



WE FIND OUT HOW A MAJOR CARIBBEAN TRANSPORT HUB HAS RECOVERED FROM A DEVASTATING HURRICANE TO REACH NEW HEIGHTS.

A BOLD RECOVERY

Saint Martin's largest airport, Princess Juliana International Airport, plays a pivotal role acting as a hub for other airports in the region.

It's a very modern airport with flights from major cities, including Europe, Canada, South America, Caribbean and the US," explains Ravi Daryanani, the CFO and Acting CEO for the airport. "We have daily flights, offered by 21 carriers providing direct service to 25 markets, as of today."

The crucial role that Princess Juliana plays in the air travel infrastructure of the region was disrupted in September last year, when the island of Sint Maarten/Saint Martin was among the places severely hit by Hurricane Irma, rendering the airport completely inoperative.

Hurricane Irma was the strongest storm on record to ever hit the open Atlantic region. An extremely powerful and catastrophic hurricane that crossed Cape Verde, with the strongest maximum sustained winds since Hurricane Wilma in 2015, Irma was a tragedy for everyone in its path.

Irma hit St. Maarten with winds of 182 miles per hour, ripping off huge sections of roof from the newly built Princess Juliana International Airport terminal. The storm cast debris across the airport's runway, caused severe

heavy flooding and water damage and completely destroyed the airport's runway and taxi lights. The hurricane also obliterated the airport's entire perimeter fence and caused sustain structural damage to all four of the airport's jet bridges. But Irma was only the beginning of the airport's troubles, with Hurricane Jose and Hurricane Maria following it over the next two weeks, unleashing a downpour of heavy rain onto Princess Juliana's damaged roof and into the flooded rooms underneath. Not surprisingly, the water damage was soon joined by mould beginning to grow on the airport's interior walls.

By December the airport had been declared a public health hazard and suffered \$76 million in damages and losses, even that only a fraction of the £3 billion Irma had caused as a whole. It was the most devastating Atlantic hurricane since records were first kept in 1851.

As well as suffering horrendous damage from the hurricane itself, airport was also unable to function as a commercial and passenger terminal for weeks after the storm, as it was taken over by the Royal Dutch Marines, and accepted only military and relief flights >>

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The beach at Maho Bay is one of the world's premier planespotting destinations. Airplanes landing at the Princess Juliana Airport fly over beachgoers.



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EXECUJET IN ST MAARTEN

ALL SET FOR THE CARIBBEAN SUMMER

ExecuJet is one of the world's leading business aviation organisations and is part of the Luxaviation Group, the second largest private jet operator across the globe. In the Caribbean, ExecuJet provides a full range of services including aircraft parking, immigration and customs clearing, car rental and hotel reservations, and private air to yacht transfers to nearby islands.

In June this year, the company celebrated the two year anniversary of its fixed based operation (FBO) at St Maarten's Princess Juliana International Airport (PJIA), a key location for those flying by private jet to the exclusive mega-yacht destinations of Anguilla, St. Barths and St. Kitts.

When ExecuJet acquired the FBO, its first in the Caribbean region, from TLC Aviation back in 2016, no one could have predicted the challenges and opportunities the next two years would bring. The devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma on St Maarten and across the Caribbean islands in September 2017 vastly impacted every business operating on the island and at the airport – and ExecuJet was no exception.

HURRICANE IRMA

While all ExecuJet staff were safe when the hurricane hit, the damage to the facility was extensive. Patrick Hansen, CEO of the Luxaviation Group, flew out to help distribute supplies and assist with recovery in the aftermath, and said of the event: "Having personally witnessed the devastation I am leading the Luxaviation Group in pledging to assist and support our colleagues, so their lives can be rebuilt. In the meantime, we will look to the future and hope to reconstruct what has been lost."

It appears ExecuJet and the wider Luxaviation Group has been fulfilling its promises to its staff and customers. Just one month on since the Category 5 hurricane hit St Maarten, ExecuJet resumed operations. The milestone moment came when FBO staff successfully handled an ultra-long-range Dassault Falcon 8X aircraft on 10 October 2017.

Steven Kong, managing director of ExecuJet's St Maarten FBO, hinted at the time that the facility would be returning to full strength "very soon", saying: "I am immensely proud of the team here in St Maarten. They have worked tirelessly to get our FBO fully operational as soon as possible, while also attending to humanitarian and relief flights during the crisis. The island is rebuilding, hotels and resorts continue to reopen, and we're looking forward to welcoming customers back to this beautiful part of the world."

BACK TO STRENGTH

A year on, and although the FBO is not yet operating at capacity, it is on a steady path back to recovery. The facility is currently also supporting commercial passenger handling for PJIA, after the roof to the airport's main passenger terminal was lost, leading to severe water damage inside the building. Reconstruction of the main terminal is the primary focus of restoration efforts at the site, and it won't be long before ExecuJet's customers will once again enjoy the sole use of its passenger lounge.

Kong says: "Every company at the airport is contributing to bringing the site back up to full capacity, and the ExecuJet team is assisting in every way we can. We've volunteered our FBO terminal to government authorities, such as customs and immigration, but we've maintained the use of our primary offices and rooms. This means that, although the airport is still being developed, our customers can expect the same level of personalised care and service they associate with ExecuJet when they visit the Caribbean."

TOURISM REBOUNDS

The high season for Caribbean tourism begins in mid-November, during the Thanksgiving holiday period in the US, and lasts through to the end of



April. Staff at ExecuJet's FBO are cautiously optimistic for a resurgence in visitor numbers.

Kong notes: "While St Maarten is still largely rebuilding, several of the island's key holiday resorts are planning on opening for the 2018 winter season. Alternatively, visitors can use the ExecuJet FBO as a base before continuing on by sea or smaller island hoppers to alternative destinations such as St. Kitts & Nevis or Montserrat, which were less affected by the hurricane." Another favourite amongst high-end travellers, Anguilla, is relaunching many of its top resorts in November, spelling a sunnier outlook for the region's tourist trade.

A GLOBAL SUPPORT NETWORK

In addition to its St Maarten FBO in the Caribbean, ExecuJet has operations in five more regions – Africa, Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East – embracing a workforce of more than 1,000 experienced staff. In partnership with Paragon Aviation GroupTM, it has 55 FBOs worldwide, 27 of which are managed by ExecuJet. The company has successfully advanced to IS-BAO Stage III certification from the International Business Aviation Council, proving its dedication to the highest standards of safety and service.

Being part of a global FBO network has its advantages, particularly in times of crisis, says Ettore Poggi, global FBO director for the Luxaviation Group. He comments: "When a major incident occurs, being part of a network is essential for swift and total recovery. With Hurricane Irma, relief aircraft were immediately dispatched from elsewhere in ExecuJet's network, bringing supplies and aid to those in need."

For pilots, passengers and crews, the assurance that FBO staff are upholding the highest global safety standards is part of the appeal when choosing a facility that's part of a network. All ExecuJet FBOs meet NATA Safety First Standards, and many have been accredited by IS-BAH (the International Standard for Business Aircraft Handling). According to Poggi: "Network FBOs are better able to implement these industry-leading standards, as consistency can be maintained across the board, regardless of location. For ExecuJet customers, this gives a valuable indication of the level of service they can expect at any one of our 27 FBOs worldwide."

READY FOR SUCCESS

Following the dramatic rebuilding efforts taking place across the Caribbean, the bucket-list destination is once again top of many travellers' lists. Those that head to the islands this holiday season can enjoy ExecuJet's industry-leading customer service at the fully reconstructed St Maarten FBO, certain of a warm welcome from staff that are delighted to be getting back to business.

Find out more and visit us at: www.execujet.com

PRINCESS JULIANA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



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Ravi Daryanani,
CFO and Acting CEO

to the island. The Dutch and American governments, working with various airlines and non-governmental organisations, were bringing in over three hundred thousand pounds of food, water, tents, tarps and hygiene products in an effort to help the island get back on its feet.

The effects of the hurricane were devastating, and for Princess Juliana International Airport the consequences have resulted in a dual challenge. First, the airport needs to be rebuilt, but secondly, the airport needs to remain functional despite the damage it has taken, even throughout the reconstruction process.

But this isn't the first time a hurricane has hit St Maarten, with Hurricane Luis causing tremendous damage in 1995. The

island recovered from that, and they're ready to do so again.

A TIME TO REBUILD

"I would say the biggest challenge is trying to get people to understand you can't rebuild an airport like you rebuild a house," Daryanani explains.

"Everyone is so focused on saying the airport should be rebuilt by a certain time, but we're trying to get people to understand the processes we go through. You don't just put a roof on an airport without having a proper structural assessment done first. These things take time. If you want to build, you want to make sure you're choosing the right people, getting quality of work, and that has been the big challenge, to juggle the

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PRINCESS JULIANA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

“THE ONE THING WE HAVE TO BE MINDFUL OF IS WE HAVE HOTELS THAT HAVE ALSO BEEN SEVERELY DAMAGED, WHICH AFFECTS THE ABILITY OF PASSENGERS TO FIND SOMEWHERE TO STAY”

to press the reset button and think about what you want you to do moving forward.”

ONE-FOR-ALL

More important than any buildings hit by Hurricane Irma are the people whose lives were upended by the disaster, and Daryanani has nothing but praise for the dedicated airport staff who have kept the facility running even while their own homes have been in turmoil.

“Our staff is very resilient, very dedicated,” he says. “Obviously everyone has their own personal issues that they’re dealing with. There are people who still have damage to their homes, but we have a resilient and loyal staff, most of them have been here for years. There’s a mixture of people who’ve been here 20 or 30 years. The staff shows up for work every day, recognizing and understanding the difficulties we’re facing. They’re working very hard. We’ve had to shuffle people into other positions for now but everyone’s just grateful to have a job at this point. We’ve avoided making any cuts to staff whatsoever.”

Despite the challenges ahead, Princess Juliana International Airport isn’t just working to put things back the way they were before Irma. They want to bring the airport back smarter, bigger and better than ever to withstand the challenges of the future.

“I think we have to build a stronger, wind resistant airport. We’re looking at a building that can withstand 185 miles per hour plus winds. We’re looking at how the structure will be inside, the windows, taking safety into consideration at every level and turning the terminal into a smart facility,” Daryanani says. “And also looking at what the weather is becoming. It’s been a huge game changer for us. We’ve not been hit by anything major in 22 years, so when a storm like this comes along you’re shook up, but it’s also a time

High Aerial view of the island of St. Maarten on a sunny day

“IRMA WAS ONLY THE BEGINNING OF THE AIRPORT’S TROUBLES, WITH HURRICANE JOSE AND MARIA FOLLOWING IT OVER THE NEXT TWO WEEKS”

perceptions and expectations of the people working for the airport and using the airport.”

At the same time, actual reconstruction has faced further administrative hurdles.

“It’s taking us longer to rebuild in the sense that we can’t rebuild until we’ve settled our insurance claim,” Daryanani says. “But the plans are there, the work has started, everything has been demolished. The removal of the damaged interior walls is almost near completion. The structure is fine, it withstood Irma, and right now we’re putting on a new roof.”

In the meantime, the airport is open for commercial activity.

“What we have done is open a temporary departure and arrival pavilion, so the flow of passengers has at least a sense of normalcy and comfort,” Daryanani says. “If all goes as planned, and barring any severe weather, construction in the terminal will begin mid October 2018 and is expected to take about a year and a half until the complete terminal is ready; however, the rebuilding is being done in phases, so we can start providing a better service to customers, handlers, airlines and others, as each phase is completed.”

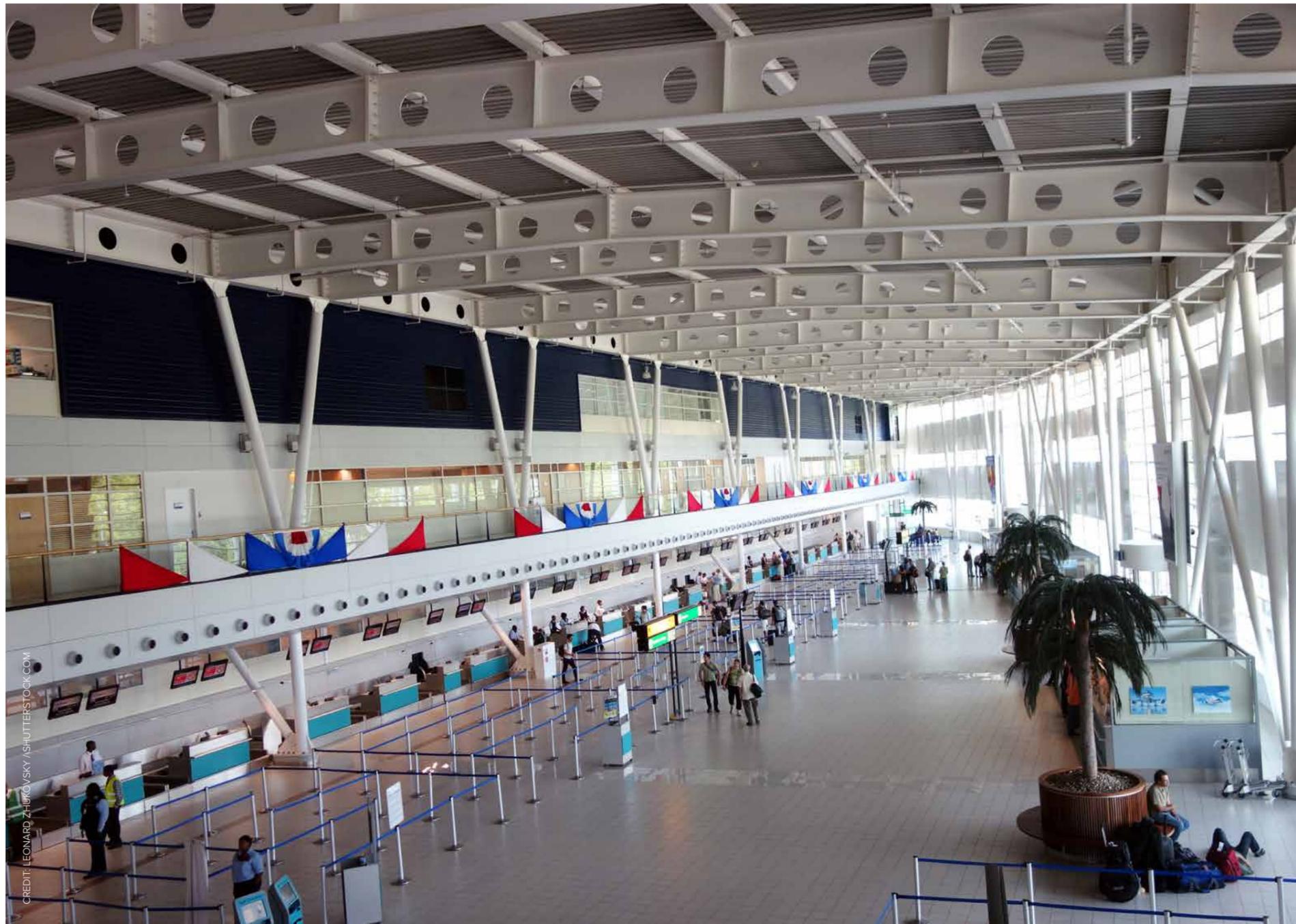
Low flying airplanes landing near Maho Beach on island of St Maarten

Of course, it’s important to remember that the damage inflicted by Irma didn’t just affect the airport.

“The one thing we have to be mindful of is we have hotels that have also been severely damaged, which affects the ability of passengers to find somewhere to stay,” Daryanani says. “Everything that’s happening is happening hand in hand, and so it’s all going to take a while.”



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PRINCESS JULIANA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT



BY DECEMBER THE AIRPORT HAD BEEN DECLARED A PUBLIC HEALTH HAZARD AND SUFFERED \$76 MILLION IN DAMAGES AND LOSSES

geographic location in the Caribbean. As a result, its airport, Princess Juliana International Airport, serves as the preferred hub for many in the region, given its network. Prior to hurricane Irma we recorded passenger movements more than 1.8 million annually, so we will be building smarter, bigger, better and stronger," said Daryanani.

airlines are already preparing themselves for a new influx of passengers, with American Airlines recently announcing an increased seat capacity on their daily flight from Miami, putting a 160-passenger capacity 737-800 aircraft on their Miami International Airport – Princess Juliana International Airport route. The airline is also adding a daily nonstop flight from its hub at Charlotte Douglas International Airport to St. Maarten from the 4th of November this year, alongside a second daily nonstop from Miami that will begin on December 19th. Princess Juliana International Airport has a lot of work to do, but the future is looking bright.

Indeed, as of press time

“PRIOR TO HURRICANE IRMA WE RECORDED PASSENGER MOVEMENTS MORE THAN 1.8 MILLION ANNUALLY, SO WE WILL BE BUILDING SMARTER, BIGGER, BETTER AND STRONGER”

“Our country partners depend on us and so do their economies. Tourists are returning and so are the airlines, which is proof that we still connect the Caribbean to the Globe.” ☺

A critical element of both the reconstruction and continuing work of the airport has been communication, and it's one Daryanani takes very seriously.

“We have an internal newsletter, that's our number one channel and keeps our staff abreast of what's going on. But we also have our division and directors' and managers' meetings, with those key people that then relate these messages to their respective staff members,” he says. “We also hold monthly meetings with airlines and baggage handlers,

“THERE'S A MIXTURE OF PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN HERE 20 OR 30 YEARS. THE STAFF SHOWS UP FOR WORK EVERY DAY, RECOGNIZING AND UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFICULTIES WE'RE FACING”

and we're also having meetings with the hotel associations and the tourist offices, including those from the French side. Another key stakeholder is L'Esperance Airport, the smaller, yet significant airport on the French side of the island. So, I think that we've set up a very good communication web by just having these meetings and making sure everyone's aware of what's happening every step of the way.”

It's been a challenging year, and there is still so much to do, but Daryanani is optimistic about

⬆ Princess Juliana International Airport terminal

the future. New Finance Minister Perry Geerlings has stated that one of the government's main priorities is getting Princess Juliana International Airport and its neighbouring hotels “up and running as soon as possible”, and the International Monetary Fund has stated that recovery in both areas will be essential for the St. Maarten economy.

“Let me put it this way, Saint Martin is very important given its