

RusAl Hires Bank to Value Norilsk Stake

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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United Company RusAl hired Bank of America Merrill Lynch to value its 25 percent stake in Norilsk Nickel, a source close to RusAl's shareholders said Wednesday, as pressure grows on the heavily indebted firm to sell.

A RusAl representative confirmed that a committee of the company's board would meet to discuss the matter.

"We view our stake in Norilsk Nickel as a strategic investment, but, as a publicly traded company, we discuss all offers as part of our corporate governance procedures," the representative said.

Norilsk Nickel earlier this month offered to buy back the 25 percent stake from RusAl for \$12 billion as it sought to end a long-running dispute between the world's largest nickel and palladium miner's two core shareholders, Vladimir Potanin and Oleg Deripaska.

Potanin's Interros and Deripaska's RusAl each hold about 25 percent of the miner.

The two sides have widely divergent views about the company's strategy and dividend policy, and RusAl in October unsuccessfully sought to dismiss Norilsk Nickel's board at an extraordinary shareholders meeting.

A third billionaire, Mikhail Prokhorov, who holds 17 percent of RusAl, said earlier this week that he believes that the world's largest aluminum producer will unload its Norilsk stake for \$12 billion to \$15 billion.

RusAl reduced its net debt to \$11.75 billion as of Sept. 30, from \$13.63 billion at the end of last year. This exceeded the company's 2010 debt reduction target by 73 percent.

Bank of America Merrill Lynch's Moscow office declined to comment on the RusAl appraisal when contacted by Reuters.

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