"Those who support criminality by either physically attacking officers or pushing narratives that strengthen smugglers are enemies of the state and should be seen as such, no matter their claim of "defending fellow citizens.

"We refuse to be intimidated by these merchants of violence. We remain focused on the job of ensuring that nothing that is capable of compromising national security and economy is allowed entry or exit," he said.

The Customs boss, therefore, urged well meaning Nigerians not to be distracted by the selective "concern" for human life and continue to support the service to serve the country better.

\$32m fraud: Court summons lawyer over failure to present defendant

By Lukman Olabiyi

THE Federal High Court, Lagos, has summoned a lawyer, Mr O. Awowole, to show cause why he should not be sanctioned for failing to present a defendant, Princess Oluwatoyin Kolade, in court.

Justice Peter Lifu ordered Awowole to appear on Tuesday, November 9, following Kolade's failure to honour a hearing notice for her arraignment on an alleged \$32 million fraud charge.

The lawyer was also absent when the matter, marked: FHC/L/407C/2019, was called.

Kolade is one of 11 others facing a 10-count charge of \$32 million fraud preferred against them by the Office of the

Attorney-General of the Federation (OAGF).

The defendants include four Indian men - Prem Garg, Devashish Garg, Bhagwan Singh Rawat and Mukul Tyagi, and two Britons - Marcus Wade and Andrew Fairie, said to be at large.

The others, apart from Kolade, are Metal Africa Steel Products Ltd, Wilben Trade Ltd, Fisolak Global Resources Ltd and Kannu Aditya India Ltd.

At the commencement of proceedings, a Deputy Director from the Federal Ministry of Justice, Mr Akutah Pius, reminded the court that when he applied for a Bench Warrant for the defendants' arrest, Awowole undertook to produce Kolade in court.

He said the counsel not

only failed to do so, neither he nor Kolade were present in court.

Pius prayed for an adjournment to enable the defendants to appear, arguing that Awowole should face the consequences of his action.

He further prayed the court to renew a bench warrant issued for the defendants by Justice Oluremi Oguntoyinbo who handled the case before her transfer to the court's Abeokuta division.

Responding to the judge's query as to why the prosecution failed to produce the other defendants, despite an arrest warrant and an extradition order, Pius explained that the Federal Government was collaborating with Interpol on that, adding that extradition was time consuming.

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