



MEDIA STATEMENT

2023/2024 FESTIVE SEASON REPORT

Deputy Commissioner Jane Thupana for Corporate Services,
Deputy Commissioner Major General David Chilembe for Operations,
Assistant Commissioners and Deputy Assistant Commissioners present,
The entire border management community,
Members of the media and South Africa at large,

Good morning,

On Sunday the 3rd of December 2023, we convened you here and presented our festive season plan which was to be implemented from the 6th of December 2023 to the 18th of January 2024. So, today we have reconvened to report on our implementation of that festive season plan which ran for 43 days through December of 2023 when we implemented the exit leg of the plan and January 2024 which focused on the return leg of the plan. As you may recall, we increased our human resource capacity and the operating hours in some selected ports of entry which do not operate on a 24hour basis.

Just to recap, the mandate of the Border Management Authority (BMA) is to facilitate and manage the legitimate movement of people and goods across our 71 ports of entry of which 52 are land, 10 are international airports and 9 are seaports. Please note that our land ports of entry are now 52 after the recent decommissioning of Zanzibar port of entry at our border with Botswana. The work of the BMA covers areas of immigration, port health, environmental and agricultural biosecurity, including access control and general law enforcement at the ports of entry and border law enforcement areas.

During the implementation of this festive plan, the BMA collaborated with a multiplicity of law enforcement stakeholders such as the South African Police Service, South African Revenue Service, South African National Defence Force, Cross Border Road Transport Agency, Immigration Inspectorate of the Department of Home Affairs and various other traffic authorities across the country. Therefore, on behalf of the Border Technical Committee (BTC) of Directors General, and the Inter-Ministerial Consultative Committee (IMCC) on border management, allow me to present the 2023/2024 festive season report on border operations.

Let's start on immigration matters, as the BMA we managed to facilitate the legitimate movement of about 5 096 288 travellers across our 71 ports of entry between 6 Dec 2023 to 18 Jan 2024. This number represent an increase of 1 million travellers compared to the 2022/2023 number of 4 million travellers. However, this number of travellers is still 1 million less to the pre-Covid average numbers of about 6 million travellers. In facilitating the movement of these travellers were processed over 216 594 private vehicles, 21 502 mini-bus taxis, 6 443 buses and 55 765 trucks through our movement control system. Further, we processed over 13 050 aircrafts through our international airports and about 709 vessels across at our seaports. In addition, about 407 vessels were processed for crew changes through the off-port limit mechanism (which means crew changes without a vessel docking at port) in our maritime environment. In this festive period, OR Tambo International Airport facilitated the majority of travellers at about 993 759, followed by Lebombo land port of entry to Mozambique at 755 066, followed by Beitbridge land port of entry to Zimbabwe at 745 563 travellers. Compared to the 2022/2023 festive period, ORTIA registered an increase of 22% in traveller volume, Lebombo registered a 24% increase while Beit Bridge registered a 25% increase.

Although our primary job as the BMA is to facilitate the legitimate movement of people, we also have to deal with individuals who attempt to illegitimately move through our ports of entry and the border law enforcement areas. As such, in this festive period we were able to detect about 15 924 individuals who were attempting to enter into South Africa without requisite documentation through our ports and the vulnerable segments of the borderline. In this instance, after intercepting them, we took their fingerprints,

declared them undesirable and banned them from re-entering South African for a period of 5 years and keep the record in the Biometric Movement Control System and got them deported. The majority of these individuals were intercepted at and around Lebombo land port of entry at 6 808, followed by Beit Bridge land port of entry at 1 891. Further, about 6 455 travellers were denied entry into South Africa for being undesirable, these include individuals who committed crimes in other countries and appear in the INTERPOL red list. In addition, about 4 626 travellers were refused entry for being inadmissible. These include individuals with invalid passports, fraudulent visas or just failed to produce valid yellow fever certificates while travelling from yellow fever endemic countries. Therefore, in the 43 days of this festive period, when adding the numbers of undocumented (15 924), the undesirables (6 455) and those that were inadmissibles (4 626), it is a total of 27 005 individuals who were deported while attempting to enter South Africa illegally. During this period, we observed an increased detection rate of the undesirables and this is due to increased utilisation of the Biometric Movement Control Systems (BMCS) after the Department of Home Affairs increased its roll out across the ports of entry. As a contemporary movement control system, the BMCS allows our officials to capture the biometric data of travellers.

Despite these interceptions, as the Border Management Authority, we remain concerned about some conveyancers, meaning public transporters who continue to consciously transport illegal migrants across our ports of entry and border law enforcement areas. During this period, we imposed about 98 administrative fines to various conveyancers especially bus companies to the value of R3 540 000 for transporting illegal migrants at the cost of R15 000 per person as per section 50 (3) of the Immigration Act of 2002. At the same time, we were able to collect about R 9, 8 million in outstanding fines from about 25 bus companies. Further, we also held a meeting with about 30 bus companies which transport people in and out of South Africa and implored them to stop transporting illegal migrants into South Africa. In this regard, they have committed to ensure that valid passports would be required from all travelers when procuring cross border tickets and for entering into the bus on travel day. We further engaged the leadership of Cross Border Road Transport Agency (CBRTA) and agreed that bus companies should comply with the conditions of their cross-border permits, otherwise, such permits would be withdrawn. In this regard, we would like to call upon all law-abiding conveyancers to partner with the officials of BMA

and expose those perennial law breakers. As the BMA, we would like to commend the sterling work of the law enforcement authorities in the neighboring countries and other parts of the continent who continue to intercept, arrest and deport illegal migrants in their territories destined for South Africa.

On general law enforcement matters working with other law enforcement authorities, the Border Guards working have been able to arrest about 246 criminal elements and confiscated about 4 tube boats which were used by facilitators to aid illegal migrants from crossing rivers into South Africa. In addition, various types of illicit drugs were confiscated that include 1.4 kg of chrysal meth, commonly known as tik, 3,5 kg dagga, 4-gram heroin, 24 mandrax tablets, 10 tablets of dapoxetine. The Border Guards also participated in over 451 roadblocks which were conducted at the requisite corridors within the 10 km radius from the ports of entry. A further 4 638 foot and vehicle patrols were conducted across all modalities in both ports of entry and the vulnerable segments of the borderline.

On the protection of South Africa from Agricultural and Environmental bio-security threat, we managed to intercept and seize a number of unauthorised consignments of Crayfish, canned meat products, infested tinned gammon ham, wheat beer, Hazelnut paste, hatching poultry eggs, packs of water and various other plants and animals such as canines. In this regard, we would like to commend the majority of travellers for headed our call to avoid bringing alien invasive species as well as foreign pests associated with plants, animal products and other regulated goods into South Africa. In this regard, it should be noted that the importation of plants and or animals and or their respective products is highly regulated and requires the requisite sanitary and phytosanitary certifications by the relevant government departments for presentation at the ports of entry.

On Port Health matters, our team of health specialists screened about 1 497 480 travellers across our ports of entry for various infectious and or communicable diseases. As already indicated above, amongst the inadmissibles, 418 of them were travellers without valid yellow fever certificates as a requirement for travellers from yellow fever endemic countries. In this festive period, our health specialists attended to 361 patients with varied medical emergencies across our 71 ports of entry.

Following the outbreak of cholera in Zimbabwe, Malawi and some parts of Zambia, the BMA port health team intensified its screening activities at the Beit Bridge border post. As such, a case of cholera was detected at Beit Bridge and was handed over to the Limpopo health authorities for further examination and treatment. Further, a total of 2 394 persons were cleared and granted a clean bill of health in various vessels at our maritime environment. Therefore, in order to protect South Africa from any kind of microbiological, chemical, communicable and or infectious diseases, including any kind of physical environmental hazards, all returning travellers presenting signs of illness or symptoms should visit their nearest health facilities or their private doctors for consultation with the intention to fully disclose their travel history.

Despite all these efforts, as the BMA we would like to acknowledge the outcry of South Africans on the challenges associated with illegal migration into South Africa. As such, we have started intensive conversations with the various stakeholders including our neighbouring countries to help us in addressing this scourge. At this point, we would like to encourage all South African in line with section 5(c) of the Border Management Authority Act to continue to engage with us on all matters relating to border management. Despite the end of the 2023/2024 festive period, as the BMA we have put measures in place to sustain our intensified border operations and consolidate our border management functions going into the future. From this operation, we are already putting plans in place for the management of the upcoming Good Friday festive period in the coming few weeks.

In closing, the BMA leadership would like to appreciate the cooperation received from the various law enforcement authorities in South Africa, those from our neighbouring countries and some from the other parts of the world in this past festive period. Despite our limited resource, we would like to appreciate the work of our immigration specialists, health specialists, including the environmental and agricultural bio-security experts for the great work done during this past festive season. We would also like to thank our team of Border Guards and Coastal Guards who continue to do their best in the mist of challenges and complexities associated with border law enforcement work. As we continue to do this work, we do believe that South Africa would rally behind us

and assist us to improve our capacity and enrol the requisite technologies required for effective border management.

I thank you.

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