



**Summary of Proceedings
Public Hearing**

Held on Wednesday January 6th, 2021 from 10:25 a.m. to 12:37 p.m.

Venue: Virtually Via the Zoom Platform

Subject Matter: An inquiry into the health and safety practices and arrangements of the Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT) in light of COVID- 19 restrictions.

Objectives of the Inquiry

The objectives of the inquiry are as follows:

- 1. To assess the health and safety policies, systems and protocols implemented by the AATT to mitigate the risks associated with operating the country's two (2) international airports.**
- 2. To assess the risk management strategies employed by the AATT in the implementation of its Covid-19 plans.**
- 3. To examine the adequacy of AATT's human resources to implement the identified Covid-19 policies, systems and protocols.**
- 4. To assess the gaps in AATT's Covid-19 strategy.**

Committee Members

The following Members were present:

Dr. Varma Deyalsingh	Chairman
Mr. Esmond Forde, MP	Vice- Chairman
Mrs. Lisa Morris – Julien, MP	Member
Mrs. Ayanna Webster – Roy, MP	Member
Ms. Khadijah Ameen, MP	Member
Mr. Nigel De Freitas	Member

*Joint Select Committee on Local Authorities, Service Commissions and Statutory Authorities
(including the THA)*

Mrs. Renuka Sagrarsingh-Sooklal	Member
Ms. Jayanti Lutchmedial	Member

Witnesses Who Appeared

The following officials appeared before the Committee:

Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT)

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| • Mr. Hayden Newton | General Manager |
| • Mr. Kurt Menal | Deputy General Manager Operations |
| • Mrs. Pamela Scotland-Benjamin | Deputy General Manager Operations (Tobago) |
| • Mr. Albert Griffith | Deputy General Manager Security |
| • Ms. Carmela Wallace | Financial Controller |

Ministry of Health

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| • Dr. Roshan Parasram | Chief Medical Officer |
| • Dr. Osafo Fraser | County Medical Officer of Health – St. George East |
| • Dr. Tiffany Hoyte | County Medical Officer of Health - Tobago |

Ministry of Works and Transport

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| • Ms. Dhanmattee Ramdath | Permanent Secretary (Ag.) |
| • Mr. Rabindranath Heeralal | Director of Environmental Health and Safety |

Key Issues Discussed

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the **Airports Authority of Trinidad and Tobago (AATT)**:

1. Though the borders are closed, Trinidad and Tobago's airports are still operational for cargo flights, domestic flights and repatriation flights. This requires staff to report to work as usual;
2. Increased surveillance of the A.N.R Robinson Airport has been implemented to enforce compliance with Covid-19 protocols such as mask-wearing and social distancing among patrons;
3. Caribbean Airlines staff assigned to repatriation flights are based in Trinidad and Tobago;
4. The Trinidad and Tobago Civil Aviation Authority is the organisation responsible for monitoring the AATT's compliance with international regulations and protocols;
5. Electrostatic fogging machines have been acquired for both airports. AATT staff are responsible for operating these machines;
6. Since December 1, 2020, the processing of repatriated passengers has moved from the tarmac to the terminal building. The passengers are processed at the Immigration and Customs Departments. Those who require state quarantine are transported by the Ministry of National Security via bus from the airport. All areas utilised by incoming passengers are sanitised after each flight;
7. The baggage claim area has been outfitted with floor markers.
8. At present, the majority of repatriated passengers arrive via Caribbean Airlines while some arrive via chartered flights.
9. There are specific protocols implemented for sanitising cargo areas.
10. Critical projects for 2021 will focus on the AATT's Covid-19 health and safety response.

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the **Ministry of Health (MOH)**:

1. The presence of a new strain of Covid-19 may prompt increased health and safety protocols at the airport.
2. Frontline staff within the airport (including Port Health officers, Immigration Officers and Customs Officers) will be amongst the priority recipients for the Covid-19 vaccine.

3. An extended quarantine period may be necessary to mitigate against the new strain of the virus entering Trinidad and Tobago via international travel.
4. In the event of a confirmed Covid-19 case, the MOH considers passengers seated in the two rows in front of and behind the suspected case and those seated beside the individual as close contacts.
5. The MOH will liaise with the relevant airline(s) for the flight manifest to make contact with those passengers deemed to have been at greatest risk of exposure.
6. The MOH monitors all other passengers on that flight for 14 days. They would not be considered at a high risk of infection if they were not seated close to the positive case. In the event that the COVID-19-positive case moved significantly around the aircraft, all passengers on that flight would need to be quarantined.
7. The mandatory negative PCR test result 72 hours before departing for Trinidad and Tobago has lowered the chances of COVID-19 transmission via airline travel.
8. New monitoring methods for returning nationals /passengers? such as tracking bracelets and mobile tracking applications are being considered.
9. The MOH created the position of Port Health Officer and filled 18 of the 50 advertised posts. These officers will be responsible for both the airports and seaports. They will replace the older Health Control Officers, who will now return to the Vector Control Division and will be fill the vacant positions.
10. There are twenty-one (21) Health Control Officers at the Piarco International Airport who work on a rotational basis spread across three (3) shifts per day (6am-2pm, 2pm-10pm and 10pm-6am).
11. Fourteen (14) Health Control Officers under the Service Commissions are presently employed at the A.N.R. Robinson International Airport. An additional fourteen (14) Port Health Control Officers will be hired on contract.
12. Since the closure of the borders, there has been no need to use the Port Isolation Room as there have been no arriving passengers with Covid-19 symptoms.
13. In the initial stages of the pandemic, the isolation room was used to interview passengers arriving from high risk countries.

The following are the main issues highlighted during discussions with the **Ministry of Works and Transport (MOWT)**:

1. In the absence of revenue associated with regular passenger traffic, the MOWT will be seeking Cabinet Approval for additional funding to cover AATT's recurrent expenditure.

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The hearing can be viewed on our YouTube channel via the following link:
<https://youtu.be/eBGmGtwGqHc>

Contact the Committee's Secretary

You may contact the Committee's Secretary at jsclascsa@tparliament.orgsa or 624-7275 Ext. 2277/2627/2282

*Committees Unit
January 27, 2021*