



home affairs

Department:  
Home Affairs  
**REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA**

## **STATEMENT BY HOME AFFAIRS MINISTER MALUSI GIGABA ON THE 2016 FESTIVE SEASON TRAVELLER STATISTICS: GCIS HEAD OFFICE**

18 January 2017

Compliments of the New Year!

Today we present yet another impressive increase in the number of travellers entering and leaving South Africa (SA) during the 2016/17 festive season. We also share information on interventions at OR Tambo International Airport.

Operations at South African ports of entry for the 2016/17 festive season were completed, with much success. We can make bold to say these operations were characterised by high levels of professionalism and efficiency.

On 9 January 2017, *News24* reported that three SA airports were listed among the world's most punctual. These are Cape Town, OR Tambo and King Shaka – with Cape Town placed top of the three for airport punctuality.

Cape Town featured sixth on the global medium airport punctuality list recently published by UK travel analysts, OAG. OR Tambo featured in eighth position globally on OAG's large airport punctuality list, and King Shaka ranked 10th in the world on OAG's small airport punctuality list. In 2016, Cape Town achieved its 10<sup>th</sup> million passenger milestone.

Through its immigration services, the Department of Home Affairs has reaffirmed its commitment to reclaim and reassert state authority in the country, in terms of which South Africa's borders must be effectively safeguarded and secured.

I am therefore pleased that we have among us some of our high performing officials who move South Africa forward.

Critical reflection on operations in this period, remains a critical requirement for future operations.

I am happy to announce from 9 December 2016 to 14 January 2017, movements recorded at ports of entry nationally amount to a total of **5 504 022**. This marks an increase of **200 467** compared to the **5 303 555** recorded for 9 December 2015 to 14 January 2016. It is an increase of **3.78%**. In spite of perceptions in some quarters, South Africa remains an attractive tourist destination.

Top 10 nationalities that arrived in SA over this period were from Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Swaziland, Botswana, United Kingdom, USA, Namibia, Germany and Zambia.

Top ten ports by volume between 9 December 2016 and 14 January 2017 were, Oliver Tambo International Airport, Beit Bridge, Lebombo, Maseru Bridge, Ficksburg, Cape Town International Airport, Oshoek, Kopfontein, Ramatlabama and Groblers Bridge.

All movements for OR Tambo for 9 December 2016 to 14 January 2017 reached a total of **977 961**, as against **948 477** during 9 December 2015 to 14 January 2016.

The 2016/17 festive season was marked by increased movement of people and goods across borders for different reasons, varying from cross-border employment and business to academic and educational endeavours.

We also observed a high number of travellers crossing borders for holiday and tourist purposes – which is one of important priorities for the country.

This movement is facilitated by a large number of ports of entry, with numbers of those travelling being cyclically influenced by the reasons for travelling, and thus we observe increases in movements during the year.

This therefore makes it imperative for ports to be well-prepared at all times to execute and facilitate traveller movement, and, importantly, also to mitigate illegal movements and transgressions, especially during peaks. The upsurge in traveller and vehicular movements put a strain on limited resources at the ports of entry.

Festive season operations commenced in earnest on 09 December 2016, and extended up to 14 January 2017. Operational plans and instructions as well as security alerts were issued in support of ports of entry operations.

Historical data on operations conducted during peak seasons in the border environment reflect the need to extend operational hours at ports of entry to cater for the upsurge in traveller movements. I therefore approved the extension of operational hours for ports of entry experiencing significant upsurge in movement volumes during the festive period.

The Immigration Operational Centre at National Office played a vital role in the success of port operations during this period. It resolved most of the challenges experienced at a tactical level. More importantly, the operational centre followed a sound escalating protocol to ensure that senior and executive management of the department were well-informed of issues, thus to allow for early responses to situations.

The festive season plan further included a deliberate response to lack of capacity at some ports of entry. Key ports were augmented with additional capacity to ensure efficiency is improved. One such port is OR Tambo International Airport.

Deploying additional staff, with good results, demonstrated the challenge at OR Tambo is mainly around resources. Now that the deployed staff had been withdrawn, maintaining the same levels of efficiency and effectiveness poses serious challenges necessitating action.

OR Tambo as a strategic hub requires additional resources on a permanent basis. It is for this reason that the department, with limited resources, plans to increase capacity at this airport. To this end, we have allocated R25 million for the 2017/18 financial year, and therefore we

should be able to appoint additional 58 immigration officials and fully capacitate our management team.

A further increase in staff capacity is planned for the 2018/19 financial year, with an additional budget allocation of R17 million, availed by National Treasury.

But challenges at OR Tambo are not only about staff shortage. Other areas of concern include the current infrastructure layout of the arriving and departing terminals. Engagements with Airports Company South Africa (ACSA) are apace to reconsider the current layout of identified areas.

Among the proposals is the separation of travellers departing, in the same way as in the Arrival Terminal, where citizens are separated from foreign travellers. The festive period where this proposal was piloted had shown there is value in implementing this option permanently precisely because required services are different for citizens and other clients.

We are grateful for assistance received from ACSA in terms of transportation and accommodation for our officials over the festive season. We trust that other stakeholders will come on board in their different ways.

Maintaining sound stakeholder relations in the border environment is essential for successful border operations. The value of an integrated approach to border operations as set out for the planned Border Management Authority underlines this notion. The following incident where a number of government departments and entities were involved further supports this view:

On 16 December 2016, a Syrian national, a suspected extremist and known member of ISIS, travelled to South Africa and was stopped and refused entry at OR Tambo, and returned. He had two passports (Uruguayan and Syrian) in his possession.

This also goes to show the important role immigration plays in security. Before the 2016/17 festive period, South Africa had beefed-up security by rolling out biometrics at selected ports.

On the whole, I am very grateful for the excellent work done by our dedicated immigration officers in partnership with their colleagues from other government departments and agencies. The 2016/17 festive season operation was executed successfully and proficiently, thus allowing for a sound base for preparing for the next operation – Easter 2017.

Improving efficiency remains high on our agenda as we see in respect of management of the 2016/17 festive season operations. This is a milestone in managing immigration for development while guaranteeing safety and security of citizens and clients.

**Best wishes for 2017 and beyond.**