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Serbian President's Plane Makes Unplanned Stop in Baku as Ukrainian Drones Attack Russia

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Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. **vucic.rs**

Serbian President Aleksandar Vučić's flight to Moscow for this week's Victory Day parade made a stop in Azerbaijan as Ukrainian drone strikes forced airports across Russia to halt travel for several hours, Serbian and Russian media reported Wednesday.

Vučić is among more than two dozen world leaders expected to attend the May 9 parade on Red Square marking 80 years since the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany.

According to the Serbian tabloid Informer, Vučić's plane made an "emergency landing" in Baku while awaiting clearance to proceed to Moscow. Russia's state-run news agency TASS, which described the stopover as "planned," reported that the Serbian Embassy in Moscow still expected him to arrive by Thursday.

Conflicting reports attributed the detour to either a need to refuel or a lack of permission to

land in Moscow amid airport closures caused by ongoing drone attacks early Wednesday.

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Russian state television later showed Vučić disembarking from his plane after it landed in Moscow.

Russia’s ambassador to Serbia, Alexander Botsan-Kharchenko, who met with Vucic before his departure Wednesday morning, accused the West of attempting to block the Serbian leader’s visit, calling it an act of “neo-Nazism.” The ambassador appeared to be referring to the Baltic states closing their airspace to world leaders traveling to Russia for Victory Day celebrations.

Vucic’s arrival comes as Ukraine launched its largest-ever drone assault on Russia, prompting authorities to repeatedly close airports in the capital and surrounding regions. Russia’s Association of Tour Operators said the disruptions affected at least 60,000 passengers.

Russia’s Defense Ministry said it destroyed 524 Ukrainian drones overnight across five regions, making it the biggest wave of drone attacks since President Vladimir Putin launched the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It also reported intercepting several rockets.

Putin declared a unilateral 72-hour ceasefire from midnight on May 8 through May 11 to mark Victory Day. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky rejected the truce and instead proposed a 30-day ceasefire.

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