

Greater security needed at OR Tambo to secure safe passage of travellers

More needs to be done to enhance the security at OR Tambo International Airport, says Flight Centre Travel Group (FCTG) Middle East Africa MD, Andrew Stark, following recent comments by security expert and Signal Risk Director, Ryan Cummings, that Africa's largest airport is "vulnerable to attacks" and that its "security is too lax".



SpringbokSam via [Wikimedia Commons](#)

Their first taste of Africa

"Compared to international standards, I find the security at OR Tambo International Airport, through which over 21 million passengers travelled in 2016, lacklustre. Our travellers are harassed by hawkers, porters and loiterers who approach them summarily and it simply doesn't feel secure enough," says Stark.

Whilst South Africans have an understanding of this, it can be bewildering to tourists and, for many of them, it will be their first taste of Africa. "They may not know if they can accept unsolicited help and if they do, how much they should pay. The number of unaccredited workers combined with the lack of information can cause a great deal of confusion to visitors."

Commenting on Political Analysis South Africa, Cummings said: "Security at an airport is first and foremost about controlling access." Cummings suggests OR Tambo International Airport is too accessible and does not have enough security provisions that do routine security checks prior to individuals accessing the airport complex.

Small improvements

Stark believes small improvements in security, lighting at the drop-off and go area, dealing with hawkers, accreditation of porters and transport providers, and enhanced security checkpoints would go some way to ensuring the safety of passengers. Police visibility, provision of information to tourists and travellers warning them about risks and easy mechanisms to report anything out of the ordinary are further ways in which to manage the situation proactively.

“We are however encouraged by last year’s announcement that key initiatives would be adopted to improve security at OR Tambo International Airport, but it’s their actual implementation and visible reduction of incidents like “follow home” robberies that we now need to see.”



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According to Stark, everyone in the tourism chain has a responsibility to protect travellers and travel hubs around the airport. “I believe more should be done to secure the safe passage of the travellers who use OR Tambo International Airport as a gateway to the rest of the country and the world.

“President Cyril Ramaphosa also seems to be looking to establish stricter border controls to ensure higher levels of safety within South Africa. I hope, in time, this will extend to increasing the efficiency of customs and immigration.”

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