

Top Book Publisher AST Could Owe \$228M in Back Taxes

By [The Moscow Times](#)

March 29, 2012

The  **Moscow Times**

Five companies in the AST Group, which includes one of Russia's top book publishers, could be hit with a 6.7 billion ruble (\$228 million) bill for back taxes on income hidden from authorities through shell companies, Vedomosti reported Thursday.

Last week, the Investigative Committee conducted a search of the offices of Polimiks-Tsentr, a logistics company that is part of the AST group, which includes more than 100 companies, including the AST publishing house, one of the two largest in Russia. Investigators suspect Polimiks-Tsentr of falsifying its tax returns.

Tax authorities are currently preparing an order for 6.7 billion rubles in back taxes and fines from four other AST group companies, which are suspected of using off-shore shell companies to conceal part of their income, an unnamed tax service source told Vedomosti.

AST's total earnings were 5.7 billion rubles over the period of June 2010 to June 2011, according to an estimate by AST competitor Eksmo. AST is majority-owned by Cyprus-

registered company Advanced Achievement Books Publishers Ltd.

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