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The Impact Of Tantita Security Surveillance Service On Oil Revenue In Nigeria And Environmental Sustainability

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ABSTRACT
This study examines the impact of Tantita Security Surveillance Services on oil revenue generation and environmental sustainability in Nigeria. With persistent oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and environmental degradation in the Niger Delta, Nigeria has suffered significant revenue losses and ecological damage. The intervention of Tantita, a private surveillance outfit, represents a strategic effort to curtail oil-related crimes and restore both economic and environmental integrity. This paper was based on content analysis drawn from conceptual, theoretical and empirical perspectives Drawing from empirical literature, theoretical perspectives—specifically the Resource Curse Theory and Stakeholder Theory—and recent field reports, the study finds that Tantita's operations have substantially increased daily crude oil output, minimized theft, and mitigated environmental hazards associated with illegal refining. The firm's use of technological surveillance and community-based intelligence gathering has led to a 50% rise in oil production and a notable decline in oil spills and pollution. However, the study also identifies concerns surrounding sustainability, legal frameworks, and institutional capacity. It concludes that while private security interventions are impactful, long-term oil sector security and ecological sustainability depend on integrated governance reforms, legal standardization, and stakeholder collaboration. Recommendations are offered for policy action, institutional reform, and technological investment to consolidate gains and ensure lasting impact.
Keywords: environmental sustainability, oil revenue generation, Tantita Security Surveillance Services

INTRODUCTION

Oil revenue plays a pivotal role in Nigeria's economic architecture, serving as the primary source of foreign exchange earnings and contributing significantly to national budget implementation. According to Omeje (2021), the oil sector accounts for over 60% of government revenue and about 90% of the country's export earnings, underscoring its strategic importance. However, the sector has been persistently undermined by systemic challenges such as crude oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and illegal

bunkering, which have led to substantial revenue losses and crippled national development efforts (Adenikinju, 2020). In response to these threats, the Nigerian government has increasingly sought alternative security measures, notably the partnership with private security entities.

Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited, a private surveillance firm led by Government Ekpemupolo (Tompolo), was contracted in 2022 to conduct pipeline monitoring and combat illegal oil activities in the Niger Delta. This intervention has been associated with several significant seizures of stolen crude, a gradual restoration of oil output, and improved fiscal stability (Okoli & Orinya, 2023). Furthermore, the implications extend beyond revenue protection, touching on the broader issue of environmental sustainability. Oil spills and unauthorized refining have long polluted farmlands and water bodies, threatening both human health and biodiversity (Eze, 2019). By curbing these activities, Tantita's efforts contribute indirectly to ecological preservation and community welfare.

Environmental protection in oil-producing regions has become a pressing concern, especially given the long-standing ecological degradation experienced by host communities. Adebayo and Ogunleye (2020) argue that any meaningful intervention in Nigeria's oil sector must balance economic objectives with environmental stewardship. As such, the contribution of security interventions to ecological well-being becomes a relevant area of academic and policy interest. This dual focus—on revenue assurance and environmental protection—provides a fertile ground for examining the effectiveness of non-state actors in the Nigerian oil industry.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria continues to grapple with declining oil revenues despite its vast crude oil reserves and long-standing position as a leading oil producer in Africa. The pervasive issues of crude oil theft, pipeline destruction, and illegal refining operations have severely hindered the country's ability to meet production quotas and optimize revenue generation. These illicit activities not only deplete national earnings but also result in extensive environmental damage, especially in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, where water and soil contamination have devastated ecosystems and livelihoods (Eze, 2019). While the introduction of private security surveillance through Tantita Security Services has reportedly led to a decline in oil-related crimes and environmental degradation, there is a lack of empirical clarity on the extent of its impact. The absence of comprehensive data-driven evaluation raises concerns about the sustainability and effectiveness of outsourcing national oil infrastructure security to private entities. Consequently, there is a compelling need to investigate whether Tantita's intervention has yielded measurable improvements in oil revenue and contributed meaningfully to environmental preservation in Nigeria.

Conceptual perspective

Tantita Security Surveillance Service and Oil Revenue:

The persistent loss of oil revenue in Nigeria due to crude oil theft, pipeline vandalism, and illegal bunkering has posed a major threat to national economic stability. These illegal activities have caused the Nigerian government to lose billions of dollars annually, with estimates suggesting a loss of over 400,000 barrels of crude oil per day at the height of the crisis (Adenikinju, 2020). This loss has severely impacted government revenue, disrupted public budgeting processes, and diminished Nigeria's ability to meet both domestic and international oil supply obligations. The inefficiency of conventional military and governmental security mechanisms in curbing these crimes prompted the Federal Government to explore alternative, more responsive security solutions, including the use of private surveillance firms with localized knowledge and operational flexibility.

Tantita Security Services Nigeria Limited, a private firm established by former Niger Delta militant leader Government Ekpemupolo (alias Tompolo), was contracted in 2022 by the Nigerian National Petroleum Company Limited (NNPCL) to monitor and secure critical oil pipeline infrastructure. Since its deployment, the firm has been credited with notable successes in intercepting oil theft operations, dismantling illegal bunkering sites, and supporting the recovery of stolen crude oil (Okoli & Orinya, 2023). Reports from the Nigerian Upstream Petroleum Regulatory Commission (NUPRC, 2023) indicate that crude oil production, which had declined to as low as 900,000 barrels per day in mid-2022, surged

back to over 1.5 million barrels per day by early 2023. This increase in production is partly attributed to the improved security landscape fostered by Tantita's surveillance efforts, thereby stabilizing oil revenue flows into the national treasury.

The involvement of Tantita has also enhanced the credibility of Nigeria's oil export data, which had long been plagued by discrepancies due to unaccounted-for losses. Prior to Tantita's engagement, there were widespread concerns about the underreporting of actual production volumes, which affected revenue transparency and trust in Nigeria's Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (NEITI) reporting framework. With tighter pipeline monitoring and reduction in unauthorized siphoning of crude, oil measurement and reporting accuracy have improved (Omeje, 2021). This development is particularly critical given the importance of oil revenue to the Federation Account, from which funds are distributed to all tiers of government. The restoration of trust and consistency in oil data enhances the government's ability to forecast and plan more effectively for national development.

Furthermore, the economic benefits of Tantita's operations extend to local communities, as increased oil revenue allows for more consistent funding of infrastructure, education, and healthcare projects. Additionally, the firm's operations have created employment opportunities for local youths, thereby reducing the socioeconomic incentives for oil theft and militancy. According to Adebayo and Ogunleye (2020), sustainable security outcomes in resource-rich but volatile regions depend on local participation and benefit-sharing mechanisms. Tantita's model, which incorporates former militants and local stakeholders into its operational structure, supports this approach by ensuring that security is not only enforced but also owned by the community. This inclusive model has proven instrumental in enhancing oil revenue retention while promoting relative peace in the Niger Delta.

Tantita Security Surveillance Service and Environmental Sustainability:

Environmental degradation in Nigeria's oil-producing regions—particularly the Niger Delta—has long been a consequence of unchecked crude oil theft, illegal refining, and pipeline vandalism. These illicit activities lead to oil spills, gas flaring, and pollution of water bodies and farmlands, thereby threatening biodiversity and the livelihoods of local communities. According to Eze (2019), the environmental costs of illegal oil activities are immense, resulting in deforestation, contaminated aquifers, and massive loss of marine life. Conventional environmental protection efforts by state institutions have been largely ineffective, partly due to limited enforcement capacity and corruption. Consequently, the deployment of Tantita Security Services not only aimed to protect oil revenue but also emerged as a strategy to address the environmental consequences of oil-related crimes.

Tantita's operations have significantly contributed to curbing illegal oil refining, which is a major source of environmental pollution in the Niger Delta. The burning of crude in rudimentary refineries releases carcinogenic substances and black soot into the atmosphere, contributing to widespread respiratory illnesses and environmental toxicity (Adebayo & Ogunleye, 2020). By dismantling these illegal facilities and preventing further sabotage of oil infrastructure, Tantita has helped reduce the incidence of oil spills and airborne pollutants. Reports from the National Oil Spill Detection and Response Agency (NOSDRA, 2023) show a marked decline in spill incidents in areas under Tantita's surveillance, indicating a positive environmental impact. These efforts have enhanced ecological stability and restored some degree of environmental normalcy in previously devastated communities.

Moreover, the role of Tantita in securing oil pipelines aligns with broader environmental governance objectives. Secure pipelines mean fewer ruptures, reduced spillage, and less need for emergency clean-ups that often fail to fully rehabilitate affected environments. Omeje (2021) notes that the stabilization of oil infrastructure is a foundational element for sustainable environmental management in oil-rich regions. In this context, Tantita's work contributes indirectly but significantly to environmental sustainability by ensuring that extraction and transportation of crude oil occur with minimal disruption to the ecosystem. This is particularly important for achieving Nigeria's obligations under international environmental protocols, such as the Paris Agreement on Climate Change.

In addition, Tantita's model of community-based security has environmental dividends. By employing locals and ex-agitators in surveillance roles, the firm fosters environmental ownership among indigenous

populations. This localized approach encourages vigilance against environmental crimes and promotes a sense of shared responsibility for ecological preservation. As communities become active participants in protecting their environment, the long-term prospects for environmental sustainability are strengthened. According to Okoli and Orinya (2023), community involvement is critical in mitigating environmental abuse and ensuring the enforcement of environmental protection norms in the oil sector. Through its strategic operations and inclusive structure, Tantita Security Services has thus emerged as a relevant actor not only in revenue protection but also in the broader fight for environmental sustainability in Nigeria's oil-producing regions.

Theoretical perspective

The Resource Curse Theory, propounded by Auty (1993) also known as the Paradox of Plenty, suggests that countries rich in natural resources—particularly oil—often experience slower economic growth, weaker governance, and higher levels of corruption and conflict compared to resource-poor nations. This paradox is especially visible in Nigeria, where oil theft, environmental degradation, and underdevelopment persist despite vast petroleum wealth.

Tantita Security Services' role in curbing oil theft and illegal bunkering directly challenges the mechanisms of the resource curse by enhancing transparency**,** revenue recovery, and local engagement in resource management. By reducing oil-related criminal activities and increasing government oil revenue, Tantita's surveillance interventions contribute to reversing the negative effects described in the theory. Moreover, the company's collaboration with host communities and enforcement agencies promotes accountability, a key factor in mitigating the governance failures highlighted in the resource curse framework.

Also, Stakeholder Theory propounded by Freeman (1984) emphasizes the importance of considering the interests of all parties affected by corporate actions—not just shareholders but also employees, communities, governments, and the environment. In the context of Tantita's operations, this theory is relevant for explaining the multi-stakeholder approach used in addressing oil theft and environmental degradation.

Tantita's strategy of involving traditional rulers, local youths, surveillance teams, and federal agencies aligns with the principles of stakeholder theory. It recognizes that sustainable security outcomes and environmental protection require cooperation and mutual benefit among all stakeholders. By promoting local engagement and environmental responsibility alongside profit and performance, Tantita embodies the stakeholder-centric model that strengthens legitimacy and long-term impact.

Empirical perspective

Empirical research has consistently highlighted oil theft as a major threat to Nigeria's economy. Henry and Mohammed (2023) estimated that the country loses about $700 million monthly to crude oil theft, a figure echoed in broader reviews by Adebayo (2016), who attributed the problem to youth unemployment, corruption, and weak security enforcement. These findings establish a clear case for urgent, scalable intervention. The inclusion of private actors such as Tantita Security Services represents a strategic pivot. Drawing from pipeline engineers and stakeholders, Adewumi, Agbasi, Etuk, and Robert (2023) noted that community-based surveillance and third-party monitoring are critical for effective pipeline protection. In this context, Tantita's role reflects the operationalization of this recommendation by offering on-ground deterrence against pipeline tampering and crude siphoning.

The fiscal impact of Tantita's intervention has been quantified in terms of recovered revenue and increased production. Anagor-Ewuzie (2023) reported that Tantita's operations helped Nigeria save approximately $43.2 million daily through enhanced surveillance and shutdown of illegal bunkering operations. Similarly, Tribune Online (2024) narrated a nearly 50% rise in crude output—from 1.0 to 1.5 million barrels per day—following Tantita's engagement in 2022. These results were achieved via a blend of drone patrols, CCTV coverage, and collaboration with local communities. The Veriv Africa (2024) report further emphasized the effectiveness of hybrid security mechanisms, showing that private surveillance firms like Tantita often outperform conventional state security forces when empowered with technology and legal authority. However, it also warned about trust issues and the need for unified command structures.

Tantita's success has been linked not only to tactical innovations but also to its sociopolitical positioning. Wikipedia (2024) outlines how the re-engagement of Tompolo—once prosecuted for oil-related offenses—through Tantita reflects broader shifts in Nigeria's approach to security governance. Tribune Online (2024) emphasized Tantita's collaboration with NNPC and traditional institutions to build trust among host communities. Community dialogue, public awareness, and surveillance training of locals created a multi-

layered deterrent system. However, critics (as cited in Valuechain, 2024) argue that long-term sustainability depends on institutional reform and depoliticization. The politicization of contracts, over-reliance on ex-militants, and irregular payment structures risk undermining credibility and continuity of such security partnerships.

Beyond revenue protection, Tantita's efforts have environmental implications. Illegal refining, sabotage, and oil spills have devastated Niger Delta ecosystems, leading to widespread health issues, water contamination, and loss of biodiversity (The Nation, 2024; Wikipedia, 2025). After Tantita's deployment, illegal refinery activities reportedly dropped by 79%, and nearly 4,000 oil theft incidents were disrupted (The Nation, 2024). This decline is associated with a reduction in soot pollution, a cleaner atmosphere, and fewer uncontained oil spills. As noted by the environmental science review on Wikipedia (2025), about 28% of all oil spills in the Niger Delta stem from sabotage. Tantita's surveillance directly addresses this by intercepting illegal tapping before significant leakage occurs. Thus, the firm's activities contribute to environmental sustainability by reducing anthropogenic damage caused by oil theft.

Method: This paper was based on content analysis drawn from conceptual, theoretical and empirical perspectives. These formed the basis of the writer's conclusions and recommendations.

CONCLUSION

The security of Nigeria's oil infrastructure and the sustainability of its environment are critical to the nation's economic stability and developmental prospects. From the empirical literature, it is evident that oil theft and pipeline vandalism have significantly undermined government revenue, destabilized oil output, and degraded the environment—particularly in the Niger Delta. The intervention of Tantita Security Surveillance Services has contributed notably to reversing these trends by deploying technology-driven surveillance, community-based partnerships, and tactical operations to curtail illegal activities. This has not only led to measurable increases in oil production and government revenue but has also mitigated the environmental hazards associated with illegal refining and oil spillage.

Furthermore, the study reveals that the collaborative model employed by Tantita—engaging local actors, traditional leaders, and federal agencies—has created a more inclusive and responsive security architecture. By incorporating non-state actors and marginalized communities in surveillance efforts, the initiative promotes local ownership and operational effectiveness. These developments validate the applicability of both the Resource Curse Theory and Stakeholder Theory, as Tantita's efforts demonstrate how strategic stakeholder engagement and improved governance over natural resources can reverse the symptoms of resource mismanagement and systemic insecurity.

In addition to the economic gains, Tantita's operations have had a profound impact on environmental sustainability. With a significant drop in illegal refining activities and reduced incidents of sabotage, there is evidence of improved air quality, less water pollution, and fewer oil spillages. These environmental outcomes suggest that private security initiatives, when properly regulated and integrated with environmental governance, can be instrumental in protecting Nigeria's fragile ecosystems. However, the long-term success of such interventions hinges on institutional support, legal backing, and sustainable funding structures.

Despite these promising results, concerns remain about overdependence on ex-militant structures, the politicization of security contracts, and the absence of a unified command structure among stakeholders. The intervention, though productive, should not be seen as a permanent solution but rather as a transitional mechanism towards more systemic reforms in oil governance and environmental protection.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The government should integrate Tantita's model into the formal oil and gas regulatory framework by enacting laws that recognize and regulate private surveillance services. This will provide legal clarity and operational consistency.
2. Beyond traditional rulers and community leaders, civil society groups, environmental NGOs, and academia should be involved in monitoring, evaluating, and refining surveillance operations to ensure transparency, inclusiveness, and accountability.

3. Modern surveillance technologies such as drones, satellite imagery, and AI-enabled monitoring systems should be expanded and maintained. Capacity building for community operatives and local security personnel will also improve intelligence and response effectiveness.
4. Environmental protection agencies should partner with surveillance outfits like Tantita to initiate immediate remediation of polluted areas. Efforts must include regular environmental audits, restoration of contaminated farmlands, and provision of clean water to affected communities.
5. While private security interventions are crucial, long-term solutions lie in strengthening public institutions. Thus, the government should gradually transition from private security dependency to a robust and well-funded national security framework backed by community policing, adequate welfare, and civic engagement.

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