

Chinese court rules against Apple in patent case (Update)

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US technology giant Apple has lost a lawsuit against a Chinese state regulator over patent rights to voice recognition software such as the iPhone's "Siri", a Beijing court said.

The legal battle begun in 2012 when Shanghai-based Zhizhen Network Technology pursued Apple for allegedly infringing its Chinese patent with Siri, its "intelligent personal assistant".

Apple asked China's patent review board, which operates under the State Intellectual Property Office, to declare Zhizhen's original patent ineffective but the request was rejected.

Late last year Apple appealed to Beijing's Number One Intermediate People's Court to overturn that decision.

"The court did not support the cause of action stated by Apple," the court said in a statement on Tuesday, referring to the case in which Apple "brought a lawsuit" against the government agency.

"The patent for the invention of the 'type of chatbot system' involved remains effective," the court said, referring to Zhizhen's patent.

Apple had decided to appeal to the Beijing Higher People's Court, it added.

Apple's Siri, which responds to a user's commands through voice

recognition software, made its formal debut with the release of the iPhone 4S in 2011, while Zhizhen claims its earlier "Xiao i Robot" product works in a similar way.

A Beijing-based spokeswoman for the US firm told AFP: "Apple believes deeply in protecting innovation and we take intellectual property rights very seriously.

"Unfortunately, we were not aware of Zhizhen's patent before we introduced Siri and we do not believe we are using this patent."

Another court would consider the issue, she said, but held open the door to a settlement, adding: "We remain open to reasonable discussions with Zhizhen."

The dispute is not the first time that Apple has been embroiled in intellectual property rights infringement and controversy in China, where its products are popular.

Apple in 2012 paid \$60 million to settle a dispute with another Chinese firm over the iPad trademark.

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