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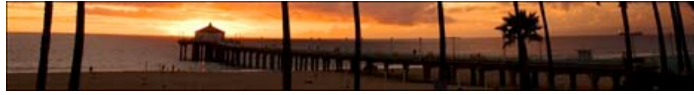
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THIS DAY

Nigeria: Trailer Crushes 17 to Death in Anambra

Charles Onyekamuo and Charles Ajunwa

19 May 2010

Lagos — A trailer obviously plying with a faulty brake at about 7:30pm Monday crushed no fewer than 17 people to death at a police checkpoint some 300 metres from the popular 'Unizik' junction in Awka, Anambra State capital.

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The trailer with registration number XN754 LSR was carrying a 40 feet container and coming from the Enugu end of the right lane of Enugu-Onitsha expressway when the accident occurred.

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Eye witnesses said the trailer said to have developed a faulty brake was running uncontrollably with its conductor shouting from the Unizik junction that the vehicle had no brake, and the driver blowing the horn relentlessly with the hazard light on to warn of an obvious danger. But the policemen who formed a checkpoint with

multiple barricades that turned the lane into a tiny strip could not bulge until the trailer approached the spot hitting some of the vehicles at the checkpoint and a policeman from behind dragging them along.

When it finally pulled into a ditch dug to channel the flood off the highway, the casualties lay there lifeless. THISDAY checks revealed that a couple driving in a red Nissan car BV 589 App with their three month old baby just dedicated in a church last week, their maid, a cousin and a friend were crushed beyond recognition.

Again, a 504 salon car had its three occupants killed, while an 18-seater bus, witnesses said was heading to Onitsha had eight of its occupants killed. One of the policemen at the checkpoint it was learnt lost his life also.

When THISDAY visited the scene of the accident, the wreckages of the vehicles were still inside the ditch and the bush to which the trailer dragged them. Even the trailer was shattered. Eyewitnesses blamed the police insensitivity and recalcitrance for the accident saying they were more interested in collecting "roger".

The Police Public Relations Officer in Anambra State, Emeka Chukwuemeka said only a policeman and two people died. He said people should not blame the police because the checkpoints had been helpful in arresting kidnap cases.

In another development, the Deputy Governor of Anambra State, Mr. Emeka Sibuedu, has expressed regrets over an accident, which claimed five lives near Iyagu Canal in Awka.

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Speaking when he paid a visit to the scene of the accident yesterday, Sibedu said the state was pained that some lives were lost and commiserated with the families of the deceased as he prayed God for the repose of their souls.

The Deputy Governor said when he got the information yesterday night as soon as the accident happened, he reached his Governor Peter Obi, who was in Abuja on official trip.

According to him, the governor had to cut his trip to Abuja short to personally access the accident and determine the causes with the view of avoiding such

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in future. In his words: "As I speak, the governor is on his way to Awka from the Owerri Airport, having cut his trip short by a day."

Sibedu promised that the state will reach the police and work out modalities for easing traffics along the dual carriage way occasioned by the fact that the road is under repairs and that motorists are forced to use only one lane.

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