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OSCE Opposes Karabakh Airport

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TBILISI, Georgia — International mediators in the Armenian-Azeri conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh warned on Thursday against the planned opening of an airport in the breakaway region.

In a statement issued after visiting the region, mediators from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe expressed concern that the planned opening of the airport in May "could lead to further increased tensions."

"The co-chairs urged the sides to reach an understanding in keeping with international conventions and agreements," the OSCE Minsk Group of French, U.S. and Russian envoys said in a statement.

Azerbaijan had threatened to shoot down planes landing at the airport but has since toned down its rhetoric. Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan says he plans to be on the first flight, tentatively scheduled for May 9.

Rebuilt at a cost of $3 million, the airport is to have regular flights between Yerevan and the enclave, currently a five-hour drive apart along a single road snaking through mountains.

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