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Putin Renames Volgograd Airport 'Stalingrad' to Honor WWII Battle

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The Volgograd airport. **Ivan Sklyarov / airportvolgograd.ru**

President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday signed a decree renaming Volgograd's airport to Stalingrad International Airport in tribute to the city's role in the bloodiest battle of World War II.

Volgograd, named Stalingrad in 1925 after Soviet dictator Josef Stalin, was the site of the pivotal 1942-43 battle in which Soviet troops repelled the invading German army. The city was renamed Volgograd in 1961 as part of the U.S.S.R.'s de-Stalinization campaign.

Putin's decree, issued after his visit to Volgograd on Tuesday, states the renaming applies only to the airport and "does not entail a change to the name of the city itself."

The symbolic move comes after years of public resistance to proposals by some officials to permanently restore the city's Soviet-era name.

Volgograd region Governor Andrei Bocharov said the idea to rename the airport came from a

group of Ukraine war veterans who called for the return of a "real, proud, masculine and heroic" name. "Their word is my law," Putin told Bocharov during the visit.

Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin later signed an order formalizing the airport's renaming.

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Earlier this month, Russia's civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia announced that air traffic controllers would temporarily use the historic names Stalingrad and Leningrad for the airports in Volgograd and St. Petersburg between May 8 and May 10 — dates that coincide with Russia's Victory Day commemorations.

"Temporarily returning historical names to the airwaves of our hero cities is the least we can do to honor the courage and resilience of their defenders and residents," Rosaviatsia said.

The Battle of Stalingrad, widely considered a major turning point of World War II, lasted from August 1942 to February 1943 and claimed an estimated 2 million lives. It ended with the surrender of Nazi Germany's 6th Army, the first major capitulation of Hitler's forces and a decisive blow that paved the way for Allied victory.

In recent years, the name Stalingrad has been temporarily revived in Volgograd during major holidays and anniversaries.

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