

**VANDALISM OF CRITICAL RAILWAY INFRASTRUCTURE IN NIGERIA:
INTELLIGENCE-LED PROTECTION, INVESTIGATIONS, AND INTERAGENCY
ARCHITECTURE FOR NATIONAL ASSET SECURITY**

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn
Deputy President & Chief Executive,
Institute of Security Nigeria
Email: bayoakinade@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract

The May 2026 enforcement action against Inner Galaxy Steel Company exposed a trans-state criminal network converting stolen railway tracks and NNPC pipelines into commercial scrap. The incident highlights systemic weaknesses in Nigeria's critical infrastructure protection regime, particularly in intelligence, surveillance, undercover operations, and interagency investigation.

This paper integrates intelligence-led policing, criminal investigation, and intelligence analysis into Nigeria's infrastructure protection architecture. Drawing on Fundamentals of Infrastructure Protection and comparative models from the USA, UK, Canada, India, and Indonesia, it proposes a legally grounded, technologically enabled, and publicly accountable system for prevention, detection, disruption, and prosecution.

Recommendations include a National Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Fusion Centre, mandatory scrap metal traceability, statutory undercover and surveillance powers, and a public-private reporting platform.

Keywords: Critical Infrastructure Protection, Intelligence-Led Policing, Criminal Investigation, Interagency Collaboration, Railway Vandalism, Nigeria

1. Introduction

Critical infrastructure is the backbone of national security and economic function. When railway tracks, pipelines, and power lines are vandalized for scrap, the state loses more than metal; it loses mobility, energy security, and public trust. The NSCDC's May 2026 operation against Inner Galaxy Steel revealed an organized supply chain that depended on weak intelligence, poor surveillance, and fragmented investigations.

This paper argues that moving from reactive raids to proactive, intelligence-led protection requires four integrated pillars:

1. Intelligence and surveillance systems
2. Undercover assignments and criminal investigations
3. Intelligence analysis and fusion
4. Legal and interagency frameworks that enable joint action and public participation

2. Background and Incident Overview

On May 25, 2026, NSCDC sealed facilities linked to Inner Galaxy Steel and Jiuxing Integrity Industrial Ltd in Kaduna, Abia, and Zamfara following a court order. Arrested suspects confessed to sourcing stolen railway materials for melting into nails and iron rods. The case revealed cross-border movement, corporate involvement, and alleged financing of terrorism.

The incident illustrates three failures:

- Detection failure: Vandalism continued for months before intelligence disrupted the network
- Investigation failure: Lack of forensic financial and digital trails slowed attribution
- Prevention failure: No system exists to track scrap metal from crime scene to foundry

3. Problem Statement

Nigeria's response to infrastructure vandalism remains reactive, evidence-light, and agency-siloed. Without statutory powers for intelligence collection, undercover operations, and mandatory traceability, law enforcement cannot disrupt networks before damage occurs.

4. Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

4.1 Intelligence-Led Policing

ILP shifts focus from incident response to prevention through the collection, analysis, and dissemination of actionable intelligence. It requires a cycle of direction, collection, processing, analysis, dissemination, and feedback.

4.2 Criminal Investigation and Forensics

Effective prosecution depends on chain-of-custody evidence, digital forensics, financial forensics, and forensic metallurgy to link scrap to source infrastructure.

4.3 Risk Management in Infrastructure Protection

As outlined in Fundamentals of Infrastructure Protection, protection involves asset identification, threat and vulnerability assessment, mitigation, and resilience planning.

5. Intelligence, Surveillance, and Undercover Operations

5.1 Intelligence Collection Systems

- Human Intelligence: Embed trained HUMINT officers within scrap dealer associations and transport unions
- Technical Intelligence: Deploy covert CCTV, GPS trackers on rail components, and RF sensors on high-risk segments
- Cyber Intelligence: Monitor dark web and social media for markets in stolen infrastructure
- Financial Intelligence: Mandate suspicious transaction reporting by scrap dealers to the Nigerian Financial Intelligence Unit

5.2 Undercover Assignments

Statutory authorization under the NSCDC Act and Administration of Criminal Justice Act should permit undercover operations against infrastructure theft networks. Safeguards must include judicial oversight, minimization of rights infringement, and evidentiary standards.

5.3 Surveillance Systems

Establish a National Infrastructure Surveillance Grid linking NSCDC, NPF, NRC, and state commands. Use AI-assisted video analytics to detect unauthorized activity on rail corridors in real time.

6. Criminal Investigations and Intelligence Analysis

6.1 Criminal Investigation Standards

- Crime Scene Management: Standardize preservation of vandalized sites for forensic metallurgy
- Financial Investigation: Trace proceeds through banking, mobile money, and informal transfer systems
- Digital Forensics: Extract data from phones and logistics platforms used by suspects
- Prosecution Support: Create a dedicated Critical Infrastructure Prosecution Unit within the Federal Ministry of Justice

6.2 Intelligence Analysis and Fusion

Create a National Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Fusion Centre under ONSA. Functions:

1. Integrate data from NSCDC, NPF, NRC, EFCC, NFIU, Customs
2. Produce strategic and tactical assessments on threat networks
3. Disseminate actionable bulletins to field units within 24 hours
4. Maintain a national offender and entity watchlist

7. Legal and Statutory Framework

7.1 Existing Provisions

- NSCDC Act 2007: Powers to protect infrastructure and investigate vandalism
- Railway Act: Criminalizes destruction of railway property
- Terrorism Prevention Act: Covers financing and facilitation
- Proceeds of Crime Act 2022: Enables asset forfeiture

7.2 Gaps and Proposed Amendments

1. Critical Infrastructure Protection Act: Define offenses, corporate liability, and mandatory security standards
2. Scrap Metal Regulation Act: Prohibit cash purchases, require seller ID, and mandate digital record-keeping
3. Surveillance and Undercover Powers Act: Provide legal basis for covert methods with judicial authorization
4. Whistleblower Protection Act: Protect informants reporting infrastructure crimes

8. Interagency Collaboration and Public Engagement

8.1 Interagency Architecture

- Joint Task Force on Infrastructure Protection: Standing body with NSCDC, NPF, NRC, EFCC, NFIU, Customs, NCC
- Memoranda of Understanding: Define roles, data sharing protocols, and deconfliction procedures
- Joint Training and Exercises: Quarterly simulations on rail corridor interdiction and evidence handling

8.2 Public and Private Sector Roles

- Private Sector: Mandate infrastructure owners to implement ISO 27001/22301 standards and report incidents within 6 hours
- Communities: Establish Community Infrastructure Watch committees linked to NSCDC through secure reporting apps
- Media: Launch public awareness campaigns on the cost of vandalism and safe reporting channels

9. Comparative Insights

9.1 United States

CISA operates the National Infrastructure Coordinating Center. The Scrap Theft Alert system allows law enforcement to broadcast theft alerts to recyclers nationwide. Undercover operations are governed by DOJ guidelines.

9.2 United Kingdom

Scrap Metal Dealers Act 2013 requires licensed dealers, no cash transactions, and police access to records. British Transport Police use covert surveillance and decoy operations.

9.3 Canada and India

Canada's CIP Program emphasizes public-private information sharing. India's CIP Centre under NTRO integrates intelligence from multiple agencies and runs cyber monitoring of critical networks.

10. Recommendations to Government and Security Agencies

10.1 To the Federal Government

1. Pass the Critical Infrastructure Protection Bill and Scrap Metal Regulation Bill within 12 months
2. Fund and operationalize the National Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Fusion Centre
3. Create a ring-fenced budget for infrastructure surveillance technology

10.2 To NSCDC and NPF

1. Establish dedicated Infrastructure Crime Units with trained investigators and forensic capacity
2. Develop SOPs for undercover operations and covert surveillance with legal oversight
3. Integrate NFIU financial intelligence into all major infrastructure crime cases

10.3 To the Judiciary

1. Designate specialized courts for critical infrastructure crimes to reduce case backlog
2. Apply asset forfeiture and corporate liability provisions aggressively

10.4 To the Public

1. Use verified hotlines and apps to report suspicious activity near rail lines and pipelines
2. Refuse to buy scrap without verifiable origin documentation
3. Support community watch initiatives under legal oversight

11. Prospects and Future Directions

Future protection will depend on AI-driven anomaly detection, blockchain traceability for metals, and biometric identification of scrap sellers. Nigeria should pilot these technologies on the Kaduna-Kano and Abuja-Kaduna corridors within 18 months.

12. Conclusion

The Inner Galaxy Steel case demonstrates that Nigeria cannot prosecute its way out of infrastructure vandalism without first investing in intelligence, surveillance, and interagency fusion. Intelligence-led, legally grounded, and publicly supported protection is the only sustainable path to securing national assets.

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About the Author

Barrister Adebayo Akinade, dfisn, is the Deputy President and Chief Executive of the Institute of Security Nigeria. He specializes in critical infrastructure protection, intelligence-led policing, and security law.

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