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New Sochi Airport Terminal Opens

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A new Sochi airport terminal intended to serve passengers arriving for the 2014 Winter Olympics and built by Oleg Deripaska's Basic Element at a cost of 6.2 billion rubles ($200 million) officially opened Thursday.

The terminal is the first major facility commissioned for the games and ticks off a box on Russia's long to-do list in preparation for the event.

The new terminal is fully operational and services both domestic and international flights. It boasts the latest know-how in ecological and resource efficiency and the most modern equipment, the company said in a statement.

"This is a major event not just for Basic Element ... but also for the main Russian resort city of Sochi and the Krasnodar region, as a modern airport is a key element of the region's future prosperity," Deripaska said.

"The new air gateway is what will give our guests — the tourists, sportsmen and women,

official delegations and spectators who fly in from all over the world — their first impressions of the Olympic Sochi," said Dmitry Chernyshenko, president of the Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee.

Analysts say the construction cost is surprisingly low compared with what has been spent on similar projects. Expansion of St. Petersburg's Pulkovo, for example, is a 1.2 billion euro ($1.6 billion) endeavor.

Industry experts say the new terminal's capacity, which is projected to reach 3,800 passengers per hour by 2014, formally satisfies the International Olympic Committee requirement but may not be sufficient to handle peak passenger traffic loads experienced by international airports during major sports events.

Athens International Airport, for example, built for the 2004 Summer Olympics, had a peak capacity of 6,000 passengers per hour.

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