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## Smugglers died while avoiding N2,000 illegal toll

on MARCH 7, 2013 · in NEWS 11:00 pm

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BY GODFREY BIVBERE

The face-off between Customs and smugglers on Wednesday in which some of the smugglers died has been attributed to attempts by the smugglers to avoid payment of N2,000 illegal toll collected at Gbaji by the Nigeria Customs Service, NCS.

However, Public Relations Officer of Seme border of Customs, Ernest Olottah, has denied the report.

*Vanguard* gathered that the smugglers in an attempt to reduce cost of transporting frozen products to its destination drove against traffic from Mile 2 to the check point.

An eyewitness told *Vanguard* that luck ran out on him because there were many vehicles coming from that direction and in an attempt to avoid them, ran into an electric pole with his car.

He was said to have sustained serious injuries and died at a nearby hospital later.

*Vanguard* further learnt that in response to the death of their colleagues; the smugglers had gone to the Customs Command at Seme to protest and that if not for the quick intervention of men of the Nigerian Army, the smugglers who were joined by a mob would have over powered the combined team of Customs and Police officers on ground.

The eye-witness who simply identified himself as Ola, said several cars were destroyed and road users abandoned their cars and took to their heels.

He said Army officers were shooting sporadically into the air, further compounding the confusion on ground.

Olottah, confirmed to *Vanguard* that the suspect actually drove



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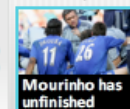


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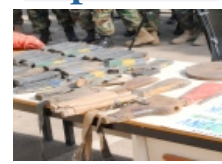
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against the traffic in a bid to beat the check point.

According to him, the check point is jointly manned by customs and Police officers.

He also confirmed that army officers were also on ground to assist but denied that they would have been over-powered if not for the army.

According to him, "I wouldn't say so. I don't think that is right. We work together; the whole essence of involving the army is to serve as deterrent (to those who think they can take the law into their hands). We actually work in synergy."

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