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## NIGERIA SECURITY AND CIVIL DEFENCE CORPS AND THE PROTECTION OF CRITICAL ASSET AND INFRASTRUCTURE: COMBATING OIL THEFT, VANDALISM AND INTERNAL INSURGENCY FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

BY

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### Abstract

*Critical asset and infrastructure mould development since it sustain citizens who are the main focus of any development effort. However, in Nigeria, these critical asset and infrastructure are the main targets of oil thieves, vandals and criminal insurgents. This presents a complex paradox for national development in Nigeria. Previous researches on this subject tend to focus on the Nigeria police and the military as it borders on the protection of critical asset and infrastructure. The role of the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) appear rather anemic and undeveloped in extant literature on the subject. This paper seeks to fill that gap in literature by examining the role and challenges of NSCDC in combating oil theft, vandalism and internal insurgency in Nigeria.*

### 1. Introduction

Without doubt, the economy is a strong driver of development. A paradox captures the extent to which Nigerians covet development, on the one hand; and the extent to which they are involved in oil theft, vandalism, and internal insurgency which

serve as a drain pipe in the nation's march to development, on the other. Few have argued that the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps (NSCDC) is another charm of the Federal Government masquerading as one of those duplications in Nigeria's attempt to combat crime.

By way of delineation, this paper aims at unmasking the nexus of oil theft, vandalism, and internal insurgency on the one hand; and the potency of the three-some to negating national development, on the other hand; with the view to proffering suggestions that would generate requisite awareness, raise ethical and accountability standards, stem the tide of oil theft, vandalism and internal insurgency, and embolden Nigeria's march to development. This would be discussed in the context of the NSCDC and the challenge of effecting the cultural reorientation of the major players. To achieve the above task, emphasis will be placed on the following: conceptualizations and contextualization, the real situation and theoretical explanation, the charms and perils of the NSCDC, the way forward, and conclusion.

## 2. Conceptualizations and Contextualizations

**Oil Theft:** This refers to the anti-people/government illegal operations in the upstream and downstream sectors of the oil industry in Nigeria which weakens the nation's economy. *The Daily Independent* of September 1, 2013 narrated:

Nigeria's economy is bleeding profusely due to oil theft, pipeline vandalization, and illegal bunkering activities with the Federal Government having no clue on how to contain the menace, even as authorities are unable to access the extent of losses caused by the hemorrhage.

The Federal Government speculates the loss to be over \$1.23b. Inspired by an audited account, the Chairman of the National Extractive Industries Transparency Initiatives (NEITI) Governing Board, Mr. Ledum Mitee, declared that over \$10.9 billion worth of crude oil was lost to thieves between 2009 and 2011. This is colossal and calls for pragmatic steps and actions.

**Vandalism:** Originally attributed to the Vandals, by the Roman Empire, in respect of the culture of ruthless destruction, vandalism simply is the willful wanton and malicious destruction of

property of others (in this case of the commonwealth of Nigerians) by a few people. This is unacceptable and calls for a serious vigilance on the part of all law abiding citizens. PHCN, oil, communication, traffic, street lights, public utilities, etc. installations have seriously been vandalized. Sadly, the rate has been alarming of late.

Regarding the activities of vandals of petroleum products' pipelines, Nigeria's economy is negatively affected. Many times they result in shortage of products through to the residual users, scarcity of petroleum products, frustration of government in attempts to meet budgetary provisions and demands, as well as foreign reserves. Same applies to PHCN facilities as darkness and lack of power envelope the system. Sometimes, such vandals lose their lives in the process of vandalizing. In the case of traffic facilities, road users suffer setbacks, and other public utilities still submit to a menace against the people when vandalized.

The end product is for a responsible government to mend the vandalized facilities for the good of the people. We must commend governments that take the pains to go through the mending process over and over again. Yet we should not submit to the powers of the miscreants. Instead, they should be tackled head-on.

## Internal Insurgency

Insurgency is an organized rebellion aimed at destabilizing a constituted authority through the use of subversion and armed conflict. The perpetrators attack governments and their facilities, employ multifaceted attempts to cultivate support from the populace, employ terrorism as a means of ensuring instability, and are largely secret.

These characteristics have been evident in the Niger Delta Militancy, various ethnic militias, and more presently, the Boko Haram insurgency in parts of Northern Nigeria. As a result, lives and property have been lost; and government has committed enormous resources to tackling them. Such resources would otherwise have been invested on other developmental projects and programmes for the good of the people. If not stemmed, the situation would be worse. It is, therefore, the collective responsibility of all to loath these ugly developments so that public funds would be better

directed at life-advancement instead of retroactive and retrogressive reconstruction.

### **National Development**

Expediency demands that an attempt be made at realizing the scope of the concept of development. To this end, Hauchler (1994) saw development as a broad concept which involves issues and ideas covering cultural, societal, historical, social, and human values. To Brown (2011), the concept, therefore, must contribute to the eradication of loss of skills and self-reliance (socio-economic), the plunder over resources (agricultural and environmental), the erosion of cultural values (socio-cultural), and the violation of human dignity and rights (socio-political).

While Todaro (1981) implies the raising of the peoples' quality of living and the creation of conducive conditions for the promotion of people's self-esteem, and increasing freedom to choose; Ake (1996) implies the process by which people create and recreate themselves and their life circumstances to realize higher levels of civilizations in accordance with their own choices and values. In the words of Caincross in Tunji Olaopa's "Ake's Unfinished Journey":

*...the key to development lies in men's minds, in the institutions which their thinking finds expression and in the play of opportunity on ideas and institutions (The Punch, Tuesday, December 10, 1996:20)*

In all, national development speaks for the reduction of unemployment, poverty, and the narrowing of inequality gap in the social structure.

### **Critical Assets and Infrastructure**

The question is "How can development be recorded in the spate of oil theft, vandalism, and internal insurgency?" Without any labourious probe, one would notice that Nigeria is a near monocultural economy (much of what is generated for Nigeria is from the oil sector). Oil therefore, is undoubtedly a critical asset for Nigeria. Yet, this critical asset has been under threat by thievery and vandalizations.

For oil theft to be successfully carried out, the oil harbouring infrastructure have variously been deliberately damaged and

government is undoubtedly frustrated. To worsen the matter, activities of militants and terrorists who unleash unquantifiable destruction on existing infrastructure and the psyche of the people have seemingly displayed stiff-necked disposition in spite of government's resolve to combat them.

The grotesque thing to note is that as oil theft hinders economic growth, government has still struggled to keep pace with development demands. And as governments "manage" to provide infrastructure, internal insurgents keep destroying them. In addition to vandalizing such infrastructure, they further dampen people's motivation to contribute to the development process as their dastardly acts demoralize the people's psyche. This scenario is summarized by Akpan (2010) as the paradox of poverty in wealth. To this, Odekunle (2008) calls for the need to reverse the trend so as to achieve an appreciable level of development.

### **3. The Real Situation and Theoretical Underpinning**

Very tersely, there is no doubt that this country has the natural capacity in terms of endowments and human resources to reach an enviable level of development. This is in the contexts of economic growth and well-being, political stability and social harmony. From petroleum (crude) and other extractive minerals, through agro-based ends, to the social industries of education, tourism, and commerce blended with a very large population, Nigeria can assume a strong development status.

Unfortunately, the picture painted earlier has excusably impeded economic well-being, political stability and social peace. On the contrary, what fumes real in the area are economic woes, political instability, and social disharmony. The residue of these are manifested in educational instability, international fund transfer as evident in current day medical tourism to other climes, implosions in the political terrain, the attempts by miscreants to reign; dearth of enabling legislations and infrastructure, dearth in discipline of officers, increasing militarization of the officers, discrimination from other security outfits, and the resultant sermonizing which this paper seeks to distant itself from.

Theoretically, the situation is blamed on strain and low state capacity. This branch of social structural thinking suggests that

crimes (oil theft, vandalism, and internal insurgency) are a product of the conflict between the goals people have and the means they can use to legally obtain them (Siegel, Welsh, and Senna, 2003). Arguably, since socio-economic goals are common to people in all economic strata, the ability to legitimately obtain the goals depends on class. Thus, without acceptable means for obtaining success, people experience social and psychological strain. Such people tend to adopt deviant methods to achieve their goals (Merton, 1968).

An evaluation of the motivational forces that *centripet* people towards oil thievery, vandalism and insurgencies are explained by the frustrations which they face in an unequal world. Thus, it is here argued that oil thieves, vandals, militants and terrorists are motivated by their inability to meet goals and needs via socially approved means of attaining goals. This, Brown (2011) argues, is because the opportunity structure has been stifled against some people who are effectively exiled from the communities they physically reside. This is complimented by low state capacity in the area of security and policing. Policing therefore becomes difficult in the formal sense. This calls for a rethinking of the situation. Security, therefore, should not be pigeon-holed into the militarized context. Instead emphasis should be broadened to include protection against all kinds of victimization to ensure the political, economic, and social security of the average citizenry.

#### 4. Enter the NSCDC: Charms and Perils

In discussing the charms and perils of the NSCDC, it is needful to bring its pedigree to the fore. This is incumbent on the fact that a sound knowledge of the institution's history would aid a proper understanding of it today, and herald an emboldened prediction of its future. It is presently in the public domain, though not public knowledge that the Corps is a paramilitary agency of the government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria saddled with the mandate of providing measures against threat and any form of attack or disaster against the nation and its citizenry. The Corps draws its statutory strength from the Act No. 2 of 2003 and/as amended by Act No. 6 of June 04, 2007.

Gliding from a mere Lagos Civil Defence Committee which was established in May 1967 for the purpose of sensitizing and

protecting the civil populace against the civil war, it grew to become the Nigeria Security and Civil Defence Corps in 1970 with the principal objective of undertaking some educational and enlightenment campaigns in and around Lagos, the then capital city of Nigeria, for the purpose of sensitizing members of the civil populace on enemy attacks and how to save themselves from danger as most Nigerians in Lagos then had little or no knowledge about war and its implications. Then the mass media were employed to guide people in cases of air raids, bomb attacks, identification of bombs, and the expected reasonable reactions to such situations.

In 1984, the Corps was transformed into a national security outfit. In 1988, a major restructuring and reorganization led to the establishment of Commands throughout the Federation, including Abuja. Special functions were also added to the Corps by the Federal Government of Nigeria. Its more recent history has it that on June 28, 2003, an Act to give a statutory backing to the Corps passed by the National Assembly was signed into law by Chief Olusegun Obasanjo, GCFR, the then President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. And in 2007, the Act was amended into Act No. 6 of 2007 by the National Assembly with the following as some of the statutory principal functions:

- (i) Maintenance of peace and order in the protection and rescuing of civil population during periods of emergency (and disaster);
- (ii) Maintain twenty-four (24/7) hours surveillance over infrastructure, sites and projects of/for governments of the various tiers;
- (iii) Arrest with or without warrants; detain, investigate and institute legal proceeding at the instance of the Attorney General of the Federal Republic;
- (iv) Monitor, investigate and take necessary steps to forestall any planned act of terrorism (including, cultism); and
- (v) Monitor, investigate and take necessary steps to forestall any act of terrorism and report same to appropriate agencies of government.

While the above highlighted functions speak for the charms, one would not but add that the rank and file of the Corps is clothed

with civility. This grants it an unparalleled capacity to record higher levels of efficiency than other outfits. It is a strong resource that needs be tapped by the system.

Indeed the Corps has been reinvigorated by its new status. Thus from Lagos to Bornu, and from Sokoto to Akwa Ibom, the effectiveness of the Corps has been glaring in the areas of discovery and recovery, as well as restoration of freedom and order. A cursory flip into the activities would reveal that in May 2013, the Rivers State Command in collaboration with the Joint Task Force (JTF) arrested vandals and recovered 29,784 litres of AGO. This was followed by the apprehension of ten suspects in June 2013. In Bayelsa State, vandals have been arrested, oil spillage and bunkering zones, illegal refineries, and vehicles discovered; suspects and militants have been arrested, kidnap victims set free, boats and tanks have been confiscated in June 2013. Still in the Niger-Delta region, sophisticated guns and boats have been seized; suspects arrested and kidnap victims freed in Delta State in June, and in Akwa Ibom State, a whopping sixty nine (69) iron drums and tanks. In addition, the Command has recorded sixty-seven arrests, comprising 163 suspects, 23 tankers, 12 light vehicles, 12 out board engine boats, 15 pumping machines, 5 motor circles, 2 try cycles, 4 filling stations, as at June 2013... and still counting. This is an eloquent testimony of the fight against illegal bunkering.

Going up North, in Katsina, Sokoto, and Zamfara States, the NSCDS intervention is clear in the areas of collapsed buildings, road accidents, burnt houses and shops, stolen vehicles, looted shops, PHCN poles collapse, cases of landslide, abandoned dead bodies, installation of private guard companies, etc.

There is a new frontier of challenge for the Corps. This emanates from the recent revelation that there are over one thousand four hundred and ninety-nine (1,499) illegal entry routes into Nigeria. This opens a new vista into the NSCDC challenge, particularly for border state commands such as Akwa Ibom. More critical is the fact that the state is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Cameroons.

In spite of the gallantry of the Corps in the various states in the federation, Nigeria as a geo-political sovereign entity is capable to do more. For instance, it is said that education which is the key to

unlocking the locked potentials of people is yet to be sincerely and vigorously pursued except in a few cases chief of which is the present administration of Akwa Ibom State which dared the odds to declare a free and compulsory education on a basic note. Legislations on the oil sector are yet to be dispassionately made to see the light of day. The opportunity structure is getting more stifled by the day. And, the very comely NSCDC in spite of its zeal to work is still understaffed, patching up in rented apartments across the country, with crude or no implement, and in the main trekking through its duties without adequate vehicles and communication gadgets. This has gone worse as the frontiers of their schedule of work have been expanded by the Ministry of Interior by acknowledging the porosity of the nation's international boundaries. The situation calls for serious inputs into rethinking the policies and provisions. Hence, the following section on suggestions.

### 5. The Way Forward

From the foregoing grey areas, the following are advanced as suggestions:

In order to ensure an all-round security of the average citizenry, education should be dearly dealt with. A leaf should be borrowed from Akwa Ibom State Government. One must, however, be mindful of the latent consequences of the UPE of the 1970s. In addition, the opportunity structure should be loosened up in order to involve as many more people as possible in the comfort zone of the socio-economic ladder.

Since the process of criminalization of oil theft, vandalism, and internal insurgency is still in the crude stage, legislations should be upgraded in order to deal with sophistications of some cases. For instance, a dispassionately passed Petroleum Industry Bill (PIB) would be a bold step taken in the right direction. The charms of the NSCDC which are epitomized in her civility should be cashed-in as a potent cheque. This could be done if:

- (i) An office complex that befits an agency of such status be built for it in all states of Nigeria;
- (ii) Public conscientization on the activities of the Corps is ensured. This could be done when institutions engage their services;

- (iii) The officers are subjected to requisite training and retraining and the trained is given to training others, even those in other institutions;
- (iv) The research wing of the Corps is strengthened. Researches and evaluations should emphasize the “return period of events”. Here linkage programmes and affiliations with higher institutions of learning and fellowship outfits as well as periodic seminars and workshops would help;
- (v) Staff members are insured. An insurance policy is thus advocated;
- (vi) Erring defaulters are punished in order to induce deterrence;
- (vii) Well performing officers are “investitured”. They are not unqualified for some secondmental appointments; and
- (viii) The principles of community policing are NSCDC-driven; and
- (ix) The Corps necessarily enjoy cooperation from/with other security agencies, traditional rulers, etc.

Also, in order to encourage campaigns, non-governmental organizations, school clubs and associations, the National Youth Service Corps Scheme’s community development wing would have to be engaged.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper conceptualizes and contextualizes oil theft, vandalism and internal insurgency as they hurt Nigeria and impede her drive to development. The thesis here is that protecting the critical asset and infrastructure will harbinger national development. Attempts have also been made to highlight the role of the NSCDC beneath the shadow of the argument that the picture would have been worse without the NSCDC. The Corps’ zeal to work and succeed is very evident. Moreover, they appear to have a more humane and acceptable policing value. These advantages seem to give the NSCDC an edge over other paramilitary agencies carrying out similar and related functions. However, her level of equipment in most certain terms leaves much to be desired. To stem the tide, this paper has enumerated some suggestions. It is incumbent on all of

us (from the political leaders – executive, legislative, judicial, and traditional) through the academia, to all and sundry to show commitment to the ideals and objectives of this presentation. A strong synergy is required.

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