

Russian VIPs to Stand to Suffer Through Ordinary Airport Lines – Report

July 02, 2015



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Russian VIPs will have to stand alongside the plebeians in ordinary airport lines after the Federal Security Service (FSB) ordered the closure of fast-track services offered to high-net-worth individuals, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

Russian airports, which have already taken a beating due to decreased air travel amid the economic crisis, are poised to lose a lucrative source of revenues with the closure of dedicated passport control areas and pre-flight inspection zones that have traditionally been available to VIP lounge customers, Kommersant reported.

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VIP lounges have been a staple in Russian airports since Soviet times, but access doesn't come

cheap. Moscow-based company VIP International offers one-time access to its international lounge in Sheremetyevo Airport for 21,000 rubles (\$378). Kids between the ages of two and 12 pay 10,500 rubles per visit.

According to Kommersant, dedicated passport control zones were the key features that attracted most VIP passengers to shell out such sumptuous sums. Indeed, in describing its international lounge on its website, VIP International's first selling point is exclusive access to its VIP passport control area.

The newspaper's source in one of the airports has predicted that the closure of such VIP zones will cost as many as 500 jobs, and could cost the state as much as 1 billion rubles (\$18 million) in lost tax revenues.

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