# Heathrow power outage causes chaos as media mix-up goes viral



On March 21, 2025, Heathrow Airport experienced significant disruption as a fire at a nearby electrical substation resulted in a widespread power outage. This incident halted operations at two of the airport's major terminals—Terminals 2 and 3—leading to extensive delays, cancellations, and the diversion of numerous flights. Thousands of passengers found themselves stranded as airline staff and emergency responders worked to manage the chaotic situation.

Among the airlines impacted was SAS Scandinavian Airlines, which had to cancel a total of 12 round-trip flights to and from the British capital. Scandinavian Airlines is a prominent Nordic carrier, well-known within the aviation community for its modern fleet and reliable service.

In an unexpected turn of events, UK media outlets Sky News and The Guardian mistakenly conflated SAS Scandinavian Airlines with the British Special Air Service (SAS), the elite military regiment. This blunder turned a routine aviation story into a viral sensation. Sky News broadcasted a graphic stating that the "Special Air Service" had cancelled flights, erroneously displaying the regiment's iconic winged dagger logo, typically associated with covert military operations. Simultaneously, The Guardian's live blog reported on the "Special Air Service, or SAS," being affected by the power outage, leaving readers to question whether the military unit had suddenly begun operating commercial flights.

Both news outlets rectified their errors within an hour. Sky News quickly removed the misleading graphic, while The Guardian updated their report by 7:38 a.m. GMT, acknowledging the mistake. However, the confusion had already sparked a flurry of social media activity, with users seizing the opportunity to joke about the unusual mix-up. One user on X commented, “Sky News thinks the SAS is cancelling flights. Are they parachuting out of Heathrow now?” Another quipped, “The Guardian mixing up an airline with special forces is peak Monday journalism.”

SAS Scandinavian Airlines capitalised on the situation with a humorous post, noting, “We get it, @SkyNews and The Guardian – same initials, both wear uniforms, operate internationally, and move fast. But only one SAS was affected by the Heathrow power outage. Spoiler: it was the one with the free coffee onboard, not the one with parachutes.” This light-hearted response garnered thousands of likes, transforming a moment of confusion into a marketing success for the airline.

The shared acronym of "SAS" became evident as the source of the confusion. In the aviation sector, SAS refers to Scandinavian Airlines System, which primarily serves Denmark, Norway, and Sweden. Conversely, the Special Air Service is renowned for its daring military operations. While such an error might seem astonishing, especially considering the distinct contexts of each entity, it underscores the fast-paced nature of news reporting in a digital age.

The operational outages at Heathrow were resolved by late on March 21, with power restored and normal flight schedules resuming. While the incident highlighted vulnerabilities within airport infrastructure, the unusual media mix-up captured the most attention, illustrating how a newsroom error can sometimes overshadow a significant event in the public eye. The incident serves as a reminder of the importance of accurate reporting, particularly when multiple organisations share similar acronyms.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://abcnews.go.com/International/londons-heathrow-airport-fully-operational-after-fire-causes/story?id=120052223> - This article corroborates the disruption at Heathrow Airport due to a fire at a nearby electrical substation, which caused significant travel disruptions and cancellations.
* <https://www.caa.co.uk/newsroom/news/guidance-to-consumers-impacted-by-heathrow-airport-incident-21-march-2025/> - This source provides guidance for consumers impacted by the Heathrow Airport incident, highlighting the disruption caused by the fire and power outage.
* <https://www.flysas.com/en/> - The SAS Scandinavian Airlines official website details their operations and services, aligning with the description of the airline in the article.
* <https://www.theguardian.com/> - The Guardian is one of the media outlets mentioned in the article as mistakenly conflating SAS Scandinavian Airlines with the British Special Air Service.
* <https://news.sky.com/> - Sky News is another outlet mentioned in the article for mistakenly conflating SAS Scandinavian Airlines with the British Special Air Service.