



Home → World

Prison chaplain says SA needs to tighten OR Tambo security to combat drug trade

30 January 2020 2:00 PM

by [Qama Qukula](#)

Tags: Hong Kong • OR Tambo International Airport • Drug trafficking

+ More



Johannesburg's OR Tambo International Airport has become a popular hub for trafficking drugs and other illicit commodities.

A Hong Kong prison chaplain is lobbying for authorities around the world to take more action in the fight against drug trafficking.

Father John Wotherspoon has met his fair share of smugglers and uncovered gruesome stories of how drug mules are recruited.

Journalist and transnational crime researcher, Sean Christie, says 22 people arrested for drug possession in Hong Kong airport between 2018 and 2019 came via OR Tambo.

In Mauritius, 100 men arrested for drug possession since in 2017 used OR Tambo as a transit point too, according to Christie.

RELATED: OR Tambo is a top transit point for illegal trade, says analyst on SAA drug bust

Wotherspoon is in South Africa as a part of his international anti-drugs awareness campaign.

He says OR Tambo is one of the popular airports exploited by Nigerian druglords for its poor security measures.

“OR Tambo Airport and Addis Ababa Airport [in Ethiopia] have the same problem. The security is very lax.”

John Wotherspoon, Hong Kong prison chaplain



“ In Hong Kong, they have best-trained customs staff in the world. The best dogs in the world and the best equipment. ”

John Wotherspoon, Hong Kong prison chaplain

Former drug trafficking insiders say some porters, police and customs officials at OR Tambo are paid to let drug mules through, Wotherspoon explains.

He claims traffickers earn approximately 4,000 US Dollars (around R58,600 for smuggling drugs to other markets).

Last year, two South African Airways (SAA) flight attendants were arrested in Hong Kong on drug trafficking charges.

Wotherspoon has met with victims who have been forced into trafficking and says some drug mules are recruited under the pretence of job opportunities abroad.

He claims 70% of drug mules from across the world traffic drug willingly for financial gain.

About 20% are forced or threatened or forced into it and the other 10% have no idea that they are drug trafficking, he says.

Listen to John Wotherspoon in conversation with John Maytham:



Afternoon Drive with John Maytham

OR TAMBO is Africa's narco airport

00:00 / 10:35

Listen to Sean Christie on The Midday Report with Clement Manyathela:



The Midday Report

International airports see rise in drug trafficking via OR Tam

00:00 / 04:10