

## OR Tambo cargo traffic up by 62% in April

OR Tambo International Airport has facilitated a total 1,400 landing and departing cargo flights from 26 March up to Friday 22 May, an increase of some 62% over the comparable period in 2019. In April, the only completed month for which figures are currently available, the airport received 476 cargo flights compared to 294 cargo flights in April of 2019.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Airport spokesperson Betty Maloka says that air cargo has maintained a vital economic lifeline at a critical time for South Africa. "With most economic activity limited for the past two months, we remain very much aware of the airport's roles and responsibilities in facilitating cargo flights at this time."

Personal protective equipment (PPE), medical devices and pharmaceuticals account for most of the increase in cargo volumes. Incoming PPE has also been forwarded to neighbouring countries who procured their own supplies but required air connectivity in order to take delivery.

"Air cargo in these categories has received priority for clearing through customs. However, processing cargo through the airport takes longer than previously not only because of the volumes but also because of hygiene and sanitisation rules and the need for staff to adhere to physical distancing," she says.

In addition, she says a number of airlines have been using passenger aircraft to transport cargo.

"Cargo transported in passenger aircraft is not packed on sealed pallets in the normal way. It is broken up and placed on seats in the passenger cabin. This has created challenges in terms of unloading and storing cargo once it is offloaded and waiting to be cleared," she says.

**Ways of streamlining and improving cargo processing systems** are the subject of continuing engagement between airport management, the Air Cargo Operators Committee (ACOC), the South African Express Parcel Association (SAEPA) and the South African Association of Freight Forwarders (SAAFF).

She says that the significant increase in volumes led not only to storage challenges, but also stretched cargo service providers and the logistics industry.

The cargo precinct at OR Tambo International Airport has about 140 operators which includes freight forwarders, clearing agents, couriers, express services, cargo handlers, freighters, specialised, perishables, cargo examiners and government agencies.

This figure excludes the road-feeder transport companies who also operate in and out of the cargo area.

Maloka says the **greater volumes of cargo have also required an increased focus on security**, particularly on the airside waiting area.

"Operators based at the cargo precinct are responsible for their own cargo security including securing consignments and storage facilities. However, an integrated multi-disciplinary tactical security team is in place to manage and oversee the tactical security plan for the cargo area.

"This team includes representation from the South African Police Service and the intelligence cluster led by the State Security Agency. Cargo operators at the airport are continuously appraised of their security risks and provided with information and intelligence to enhance their security processes and protocols," says Maloka.

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