



MAJOR ALERT AT HEATHROW AFTER MAN LOCKS SELF IN JET COCKPIT

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Portuguese national Louis Pedro Verdasca dos Santos Costa, 38, has been charged over the incident at Britain's biggest airport on Saturday.

A major security alert was sparked at Heathrow Airport after an intruder broke through a security cordon, climbed aboard an empty British Airways 747 airliner and locked himself inside the bomb-proof cockpit.

Police were alerted shortly after 11.30am on Saturday that a suspect had managed to breach security on the Heathrow perimeter and had managed to get to the BA engineering base at Hatton Cross, Heathrow where the passenger jet was parked.

After realising he had been spotted getting into the cabin of the empty plane, the suspect fled to the flight deck and was able to get into it through the open doors.

Moments later he slammed shut the high-security cockpit doors, effectively locking himself into the captain and co-pilots' seating area.

A source said that it was impossible for security staff to get to him because the bomb and bullet proof cockpit doors are designed to protect the pilot and co-pilot should a terrorist try to take over the plane in mid-flight.

"It was a very difficult and complex situation and in the end the fire brigade had to be called to the plane and carried out a long and very protracted operation to get into the cockpit from outside."



747 plane

Fears: The intruder managed to lock himself into the cockpit of a BA

"Eventually they managed to gain access to the cockpit and police were able to storm in

and arrested the intruder," said the source who asked not to be named.

"It is a terrifying situation when you think about it. Here is a man who not only has managed to go air-side at one of the world's busiest airports but he has successfully got to a Boeing 747 jet liner and found it open and was able to climb aboard.

"Then he has got onto the flight deck and barricaded himself in using the plane's own anti-terrorist equipment.

"As far as I know there is no suggestion he is in anyway linked to terrorism but imagine if he had been a terrorist with the ability to handle the controls of a 747.

"Although it was away from the main runway, the plane could have caused a major incident and even worse, if it had taxied and taken off," the source added.

"The fire brigade from the airport took a long time to extricate him because the plane's cockpit is designed to be impenetrable in case of acts of terrorism."

Police confirmed tonight that there had been an incident on a parked aircraft at Heathrow but said that it was not believed to be terrorist-related.

In a statement a spokesman for the Metropolitan Police said that a 38-year-old man had been arrested and was being held in custody at a West London police station. He was expected to appear in court "at the earliest opportunity."

It was understood that the detained man was a Portuguese national.

"Louis Pedro Verdasca dos Santos Costa, 38, of Stonehill Road, Hounslow, west London was charged on Saturday, 5 March with two counts: of unlawfully being airside, and of unlawfully being on an aircraft," said the spokesman.

"He has been remanded into custody at a west London police station and will appear at court at the earliest opportunity next week."

A spokeswoman for Heathrow Airport said: "Safety and security are always our main priority and we take incidents involving either very seriously indeed. Individuals illegally entering the airside environment potentially endanger their own lives and those of others.

"We are working with the police following an incident on Saturday. We keep security under constant review."

British Airways declined to comment.

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