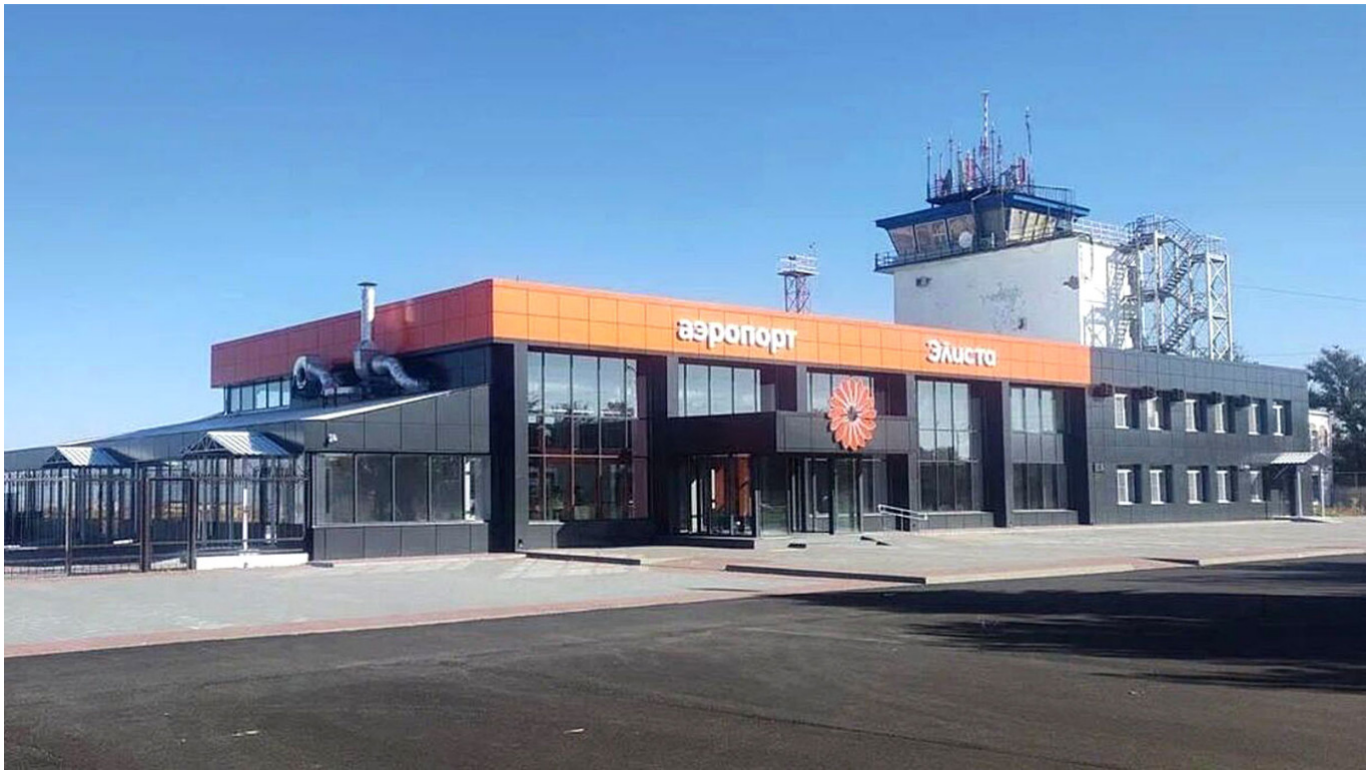
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Russia to Reopen First Airport Shuttered Since Ukraine Invasion

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Elista Airport. **favt.gov.ru**

Russia is reopening the first of several regional airports that were closed when the country invaded Ukraine more than two years ago, state civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia announced Friday.

All flights to and from 11 airports in southern and central parts of the country have been grounded over safety concerns since President Vladimir Putin ordered troops into Ukraine in February 2022.

Elista Airport in the republic of Kalmykia near the Caspian Sea will reopen next Friday, May 3, following safety inspections by the Defense Ministry and Rosaviatsia, the aviation agency said in a statement.

"A safe and comfortable environment has been created at Elista Airport as a result of the works carried out," it said.

Elista Airport lies 380 kilometers east of the border with Ukraine, which has ramped up drone strikes on Russian regions along its borders and further into Russian territory.

The republic of Kalmykia is not known to have been targeted by the drone strikes, which Kyiv does not officially confirm or deny.

Pashkovsky Airport in the southern Krasnodar region received its first test flight last December since closing down over the invasion. But plans to reopen it have since been scuttled for unexplained reasons.

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