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# Moscow Police Report Huge Drop in Tax Cases This Year

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Moscow police appear to have lost interest in tax crimes, with year-on-year statistics plunging in the first quarter of 2011, according to police statistics obtained by Vedomosti.

The city's tax crime division uncovered 399 crimes from January to March, compared with 1,623 for the same period last year.

But the percentage of cases brought to court is growing, reaching 65.4 percent, or 17 of 26 cases compared with 49.6 percent, or 121 of 243 cases, last year.

A police spokesman did not answer calls Friday. A representative for the Investigative Committee was unable to comment on police statistics.

An official from the police's tax crime department linked the drop to the reorganization of economic crime fighters. Also playing a role was the transfer of preliminary investigative powers for tax evasion cases from the Interior Ministry's Investigative Committee to the independent Investigative Committee, separated from the Prosecutor General's Office in

January, the official said.

Roman Terekhin, a lawyer at the Nalogovik law firm, linked the decline in cases to a bureaucratic war that broke out when investigative powers were transferred to the Investigative Committee, with Interior Ministry investigators sabotaging work and the Investigative Committee refusing, in return, to sign police requests and orders.

A second reason for the decline, Terekhin said, is a reduction in fabricated cases, which is evidenced by the increasing proportion of cases being brought to court.

There is the third reason as well, because an increase in insurance payment tax, which reached 34 percent, has forced small and midsized businesses to switch to gray salaries, said Tatyana Moskalkova, a former deputy department head with the Interior Ministry.

These businesses are seeking deals with authorities who takes bribes to not open cases, said Moskalkova, who is now a State Duma deputy with A Just Russia.

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