

Japanese Embassy Complains Over Copyright Fee Law

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin meeting Mikhalkov and his relatives on Tuesday. **Mikhail Klimentyev**

Japan's embassy in Russia has asked the Economic Development Ministry and the State Duma to change the current system of copyright fees for importers of consumer electronics, a news report said Wednesday.

Japanese manufacturers are unhappy about the makeup of the list of appliances on which the fee is charged.

They have also pointed out that currently there is a legally binding requirement to conclude an agreement with the Russian Union of Right Holders and no sanctions for non-payment, Kommersant reported, citing a letter sent by the embassy.

According to the Civil Code, all local manufacturers and importers of data storage devices and recording equipment — mobile phones, computers and MP3 players — have to pay 1

percent of the product's value to the Russian Union of Right Holders.

The union, headed by film director Nikita Mikhalkov, collected more than a billion rubles (\$33 million) in copyright fees in 2012, Kommersant reported.

Meanwhile, one of the major importers of consumer electronics, Japan's Panasonic, has not been able to conclude an agreement with the Russian Union of Right Holders, while being exposed to pressure from law enforcement agencies.

Since March 2012, the company's Russian branch has received several requests for compliance reports from the Simonovsky inter-district prosecutor's office in Moscow, followed by similar requests from the Interior Ministry's main directorate for Moscow, the embassy said.

Meanwhile, the Foreign Affairs Ministry has sided with the Russian Union of Right Holders. In its official response to the letter sent by the Japanese Embassy, the ministry said current copyright law "fully complies with the accepted international principles and standards" and does not discriminate against foreign companies.

The Russian Union of Right Holders confirmed that Panasonic is one of the few foreign companies that have not concluded an agreement on paying the copyright fee yet.

The company currently owes about 60 million rubles in unpaid fees, a source familiar with the situation told Kommersant.

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