



MINISTER OF TRANSPORT MEDIA STATEMENT ON YESTERDAY'S (01 JULY 2017) SWIFT RESPONSE BY SAPS AND AIRPORT SECURITY IN FOILED CARGO ROBBERY AT O.R. TAMBO INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

In South Africa, the responsibility of promoting and maintaining a safe, secure, and sustainable civil aviation environment rests with the Department of Transport.

ACSA's nine airports are registered on the largest worldwide Airport Service Quality (ASQ) programme, under the auspices of Airports Council International, which represents 98 percent of the world's airports and contributes handsomely to the national fiscus.

With Gauteng being largely the economic hub for South Africa, contributes approximately 35% to the national GDP and approximately 11% to the African continent economic efforts.

With this in mind, it is important to note that these airports are major generators of direct and indirect employment and business opportunities, providing the core of development nodes in South Africa. ACSA airports have once again been ranked as some of the best in Africa in the annual Airports Council International's (ACI) 2015 (ASQ) Awards.

Boasting a very rich history, O.R. Tambo International Airport, the biggest and busiest airport in Africa is situated in Ekurhuleni in South Africa's economic capital, Gauteng. This last financial year alone, approximately 21 million passengers passed through this aviation gateway into Africa, making it by far the most prominent and vital entry point into the country. It is therefore not surprising, that criminals are targeting our main and busiest airport, O.R. Tambo International Airport for such crimes.

This transport hub boasts key elements required for a world-class airport business – location, accessibility and connectivity. It is ideally situated in the heart of South Africa's commercial and industrial hub, with excellent road infrastructure, linking it to the national road network.

O.R. Tambo International Airport services airlines from five continents and plays a vital role in serving the local, regional air transport needs of South African and international travellers.

The airport offers various retail outlets for travellers' convenience. It also boasts top-of-the-range hotels. It also directly employs approximately 1200 employees with over 35,000 other people working at the airport, employed by the 170 retail outlets, domestic and international airlines and ground handlers operating out of the airport.

As part of yesterday morning's foiled cargo armed robbery, which took place at the Swissport warehouse, located at the cargo precinct of O.R. Tambo International Airport, the result being that an armed robber was shot dead and another arrested after they held up Swissport security guards based at the warehouse.

We can confirm that at approximately 10h00 yesterday morning, a group of armed men dressed in relevant service provider reflector jackets, held up and overpowered security guards employed by Checkport at the Swissport warehouse at the cargo precinct.

The robbery took place on the public access landside of the cargo precinct and the robbers did not gain access to the airside of the airport. This is important to note, as this incident took place on the landside of the airport, far away from the airport terminal building itself. This incident therefore did not pose any imminent threat to passengers and visitors to the airport.

It is alleged that the robbers made off in a hijacked cargo truck which was later recovered. Members of the South African Police Service and Reshebile Protection Services responded immediately. Reshebile is both licensed and contracted by Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) to provide security services to the airport.

A few kilometres from the cargo precinct, at the Kempton Park off-ramp of the highway, the robbers were confronted by SAPS members and Reshebile Security staff. Two members of the gang attempted to flee on foot. A shootout ensued in which one of the robbers was killed and another arrested. Two firearms, including 2 radios and 2 cargo scanners were recovered from these suspects.

Police continue to further investigate yesterday's incident. This case is being investigated by the recently established multi-disciplinary team comprising of, among others, specialized investigators, Crime Intelligence and Forensic Experts. We have an absolute confidence that South Africans will start to see the decrease in this type of crime which is part of a trio crimes. (vehicles hijacking, robberies at residential and robberies at non-residential premises).

As the Minister of Transport, I was this morning briefed by Airports Company South Africa CEO, Mr Bongani Maseko, the GM of O.R.Tambo International Airport, Ms Bongwiwe Pityi, Head of Security for ACSA, Mr Jason Tshabalala and Mr Kamal Shivanand, Acting Manager for Airport Security, on yesterday's foiled cargo armed robbery.

I can confirm that I am happy with the mechanisms being put in place as part of the joint reactive strategies employed by law enforcement and other key stakeholders, in order to combat this type of crime, which unduly negatively impacts the reputation of not only O.R. Tambo International Airport, but brand South Africa as a whole. We want to reassure South Africans that crime in our ports of entry, given the now better co-ordinated efforts of SAPS and other law enforcement agencies, will become a thing of the past. We are beginning to squeeze the space in which criminals operate.

We applaud the working relation of our Airport Management at O.R. Tambo International Airport, as well as the security forces in fighting this particular type of crime which includes the so-called 'follow-home' incidences.

We urge all South Africans to also partner with our South African Police Service by ensuring that such crimes are reported immediately, as we continue to confront this scourge.

We want to appeal to all users of our airports to be security conscious and avoid being vulnerable to criminals. This will augment the efforts of the Police and security cluster to protect and prevent such crimes.

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