

## **SECURITY A PRIORITY FOR ACSA**

Safety and security remains one of ACSA's top priority's, with airports around South Africa improving their focus on security on an ongoing basis. ACSA has spent more than R195 million on security over the past five years, with a further R 72 million earmarked for the current financial year.

“As is the case with most airport operators around the world, we are faced with a widening spectrum of security issues from petty theft to organised crime. There is also the fear of terrorism following 9/11, the London bombings and other attacks around the world. We take these issues extremely seriously. Providing a secure environment takes a collaborative effort at every level. We work very closely with the South African Police Service (SAPS) and various security agencies, as well as customs and immigration to put effective measures in place to counter any threats,” explains O.R Tambo International Airport's (ORTIA's) head of security Jason Tshabalala.

He says there is a National Committee that deals with security at the highest level - with representatives from the Civil Aviation Authority, the National Defence Force, the SAPS, ACSA and most airlines. This committee continually reviews the processes and procedures in place and looks for ways that all stakeholders can improve security.

“We are acutely aware of our responsibilities and have installed some of the world's most sophisticated surveillance equipment in our airports. Security is continually assessed and we move quickly to make changes and improvements when they are needed.”

### **Focus on Safety**

The roll-out of the safety palladium occurrence system which provides an accurate record of safety incidents throughout the airport network has been completed. This enables ACSA to measure where it stands in relation to international best practice and to zero in on areas where there is room for improvement.

### **Boot Camp**

Special training in all aspects of security is being stepped up at the ACSA Academy, which has close ties with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and the Civil Aviation Authority. Training is provided for all staff, however, the training security staff receives is particularly rigorous.

“With security personnel making up almost 40 percent of ACSA’s entire staff compliment, the recruitment and screening processes have to be extremely thorough in order to for us to secure competent and trustworthy people who are committed to protecting our airports and our travellers,” Tshabalala says.

**Some of the steps taken in the fight against crime include:**

- The installation of automated baggage management machines at the international airports in Johannesburg, Durban and Cape Town, limiting human contact with baggage to check-in and the loading of bags into containers that are taken onto the aircraft
- The upgrade of the control room and ORTIA, which monitors areas such as baggage make-up, passenger screening, customs and immigrations and the perimeter gates
- The implementation of a new process to improve access control in restricted areas, including the use of new colour coded permits and even biometric technology
- The deployment of a unit of specially trained SAPS officers to deal specifically with baggage pilferage at all major airports
- The increase in CCTV coverage of the baggage make-up area; and increased access control in the baggage handling areas
- A new R25 million Staff Processing Facility, which ensures all airside personnel can no longer take items of a personal nature in the areas where they work. They are screen both before they report to their workplace and when they return to the facility to collect their personal belongings before leaving work
- The upgrade of the perimeter fence and gates at ORTIA, which was constructed in consultation with SAPS to specifications that exceed those stipulated by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO)
- Making baggage wrapping facilities available at ORTIA

**Valuable Partnerships**

ACSA is extremely pleased with the response that it has received from the SAPS in improving general security at airports and it is working closely with them as they roll out plans to improve on airport security. The fact that there is now more than 1000 police officers at ORTIA indicates the response of the SAPS to the task of providing sufficient numbers, for example, the ORTIA precinct has been identified as one of the most actively policed in South Africa.

While security infrastructure is certainly up to scratch it is essential to ensure that high quality people are employed to form part of the security infrastructure. Since ACSA manages in a virtual environment and does not have direct control over the cleaners or the baggage handlers, for example, it is vital to work with

stakeholders to ensure that all their employees are adequately screened and that close checks and controls are kept on the people that they employ.

Overall, measures that are successfully tried and tested at ORTIA will be rolled out to other ACSA airports. In the meantime, security company contracts have been awarded on a regional rather than a national basis to avoid the risk of having one service provider at all airports.

Tshabalala explains that ACSA is continually assessing and monitoring all aspects of security, benchmarking itself against international best practise. In addition, ACSA's aviation security standards are subject to a robust three tiered audit comprising internal, national and international reviews.

Internally ACSA employs full-time standards compliance officers who monitor security compliance by the various airport stakeholders on a ongoing basis. The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) conducts periodic audits at all 10 airports under ACSA's management to check compliance with aviation security standards. The larger airports are also audited by the US Transportation Security Administration each year, to ensure ACSA's standards comply with their stringent requirements.

"We continue to meet the highest aviation security standards in the world. However, we remain vigilant and keep a keen eye on our processes and procedures to close any gaps and maintain tight security at all times," concludes Tshabalala.