

Customs, agents lose N50m daily to terminal closure

By Kelvin Osa Okunbor

THE Murtala Muhammed International Airport Command, Nigerian Customs Service (NCS) and clearing agents yesterday lost over N50 million as revenue over the closure of the cargo terminal at the airport on the orders of the Federal Government.

The N50 million loss is the revenue that would have accrued to both the clearing agents and the Customs for clearance of imported and exported goods through the airport.

Addressing reporters yesterday, the chairman of the Lagos Airport branch of the Association of Nigerian Licensed Customs Agents (ANCLA), Mr Alloy Emeka Igwe described the continued closure of the cargo terminal by customs as insensitive, as the crisis that emanated at the airport is not beyond resolution.

He decried the deployment of military personnel to the cargo section of the airport who manhandled clearing agents by shooting sporadically into the air.

Igwe said many clearing agents sustained injuries from the gun shots carried out by officers of the Federal Operations Unit (FOU) of the NCS.

He said the alleged attack on the Customs Area Control

ler of the Lagos Airport Command was not carried out by licensed clearing agents, arguing that miscreants could have taken advantage of the crisis.

The chairman said the major challenge is access control into the cargo area, which is handled by security personnel attached to the Federal Airports Authority of Nigeria (FAAN).

He described as untrue, information making the round that licensed customs agents forced their way into the bulk breaking area.

Igwe said: "What happened yesterday at the cargo terminal was a clear case of professional disagreement between the agents and Customs which was not managed properly

"The situation could not have degenerated into the militarisation and sporadic shootings carried out by officials of the FOU, which deployed armed personnel carrier to the airport. We share our sympathy with the customs comptroller who was allegedly manhandled. We have issues with our operational base, where the exit gate is very porous, there is easy access into the terminal, which could have given room to hoodlums to take advantage of the situation to carry out unauthorised activities.

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