

**CRUDE OIL THEFT, ILLEGAL BUNKERING AND PIPELINE VANDALISM IN
NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA: EFFECTS AND NATIONAL RESPONSES TO
CURB THE MENACE**

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Abstract

Against the backdrop of the fact that Nigeria lost large scale of petroleum resources valued as huge financial losses to the nation, individuals, and other institutions, this paper examined crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria; effects and national responses. The findings show that crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism have caused adverse effects such as socio-economic losses to Nigeria, environmental pollution and degradation, a threat to national and international security, and caused huge losses to national and international oil companies and individuals. To ensure the smooth operation of the country's oil industry, various administrations have carried out various national responses to curb the menace. These include enactment of laws, arrest, and prosecution of perpetrators, strengthening security arrangements, the establishment of the Inter-Agency Maritime Security Task Force (IAMSTF) and the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), granting of amnesty to ex-militants and collaboration with regional and international partners to curb the menace of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta. Therefore, the paper concluded that it is due to faulty implementation of such national responses that the phenomenon is unabated.

Keywords: *Crude Oil Theft, Illegal Bunkering, Pipeline Vandalism, Nigeria's Niger Delta, National Responses.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

For several decades, especially from the 1970s and beyond, petroleum resources have become the life wire of Nigeria's economy. In particular, oil and gas resources are vital to Nigeria's economy for many reasons, including income, export earnings, energy production, industrialization, infrastructure, and the advancement of society, etc. Starting in 1975, the importance of petroleum resources to the economy increased steadily. At its peak, it was noted that the Niger Delta's oil and gas resources contributed roughly 50% of the GDP, 85% of the country's budgetary revenue, and 95% of the government's foreign exchange earnings (Garuba, 2016). Under the shadow of Nigeria's crucial reliance on the petroleum industry, a subsector of the economy is thriving unchecked, supported by crude oil theft, illicit bunkering, and pipeline vandalism. It has been documented that in a single week between October 14 and October 20, 2023, the Nigerian National Petroleum Company (NNPC) reported 149 cases of crude oil theft throughout the Niger Delta (Adoluju, 2023).

The subject of this study is the Niger Delta in Nigeria, which is one of the oil-bearing regions of the world adversely impacted by crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism. Due to inadequate control of the nation's oil industry operations and inadequate handling of petroleum products, the region has become one of the world's most negatively impacted oil-producing areas (Raji & Abejide, 2013; UNEP, 2011). In addition, due to crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism, the country suffers huge revenue losses, estimated to be in trillions of Naira, with obvious security threats and environmental hazards (Izeze, 2018). It is, therefore, pertinent to consider the effects of the phenomenon and discuss the various national responses to tackle the menace of the problem.

The broad aim of this paper is to examine crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Specifically, the paper focused on the following objectives:

- Discuss the effects of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region; and
- Assess the national efforts to stop the menace of pipeline vandalism, illicit bunkering, and crude oil theft in Nigeria.

The following sub-themes are included to help accomplish the article's goals: introduction, methods and materials, conceptual and literature review, effects, national responses, and conclusion.

2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study used a qualitative research design, which helps us comprehend the nature of the research problem to determine the effects and national responses of pipeline vandalism, illegal bunkering, and crude oil theft in Nigeria's Niger Delta. To address the issues squarely, the author used descriptive analysis. As a result, it used secondary sources for gathering data. Therefore, the major sources of the secondary data were books, journal articles, conference papers, magazines, and online materials.

Similarly, content analysis was appropriately employed to make sense of data. Therefore, the study's focus was on how the Niger Delta region's illicit bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and crude oil theft affected the country and how various administrations responded to the challenges thereof.

3. CONCEPTUAL AND LITERATURE REVIEW

There are notable intellectual works in the literature on crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta region of Nigeria. Paki and Agusomu (2018: 16), conceptualized crude oil theft as “the act of taking or stealing crude oil and its associated products from pipelines or well heads or oil platforms or overloading ships at the export terminal facilities onshore or offshore to cheat the rightful owner(s) of the products for personal gains”. Crude oil is stolen from oil facilities and sold to buyers locally and internationally for profit.

On the other hand, illegal bunkering means “the clandestine siphoning off or diverting of petroleum products from pipelines and storage facilities, which are often performed or done with crude methods that usually cause accidents and pollution” (Paki & Agusomu, 2018: 17). Similarly, the fundamental act of pipeline vandalism is the blowing up of pipelines to cause shortages of petroleum products for both domestic and foreign markets and to send signals for an abrupt rise in the price of crude oil (United Nations Development Report [UNDP], 2006). Since one might lead to the other, the terms “oil theft”, “illegal bunkering”, and “pipeline vandalism”, are frequently used interchangeably in the literature (Adishi & Hunga, 2017).

It has been observed that writers agree with the fact of the existence of organized stealing of crude oil daily in the Niger Delta region, there is however disagreement on various quantities or scales of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism (Arugu, 2014; Boris, 2016; Adishi & Hunga, 2017; Paki & Agusomu, 2018). The quantity of crude oil losses to the nation's economy has been variously mentioned in the literature on the phenomenon to be 100,000 barrels per day (bpd) (Faucon, 2009), 150,000 bpd (Attah, 2012; Akpan, 2013), 180,000 bpd (Ahmed, 2013), 200,000 bpd (Nigerian Navy, 2013), 300,000 bpd (Olusola, 2013; Odemwingie & Nda - Isaiah, 2013; Okere, 2013; James, 2013), 400,000 bpd (Akpan, 2013) and 800,000 bpd (Okere, 2013). However, Izeze (2018) reported that Nigeria is losing over 2 million bpd of crude oil to corporate oil thieves. The losses amount to billions of dollars annually.

The operators of these illegal businesses carry out their nefarious activities at different levels, the most popular method of which is to perforate pipeline conveying petroleum products from one part of the country to another to siphon it for sale or use (Obasi, 2011; Paki, 2017; Paki & Agusomu, 2018). Scholars like Asuni (2009); Katsouris and Sayne (2013); Adishi and Hunga (2017), respectively listed the various operational methods of oil theft in the Niger Delta to include:

- Use of explosives like dynamite or bombs to blow up the crude oil pipeline to obstruct the supply process to refineries or loading stations;
- Small-scale, insignificant theft of petroleum products and condensate intended for the local market;
- Physical removal of the "Christmas tree" by hacking into pipes or using a hose to tap a wellhead; and
- Lifting of more crude oil than is authorized through the use of forged bills of lading.

On the issue of the main players in these illegal businesses in the Niger Delta, the literature mentioned the involvement of a whole network of people and institutions such as the barons and the boys, local people, security agents, local refinery operators, and international actors involving international oil companies, nationals of foreign countries and some sovereign nations that collaborates to perfect successful operations (Asuni, 2009; Garuba, 2010; Obasi, 2011; Olateju, 2013; Ofuoma & Omoruyi, 2014; Obodo-Joel, 2014; Adishi & Hunga, 2017; Paki & Agusomu, 2018). However, some security agencies and oil companies have refuted their alleged involvement in crude oil theft in the Niger Delta (Ogunyemi, 2023).

Many factors that purportedly contribute to the continued success of illegal economic endeavors are said to be driving the oil business in Nigeria's Niger Delta region. Paki and Agusomu (2018: 26-27) observed that the literature on crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism mentioned various reasons ranging from the mundane to the absurd. These include (a) poverty; (b) ignorance; (c) greed; (d) disrespect for the country's economic survival; (e) the "get rich" syndrome; (f) unemployment of young people; (g) abusing the criminal justice system's weaknesses to evade the law; (h) a culture of impunity that has developed as a result of the false belief that some people are above the law; (i) lack of a strong institutional framework to apprehend criminals; (j) malice; (k) poor governance (corruption, incompetence); (l) criminal impunity in the nation; (m) the government's and multinational corporations' neglect of the region; (n) the desire to share and partake in the national cake; and (o) cooperation between security personnel and bunkers; (p) community - industry expectation mismatch; and (q) ineffective law enforcement (Garuba, 2012; Udo, 2013; Igbuku, 2014; Victor, Offiong & Sunday, 2016; Adishi & Hunga, 2017). In addition, other notable causes include poor natural resources governance, failure to curb the lingering Niger Delta crisis, and militarization of the Niger Delta (Paki & Agusomu, 2018).

Crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism have caused adverse socio-economic losses to Nigeria, environmental pollution and degradation, threat to national and international security, caused economic losses to national and international oil companies (Akpan 2013; Olusola, 2013; Odemwingie & Nda - Isaiah, 2013; Okere, 2013; James, 2013; Wilson, 2014; Onuoha, 2016; Adishi & Hunga, 2017; Paki, 2017). Therefore, to ensure the smooth operation of Nigeria's oil industry, various administrations have initiated several national responses to curb crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism by instituting diverse measures to enhance its credibility. These among others include enactment of laws, arrest, and prosecution of perpetrators, strengthening security arrangements, granting of amnesty to repentant militants, the establishment of the Inter-Agency Maritime Security Task Force (IAMSTF) and the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), and have collaborated with regional and international partners to address the problem (Obasi, 2011; Ogodo, 2012; Nwanosike, 2013; Udo, 2013; Dodondawa, 2014).

Effects of Crude Oil Theft, Illegal Bunkering and Pipeline Vandalism

The effects of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism are tremendous. As stated earlier, it has caused adverse socio-economic losses to Nigeria, environmental pollution

and degradation, threat to national and international security, caused security concerns and economic losses to national and international oil companies (Akpan 2013; Olusola, 2013; Odemwingie & Nda - Isaiah, 2013; Okere, 2013; James, 2013; Wilson, 2014; Onuoha, 2016; Adishi & Hunga, 2017; Paki, 2017; Soremi, 2020).

In the Niger Delta, theft of crude oil, unlawful bunkering, and pipeline vandalism have resulted in significant threats, risks, and costs for national security. This is because militant activities in the region have continued to threaten the very fabric of national unity and cohesion. Such activities are partly funded with proceeds from the illegal business. It becomes more apparent when seen in the light of the deployment of security personnel, especially the Joint Task Force (JTF) and other para-military and military outfits to protect and prevent the oil infrastructure in the region from destruction (Oromareghake, Arishi & Igho, 2013; Mboho & Udousoro, 2014). This has, therefore, raised the stakes for risk awareness and danger imposed on security personnel, oil companies' workers, and the people living in the region.

Similarly, Nigeria and oil companies spent billions of naira yearly to buy equipment, pay security personnel deployed on peacekeeping operations and provide security in the Niger Delta. Aghedo and Osumah (2014) claim that the Nigerian government increased its security spending significantly by spending over N400 billion on protecting the area and its oil and gas assets. The enormous expense of maintaining peace and tranquility in the Niger Delta directly affects the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and national development and progress of the nation. The Technical Committee on Niger Delta (TCND) documented, for example, that Nigeria lost around US\$61.6 billion to oil theft and pipeline damage between 2006 and 2008.

In 2009, the Federal Government launched an amnesty program in response to insecurity in the area. About 30,000 militants who repented and turned in their small arms and light weapons (SALW) were granted amnesty. Since then, efforts made were to strengthen security in the Niger Delta; the federal government has invested billions of naira in disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation initiatives. This tenuous quiet caused oil production to pick up speed, but the project has already cost more than 200 billion naira (Aghedo & Osumah, 2014). This suggests that maintaining peace has not come without a high price.

In addition to the expenses borne by national governments, the multinational oil and gas companies (MNOCs) operating in the region have invested over US\$3.7 billion in security in just 2007 (Aaron, 2015). Another concern is the paying "protection fees" to former fighters. It

has been revealed that the Nigerian government paid ex-militant commanders over N5.6 billion in protection costs to ensure that its infrastructure for gas and oil was protected. Furthermore, ex-militant commanders received contracts for millions of dollars to buy ships that the nation's military would use for maritime patrols (Aaron, 2015). These actions have resulted in a temporary decrease in militant attacks; nevertheless, they are not long-lasting. Additionally, the effects of oil theft and pipeline destruction were producing economic havoc, making it difficult for the government to effectively, implement its annual budgets (Aaron, 2015).

Nigeria's national security crisis, according to Nwangwu and Ononogbu (2014), caused the nation to divert limited funds from the national budget to buy military hardware, cutting money that could have been used for other vital aspects of the country's operations, like infrastructure development, social welfare services for the populace, and education. For instance, it was reported that the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) spent N292.7 billion, N276.5 billion, N422.9 billion, and N563.2 billion in 2008, 2009, 2010, and 2011 respectively for such payments (Nwangwu & Ononogbu, 2014).

Oghoghomeh and Ironkwe (2012), revealed that the government and MNOC leadership had employed security agents and peacekeeping troops at great financial expense to safeguard their personnel and infrastructure against potential threats. For instance, the NNPC estimated the cost of pipeline vandalism to be over N10.2 billion in 2001. As a result, the organization concluded that the expense of peacekeeping in the Niger Delta had a significant negative impact on Nigeria's GDP and economic growth. Studies have indicated that the sums of money invested in securing oil facilities were almost comparable to the amount required to provide development for the population (Oghoghomeh & Ironkwe, 2012). This led the authors to conclude that it would be more economical for the government to deal with the development of the Niger Delta than to keep funding security.

National Responses to Curb the Menace

As a result, Nigeria has for many years now risen to the task of ensuring the smooth operation of the oil industry by instituting diverse measures to enhance its credibility. Therefore, the consideration of the following national responses is pertinent:

(a) Enactment of Laws

The country has enacted several requisite laws, rules, and regulations against crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism, especially military governments in Nigeria, including the Minerals Decree 1969, Petroleum Products Distribution (Anti-sabotage) Decree 1975, the Special Tribunal (Miscellaneous) Decree No. 20 of 1984, etc.

In addition, democratically elected governments in Nigeria have intensified efforts to strengthen existing laws of the country and created new ones and established new institutions to regulate financial crimes e.g. the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC), the Nigerian Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC), etc. While the EFCC has since been involved in the investigation and prosecution of financial transactions concerning illegal bunkering, the NSCDC has been reported to have arrested oil thieves and people caught in the act of pipeline vandalization and turned them over to the police so they may face charges (Obasi, 2011).

(b) Arrest and Prosecution of Perpetrators

By successfully apprehending, prosecuting, and punishing those responsible for the criminal activities, the Nigerian Federal Government has taken decisive action against the threats posed by illegal bunkering, pipeline vandalism, and crude oil theft. The various security agencies in the country have regularly investigated and prosecuted such crimes.

For example, many ships engaged in Nigeria's illicit crude oil trade were confiscated, and the offenders were taken into custody. However, in some cases, the confiscated vessels and products, and the people responsible for the illicit activities sometimes vanished into thin air; the arrested oil thieves and the seized vessels could not be prosecuted successfully (Obasi, 2011).

(c) Strengthening Security Arrangements

Following an increase in military involvement in 2003, the Nigerian government deployed the JTF to the Niger Delta to combat illicit bunkering, pipeline destruction, and crude oil theft. The JTF, consisting of the military (Army, Air Force, Navy) and paramilitary agencies, has been tasked with reducing and possibly eliminating unlawful petroleum activities in the oil-rich Niger Delta area. The JTF carried out aggressive operations against these offenders multiple

times since it was founded. The JTF and other security agencies have paraded some alleged illicit bunkers and refinery operators in the waterways of the Niger Delta, which resulted in the demolition or recovery of many barges, canoes, speedboats, and big wooden boats (Ogodo, 2012; Obasi, 2011).

Crude oil theft, illicit bunkering, and pipeline vandalism are still ongoing problems in Nigeria's oil industry in the Niger Delta, notwithstanding JTF operations in the area. This demonstrates that the JTF's creation did not have the intended impact on eliminating the rise in crude oil theft, illicit bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta. But once President Umaru Shehu Yar Adua passed away in 2009, his deputy, Dr. Goodluck Jonathan, assumed power. To combat the threat of oil theft, President Goodluck Jonathan also, took a variety of actions. In addition, he gave the NSCDC more responsibilities, such as guarding the nation's pipelines, and permitted them to carry weapons (Nwanosike, 2013; Udo, 2013). Therefore, strengthening the security arrangements for the protection of Nigeria's oil industry is one of the pivotal aims of any government at the federal level.

(d) Establishment of Inter-Agency Maritime Security Task Force (IAMSTF)

According to Obasi (2011), President Olusegun Obasanjo, in November 2005, established the IAMSTF to look into the various risks associated with maritime security and to make recommendations on how to stop any criminal activity or security breaches in the nation's coastal waters. This led to the setting of the task force, led by Rear Admiral Dele J. Ezeoba, which began meeting on November 25 and had ninety days. Its mandate was to:

- Examine and enhance how security personnel and government organizations run their operations in the country's ports;
- Investigate and monitor the operations of private jetty operators with licenses;
- Penalize anyone found to be engaging in illicit activity;
- Ensure that all unauthorized and unlicensed private aircraft are shut down immediately;
- Examine and monitor the operations of gas and oil businesses in the country's marine region;
- Arrest inept people and groups responsible for security breaches; it was to locate and reallocate employees who have overstayed in the ports, collaborate with all security agencies;

- Assess if midstream discharge and trans-shipment of cargoes in Nigerian waters comply with current laws; Ensure that maritime laws are upheld;
- Clearly state what steps should be taken to maintain marine security and safety;
- Consult with any other pertinent agencies that support the task force's efforts; and
- Offer any additional recommendations that may be required (Obasi, 2011).

Representatives from the Nigerian Police, Nigeria Customs Service, Nigerian Armed Forces, State Security Service (SSS), and the Nigerian Maritime Administration and Safety Agency (NIMASA) are among the task force members. Following the task force's fulfillment of its mandate, recommendations were presented and the Presidential Implementation on Maritime Security (PICOMS) was established. Nonetheless, most of IAMSTF's recommendations have not been implemented (Obasi, 2011).

(e) Establishment of the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI)

Nigeria established the Nigerian Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI), a local counterpart of the worldwide Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI). On May 25, the National Assembly approved the NEITI Act 2007 No. 69, which aims to:

- Get rid of any unethical methods used in calculating, settling, receiving, and posting the money owed to the Federal Government by extractive industry firms;
- Ensure that the government is transparent and accountable when allocating resources from the payment of receipts extractive industries;
- Ensure that all extractive industry companies follow the law and are transparent when paying the federal government and statutory recipients; and
- Ensure that the Federal Government monitors and is held accountable for the revenue receipts from extractive industry companies (Obasi, 2011).

(f) Granting of Amnesty to Ex-militants

During the President Yar Adua administration, there was a significant rise in militancy, resulting in the kidnapping of oil workers by militants, attacks on oil infrastructure, and illicit oil bunkering (2007–2009). In an attempt to lessen oil theft and other vices in the region, the late former president launched the Niger Delta militant amnesty program in 2009.

As a result, the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND), which coordinated massive and sustained attacks on oil facilities, was able to put a stop to its nascent insurgency and remove several categories of small arms and light weapons (SALWs) from circulation in the Niger Delta as about 30,000 ex-militants accepted the amnesty offer. This increased crude oil production and decreased crude oil theft, illicit bunkering, and pipeline vandalism (Obasi, 2011).

(g) Regional and International Responses

Nigeria has joined other nations in offering institutional frameworks and policy scope for forming bilateral and multilateral agreements to address the threat of pipeline vandalism, illicit bunkering, and crude oil theft. Similarly, the Nigerian Federal Government under President Olusegun Obasanjo signed an Agreement for the state-owned refinery of Cote D'Ivoire to receive its oil supply, and bravely engaged in bilateral talks to prevent the Cote D'Ivoire refinery from processing crude oil that had been stolen from Nigeria. In 2003, it issued a cautionary note to Cote D'Ivoire and provided the government with contracts so that the state-owned refinery could obtain legal oil (Dodondawa, 2014).

Additionally, the Nigerian government issued a cease-acceptance order to the governments of some sovereign states known to have received stolen oil from Nigeria. If this action had been taken against other countries known to be getting stolen oil from Nigeria, it might have had a greater impact. Such concerns are rarely taken seriously since the nation is unable to adequately penalize foreign governments that are known to be receiving stolen oil from Nigeria (Dodondawa, 2014).

The government of Nigeria believes that some of its crude oil is illegally obtained and being refined in other nations and the people and organizations involved are laundering the money obtained through illegal bunkering (Obasi, 2011; Nwanosike, 2013; Udo, 2013). As a result, the administration of President Goodluck Jonathan also initiated contact with officials in these other nations. The president asked for help earlier in 2014 from the US and the European Union (EU) by refusing to purchase crude oil pilfered from Nigeria (Dodondawa, 2014). The phenomenon persists since these attempts were unable to produce the expected consequences.

Also, Nigeria and other countries formed the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GoGC) such as Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sao Tome and Principe. The GoGC was established with the following objectives in mind:

- Creating a structure for member nations to consult on cooperation and development; supplying a framework and structure for communication, conflict management, prevention, and settlement amongst states in the region;
- Establishing security, tranquility, and mutual trust to encourage peaceful growth; coordinating the many state policies, using natural resources, and developing a framework for the legal control of the activities of oil multinational corporations in the area;
- Safeguarding, maintaining, and enhancing the area's natural ecosystem as well as collaborating in the event of a natural disaster; and
- Building a large network for integration and connectivity between transportation networks (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), 2011).

Again, Nigeria is a member of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) established in 2002 after the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg. The initiative is a multi-stakeholder effort that brings together governments, businesses, investors, civil society organizations, and international organizations. As a voluntary initiative by countries, it is expected to be carried out with the government consent of the member countries. Its objectives are as follows:

- Increasing accountability and transparency in the extractive industry; encouraging better governance in resource-rich countries by mandating that government revenues from mining, oil, and gas be verified and fully published;
- Mandating that member states carry out this implementation; and
- Encouraging civil society's active involvement in the creation, supervision, and evaluation of the payment and revenue processes, being its contributions to public discourse on the subject (FES, 2011).

As a result, Nigeria hosted the first EITI West Africa Conference in 2008, which was held in Abuja and covered strategies for identifying common interests among the countries in the sub-region (Obasi, 2011).

4. CONCLUSION

The paper explored the effects and national responses related to the challenges posed by crude oil theft, illicit bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in Nigeria's Niger Delta. This is against the

backdrop that Nigeria shouldn't lose large-scale petroleum resources, which was valued as a huge financial loss to the nation, individuals, and other institutions. The study revealed that crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism have caused adverse effects in the areas of socio-economic losses to Nigeria, environmental pollution and degradation, threats to national and international security, and economic losses to national and international oil companies and individuals.

Again, it was revealed that, to ensure the smooth operation of the country's oil industry various administrations have carried out various national responses to curb the menace. These include enactment of laws, arrest, and prosecution of perpetrators, strengthening security arrangements, the establishment of the IAMSTF, NEITI, and GoGC, granting of amnesty to ex-militants, and collaboration with regional and international partners to curb the menace of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta and ensure security and protection of lives and property in the region.

Despite the implementation of these extant regulatory policy options, the problem of crude oil theft, illegal bunkering, and pipeline vandalism continue to occur in the Niger Delta. The inference was that the situation persisted because the national responses to curb the menace were implemented ineffectively.

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