

How technology can save SA airports and travel industry

By [Roy Alves](#)

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Around the globe, travel and tourism plays a big part in the performance of the economies of countries, as well as in job creation. In fact, for the past six years, the worldwide rate of growth within the travel and tourism sector, has outperformed the growth rate of the global economy, according to a report by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC) entitled [Travel and Tourism: Economic impact 2017 South Africa](#).



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This same report states that the total contribution of travel and tourism to the South African GDP during 2016 was R402.2bn or 9.3% of GDP last year. Furthermore, the travel and tourism industry directly supported 716,500 jobs last year or about 4.6% of total employment.

Over the last year, the performance of this vital sector for the economy has come under threat from local sources. Tourists and local travellers making use of South Africa's largest airport, for instance, has been targeted through ['follow me home' robberies](#), while high-profile heists at the airport have also dented the image of our nation overseas and kept possible tourists away from our shores.

Even South Africa's Police Minister Fikile Mbalula has [admitted](#) that these incidents which involve corrupt police officers are putting travellers as well as our tourist sector in danger. Securing South Africa's airports is going to involve a lot more than more vigilant travellers and more visible policing.



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Securing SA's airports

Perimeter defence protection is the first layer of resistance between the outside world. Airport security personnel must be extra vigilant when inspecting their facility's perimeter.

Airport breaches not only put travellers in danger, they can also be very costly. Time equals money and an intruder who shuts down a runway - or prevents even a single plane from taking off - could cost the airline hundreds of thousands (or even millions) of rands in the form of solution repairs and inspections, lost customers, and fines and court fees. It's crucial to take seriously how well a facility's current perimeter defence is working, and understand how to upgrade it with the latest security solutions if necessary.

It's never easy to secure an airport's perimeter, but it's made even more difficult when officials implement incorrect security protocols and when professionals fail to install the correct perimeter security solutions.

For example, traditional perimeter protection measures - typically analogue solutions or ones that used ground and motion sensors, short distance radar and motion sensitive wires - could not always differentiate between an intruder and a non-threatening animal or person, such as a nearby pedestrian walking close by. As you can imagine, there always existed a real possibility these solutions would falsely alert airport security personnel or, at a minimum, fail to warn employees about threats in a timely manner. This forced officials to follow "breadcrumbs" and piece together disjointed stories well after the fact.

Today, many businesses use network video solutions, which not only provide clean, crisp video footage but are more apt to accurately notify employees when they're needed.

Points to ponder when purchasing network security solutions for airport perimeter protection:

- Unfortunately, many facilities employ solutions that work in isolation, resulting in airport security employees discovering breaches after they've happened. It's imperative to install cameras, solutions and software that work together in harmony.
- Crime doesn't sleep. During early morning or evening, a perimeter is extremely vulnerable to criminals who might use low light as a cloak to secretly breach airports. This can be problematic to security personnel who want or need to identify culprits by the colour of their attire. In this case, it's important to use cameras that use specialised lenses and software so the solutions can detect objects and colour in high resolution and in poor lighting.
- Airport officials who are operating with little financial wiggle room must install the right perimeter protection solution. One that provides a higher degree of detection and tracking capabilities in multiple environments and situations.
- Finally, it's important to consider installing solutions that employees can use remotely. Personnel who can operate a perimeter defence solution on their phone or laptop while in the breakroom sipping their morning coffee suddenly become just as essential to an airport's perimeter protection as those who are observing monitors in a control room.

Protecting an airport's perimeter is difficult. However, by recognising and understanding its complexities, professionals can stay away from using the wrong solutions and instead opt for comprehensive systems that fit their airport's specific needs. By properly protecting our airports and more importantly – travellers and tourists – the sector can go on to thrive and deliver

the maximum boost to the economy that it is capable of and also put a larger dent in the local unemployment figures.

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