

Ogun: Policeman, civilian killed in border drill operatives, residents' clash

March 16, 2020 Kunle Olayeni Abeokuta



- **Monarch's palace, vehicles, motorcycles vandalised**
- **Abiodun steps in, calls for restraint**

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Two persons, a policeman and a civilian, have been killed at Imasayi in Yewa North Local Government Area of Ogun State during a clash between suspected smugglers and operatives of the National Border Drill.

The incident, which happened on Saturday, has sparked tension and left the town deserted.

At press time, the palace of the Olu of Imasayi, Oba Adesola Oni, had been vandalised while several vehicles and motorcycles belonging to residents have either been destroyed or set ablaze.

It was learnt that crisis erupted when anti-smuggling operatives of the National Border Drill, including Customs and police officers, stormed Imasayi in search of suspected contraband.

Though there were conflicting accounts, a resident told our correspondent that the law enforcement agents shot dead a youth and wounded another person while chasing their targets which irked members of the community.

The resident, who craved anonymity, said while the anti-smuggling operation was ongoing, a policeman among the Border Drill operatives attempted to demobilise a young man who had metaphysical powers.

After the shots fired at him had no effect, the young man allegedly snatched the policeman's gun and fatally shot him.

Sensing danger, the Border Drill operatives retreated and later mobilised back to the scene with soldiers to wreak havoc.

"The violence started about noon on Saturday. A combined team of Customs men and the police came around looking for smuggled rice. After they probably impounded some, they now started shooting sporadically. Somebody was shot and another person was wounded by the security officers.

"But unfortunately, one policeman shot a young man. That young man has metaphysical powers so the gunshots had no effect on him. In the process, the young man commanded the policeman to bring his gun. He collected it and shot him dead.

"Thereafter, the operatives escaped from the scene and later mobilised back with soldiers. They started attacking and arresting anybody in sight.

"As I speak with you, the operatives have vandalised the palace of Olu of Imasayi. The town has been deserted; people have fled to the villages for fear of being arrested," the source said.

The resident wondered why Border Drill operatives invaded Imasayi which, according to him, is not situated along the border but about 60 kilometres away from it.

When contacted yesterday, the Public Relations Officer of Nigeria Customs Service, Ogun 1 Command, Abdullahi Maiwada, confirmed the killing of an operative of the Border Drill.

Maiwada,
however,

told our correspondent that the authorised persons would provide details of the incident since the anti-smuggling operation was not by his command.

He said: "I can only confirm the incident. The details of the incident will be communicated from the appropriate quarters."

Also, the state Police Public Relations Officer (PPRO), Abimbola Oyeyemi, said a policeman was lost to the incident.

Oyeyemi, however, promised to avail our correspondent with details of the incident when made available to him.

The
Senator representing Ogun West, Chief Tolu Odebiyi, and the House of Representatives member representing Egbado North/Imeko-Afon Federal Constituency, Hon. Olaifa Aremu, have called for calm over the incident.

In separate statements issued yesterday, the two lawmakers condemned the killings and appealed to the law enforcement agents to de-escalate tension in the area.

He said: "I have responded to the chaos in Imasayi by speaking to Governor Dapo Abiodun, MFR, who was firmly briefed and gave assurances that the situation is under control, as he has gotten commitments from the military and Nigeria Customs officers on ground.

"I also spoke to the Assistant Comptroller of Customs, Mr. Amajam and the Director of the Department of State Services (DSS) who were equally helpful in talking to the Strike Team.

"The issue in Imasayi is totally unacceptable and unwarranted as there was no justification for the killing of a uniformed officer."

On his
part, Aremu, in a statement signed by his Senior Legislative Aide, Wale Junaid, cautioned both parties against further violence.

He said: "The truth of this matter is that, there was no justification for either the brazen overzealousness on the part of men of Nigeria Customs or the killing of a uniform officer by the irate residents as well as the follow up retaliation siege on the community; all these are condemnable."

Meanwhile, Governor Abiodun has ordered a manhunt for the suspected killer of the operative of the National Border Drill.

Abiodun, who gave the order to arrest the fleeing culprit, also called for restraint in the use of lethal arms by law enforcement officers.

The governor added that he had to intervene in the unrest that erupted in Imasayi when a joint task force, comprising operatives of the military, police, Customs, Immigration and the Department of State Services (DSS) had a face-off with youths of the community which resulted in the death of an officer.

The Chief Press Secretary (CPS) to the governor, Kunle Somorin, said in statement that Abiodun had been in contact with relevant authorities in the Army and the Nigeria Customs Service over the incident.

Somorin added that talks were ongoing towards apprehending the suspects who allegedly killed a uniformed officer in the melee.

The CPS disclosed that the manhunt had as at Sunday morning yielded results with the recovery of the stolen rifle of the slain security officer.

He said: "Governor Abiodun urged law enforcement agents to exercise restraint and be humane in carrying out their duties.

"He, however, warned that the state government will not condone assault on any serving officer of the military, police and the paramilitary agencies who daily sacrifice their private lives to serve the public."