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## Minister Rules Out Malicious Activity in UK Air Travel Disruption

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Transport Secretary Heidi Alexander has stated there is no evidence of any malicious or cyber-related activity behind the radar failure that caused major disruption to UK air travel on 30 July. The incident, which briefly suspended air traffic control operations, is being treated as an isolated technical fault.

The failure originated at the National Air Traffic Services (NATS) control center in Swanwick, where a radar system glitch caused data screens to stop displaying accurate flight information. As a precaution, NATS temporarily suspended automated data processing, prompting delays and cancellations across key airports including Heathrow, Gatwick, Manchester, and Edinburgh.

Although the technical issue was resolved within 20 minutes using a backup system, flight schedules continued to suffer through the following day. Heathrow alone saw at least 16 flight cancellations on Thursday, while other airports reported ongoing delays as airlines worked to recover disrupted services.

Alexander met with NATS Chief Executive Martin Rolfe shortly after the disruption, pressing for an urgent review and future safeguards. She reassured the public that the failure was not linked to external interference and confirmed that investigations had found no evidence of a cyber attack or coordinated activity.

The disruption has reignited criticism from airlines. Ryanair called for Rolfe's resignation, citing repeated failures since a similar incident in 2023. EasyJet also demanded greater transparency on measures to prevent further occurrences. Industry experts noted that while such failures are rare, robust backup protocols and communication systems are essential for maintaining public confidence.

NATS attributed the failure to a technical issue within its radar network that disrupted flight plan displays. It stressed that safety systems operated as designed, automatically halting certain processes to avoid

compounding errors. The backup procedures were promptly deployed to restore operations.

Passengers were advised to check directly with their airlines for updated travel information. While services at Heathrow and Gatwick had mostly stabilised by Thursday, residual delays persisted as operators worked through the backlog.

This marks the second major outage at NATS in two years, prompting concerns about infrastructure resilience. Government officials have signalled their intention to review the agency's operational readiness and demand greater accountability. The incident places renewed focus on the robustness of UK air traffic management as travel volumes return to pre-pandemic levels.