

HP settles patent violation cases with importers

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(AP) -- Hewlett Packard Co. said Thursday that it has reached a settlement with three companies that have been accused of infringing on the printer company's patents for ink cartridges.

HP filed a complaint with the U.S. International Trade Commission in September, seeking to ban imports of ink cartridges by 11 companies.

Two of those companies - InkPlusToner.com of Canoga Park, Calif., and Comptree Inc. of City of Industry, Calif., have agreed to stop the imports and paid HP an undisclosed sum. HP expects to reach a similar agreement with Smartone Services LLC of Hayward, Calif.

Zhuhai Gree Magneto-Electric Co. of China has asked an administrative law judge to end the commission's investigation after agreeing to cease importing these ink cartridges.

A default judgment was entered against the remaining seven companies: Mipo International Ltd. of Hong Kong, Mextec Group Inc. of Miami, Fla., and five Chinese companies, Shanghai Angel Printer Supplies Co. Ltd., Shenzhen Print Media Co. Ltd., Zhuhai National Resources & Jingjie Imaging Products Co. Ltd., Tatrix International and Ourway Image Co. Ltd.

HP said it expects the commission to rule in favor of banning the importation of these goods from the companies.

HP's ink business has long been a cash cow, only recently being supplanted as HP's most profitable business by its services division. HP's printer and ink division had 2 1/2 times the operating profit as the personal computer division in the last fiscal year, even though the PC group's revenue was higher.

Shares of HP, based in Palo Alto, Calif., rose 41 cents to \$52.64 in midday trading.

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