

# Gazprom Pumps \$57 Million Into 2 Russian Hockey Teams

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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SKA hockey club's president Gennady Timchenko, left, standing alongside KHL chief Alexander Medvedev.

Gazprom Neft, the oil-producing arm of Russian state gas company Gazprom, has finalized sponsorship deals with the SKA and Avangard hockey clubs worth a total of about 2 billion rubles (\$57 million), Vedomosti reported Wednesday.

The St. Petersburg-based SKA hockey club, which reached the semifinals of the Kontinental Hockey League's western conference in March, will receive 1.18 billion rubles (\$33 million) to advertise the company's brand until the end of 2014.

Gazprom Neft's board of directors has also agreed to pay out 798 million rubles (\$23 million) to Avangard, a club from the Siberian city of Omsk that failed to qualify for the playoffs after finishing 10th in the eastern conference. The sponsorship deal between the two sides runs from August to April 2015.

SKA, whose president is none other than U.S. sanctions-hit Gennady Timchenko, the owner of investment firm Volga Group, has a budget of 1.27 billion rubles (\$36 million) for players' wages — the biggest in the KHL. Timchenko is also the chairman of the KHL, a position he assumed in July 2012.

In March, Roman Rotenberg, the club's vice president for marketing and business development, announced that SKA had revenues of 500 million rubles (\$14 million) for the current season and that the club would look to reduce its dependence on Gazprom Neft sponsorship. Roman Rotenberg is the son of billionaire Boris Rotenberg, another Russian businessman targeted by U.S. sanctions following Russia's annexation of Crimea earlier this year.

Gazprom Neft made its last recorded financial injection to SKA in December — a payment of 684 million rubles (\$19.1 million), which is well above the market rate, RIA Novosti reported.

Avangard's home stadium is the \$70 million Omsk Arena, a 10,000-seater facility whose construction was funded by Russian billionaire businessman Roman Abramovich. In 2012, Abramovich, who also owns Chelsea Football Club, donated the arena to the hockey club.

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