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Airports in Southern Russia Paralyzed After Ukrainian Drone Hits Air Traffic Control Center

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A worker at Sochi International Airport. **Dmitry Feoktistov / TASS**

More than a dozen airports across southern Russia suspended operations on Friday morning, while hundreds of flights were either cancelled or delayed after a Ukrainian drone crashed into the air traffic control center for the region, transportation authorities said.

The strike damaged equipment at the control center in Rostov-on-Don, which manages aviation for southern Russia, the Transportation Ministry said. No one was reported injured, but the attack forced the center to suspend work.

As a result, airports in southern Russia halted operations, including in the cities of Astrakhan, Vladikavkaz, Volgograd, Gelendzhik, Grozny, Krasnodar, Makhachkala, Magas, Mineralnye Vody, Nalchik, Sochi, Stavropol and Elista.

Aeroflot, Pobeda, Nordwind and Rossiya Airlines said they were adjusting their flight

schedules for Friday and would need to cancel some flights. At least 14,000 passengers were stuck due to delays and cancellations, the Association of Tour Operators of Russia said.

Russia's Transportation Minister Andrey Nikitin asked major airlines to coordinate with the state-owned Russian Railways and the Unified Transportation Directorate to arrange for trains and buses to transfer passengers from canceled flights.

The civil aviation agency, Rosaviatsia, initially issued a notice that flights in southern Russia could be suspended until May 12. The notice was rescinded later on Friday.

More than 260 Ukrainian drones were intercepted across Russia early Friday, the Defense Ministry said, with officials reporting that some of the unmanned aircraft struck industrial sites as far as the Perm region in the Ural Mountains.

The attacks come hours after a ceasefire that Russia unilaterally announced for May 8-10 came into effect. The Defense Ministry said in a statement on Friday morning that it had registered 1,365 violations by Ukraine since midnight.

Ukraine also reported continued attacks on its territory since the start of the Russian ceasefire, which it had previously dismissed as an unserious gesture. President Volodymyr Zelensky said his military registered 850 Russian strikes since midnight.

"All of this clearly shows that, on the Russian side, there was not even a token attempt to cease fire on the front," Zelensky wrote on X. "As we did over the past 24 hours, Ukraine will respond in kind today as well."

He also claimed that Ukrainian drones struck energy infrastructure in the Yaroslavl region, located around 700 kilometers (434 miles) from the border with Ukraine. "An oil sector facility that was of great importance for financing Russia's war," Zelensky wrote.

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