

O.R Tambo boosts safety, security for festive travellers

According to O. R. Tambo International Airport's general manager, Bongiwe Pityi-Vokwana, the airport's community is gearing up for the busiest time of the year to help an anticipated four-million passengers get their holiday travels underway stress-free.



SpringbokSam via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Pityi-Vokwana says that the airport has prepared contingency plans with the support of the airport community which includes airport staff, airlines, air traffic controllers, South African Weather Services, ground handlers, contracted security staff, retailers, car rental firms, mechanical, electrical, civil infrastructure and IT equipment maintenance contractors, law enforcement agencies such as SAPS, SARS Customs & Excise, Immigration Services, State Security Agency and many others.

"About 38,000 people are employed in and around the airport. Of these, only about 1,400 are directly employed by us. We are fortunate that all our stakeholders appreciate that we work in an ecosystem where running an efficient airport relies on continuous collaboration among thousands of people.

"Airport operations are complex. We manage volumes, variability, variety and visibility in a live environment where precision and predictability of service is the basis of our existence.

"The regulatory demands to guarantee civil aviation safety require effective planning and synchronisation of thousands of activities every hour in the passenger's journey from arrival on our landside, to when the aircraft takes off, lands and passengers safely leave the airport," says Pityi-Vokwana.

Aircraft crash management

An aircraft crash crisis simulation exercise, overseen by the South African Civil Aviation Authority as part of the airport licensing process, recently tested the abilities of airlines, air traffic control, ground handlers, airport management, emergency services, law enforcement agencies, and other role players around Gauteng to respond quickly and effectively to any situation.

"In addition, airport staff and our safety and security partners have made tremendous strides over the past 18 months in

intensifying our security operations and combating crime. We are especially appreciative of the efforts of the SAPS and the National Prosecuting Authority in securing convictions and lengthy sentences for some of those responsible for the armed robbery at the airport in March 2017."

Regulated airport security

The airport's law enforcement agencies executing against the government-approved Integrated Multi-Disciplinary Plan has achieved notable successes in intercepting drug concealments over the past 12 months with 1,186 seizures of drugs with a total street value of R2.9bn.

There were 676 arrests for all classes of crime, representing a 20% month-on-month reduction in cases reported at the airport.

"**Aviation security** is a highly regulated license-carrying responsibility. I am extremely proud of our security teams who are always willing to go the extra mile and demonstrate a tireless work ethic, often forfeiting meal breaks and willingly volunteering for overtime. Over 90% of the successes achieved by our passenger and hand luggage x-ray screening staff is attributable to diligence, teamwork and well-trained eyes studying passenger behavioural trends.

"This is always a very busy time for the airport. Among the four million passengers, most of them will be first-time flyers and a substantial number of elderly people. The operational demands are therefore different at this time of year because of the different passenger mix. But I can assure travellers that it is all hands-on-deck for and we are ready.

"We look forward to a successful festive period and wish the best at this time for our passengers, staff and stakeholders," says Pityi-Vokwana.

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