

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY

QUESTION NUMBER 2001 [NW2385E]

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2001. Mr A M Figlan (DA) to ask the Minister of Finance:

(a) What informed the decision to reduce the number of airports that have custom services, (b) how many airports in each province no longer have custom services and (c) by what number was the staff reduced at each of the airports?

NW2385E

REPLY:

- a) The SARS Commissioner may in terms of the Customs and Excise Act 91 of 1964 prescribe places to be customs and excise airports through which goods may be imported or exported. The discretion of the Commissioner in designating airports as customs and excise airports is however limited to those airports designated by Cabinet as international airports.

In 1997 Cabinet reduced the number of international airports in order to facilitate improvements to border control. Border control management was enhanced by concentrating the scarce resources of the State to a limited number of ports of entry and thus being able to better manage the risks involved. Inter-governmental consultations between government departments having a border control mandate being the Department of Transport, SARS, South African Police Services, Department of Home Affairs and the South African National Defence Force preceded Cabinet's decision.

The ten international airports prescribed as customs and excise airports are Braam Fisher International Airport, Cape Town International Airport, King Shaka International Airport, OR Tambo International Airport, Kruger Mpumalanga International Airport, Lanseria International Airport, Pilansberg International Airport, Polokwane International Airport, Port Elizabeth International Airports, Upington International Airport.

It should be noted that aircraft pilots requiring clearance at the above-mentioned airports (except OR Tambo International Airport, and in respect of scheduled international flights at Cape Town and King Shaka International Airports) at which no resident customs and excise officers are stationed, are required to give at least 12 hours' notice of the time and date of their arrival or departure to the customs and excise office at the places mentioned, in order that arrangements may be made for the attendance of the necessary officers.

- b) The Grand Central, Messina, Komatipoort, Nelspruit, Rand, Wonderboom, Richards Bay and Virginia airports no longer have customs services in line with Cabinet's decision to limit the international airports to ten.
- c) The SARS Customs staff complement were not reduced given that the service rendered by Customs to these airports were on an ad hoc basis where staff were temporarily deployed to that airport from the nearest Customs and Excise office to clear the flight. No permanent Customs presence was deployed at these airports.