

Cisco wins U.S. patent dispute over wifi technology



The Cisco Systems logo is seen as part of a display at a technology conference in Chicago, Illinois, May 4, 2015.

Reuters/Jim Young

Cisco Systems Inc did not infringe a patent holding company's wifi technology, a U.S. appeals court ruled on Monday, reversing a near \$64-million judgment against the networking equipment maker in the long-running patent dispute.

After eight years of litigation that also included a trip to the U.S. Supreme Court, the decision from the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit said Cisco was not liable for directly infringing or inducing others to infringe a patent held by Commil USA LLC on a way to help spread wireless signals over a large area, where multiple access points are needed.

Cisco General Counsel Mark Chandler said the company was gratified by the ruling. "The patent never had anything to do with our products and the millions of dollars spent defending this unmeritorious suit are a travesty," he said in an emailed statement.

Representatives for Commil could not be reached on Monday.

Texas-based Commil USA sued Cisco in 2007, shortly after buying the patent from an Israeli company, Commil Ltd, according to court documents. Cisco has called it a non-practicing entity,

referring to a company that primarily makes money by licensing patents instead of making products.

In 2011, a federal jury in Texas found that Cisco induced infringement by encouraging its customers to use Cisco products that infringe Commil's patent. The jury awarded Commil almost \$63.8 million in damages. A judge subsequently added \$10.3 million in interest.

In 2013, the Washington, D.C.-based Federal Circuit, the nation's top appeals court specializing in patent issues, ordered a new trial, saying that Cisco should have been able to mount a defense based on its "good faith belief" that Commil's patent was invalid.

The Supreme Court in May said that defense was not legitimate, throwing out the ruling and sending the case back to the Federal Circuit.

A three-judge Federal Circuit panel on Monday again ruled in favor of San Jose, California-based Cisco.

The panel said that when it last considered the case, it did not consider some of Cisco's arguments that it did not infringe the patent. In weighing those arguments this time, the panel said that "substantial evidence did not support the jury's findings."

The case is Commil USA LLC v. Cisco Systems Inc, in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, No. 12-1042.

(Editing by Cynthia Osterman)

Samsung wins appeal in patent dispute with Apple

A U.S. appeals court on Friday overturned a \$120 million jury verdict against Samsung, finally handing the South Korean smartphone maker a significant win in its longstanding patent feud with top rival Apple.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit in Washington, D.C., said Samsung Electronics Co Ltd did not infringe Apple's "quick links" patent, and that two other patents covering the iPhone's slide-to-unlock and auto-correct features were invalid. The court also said Apple was liable for infringing one of Samsung's patents.

In a statement, a Samsung spokeswoman said: "Today's decision is a win for consumer choice and puts competition back where it belongs - in the marketplace, not in the courtroom."

A spokeswoman for Apple declined to comment.

Apple and Samsung have been battling over mobile device technology patents for years. Apple has mostly prevailed, and in December, Samsung paid Apple \$548.2 million stemming from a separate patent case, which Samsung has appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Friday's ruling was issued by a unanimous three-judge panel of the Federal Circuit, the country's top court specializing in patent issues.

The ruling reverses a May 2014 verdict from a federal court in San Jose, California ordering Samsung to pay \$119.6 million for using Apple's patented technology without permission.

Infringement of the quick links feature, which allows the device to recognise data on the touchscreen, such as a phone number, and link to it to make a call, accounted for nearly \$99 million of the damages.

While the appeals court said that Samsung did not use the same technology to detect and link to specific data, it also said Apple's other patents were obvious compared to previously known inventions and should never have been granted.

Chicago-based patent lawyer Bradley Hulbert, who has followed the litigation, said the decision is "a clear signal that Apple is not invincible and that alternative operating systems are here to stay. The marketing and psychological benefits for Samsung are huge."

Rutgers Law School professor Michael Carrier said Apple "rolled the dice" by going to court and today's decision "shows that the patent wars really are not worth it."

The case is Apple Inc v. Samsung Electronics Co Ltd et al, in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, No. 15-1171.

(Editing by Cynthia Osterman)

IBM granted most U.S. patents in 2015, study finds



International Business Machines Corp ([IBM.N](#)) was granted the most U.S. patents for the 23rd year in a row in 2015, according to a ranking by patent analysis firm IFI Claims Patents Services.

There were 298,407 utility patents granted in 2015, down slightly from 2014, IFI Claims said on Wednesday. IBM gained 7,355 patents last year. Utility patents cover function rather than design.

Among the technology giants notable for their intellectual property, Alphabet Inc's ([GOOGL.O](#)) Google stepped up its patent activity, moving to the fifth position from eighth in 2014, while Apple Inc ([AAPL.O](#)) stayed at the 11th position.

Patents are sometimes the subject of legal battles, and investors, analysts and enthusiasts alike track patents closely to see what companies are looking to develop next.

Following IBM, Samsung Electronics Co Ltd ([005930.KS](#)) and Canon Inc ([7751.T](#)) rounded off the top three spots, the ranking showed.

The U.S. patent counts for 2015 fell for the first time since 2007, according to the ranking.

Microsoft Corp's ([MSFT.O](#)) patents dropped significantly in 2015, sliding to tenth on the list with a near 31 percent decrease in patents.

Companies such as Microsoft and Panasonic ([6752.T](#)) have assigned some patents to newly formed holding companies, which explains why several entities dropped considerably lower in the rankings, IFI said.

"Rather than keeping all corporate patents under a single registration, some companies are choosing to spread their portfolios across multiple entities," said Larry Cady, an analyst at IFI Claims.

(Editing by Cynthia Osterman)