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Airport Ownership Stumps Investigators

By Howard Amos

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In response to a rare public appearance by Dmitry Kamenshchik, chairman of Domodedovo Airport's board of directors, the Investigative Committee admitted that it has failed to get to the bottom of who the owner of the country's biggest airport is.

Kamenshchik, Russia's 86th richest man according to Forbes magazine, refused to reveal Domodedovo's ownership structure to reporters during a news conference Tuesday, and the Investigative Committee said he has taken a similar position during questioning as part of an investigation ordered by President Dmitry Medvedev into January's terrorist attack that killed 37 and injured 173.

"At the present time, the investigation has not succeeded in determining the real owners of the airport, on whom legislation lays the responsibility for the preservation of transport security at Domodedovo Airport," the Investigative Committee said Wednesday.

Kamenshchik and Valery Kogan, director of the airport's supervisory board, cited Article 51 of the Constitution when refusing to disclose whether they controlled Domodedovo,

the Investigative Committee said. Article 51 states that no one is obliged to give incriminating evidence about themselves.

But the Investigative Committee said both men had admitted that they were employed as consultants to an offshore company called Airport Management, registered in the Isle of Man.

Domodedovo is operated by a company called East Line Group, in turn owned by FML Limited, which is also registered in the Isle of Man. DME Limited, which is the official face of Domodedovo, attempted an initial public offering in May this year. Although the documents for the listing identified Kamenshchik as the 100 percent beneficiary owner of the company, he has declined to disclose whether there had been any ownership changes since the IPO was pulled.

A police raid of Domodedovo in June was seeking information about transport security at the aviation hub as well as the question of ownership, the Investigative Committee said.

Kamenshchik has consistently maintained that, although the ownership structure of Domodedovo is opaque, it is not in breach of any laws.

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