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Oil Surveillance Contracts and its Impact on Oil Output and Environmental Protection in the Niger Delta

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Abstract

Oil surveillance contracts have become a critical component of Nigeria's security strategy to combat oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the Niger Delta. This study examines the impact of these contracts on oil output and environmental protection, utilizing a mixed-methods approach that combines primary data (survey and interviews) with secondary sources. A structured survey was conducted among 150 respondents, including oil company officials, security personnel, local contractors, and community members. The findings reveal that 72% of respondents believe oil surveillance contracts have significantly reduced oil theft, while 28% argue that collusion between surveillance contractors and illegal oil bunkers remains a major challenge. Oil output in secured areas has increased by 15–20% over the past two years, aligning with reports from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC). However, the study also highlights environmental concerns. 65% of community respondents express fears over the militarization of oil-producing areas, citing human rights violations and forced displacements. Moreover, 53% believe that host communities are inadequately involved in the surveillance process, underscoring the need for a more inclusive approach. The study concludes that while oil surveillance contracts have enhanced security and oil production, their long-term success depends on strengthened oversight, environmental accountability, and community participation. Without these measures, surveillance efforts risk becoming a short-term fix rather than a sustainable solution.

Keywords: *Oil Surveillance Contracts, Niger Delta, Oil Theft, Environmental Protection, Security, Community Participation*

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Background of the Study

The Niger Delta as a region rich in hydrocarbon resources, remains central to Nigeria's oil industry. However, oil production in this region has been marred by numerous challenges, including oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and environmental degradation. According Zandvliet & Don Pedro (2002), Oil exploration and extraction in the Niger Delta have been accompanied by severe socio-economic and environmental challenges, exacerbating tensions between oil companies, the government, and local communities. In response, the Nigerian government and oil companies have increasingly relied on private surveillance contractors to safeguard oil infrastructure (Asiegbu, 2024). These contracts have been primarily utilized to curb the frequent vandalism, oil theft, and sabotage that have contributed to significant revenue losses and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta (Tayler, 2019). The surveillance contracts have generated significant debate, with proponents arguing that they enhance oil output and environmental protection, while critics claim they serve as political tools and avenues for corruption (Stakeholder Democracy Network [SDN], 2019).

Research findings affirm that ecosystems provide essential services that support human life and well-being (Opukri & Ibaba, 2008). The Niger Delta region, being one of the world's largest wetlands, covering an area of approximately 70,000 square kilometers, possesses distinctive ecological features, including sandy coastal ridge barriers, brackish mangroves, freshwater swamps, and lowland forests (Rufus & Ekiye, 2021). However, the intensive oil exploration activities in the region have resulted in widespread environmental damage, posing significant threats to biodiversity and human livelihoods. The degradation of these ecosystems has led to growing concerns about environmental rights and insecurity, further complicating development efforts in the region (Rufus & Jonah, 2022).

A significant discourse within the environmental rights literature questions whether there is a universal acknowledgment of human rights that includes environmental protection or if environmental rights remain a distinct category of advocacy (Rufus & Jonah, 2022). This debate is particularly relevant to the Niger Delta, where environmental degradation has led to health crises, loss of arable land, and the destruction of aquatic life, exacerbating socio-economic vulnerabilities (Rufus & Ekiye, 2021). Furthermore, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Fourth Assessment Report (2007) established that climate change is already occurring, with the Niger Delta region experiencing increased flooding, coastal erosion, and habitat loss, further complicating the management of oil-related environmental challenges.

Despite the industrial-scale oil extraction in the region, indigenous communities have long practiced environmental conservation techniques aimed at sustainable resource use (Ibaba, Sibiri & Barikor, 2019). Traditional methods of environmental management, such as controlled timber lumbering, water conservation, and community-based land-use practices, have historically played a role in mitigating ecological degradation. However, these practices are increasingly undermined by oil spills, gas flaring, and deforestation linked to oil exploration. The introduction of oil surveillance contracts was intended to reduce pipeline vandalism and oil theft, but their role in protecting the environment remains debatable (Asiegbu, 2024).

Pipeline surveillance contracts in the Niger Delta were introduced to address oil theft and infrastructure sabotage. Traditionally, the Joint Task Force (JTF), comprising military personnel, was responsible for securing oil facilities. However, the inability of conventional security agencies to curb oil theft has led to the emergence of private surveillance firms (Asiegbu, 2024). Companies such as Tantita Security Services, Global West Vessel Specialist Limited (GWVSL), and Ocean Marine Solutions (OMS) have been awarded lucrative contracts to monitor and protect oil pipelines (Asiegbu, 2024). The effectiveness of pipeline surveillance contracts in boosting oil output is evident in the reported increase in production following the award of major contracts. Nigeria's crude oil production, which had suffered due to persistent pipeline vandalism, saw improvements after enhanced private surveillance efforts (Asiegbu, 2024). Private security firms engage in intelligence gathering and operational interventions that help detect and mitigate oil theft, thereby contributing to more stable production levels (Asiegbu, 2024).

However, the environmental impact of oil surveillance contracts is complex. While enhanced security may prevent oil spills resulting from sabotage, some contractors have been accused of complicity in oil-related crimes (SDN, 2019). Because surveillance contracts are primarily awarded to political allies and ex-militants, the sustainability of these security arrangements remains uncertain. Research suggests that once contracts are terminated, former militants often return to vandalism and illegal refining, exacerbating environmental degradation (SDN, 2019). The abrupt suspension of such contracts in 2015 under President Buhari's administration led to a surge in attacks on oil infrastructure, demonstrating the fragile nature of this arrangement (SDN, 2019).

One of the significant concerns surrounding oil surveillance contracts is the lack of transparency in their allocation and execution. The details of these contracts are rarely made public, often under the guise of national security (Anderson & Page, 2017). The absence of oversight and accountability mechanisms has fueled corruption, with contracts frequently awarded based on political affiliations rather than security competence (SDN, 2019). Both the All Progressives Congress (APC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have been implicated in using pipeline surveillance contracts as a means of rewarding political loyalists (SDN, 2019). The monetization of surveillance contracts has led to a situation where security efforts are not necessarily aimed at protecting oil infrastructure but rather at appeasing powerful actors. The amount allocated to these contracts is often determined by the number of individuals the contracting entity claims to have under its command rather than the actual cost of surveillance operations (SDN, 2019). This system encourages inflated contract values and mismanagement of funds meant for oil security.

Statement of the Problem/Justification

The Niger Delta, despite being a region of immense hydrocarbon wealth, remains plagued by oil-related insecurity, environmental degradation, and economic instability. The persistent issues of oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and illegal bunkering have not only resulted in significant revenue losses for the Nigerian government but have also exacerbated environmental hazards, leaving communities vulnerable to pollution and ecological

destruction (Amnesty International, 2015; Zabbey et al., 2017). In response, the Nigerian government and oil companies have increasingly relied on private oil surveillance contracts to safeguard critical infrastructure and mitigate oil-related crimes (Asiegbu, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these contracts remains highly contested, raising critical questions about their impact on oil production and environmental sustainability.

While proponents argue that oil surveillance contracts have led to a reduction in large-scale oil theft and improved security in oil-producing areas (Sayne & Katsouris, 2013), critics contend that these contracts often function as mechanisms for political patronage rather than genuine security measures (Stakeholder Democracy Network [SDN], 2019). Many of these contracts are awarded to ex-militants and politically connected individuals, raising concerns about corruption, lack of transparency, and the entrenchment of private militias (International Crisis Group, 2015). The cyclical nature of violence and insecurity in the region suggests that surveillance contracts may not be addressing the root causes of oil-related conflicts but rather perpetuating a dependency on armed groups to maintain stability. Furthermore, the environmental impact of these contracts remains an understudied yet crucial dimension of their effectiveness. While they are intended to prevent pipeline vandalism and oil spills, reports indicate that some surveillance contractors may be complicit in oil theft or deliberately escalate insecurity to justify contract renewals (Sayne & Katsouris, 2013; SDN, 2019). The Niger Delta's fragile ecosystem, already compromised by decades of oil exploration, continues to suffer from severe pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity, with limited accountability for environmental violations (Opukri & Ibaba, 2008; Ibaba, Sibiri, & Barikor, 2019; Rufus, 2019).

Given these complexities, there is a pressing need to critically assess the impact of oil surveillance contracts on oil output and environmental protection in the Niger Delta. This study aims to bridge the existing knowledge gap by evaluating the effectiveness of these contracts, the extent to which they contribute to oil security, and their broader implications for environmental sustainability and governance. In doing so, this research will provide valuable insights into the political economy of oil surveillance contracts and their role in shaping the future of Nigeria's oil industry and environmental policies.

Research Questions

i. How have oil surveillance contracts impacted oil output and environmental protection in the Niger Delta?
ii. To what extent have these contracts contributed to reducing oil theft and enhancing security in the region?

Objectives of the Study

i. To examine the influence of oil surveillance contracts on crude oil production and environmental sustainability in the Niger Delta.
ii. To assess the effectiveness of these contracts in curbing oil theft and improving security around oil installations.

Literature

Conceptualizing Oil Surveillance Contracts

Oil surveillance contracts are specialized security agreements between governments, oil companies, and private security firms aimed at protecting oil infrastructure, curbing oil theft, and ensuring stable production (Addeh, 2024). These contracts typically involve surveillance operations, intelligence gathering, and physical security measures to safeguard oil pipelines, flow stations, and other critical assets from vandalism and sabotage (Ikelegbe, 2010).

Scholars have conceptualized oil surveillance contracts within the broader framework of resource governance and security privatization. Watts (2008) argues that such contracts represent a shift towards outsourced security governance, where the state delegates its core responsibility of resource protection to private entities. This trend is particularly evident in rentier states like Nigeria, where the government relies heavily on oil revenues but struggles with enforcement due to weak institutional capacity (Obi, 2010). According to Adibe, Egbefo, and Oghator (2018), oil surveillance contracts are often awarded to ex-militant leaders, private security firms, or local community groups, reflecting the political economy of security in oil-rich regions. This model has been both praised and criticized: proponents argue that it creates local employment and improves security, while critics contend that it entrenches patronage networks and exacerbates local conflicts (Adunbi, 2015).

The Niger Delta, Nigeria's primary oil-producing region, has been plagued by oil-related conflicts for decades. These conflicts stem from environmental degradation, marginalization of host communities, oil theft, and militant activities (Okonta & Douglas, 2003). The region accounts for over 90% of Nigeria's foreign exchange earnings, making oil security a top priority for both the government and multinational corporations (Etekpe & Okolo, 2010). Historically, oil theft and pipeline vandalism have posed significant threats to Nigeria's oil sector. Reports indicate that the country loses an estimated 200,000 barrels of crude oil daily to illegal bunkering and pipeline sabotage (Anyaogu, 2021). To combat these losses, the Nigerian government, in partnership with oil majors such as Shell, Chevron, and ExxonMobil, introduced oil surveillance contracts as a non-military strategy to protect oil infrastructure (Addeh, 2024).

The introduction of surveillance contracts coincided with the post-amnesty era in 2009, following the disarmament of Niger Delta militants (Ikelegbe, 2010). The Nigerian government sought to integrate ex-militants into legal economic activities by awarding contracts to local security outfits run by former warlords. While this strategy reduced large-scale militant attacks, it also created a parallel security structure, where non-state actors assumed quasi-governmental roles in resource protection (Watts, 2008).

Key Stakeholders in Oil Surveillance Contracts

Several actors play crucial roles in the design, execution, and oversight of oil surveillance contracts. These stakeholders include:

1. The Nigerian Government
    i. Through agencies like the Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation Limited (NNPCL) and the Ministry of Petroleum Resources, the government awards contracts and sets security policies.
    ii. The Nigerian Navy and Joint Task Force (JTF) oversee maritime and territorial security but often collaborate with private security firms.
2. Oil Companies (Multinational and Indigenous)
    i. Major oil companies such as Shell, Chevron, ExxonMobil, TotalEnergies, and Eni invest in surveillance contracts to safeguard their operations.
    ii. Indigenous firms, like Seplat Energy and Aiteo, also rely on these security arrangements for operational stability.
3. Local Contractors and Security Firms
    i. Private security firms, including those owned by ex-militants like Tompolo's Tantita Security Services, dominate the oil surveillance sector (Addeh, 2024).
    ii. These firms operate within designated areas, securing oil pipelines and gathering intelligence on illicit activities.
4. Community Stakeholders
    i. Traditional rulers, youth groups, and civil society organizations often influence contract allocation.
    ii. Some contracts incorporate community-based surveillance, which promotes local employment but can also spark disputes over resource control.
5. Security Agencies
    i. The Nigerian Navy, Army, and Civil Defense Corps provide backup security and intelligence-sharing with surveillance contractors.
    ii. Coordination between private security and state forces has been both beneficial and contentious, especially regarding jurisdictional overlaps (Ikelegbe, 2020).

Impact of Oil Surveillance on Oil Output

One of the primary justifications for oil surveillance contracts is their role in mitigating crude oil theft and ensuring a steady flow of production. Reports indicate that prior to the intensification of surveillance activities, Nigeria lost an estimated 200,000 to 400,000 barrels of crude oil daily to theft, sabotage, and illegal refining (Anyaogu, 2021).. The deployment of private surveillance contractors, particularly those led by ex-militants familiar with the terrain, has reportedly curbed illicit activities and restored oil production to more stable levels (Addeh, 2024).

Empirical data suggest that enhanced security measures correlate with improved oil output. In 2022, following the renewal of surveillance contracts with Tantita Security Services and other private contractors, Nigeria's crude oil production rose from 900,000 barrels per day (bpd) in Q3 2022 to over 1.5 million bpd by mid-2023 (Anyaogu, 2021). The Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC) confirmed that the reduction in crude oil theft was a major contributor to this increase (Adunbi, 2021). According to Ikelegbe (2010), the success of surveillance contracts is tied to localized intelligence gathering, community

involvement, and rapid response mechanisms. Unlike conventional state security agencies, which often struggle with bureaucratic inefficiencies, private contractors operate with greater flexibility, allowing for quicker interventions and real-time monitoring of oil pipelines (Watts, 2008).

Pipeline vandalism has historically been a major factor in Nigeria's declining oil output. Surveillance contracts have played a preventive role, ensuring that pipelines remain functional and minimizing shutdowns due to attacks. According to Obi (2010), the deployment of community-based surveillance teams in oil-producing areas has reduced incidences of pipeline breaches by over 60% in monitored regions. Surveillance contractors have been instrumental in disrupting illegal refining networks, which are responsible for significant crude oil losses. The destruction of illegal refineries in Rivers, Bayelsa, and Delta States has cut down oil leakages and boosted official production levels (Adunbi, 2015). While oil theft persists in certain locations, the scale of illicit operations has diminished, allowing for a more predictable production environment. However, some scholars argue that surveillance contracts alone do not fully address the root causes of oil-related insecurity. Adunbi (2015) notes that despite increased surveillance, some actors within the state and oil industry remain complicit in oil theft, undermining the overall effectiveness of these contracts. This underscores the need for structural reforms in oil sector governance, beyond reliance on private security measures.

Environmental Implications of Oil Surveillance Contracts

The Niger Delta region of Nigeria is one of the most environmentally degraded oil-producing regions in the world. Decades of crude oil exploration, pipeline vandalism, illegal refining, and oil spills have left vast areas polluted, infertile, and uninhabitable (Watts, 2008). The introduction of oil surveillance contracts was primarily aimed at securing oil infrastructure and curbing oil theft; however, the environmental consequences of these contracts remain a subject of scholarly debate. While some argue that surveillance efforts help reduce oil-related environmental degradation, others contend that these contracts exacerbate ecological harm due to their approach to securing oil assets (Adunbi, 2021).

One of the positive impacts of oil surveillance contracts is their role in preventing oil spills and reducing environmental degradation. Before the implementation of enhanced surveillance, the high frequency of pipeline vandalism and illegal refining contributed to extensive oil spillage. The deliberate rupturing of pipelines by oil thieves often resulted in large-scale pollution of farmlands, rivers, and mangrove forests (Obi, 2019). Surveillance contractors have helped reduce such activities, leading to fewer oil spills and less environmental contamination (Anyaogu, 2021).

For instance, reports indicate that between 2019 and 2022, crude oil losses due to theft and vandalism led to hundreds of spills annually, with devastating impacts on the ecosystem (NUPRC, 2023). However, following increased surveillance activities in 2023, Nigeria's recorded oil spill incidents reduced by approximately 35% (Addeh, 2024). This decline suggests that oil surveillance efforts contribute to environmental protection by deterring

sabotage-related spills. Additionally, by curbing illegal refining—a major source of air and water pollution—surveillance contracts have helped in reducing unregulated waste dumping and toxic emissions in certain areas of the Niger Delta (Adunbi, 2015). This has had some positive effects on biodiversity, as certain polluted water bodies have started recovering (Ikelegbe, 2010).

Irregardless of the potential benefits, oil surveillance activities have been criticized for contributing to environmental harm through their methods of dealing with oil theft and illegal refineries. A major concern is the widespread use of "bush burning"—the practice of setting fire to crude oil storage sites, illegal refining camps, and intercepted stolen oil (Adunbi, 2021). The Nigerian security forces and private surveillance contractors frequently burn confiscated crude oil and refining equipment, releasing highly toxic pollutants into the air and surrounding environments (Watts, 2008). The combustion of crude oil produces soot, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and other hazardous gases, which contribute to:

i. Severe air pollution and respiratory diseases in local communities.
ii. Acid rain, which damages crops and pollutes water sources.
iii. Loss of biodiversity, as fires destroy surrounding forests and wildlife habitats.

For example, in Rivers State, the effects of these operations have led to persistent black soot pollution, causing health hazards for residents and raising concerns about the long-term sustainability of such cleanup measures (Adunbi, 2015). In as as much as the call for more eco-friendly decommissioning methods, the use of fire remains the dominant approach, exacerbating the environmental crisis in the region (Obi, 2011).

Another negative environmental impact of oil surveillance contracts is the displacement of local communities and disruption of traditional livelihoods. While securing oil facilities, surveillance contractors often restrict access to land and waterways, areas which many Niger Delta residents depend on for fishing, farming, and other subsistence activities (Ikelegbe, 2010).

i. Fishermen have reported being barred from rivers and creeks, leading to a decline in their catch and economic hardship.
ii. Farmers whose lands are close to oil pipelines have faced difficulties accessing their farmlands due to increased security patrols and restrictions (Watts, 2008).
iii. Some communities have been forcefully relocated, especially in areas where security operations escalate into violent confrontations between contractors and oil thieves (Addeh, 2024).

These disruptions contribute to food insecurity, economic displacement, and rising poverty, further fueling resentment towards oil companies and security contractors. In some cases, affected communities have engaged in retaliatory attacks on oil facilities, perpetuating the cycle of conflict and environmental destruction (Adunbi, 2015). Beyond immediate environmental consequences, long-term sustainability issues arise from Nigeria's reliance on security-driven oil management. While surveillance contracts may temporarily reduce oil theft, they do not address the root causes of environmental degradation in the Niger Delta.

Key concerns include:

i. Neglect of Environmental Remediation – Oil companies and the government prioritize security spending over environmental restoration, leaving many polluted sites unattended (Anyaogu, 2021).
ii. Weak Regulatory Oversight – Surveillance contractors operate with minimal environmental accountability, meaning their actions are rarely scrutinized for ecological damage (Adunbi, 2021).
iii. Dependence on Non-State Actors – The involvement of private security firms and ex-militant groups in oil surveillance creates conflicts of interest, making it difficult to implement transparent environmental policies (Watts, 2008).

For sustainable environmental protection, scholars recommend that Nigeria:

i. Invest in modern surveillance technology (e.g., drones, satellite monitoring) to reduce reliance on destructive field operations.
ii. Develop non-invasive cleanup techniques instead of burning confiscated crude oil.
iii. Strengthen environmental oversight to ensure that surveillance contractors adhere to eco-friendly practices.

Theoretical Perspectives on Oil Surveillance and Security

The study of oil surveillance and security in the Niger Delta is underpinned by several theoretical perspectives that explain the dynamics of resource control, state intervention, and conflict management. One relevant framework is the Rentier State Theory (Mahdavy, 1970), which posits that oil-dependent governments prioritize revenue security over sustainable governance. This explains why the Nigerian government employs surveillance contracts to protect oil infrastructure rather than addressing the socio-economic grievances fueling oil theft and sabotage (Watts, 2008).

The Resource Curse Theory (Auty, 1993) highlights how oil wealth paradoxically breeds instability, weak institutions, and violent conflicts. In the Niger Delta, the proliferation of oil surveillance contracts reflects a securitization approach that prioritizes military-style interventions over long-term environmental and social reforms (Obi, 2010). This perspective aligns with the Securitization Theory (Buzan, Wæver & de Wilde, 1998), which explains how states frame oil theft as an existential threat to justify extraordinary security measures, often at the expense of human rights and environmental sustainability (Adunbi, 2021). Furthermore, Marxist Political Economy Theory (Marx, 1867) provides insight into the class struggles inherent in oil surveillance, where state and corporate actors collaborate with private security firms to safeguard oil revenues while local communities face exclusion and environmental degradation (Ikelegbe, 2010). Collectively, these theoretical perspectives illustrate how oil surveillance contracts function within a broader framework of resource control, state security priorities, and economic inequality in oil-producing regions.

Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data with qualitative insights from interviews and focus group discussions. Primary data was collected

through a structured questionnaire administered to 150 respondents, including oil company officials, security personnel, government representatives, and community members. These respondents were selected using purposive and stratified sampling to ensure diverse perspectives on oil surveillance contracts. Key informant interviews were conducted with industry experts, local leaders, and environmental activists to gain deeper insights into the implications of oil surveillance. Secondary data was sourced from government reports, academic publications, and industry analyses to contextualize findings and validate primary data. Data analysis involved descriptive statistics (percentages and frequency distributions) to assess survey responses, while thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data. Tables and charts were utilized to present key findings, ensuring clarity and precision. The study adheres to ethical research standards, ensuring respondent confidentiality and obtaining informed consent before data collection.

Analysis

The analysis of oil surveillance contracts and their impact on oil output and environmental protection in the Niger Delta is based on data collected from key stakeholders, including oil company officials, security personnel, government representatives, and community members. Structured questionnaires were administered, and in-depth interviews were conducted to provide qualitative insights. The study engaged 150 respondents, categorized as follows:

Table 1: Category of Respondents

Category of Respondents	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Oil company officials	40	26.7%
Security personnel	35	23.3%
Government representatives	25	16.7%
Community members	50	33.3%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Effectiveness of Oil Surveillance in Reducing Oil Theft

The study found that 74% of respondents agreed that oil surveillance contracts have significantly reduced oil theft and pipeline vandalism in the region. Security personnel and oil company officials cited improved intelligence gathering and rapid response mechanisms as key factors. This finding aligns with Addeh (2024), who noted that Nigeria's oil production increased following enhanced surveillance operations. However, 26% of respondents believed that oil theft persists due to internal collusion between surveillance contractors and illegal oil bunkerers. This concern is supported by Obi (2010), who argued that while surveillance contracts are designed to curb theft, weak regulatory oversight and corruption undermine their effectiveness.

Table 2: Perception of Oil Theft Reduction

Perception of Oil Theft Reduction	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes, oil theft has reduced	111	74%
No, oil theft persists	39	26%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Impact on Oil Output and Revenue Generation

The implementation of oil surveillance contracts has led to notable improvements in oil production. Based on survey responses and secondary data, oil output in areas under strict surveillance increased by an estimated 18% over the past two years, while areas with weak or no surveillance experienced only a 4% increase. This trend aligns with reports from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (Addeh, 2024), which highlighted that enhanced security in oil-producing areas has resulted in higher investor confidence, reduced oil theft, and improved production stability. However, interviews with government representatives and industry stakeholders revealed that while surveillance efforts have improved security, they have not addressed the root causes of militancy and local grievances. Some experts cautioned that without socio-economic reforms, disruptions could resume despite increased security presence. This perspective aligns with Watts (2008) and Rufus and Sinivie (2022), who argued that long-term stability in the oil sector requires a balance between security measures and sustainable community development policies.

Table 3: Change in Oil Output Due to Surveillance Contracts

Change in Oil Output Due to Surveillance Contracts	Estimated Increase (%)
Oil-producing areas under strict surveillance	18%
Oil-producing areas with weak or no surveillance	4%

Environmental Consequences of Surveillance Operations

The study also examined the environmental impact of oil surveillance activities. 63% of community respondents expressed concerns over the militarization of oil-producing areas and its effects on the local environment. Security operations sometimes involve aggressive tactics such as pipeline shutdowns, controlled burn-offs, and armed interventions, which have led to secondary environmental degradation (Ikelegbe, 2010).

Table 4: Community Perception of Environmental Impact

Community Perception of Environmental Impact	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Increased environmental degradation	95	63%
No significant environmental impact	55	37%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Respondents also noted that abandoned oil infrastructure and inadequate remediation efforts following surveillance operations exacerbate environmental pollution. This supports Adunbi (2021), who highlighted that military-style interventions in oil-rich regions often lead to socio-environmental tensions.

Community Perception and Social Inclusion in Surveillance Contracts

Community engagement remains a major issue in the implementation of oil surveillance contracts. While ex-militants and local contractors are often engaged in surveillance, 56% of community members believed they were not sufficiently included in the decision-making process. Many expressed concerns that contracts are awarded to political elites rather than genuine community stakeholders, leading to distrust and occasional clashes.

Table 5: Community Perception of Inclusion in Surveillance Contracts

Community Perception of Inclusion in Surveillance Contracts	Number of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes, the community is adequately involved	66	44%
No, the community is not adequately involved	84	56%
Total	**150**	**100%**

This aligns with Obi (2019), who argued that lasting peace in the Niger Delta requires surveillance models that integrate community governance structures rather than relying solely on external security forces. Interviews with community leaders emphasized that greater transparency in contract allocation could foster trust and improve the long-term success of surveillance programs.

Conclusion

Oil surveillance contracts have played a significant role in shaping oil security and environmental dynamics in the Niger Delta. The findings from this study indicate that while these contracts have contributed to reducing oil theft and increasing oil output, their long-term effectiveness remains constrained by institutional weaknesses, environmental concerns, and community tensions. The reliance on local contractors for surveillance has enhanced

intelligence gathering and deterred large-scale pipeline vandalism. However, issues of collusion, militarization, and inadequate community inclusion continue to challenge the sustainability of these initiatives.

Furthermore, while surveillance efforts have contributed to short-term stability in oil production, their impact on environmental protection remains controversial. The heavy security presence and aggressive enforcement tactics have, in some cases, led to human rights violations, forced displacements, and secondary environmental degradation. Addressing these challenges requires a more holistic approach, where oil surveillance is complemented by transparent governance, community engagement, and sustainable development policies.

To ensure that oil surveillance contracts serve as a sustainable solution rather than a temporary fix, policymakers must focus on strengthening oversight mechanisms, promoting environmental accountability, and fostering inclusive participation. Without these critical reforms, oil surveillance in the Niger Delta may continue to deliver short-term gains at the expense of long-term stability and environmental justice.

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