

Domodedovo Airport 'Seeks' Possible Buyer

By [Rachel Nielsen](#)

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The  Moscow Times

Peering out from an airplane window at Domodedovo Airport. A major investment bank is helping the airport's owners find a buyer, Russian media reported. **Maxim Stulov**

Looking for the perfect holiday gift and willing to spend several billion dollars?

Domodedovo Airport, which aborted an initial public offering attempt earlier this year, could soon be for sale.

The airport's owners have hired Goldman Sachs to search for a potential buyer, Interfax reported late Monday night, citing "several sources in banking circles."

According to one Interfax source, Goldman is the only adviser for the potential sale. The global investment firm was one of four companies, along with Morgan Stanley, Citi and JPMorgan Chase, which had been a bookrunner for the planned IPO.

DME Limited, which owns and operates Domodedovo, had sought to raise \$700 million to \$1 billion in June by listing on the London Stock Exchange. But DME Limited turned heel in late May, saying the IPO couldn't be priced at a fair valuation in the current market conditions.

The role of adviser for the sale process attracted interest from "several investment banks, including Russian ones," Interfax said, citing another of its sources. In the IPO run-up, Goldman had valued the airport at \$3.5 billion to \$7.5 billion, while Citi and JPMorgan Chase gave valuations ranging from more than \$4 billion to just over \$5 billion, Interfax said.

E-mails to Goldman and Domodedovo attempting to confirm the sale plan did not immediately receive responses.

The Goldman Sachs news comes just three months after Domodedovo unveiled aggressive development plans valued at close to \$4 billion that included construction of a third runway and reconstruction of the area for loading and refueling planes.

A five-year, 26 billion ruble (\$810 million) renovation of the loading and refueling area is expected to begin in 2012. Also next year, the airport will begin work on a third runway at a cost of 30 billion rubles.

These projects follow renovation work on the passenger terminal and an upgrade of the first runway that began this fall. But they also follow a colossal breakdown of airport services that stranded passengers during a December 2010 ice storm, a terrorist suicide bombing that killed close to 40 people in January and subsequent criticism and investigation by the federal government.

The airport, which calls itself the nation's biggest, has maintained a high level of customers, however.

On Tuesday, it announced that passenger traffic has increased almost 16 percent compared with the same period last year. From January through November, more than 23.8 million people went through Domodedovo, it said in a press release. The airport plans to welcome its 25 millionth passenger on Wednesday, which it called "a first in the history of Moscow's air hubs and of all air terminals in Russia."

Domodedovo also saw a 15 percent rise in the number of flights, to more than 220,000, and almost a 20 percent rise in the amount of cargo.

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