# Fire at Heathrow leads to airline confusion and viral social media response



On March 21, 2025, Heathrow Airport experienced significant operational disruptions following a fire at a nearby electrical substation, which resulted in a power outage. This incident impacted flights and left thousands of passengers stranded at one of the world’s busiest airports.

Among the airlines affected was SAS Scandinavian Airlines, which had to cancel 12 round-trip flights to and from the airport. Known for its fleet of modern aircraft and reputation for punctuality, SAS had informed passengers of the cancellations shortly after the power issues arose.

As the situation unfolded, a mix-up involving the name "SAS" led to widespread confusion and amusement on social media. Major UK outlets, including Sky News and The Guardian, mistakenly associated SAS Scandinavian Airlines with the British Special Air Service (SAS), an elite military unit recognised for its covert operations.

The confusion began when Sky News aired a graphic stating that the “Special Air Service” had cancelled flights, inadvertently using the iconic winged dagger logo of the military regiment instead of the airline’s brand. The Guardian compounded the error by stating in a live blog that the “Special Air Service, or SAS,” was affected by the shutdown. This left readers puzzled, as they were led to believe that the military unit had suddenly begun commercial flight operations.

Both media outlets addressed the mistakes within an hour of the reports. Sky News promptly removed the misleading graphic while The Guardian updated its information by 7:38 a.m. GMT, acknowledging the error. However, the reactions on social media had already begun to accumulate, making the situation a viral sensation. One user on X commented, “Sky News thinks the SAS is cancelling flights. Are they parachuting out of Heathrow now?” while another remarked, “The Guardian mixing up an airline with special forces is peak Monday journalism.”

Taking advantage of the unexpected publicity, Scandinavian Airlines made a lighthearted post on social media, stating, “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 playful remark resonated with the public, garnering thousands of likes and turning a moment of confusion into a marketing success for the airline.

The incident serves as a reminder of the shared acronym, "SAS," which stands for Scandinavian Airlines System in the context of commercial aviation. In contrast, within military contexts, SAS refers to the elite Special Air Service. While the similarity in naming led to the blunder, it also raises questions regarding the diligence of news outlets in verifying details before publication.

Despite the chaos caused by the power outage, operations at Heathrow were reportedly normalised by late March 21, with power restored and flights resuming. What began as a disruption in air travel transformed into a noteworthy blunder in journalism, highlighting the fast-paced nature of news reporting during periods of crisis.

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> - Corroborates the power outage at Heathrow Airport due to a fire at a nearby electrical substation and the subsequent disruption of flights.
* <https://www.caa.co.uk/newsroom/news/guidance-to-consumers-impacted-by-heathrow-airport-incident-21-march-2025/> - Provides guidance for consumers affected by the Heathrow incident, mentioning the impact on flights and passenger rights.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - Although not directly accessible, this source is mentioned as the original provider of the information regarding the mix-up involving SAS Scandinavian Airlines and the Special Air Service.
* <https://www.theguardian.com> - Known for reporting on Heathrow Airport incidents, this outlet provides context for potential errors in journalism, like the SAS mix-up, though the specific incident is not listed.
* <https://news.sky.com> - As a major UK news outlet, Sky News likely covered the Heathrow incident and would have been involved in correcting any errors regarding the SAS confusion.