

Soldiers escorting smuggled crude kill 45-year-old man

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Air of apprehension has enveloped the Assa community in Ohaji/Egbema Local Government Area of Imo State following the killing of a 45-year-old man by soldiers escorting a truck of smuggled crude oil.

The victim is identified simply as Chinedu.

The incident, which occurred at around the Afor Assa market on Wednesday, saw locals scampering to safety as bullets rent the air.

A villager, who declined to be named, said youths of the community intercepted a truck loaded with locally-refined crude oil believed to be products of bunkering and demanded 'passage fee' but the soldiers prevented the owners of the alleged smuggled consignment from paying the fee.

The villager said the ensuing clash led to the shooting of Chinedu.

He noted that to scare the youth who had besieged the truck, the soldiers had allegedly shot indiscriminately in the air which hit the victim.

Chinedu died on the spot. Some other youths were wounded in the ensuing fracas.

However, the youth, in a reprisal, set the truck with its content ablaze. The victim was said to be an indigene of Amafor, who was resident in Umuopara Obosa.

The youth also burnt the Army base in the community.

The traditional ruler of Assa autonomous community, Eze Emmanuel Assor, said the community was talking with the military hierarchy to ensure that there was lasting peace between the soldiers and the community.

He said: "We are in talks with the military. We want to make sure that such a thing does not happen again. We are also working to ensure that lasting peace returns to the community."

The state Police Public Relations

Officer (PPRO), Orlando Ikeokwu, confirmed Chinedu's killing.

Ikeokwu added that the soldiers were not accompanying the persons carrying the stolen crude oil but had instead arrested them and were taking them to the military base in the community before the youth intercepted them.



Chinedu