

Shopping Malls in Central Russia Converted Into Drone Plants

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Drones made by Izhevsk Unmanned Systems. supercam.aero

A shopping mall in the Russian city of Izhevsk is set to be converted into a drone production facility, the third such repurposing in the city over the past year, local activists [said](#) Friday.

The Russian drone manufacturer Aeroscan recently purchased Izhevsk's Stolitsa shopping mall and notified its tenants that their leases would be terminated by Oct. 15, according to the Udmurtia Protiv Korruptsii (Udmurtia Against Corruption) activist group.

Last year, Aeroscan [bought](#) another mall in Izhevsk and ordered its tenants to vacate the premises by Jan. 31, 2023, local media reported at the time.

A change.org petition against repurposing the mall for drone production [warned](#) that “this creates a precedent to place hazardous production inside a dense residential area.”

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Similarly, the activists [reported](#) last week that another drone maker, the Izhevsk Unmanned Systems Research and Production Company (IZHBS), bought the shopping mall Novyi Dom.

A separate change.org petition slammed that purchase, saying “defense companies that can’t build anything themselves simply convert civilian facilities for their needs.”

IZHBS, which is [under](#) Western sanctions, has reportedly been recruiting engineers and other workers throughout the city.

Meanwhile, Aeroscan’s owner Nikita Zakharov — who is the [son](#) of Alexander Zakharov, co-owner of the Lancet kamikaze drone maker — had previously [floated the idea](#) of repurposing shopping malls into drone production facilities as far back as in 2020, according to local media.

Zakharov [revisited](#) his initial proposal last year later after Western brands vacated Russian malls as part of a mass corporate exodus in retaliation to the invasion of Ukraine.

Russia’s state media watchdog blocked access to Udmurtia Against Corruption’s website and its [page](#) on the social network Vkontakte following Moscow's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

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