



Customs to lose 50% Revenue on Vehicles Importation Ban

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NIGERIA: -

Following the ban place on the importation of vehicles through the land borders by the Federal Government, the Nigerian Customs Service (NCS), Seme Command, is set to lose 50 per cent of its monthly revenue valued at about N13 billion.

According to CEOAfrica's source Thisday, the Seme command of the NCS rakes in between N25 billion to N28 billion monthly with 50 per cent of that amount coming from vehicle importation.

The federal government had last year prohibited the importation of vehicles, new and old, through land borders, restricting all vehicle imports to Nigeria Sea Ports only.

However, Customs Area Controller of Seme Border, Victor Dimka said: "You will agree with me that over 50 per cent of our revenue comes from vehicles importation in this command, so that is going to be completely removed and what is left is what we should expect but we will create a very friendly environment just as we have been doing. You will also agree with me that the trade between Nigeria and the countries of the corridors are more or less informal, we will try to perfect on this relationship so as to make the place more business friendly.

“We will have flyers all over the places, we have help desk as you can see, our officers will tell people what must be done and what must not be done. So when you have two or more sources, two are removed, the one remaining we will guide Jealously, so importation on General goods from Benin Republic and other countries of the corridors to see we maximize revenue collection optimally.”

He said the Seme Command raked in over N1 billion a few working days to the take-off of the ban following the rush to bring in vehicles into the country by importers.

He said the ban on vehicles as was announced by the federal government meant that the command will re-tighten its belts, “because it very difficult to see vehicles being smuggled through Seme even before the ban. So what is going to happen just to tighten what we have, make sure we deploy officers to all the likely routes they will follow. We have also discovered through intelligence new routes they are creating but by the time we finish, we are going to move officers there permanently.

“Of course there is going to be a combined force from the Command, Federal Operations, Compliance Team and even the military to ensure total blockage. Believe me, the war is going to be fierce because you know most of them in this vicinity see smuggling as a birth right, so they will want to try but we will resist them.

“They attempt justifying the act by saying its buying and selling. For them, it is merely traveling from one end to buy or trade at the other end. They even argue that their fathers have been trading between the Nigerian area and Benin Republic, so stopping them is like stopping what they have known to be doing for hundreds of years.” he said.

He added, “Those at the Nigerian end of the border share lingual, cultural and historical similarities with some communities in Benin. In fact, some Nigerian families have branches in Benin. As a customs officer, I have seen them celebrate, worship and mourn together as one. We tell them daily that what they enjoy is the ECOWAS treaty on free movement and that the family houses they claim to be going fall within the territory of a different state.

“This is where enlightenment comes in. I am regularly educating the people on Nigerian side that the Benin Republic is a different country from Nigeria and they don't share uniform economic policies. I keep telling traditional rulers and youths that every country like Nigeria has policies to protect their economies and import prohibition lists are part of these policies. This is the thrust of our Customs Community Relations efforts. We keep telling them not to see smuggling as a right or a legitimate source of livelihood.”