

The Niger Delta Avengers (Nda) War Against The Nigeria State & Multinational Oil Companies

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Abstract:- The “Niger Delta Avengers” which fully commenced activities in April 2016 with avowed declaration to establish an independent, sovereign Niger Delta State, had carried out a successful attack and blown up many oil pipelines conveying crude oil to different parts of Nigeria. They equally pledged to continue the attacks while targeting oil blocs across the Niger Delta until it bring the about 2.46 million barrels daily production to zero. The paper exposes and discusses viz who they are, their objectives and aims, the remote and immediate causes as well as global and national consequences of their action. The paper utilized qualitative method of generating information through documents review (secondary sources) and the discourse analytic method to carry out the study. The study covers a time frame of 3rd February, 2016- 31st July, 2016. The period was chosen and regarded as sufficient enough for academic research since it covers a period of barely six months coupled with the need to research into a fresh contentious issue to provide a road map for other researchers in the same or similar issues. The paper answers four major questions including who are the Niger Delta Avengers? What are their demands and causes of their emergent? To what extent have they carried out their activities? and finally, what are the consequences of their activities. A review of the available documents used/consulted have revealed the following findings including, that the action of the Niger Delta Avengers is premised on accumulative long years of neglect by successive governments in the Niger Delta Region over the implementation of environmental friendly programmes recommended by various international and national environmental experts, neglect of the earlier warning issued by the Niger Delta Avengers in February 2016 by the constituted authorities amongst others. In view of the above findings, it is recommends among other things that Government embark on implementation of environmental programmes in the Niger Delta Region recommended by international experts relating to checking oil pollution and gas flaring, implement the 2014 Constitutional Conference Committee Report amongst others.

Keywords: *Niger Delta Avengers, war, the Nigeria State, and Multinational Oil Companies*

I. INTRODUCTION

Niger Delta politically and economically is comprised of Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross-River, Delta, Edo, Imo, Ondo and Rivers states respectively. The Niger Delta Region is a region that covers 70,000 square kilometers, largest wetlands in Africa. It is the third largest mangrove forests in the world. It is characterized by swampy maze creeks, estuaries, streams and rivers. The Region homes a population of about 28 million people (2002 Census Figure in Nigeria in Curson, 2009). The ethnic groups found in this region include the Ijaw people, Itsekiri, the Urhobo, the Igbos, the Yorubas (Earth Rights Institute, 2003). The region becomes the most popular and most honoured region after 1956 because it is rich in abundant oil resources and becomes the major sources of revenue for the government of the Federation. The Region’s oil has made Nigeria to attained being the largest producer of oil and exporter within the African Continent and substantial earnings from gas export annually (Obi, 2009). Following the exploration and exploitation of oil in the region over the years, the inhabitants of the region had at various international and national forum complained of environmental degradation and pollution in the region arguing that the government and the oil companies are not doing anything reasonable to check the menace. Again, they had continues to argue that the states within the delta region and its communities are paradoxically topping the lists of the least developed areas in Nigeria despite their oil wealth. Consequent upon the above, over the years the region have recorded the proliferation of environmental activists as well as formation of various organizations and movements including Movement for the Survival of Ogoni People (MOSOP) led by late Ken-Saro Wiwa, Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) being led by Henry Okar, Niger Delta Peoples Volunteer Force (NDPVF), Niger Delta People’s Democratic Front (NDPDF) and a host of pockets of others. The activities of the above groups over time has been open campaign against the government and oil companies operating in the Delta Region thereby

demanding for the control and management of their oil wealth. A follow-up to their campaign are incessant attacks on multinationals oil installations, equipments and even taking hostages of foreign oil workers almost on daily basis. The major arguments of the Niger militants are that Niger Delta Region has been neglected by the multinational oil companies assisted by the Nigeria state in observing the necessary local and international legislations and acts relating to oil exploration and exploitation best practices while they watch the on-going devastating pollution as well as the environmental degradation. These arguments according Nwankwo (2015) was supported by Aghalino, 2009, Evo, 2009, Arinze, 2010, Oviasuyi and Uwadike, 2010, Aghalino, 2011, Aghalino, 2012, Adams, 2014, Aghalino and Okoli-Osemene, 2014, and Okoli-Osemene, 2015.

In December 1998, the Niger Deltans from across all the communities came together and declared what they termed “Resource control” at the Kaima Declaration. They advanced the argument that resource control means the rights of the Niger Deltan people to control and manage resources located within its territories by themselves without the interference of any external government or foreign powers. In furtherance of their argument in favour of resource control they said resource control will make them to stop gas flaring, oil pollution, degradation, revamping, preservation and protection of the environment. Since the Kaima declaration of resource control, coupled with the formation of Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) the intensity of activities of the militants in the oil region resisting the multinational oil companies and the Nigeria state operating and controlling the oil resources in the Delta Region has been on the increase.

The United nations Development Programmes (UNDP, 2006, 36) while reporting on Human development in the Niger Delta has attributed and blamed the growing increase in the resistance to prevalent high rate of poverty in the entire South-South geo-political zone of Nigeria which then stands at 74.8 percent coupled with and worsened by the inability of the local people to have access to and directly be involved in the benefits accruing to the Nigeria State and the oil companies through the exploration, exploitation and exportation of the oil. Others according to UNDP (2006) include high unemployment rate, lack of capital or skill or both combined which are precondition for participating in the oil industry.

The daily interruption of oil activities by militants in the Delta Region forced late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua to embarked on the Amnesty programme in 2009 after taking over in 2007 as President and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed forces of the federal Republic of Nigeria which yielded reasonable results before he died in 2010. From 2010-2015, Goodluck Jonathan from the Niger Delta South-South Bayelsa State acted as President and was elected as the first first President from Nigeria’s South-South geo-political zone and through his one term of four years he sustained the Amnesty programme of his predecessor which reasonable calm down militancy activities in the Niger Delta Region. According to BBC Report, the Amnesty Programme provides monthly stipends for up to tens of thousands of former militants but President Muhammadu Buhari “in his latest budget (2016 Budget) reduced funding for it (Amnesty Programme) by 70% and has spoken of phasing it out entirely by 2018” (Ewokor, 2016)

II. THE NIGER DELTA OIL INSURGENCY-“ THE NIGER DELTA AVENGERS” WHO ARE THEY?

The emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers in the list of militant activities in the Delta Region of Nigeria on 3rd February, 2016 is awesome, shocking and outrageous to the multinational oil companies and the Nigeria State over their brutal bombing and destructive attacks on oil pipelines and oil wells since April 2016.

BBC reporter captured the definition of the “avengers” as they define themselves saying “We are a group of educated and well travelled individuals that are poised to take the Niger Delta struggle to new heights that has never been in this nation before” (Ewokor, 2016). Also, they defined themselves as “worthy outlaws” (Vanguard, 2016). Alade, Osuyi, Folaranmi, John & Ganagana (2016) also describe the Niger Delta Avengers like an amorphous ad-hoc group of ex-militants who had embraced the Presidential Amnesty granted by late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua and those who refused the amnesty who have no known leadership and operational base.

Mulade, according to Alade, Osuyi, Folaranmi, John & Ganagana (2016) however, define the Avengers as a group of aggrieved which may have possibly think that the accruing benefits to them from the proceeds of oil of their being a servant to their militant masters are not enough and therefore, may have resorted do it directly on their own to attract a high reward from the state through a fair negotiation with the government since they will be invited. It is a known established fact, Mulade argues that it is possible that the Niger Delta Avengers may be associated with some people who are seeking for political relevance in the Delta region or who may be involved in the illegal oil bunkering through vandalism.

Osinbajo (current Nigeria Vice President) in Ayodele-Bello (2016) define the Niger Delta Avengers as the economic warriors fighting for their private pockets. Deducing from the aforementioned definitions of who the scholars say the Niger Delta Avengers are are, may I also say that the Niger Delta Avengers are new emergent group of Niger Delta militants who are out to protest against the Nigeria state and the multinational oil companies over long years of oil exploration and exploitation which they feel they have no fair share of the

money and would want to control and manage the resources directly. In other words, the Niger Delta Avengers are unidentified group of people planning to declare Niger Delta sovereign state through the intimidation of the Nigeria state and the oil multinational companies by the bombing of oil wells and pipelines in the Delta Region in order to weaken the government financial base of having the stamina of fighting against them. Finally, the Niger Delta Avengers are group of Niger Delta Militants who are either boys of former militant leader (s) or a new faction which forcefully break away from one or more of the militant organization (s) in the Niger Delta Region with a completely different objectives to entirely destroy all the oil wells and oil and gas facilities in the Delta Region so as to forget the issue of oil once and for all in Nigeria.

BBC also reported that it is very difficult to categorically say who the group are but, opined that based on their twitter which BBC currently have (as at the time of the report on June 2, 2016), the Avengers have “AFP photo of a Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) militant taken in September 2008 as its profile picture” (Ekwokor, 2016). The above assertion according to the report (BBC) was corroborated by some locals in the Niger Delta Region that Niger Delta Avengers may either be members of the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND) or the Niger Delta People’s Salvation Front (NDPSF) while others say that the Niger Delta Avengers may likely be followers of the former Militant Leader, Ekpemupolo alias Tompolo. Also Alade, Osuyi, Folaranmi, John & Ganagana (2016) has describe the Niger Delta Avengers as a group which is likely to be associated with Government Ekpemupolo a.k.a Tompolo that even the denial of being associated with the Niger Delta Avengers by Ekpemupolo is seen in some quarters as a façade and diversionary ploy because the boys may have been used by Ekpemupolo to deflate and deflect attention on him since according to Oladimeji (2016) he was declared wanted by Economic and financial Crimes commission (EFCC) for a sum of N45.9billion issued in two bench warrant against him by the Federal High Court in Lagos Nigeria in February 2016. However, Mulade from Gbaramatu Kingdom the home of Tompolo and a Coordinator of centre for Peace, Environment and Justice in Alade, Osuyi, Folaranmi, John & Ganagana (2016) says that he may not completely exonerate Tompolo but it is as well very possible that the Avengers boys may be capitalizing on the travails that Tompolo is currently passing through in the hand of the Federal Government to carry out the acts so as to link it to Tompolo.

III. DOES THE NIGER DELTA AVENGERS HAVE A GOAL (S) AND ARE THEY UP TO THE TASK?

The Avengers showcased their ability to actualize their target and aims by saying “we have well-equipped human resources to meet this goals” (Ewokor, 2006) because according to Alade, Osuyi, Folaranmi, John & Ganagana (2016), they possesses high-tech equipments such as surface long range and underwater weapons that could perfectly be use to blow up pipelines without applying any serious energy and effort thereby taking the Nigeria security agents unaware. President Muhammadu Buhari also stated that the Niger Delta Avengers use hi-tec equipments to destroy oil installations (Press TV, 2016). The BBC (Ekwokor, 2016) rightly pointed out that the Niger Delta Avengers are the “first armed group that emerged in the region (Niger Delta Region).

Mudoch Agbinibo, the Spokesman of the Avengers (which according to BBC is likely to be a pseudo name - disguised name) in Amaize (2016) says his militant group has a “...goal to cripple Nigeria’s Economy”. The Avengers further asserts “we are well equipped to cripple Nigeria”. On 14th February 2016, the group declared “operation red economy”. The next question to be answer is what are the demands of the Niger Delta Avengers and what prompted the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers? The answer to the above questions is unfolds below.

IV. DEMANDS OF THE NIGER DELTA AVENGERS

Uchenna (2016), Amaize (2016) in their report have outlines the demands of the Niger Delta Avengers. The avenger made 11 points demands as follows:

1. Immediate implementation of the Report of the 2014 National Conference, otherwise this country will break-up forcefully;
2. President Buhari, the DS SSS and Timipre Sylva should apologize to the people of the Niger Delta Region and family of late Chief DSP Alamiesegha for killing him with intimidation and harassment because of his party affiliation;
3. The ownership of oil blocs must reflect 60% for oil producing people and 40% for the non-oil producing people;
4. The only maritime university sited in the most appropriate and befitting place Okerenkoko must start the 2015/2016 academic session immediately;
5. The Minister of Transportation, Mr, Rotimi Amechi should apologize to the Ijaws and the entire Niger Delta for his careless and reckless statement about the sitting of the university;
6. The Ogoniland and indeed 11 oil polluted lands in the Niger Delta must be cleaned up and compensation be paid to all oil producing communities;

7. Mr Nnamdi Kanu, the Leader of IPOB (Indigenous People of Biafra) must be released unconditionally as the court said;
8. The Niger Delta Amnesty Programme must be well funded and let it continue to run effectively;
9. All APC (All Progressive Congress) members that are indicted in any corruption related cases should be made to face trial like the PDP (Peoples Democratic Party). Otherwise, Buhari should shamefully forget about this nonsense anti-corruption fight;
10. All oil multinationals and foreign investors should observe this ultimatum, as their business in the country must be first target. A word is enough for the wise.

V. REASONS FOR THE EMERGENCE OF THE NIGER DELTA AVENGERS

There are several reasons for the emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers in the Delta Region of Nigeria. We have the remote and immediate causes respectively. Among the remote and the immediate causes, there are some that were given by the Niger Delta Avengers by themselves. However, the reasons given below are extracts deduced by the researcher from the reasons given by the Avengers themselves as captured by Naij.com and Sahara Reporters (2016).

VI. REMOTE FACTORS

Apart from the reasons the Avengers gave for their brutal militant activities in the Delta region, others have added reasons for the intensified vandalizing of the oil pipelines in the region. British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) source have it as reported by Ekwokor (2016) that in the latest Budget in Nigeria (2016 which is currently under implementation), the current administration under President Buhari reduced the amount accruing to the Amnesty programme by 70 percent and states that the reduction is on a gradual process and will be finally stopped by 2018 which is contrary to statement he made while delivering his inaugural address to the nation promising that his government will heavily invest in the Amnesty programme in the Niger Delta (Odoh, 2016 p 116). Norton (2016) also says that the crisis in the Niger delta was exacerbated by the cut of 70% of the Niger delta Amnesty announced in the 2016 Budget. Analysts argue in this direction that the surfacing of the brutal pipeline vandals could be attributable to such development since the aggrieved youths in the Delta region may have think that the President may think that they are being favoured by the stipends that goes to some of them monthly most particularly that it is not a national policy. In the same vein but different argument some scholars has argues that the president may not understand that the reasons why his fellow Katsina Man, President Yar'Adua has to embark on the Amnesty programme is to let the sleeping Dog lie in order to maintain peace and ensure orderliness in the oil region. Norton (2016) demonstrates that lack of commitment to rehabilitate the Delta's ecosystem despoiled by decades of oil extraction is likely to be attributed to the recent emergence of the Niger Delta Avengers going by the recent assessment by the United Nation's Environmental Programme (UNEP) which estimates that it will take up to 25 years ahead to be able to restore the habitat of the Delta region. To justify this argument to be true that extensive pollution of soil, sediment and swampland exists in the Delta region, UNEP cites example of a location close to Nigeria National Petroleum Company pipeline where "an 8cm layer of refined oil was observed floating on the ground water which serves the community wells"

Finally, the present crisis in the Delta region may be connected to the little disappointment many Nigerians faced with the delay in execution of programmes and policies for one year by President Buhari despite the enthusiastic trust and confidence reposed on him by those electorates who defiles sun heat and rain fall at the polling stations across the country to vote him into electoral victory over the incumbent President Goodluck Jonathan. One of such scholar who share such view is Odoh (2016). He states that the delay in carrying out policies and programme makes many to begin to loss confidence in what President Buhari promised to do. In line with the above arguments, the Niger Delta Avengers may think that President Buhari may also have joined the league of business as usual where past Presidents keeps telling Nigerians stories until the end of their tenure which year in year out keeps Nigeria perpetually underdeveloped since her political independence from the British on October 1, 1960.

VII. IMMEDIATE JUSTIFICATIONS

A school of thought asserts that the merciless acts of vandalism from April 2016 may not be unconnected with lack of interest in the Avengers declaration and ultimatum given to the Federal Government and the oil multinational companies on the 3rd February, 2016 where they listed their demands as contained under the demands above in this article. To add more salt to an injury, President Buhari declared that the oil insurgents in the Niger Delta will be treated as Boko Haram in the North East if they did not desist from the spate of pipeline bombing (Odoh, 2016). Follow-up few weeks later on according to Odoh (2016) on the 30th May President Buhari militarily deployed and declared war in the Delta Region, dispatched five War Ships, 100 Gun Boats and Fighter Jets. This act some have argued may have increased and further aggravate the anger of

the Avengers to further carry out their act of vandalism. Though, based on advice from well meaning Nigerians, President Buhari ordered a two weeks ceasefire of military action against the Niger Delta Avengers according to Amaize, Ujah, Nwabughio, Oyadongha, Yafugborhi, Udofia (2016). In their position, the Avengers have justified their emergence as a result of the fact that Nigeria is a failed entity and they threaten that the economy will be cripple should the government headed by president Buhari should fail to meet up with their demands within the ultimatum they gave. According to the Avengers, Buhari Administration has neglected the Niger delta region. Based on the current happenings, a pointer is indicating a derailed Nigeria state which is heading to nowhere. The leaders in power (the Avengers continued) overlook the main reasons behind the mandate given to them at the poll by the enfranchised electorates and pursue their selfish interests to enrich themselves and influence the sitting of infrastructures to their region. In furtherance of their acclaimed justifiable arguments the Avengers reiterates that it is clear with the killings and atrocities the Fulani Herdsmen have committed against farmers and some people of the South and Middle Belt which the President neglected but in the contrary could issue order of “a shoot on sight” against the peaceful protest of the Indigenous People of Biafra. Again, Avengers extends their string of argument to the 2016 Budget which they says shows that nearly all the major projects captured is channeled to the North while the Niger Delta Creeks are neglected when they are in dear need of development to improve the living standard of the people in that region. Though, late President Umaru Musa Yar’Adua proclaimed Amnesty Programme, nothing tangible is done in the area of human capital development, infrastructure, educational infrastructure and youth empowerment stressing that the Niger Delta region has been neglected for over fifty years. One other area the Avengers arose to query and correct according to them is the activities of the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) which was established with the sole aim of providing development in the Delta Region but has been turned into what they described as “cash cow” for both the North and their Southern political counterparts. Quoting Rotimi Amaechi (Nigerian Transport Minister), ‘the Niger Delta region is more or less a forbidden region where no parents send their children to school’ is clearly demonstrated by the cancellation of the Nigeria Maritime University, Okerenkoko by President Buhari Administration, a university that supposed to bring about educational development to the Delta region. The Avengers drew the attention of the Federal Government under Buhari to immediately organize sovereign national conference to enable Nigerians decide either to disintegrate into four self governing countries or to remain within the Nigeria state. They warned during their initial declaration that refusal to call the sovereign national conference within the ultimatum given to the government would amount to them crippling the economy and thereafter extend the war to the major cities from the Delta Creeks. They proclaimed “The Niger Delta Avengers are not Boko Haram, we are not ISIS. All we are asking for is a better living for the people of the Niger Delta and self-determination that is, to govern ourselves. We will soon raise our flag and name our interim ruling Council.

VIII. A REVIEW OF THE ACTIVITIES OF THE NIGER DELTA AVENGERS SINCE INCEPTION

A review of the Niger Delta Avengers’ activities in the Niger Delta Region beginning from 3rd February 2006- July 10, 2016 based on documents studied portrays that the Niger delta Avengers have carried out negative activities across the Niger Delta Region notably in Delta, Bayelsa, and Rivers states respectively.

Ogundipe (2016), on June 1 reported that the Avengers claims more attacks on Chevron installations. The NDA according to this report boasted that “with the heavy presence of 100 gunboats, 4 warships, and Jet Bombers, NDA blew up Chevron oil wells RMP 23 and RMP 24 at 3.44 am this morning. The group tweeted”. The attack according to the report followed previous ones on NNPC, Agip, Shell and other major oil corporations facilities across the Delta states and has results in the declining production accordingly. On the 3rd July, 2016, the Premium times reported that Niger Delta Avengers staged new attack on Chevron, Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) facilities. The paper in its report added that the bombing affected five major facilities in Delta State including pipelines and oil wells respectively. On the side of the Nigeria Government, in Ayodele-Bello (2016), Vice President Osinbajo states that the Niger Delta Avengers are not Niger Delta freedom fighters or working for the interest of the Niger Delta people as they claimed to because if they are, they would not engage in the destruction of the source of economic power of the Region. Osinbajo further asserts that by what they are doing now, they are rather creating more problems in the Region by polluting the environment and making lives more difficult for the people. Osinbajo made the declaration at the Second Foundation Lecture of Elizade University, Ilara Mokin, Ondo state, Nigeria.

Exarheas (2016) reveals that the Niger Delta Avengers on 13th June, 2016, after attacking the Chevron oil facility for the first time issued a warning to Chevron not to carry out any repair of the bombed facilities pending the full implementation of their demand by the Federal Government. When the Avengers heard of Chevron planning to undertake a repair of the bombed facility, it re-echoed its warning again on the 11th May, 2016 that they suspected that Chevron is about to repair their damaged facility at the Okan Valve platform which was blown up in early May, 2016 and that if they do that that will attracts more damage to the company’s

facilities. Chevron did carried out the repair and more attacks followed as Chevron Escravos terminal and the Company's RMP 23 And RMP 24 oil wells were blown up. Apart from the above based on Exarheas (2016) report, more attack has occurred. These include: -an explosion that occurred at a Chevron oil well at the Marakaba pipeline in Warri, Delta State on May 13, 2016, a gas pipeline blown uu in Ogbembiri, Bayelsa State belonging to Italy's Eni May 17, 2016, and crude oil pipeline in Bayelsa, operated by Eni subsidiary Nigerian Agip oil company was damaged with dynamite on May 22, 2016Adurokiya (2016) reports that on the July 3, the Niger Delta Avengers bombed 5 oil pipelines. These were described as Chevron's major oil wells 7 and 8 which is close to the Abiteye flow stations in Delta state.Amaizie & Brisibe (2016) said between July 1-4, the Avengers blown up NNDC manifold, close to batan, two NNPC/PPMC crude oil trunk lines, NNPC pipeline in Eleme , Rivers State, 3 Chevron manifolds in Diogbolo, Dibi oil field in Warri North Local government area and 1, 2, and 3 crude trunk lines in Bayelsa and rivers states. The Niger Delta Avengers Militants also warned of the its intention to attack State House, Abuja, Defence Headquarters, National Assembly, NNPC Towers, Central Bank of Nigeria, Supreme Court/Appeal Court, Agip Headquarters, Abuja and Shell Headquarters, lagos. The target listed also include Chevron Headquarters, lagos, Exxon Mobil, Lagos, Nigeria Liquefied Natural gas lagos and Abuja offices, Kaduna refinery and all military formations in Abuja, Lagos, Kaduna and Benue respectively. The Niger Delta Avengers based on their declaration to extend their activities beyond the Niger delta creeks commenced the operation of the bombing of pipelines to South-West geo-political zone and had bombed several oil pipelines there.The above listed attacks are not exhaustive of the entire attack by the Niger Delta Avengers rather it is a selected sample out of their activities carried out relating to the destruction of oil facilities.

IX. CONSEQUENCES

On 3rd July 2016, Amaize, Ujah, Nwabughio, Oyadongha, Yafugborhi, Udofia, et al (2016) reports that Nigeria Agip Oil Company (NAOC) shut down its operation following the attack of its pipeline in Bayelsa on Friday 3rd June, 2016. Aiteo operator of Nembe creek trunk line which conveys crude to Bonny export terminal was shut down following attack on May 28, 2016 by the Avengers. Chevron Nigeria limited and Shell Petroleum Development Company (SPDC) had various of their facilities bombed by the Niger Delta Avengers and facilities shut down in Bayelsa. Shell declared a "force majeure" on its Bonny Light Crude Blend because of the avengers attack on its Nembe Trunk line in Bayelsa.

Also, Eni (the parent company of NAOC's) production was interrupted by avengers attack

On the consequences of the Niger Delta Avengers, Vice President Osinbajo said it has resulted to poor electricity supply, declined oil production by about 800,000 barrels per day (Ayodele-Bello, 2016). Kachukwu (immediate past State Petroleum Minister) cited in Gaffey (2016) reports that production of oil falls by 800,000 barrels per day which is the lowest in two decades. Norton (2016) also agree that oil production out fell by more than 50% to 1.1 million barrels per day while electricity production dropped by more than 1,000 megawatts. The government according to Osinbajo has lost a huge amount of money that was invested in the Niger Delta for various intervention programmes due to the massive destruction being done by the Avengers.

There is a serious and inestimable consequence of the on-going bombing of the oil wells in the Niger Delta. These include environmental and socio-economic implications. Opsal (2016) argues that the US and its coalition are conscious of the detrimental effect bombing of oil location in the occupy territories of the ISIS could have on the future of Syria and Iraq and that is why ISIS could thrive despite the presence of the US coalition forces there. That is why only 260 oil targets out of the 16,075 have been destroyed despite the already established US-coalition military intelligent plan to destroy the income generating resources in the occupied ISIS territory as the only alternative to weaken ISIS. The destruction of oil wells by bombing in the Niger Delta in Nigeria and anywhere in the world will eventually mean that the oil will get dried up and that is what is likely going to happen to the oil wells bombed in the Niger Delta in Nigeria. Environmentally, Zwijnenburg and Waleij (2016) has in their study discovered that oil fires releases harmful substance into the air-sulphur dioxide, polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, and lead which could cause severe short term health effects for people and wildlife especially with pre-existing respiratory problems. Long run exposure may lead to respiratory disorder, liver problem, kidney disorders and cancer. Opsal had pointed out that though the Geneva Conventions (Rules 50-51) forbids attacks on industrial infrastructure, including oil facilities, attacks on industrial infrastructure have been common place in armed conflict zones. The Federal Government and the oil companies will have lost reasonable hundreds of billions of US Dollars to the bombing of oil wells and pipelines since the Niger Delta Avengers commenced their activities in February, 2016. Apart from the losses of revenue, the Federal Government and the Oil companies will have to spend thousands of billions of US Dollars when the destruction eventually come to an end to re-put the facilities in place if the Avengers is not able to achieve their agitation for sovereign state of the Niger Delta as they are striving for based on their demand. Globally, the destruction caused by the Avengers on oil and gas production in Nigeria in conjunction with other global oil challenges has led to slight price increase in the global oil market. "...the group (Niger Delta Avengers) has averagely stopped

the production of about 1 million barrels of oil daily since they first began attacks in February. A few weeks ago (as at June 8, 2016), oil prices were at 13 year low, but the impact of the Niger Delta Avengers and other international incidents such as strikes in Kuwait, and a blockade in Libya have caused oil price to rise. At last check (as at June 8, 2016), Brent crude was at \$52.21 compared to \$37.69 on April 4, 2016” (Gattenyo, 2016)

X. FINDINGS

Based on the review of the available documents used by the researcher on the activities of the Niger Delta Avengers (a new militant group in the Niger Delta Region of Nigeria) covering a period of five months and one week (3rd February, 2016 – 10 July, 2016) the following findings naturally emerged accordingly.

The “Niger Delta Avengers” really exists and actually made a declaration on the 3rd February, 2016 to cripple the oil economy of Nigeria which is naturally located at the Niger Delta Region should the Federal Government under the current Leadership of President Muhammadu Buhari fails to implement their demands which is contained in this article. The Government failed to implement the demands of the Avengers and they carried out the crippling of the economy through bombing of oil wells and pipelines. This was confirmed by government security agents and multinational oil companies. The Niger Delta Avengers claimed to possess high tech-equipments capable of carrying out the bombing of gas and crude oil pipelines and oil wells and which has been applied successfully. This was confirmed by other sources cited in this article including President Muhammadu Buhari of Nigeria. The hi-tech equipments were confirmed to have been used to carried out the destruction of the pipelines and oil wells. Based on the continued bombing of the oil and gas facilities across the Niger Delta Region, the Federal Government in its intention to track down the perpetrators, on the 30th of May, 2016 deployed military personnel and some war equipments to the creeks of the Delta Region. However, based on appeals from concerned Nigerians and others which calls for negotiation as the best resolve to stop the militants activities, the Federal Government suspended its military action for two weeks and at the expiration of the two weeks Government still sustains the ceasefire in order to pave way for dialogue which the Government says they have commenced with the militants after much efforts to bring the Avengers to negotiating table failed severally. The government through the Minister of State for Petroleum Resources and the current Nigeria Vice president also confirms the sharp reduction of oil production to almost fifty percent thereby causing high reduction exportation of o crude oil to the global market, causing scarcity of Premium Motor Spirit (Petrol) nationally and outrageously reduced power supply to almost zero. The Nigerian Security agents is yet to determine exactly who the Niger Delta Avengers are and could not determine accurately their modus operandi despite the devastating havoc so far wrecked on oil installations across the Niger Delta Region.

XI. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Niger Delta Avengers are unique in the world in terms of their massive destruction of oil wells and pipelines conveying gas and crude to export destinations in the Niger Delta and to other parts of Nigeria for refining. In the wake of the merciless attacks on the oil installations they have crippled reasonably the oil revenue of the Nigerian state, thrown Nigerians into darkness as a result of destruction of power facilities, assisted in the nearly fifty percent reduction in oil production per day, has impacted on the increase in the global oil price and many other factors already discussed in this write-up. Fritzpatrick (2016), reported that on the 12th June, 2016, the Niger Delta Avengers agreed to enter a dialogue with the Nigeria Government on issues affecting them. The group according to Fritzpatrick (2016) citing the Guradian, a Lagos-based newspaper called for “genuine attitude and conducive atmosphere” from the Nigeria government to enhance and facilitate proposed dialogue and lasting peace talk while pledging to continue with its destruction until government agree to use oil profits to develop the Niger Delta territory. The Government had offered a handshake with the Avengers to come to the negotiating table by stopping its military activities in the Delta Creeks for two weeks and beyond with effect from 7th June, 2016. Though, the Niger Delta Avengers rejected the offer at the initial time however, about three militant groups later agree to negotiate with the Federal Government. On the 10th July, 2016, Amaize and Brisibe (2016) reported that President Buhari because of a renewed and increasing bombing of oil facilities particularly the bombing of five oil facilities between 1st to 4th July, 2016 declared that the Nigeria Unity is not negotiable and that the Government will have to “concentrate on the militancy to try to know how many of them, in terms of groupings, try to get in touch with their leadership to try to persuade them to please give Nigeria a chance”. The comment of the President is power-packed. The President on several occasions since the spate of bombing of oil facilities started had severally pleaded with the Avengers to desist from the act. The question is, did the Federal government know the membership of the Niger Delta Avengers as claimed reported by Idowu (2016) on 10 June, 2016, saying that a highly placed security officer reports that the security agents, the Joint Task Force (JTF) and the Nigeria Navy Ship (NNS) have linked members of the Niger Delta Liberation Front (NDLF) founded by the Late ex-militant leader John Togo with the several bombing of gas and crude oil pipelines in parts of Delta and Bayelsa States respectively. “*The boys that bombed crude oil pipeline last Thursday were late John Togo boys. They were sighted at the scene of the blast by soldiers who*

were on their trail before they fled into the creeks with their high speed boats. At least, they recognized some of them to be John Togo boys” If the Government knows them why is it taking them these entire long to arrest the “Boys”.

This research work will leave behind a research gap and questions for other researchers to answer by continue from where this work stops. The simple questions to be answer by other researchers are: what are the main reasons behind the bombing and destruction of the gas and oil wells and pipelines by the Niger Delta Avengers in the Niger Delta Region in Nigeria? Two, are those reasons justifiable enough and commensurate with the destruction of the oil and gas wells and other oil related facilities in the Niger Delta Region by Niger Delta Avengers? In the light of the above findings and conclusions, the researcher wishes to submit the following recommendations. One, that the Niger Delta Avengers should stop the persistent bombing of the oil wells and other oil facilities, embrace dialogue as a genuine and internationally acceptable means of resolving conflicts and if possible invite the United Nations through their elected representatives at the National and state assemblies to represent and dialogue on their behalf for any long outstanding grievances between them and the Government and oil companies or alternatively engage in a useful means of seeking for a referendum to determine their stay within the Nigeria State.

The decision of the elders and leaders of thought of the Ijaw nation including some governor in the Delta Region taken at a meeting hosted by Edwin Clark, Ijaw National Leader in Warri, Delta State on the 31st July, 2016 is a welcome development. The Ijaw Leaders has strongly warned the militants not to declare Niger Delta Republic that what the Niger Delta Region want is true federalism and restructuring of Nigeria as the alternative to entrench lasting peace in the Delta Region and in Nigeria. At the meeting also, the leaders condemned the spate of bombing of oil facilities by militants. The leaders statement was contained in the Communiqué issued at the end of the meeting. The Niger Delta Avengers should follow the line of reasoning of its elders and leaders of thought and stop the destruction of oil facilities most particularly that the Niger Delta representatives have dialogued with the government.

While it is very clear constitutionally and even within international regulations that no legitimate sovereign de-facto government will fold its hands while watching any people, or groups of people forcefully destroying its national resources and threatening to secede from its defined territory without due process, the Federal Government has continue to tread on the part of peace over the activities of the Niger Delta Avengers. She should continue to preach peace and sustain it at all cost while looking for an alternative ways of starting to address the demands of the Avengers where necessary in order to avoid any further form of war or renewed face-off between the military and the Niger Delta Avengers because of the aftermath effect it will have on that region in particular and Nigeria in general. The Government in her efforts to bring the militants to negotiating table which she said is on-going should be sustain and be use to address the demands since it is the most veritable tool to resolving the on-going destruction of the oil economy.

The Federal Government should also re-consider immediate implementation of the 2014 Constitutional Conference Report since it Nigerians are clamouring for its implementation in order to reduce tensions and frictions in the Nigerian state relating to the cries for marginalization by some parts of Nigeria including the Niger Delta people.

It is also recommended that the planned attempts by several groups to secede out of Nigeria is a clear manifestations of the indicators that something if not so many things, needed to be address in Nigeria if Nigerians ethnic nationalities are to stay together as one and indivisible sovereign nation. The task is hanging on the neck of the present Administration under President Muhammadu Buhari for that is the reasons why Nigerians massively came out en masse to vote him into a landslide victory against President Goodluck Jonathan.

The present Government is fully aware that the past successive governments paid a lip service and empty promises to tackle the negative environmental impacts and challenges confronting the states in the Niger Delta Region over the oil pollution and gas flaring contrary to various international recommendations. The Government under Buhari should therefore, implement those recommendations in order to improve the environmental conditions in the Niger Delta Region so as to stop militants activities in the Niger delta Region.

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