

Company Claiming iPad Trademark Sues Apple In U.S.

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SHANGHAI (AP) — Apple Inc. is facing yet another challenge to its use of the iPad trademark in China — this time in a court in California.

Proview Electronics Co., a unit of Proview International Holdings, which claims it owns the iPad name, filed a lawsuit against Apple's use of the trademark in mainland China at the Santa Clara Superior Court on Feb. 17, Proview spokeswoman Alice Wang said Friday.

An attempt by Proview to win an injunction to stop Apple from selling iPads in Shanghai was foiled this week when a court there rejected the case pending the resolution of a similar lawsuit in a higher court in China.

Apple had no immediate comment on the California lawsuit.

The companies are feuding over whether Proview sold the mainland Chinese rights to the iPad trademark to Apple in a 2009 deal.

Proview claims the sale of the iPad China trademark to a company representing Apple by its Taiwan affiliate in 2009 was invalid. Proview has not challenged the sale of other worldwide rights to the iPad trademark to Apple in the 35,000 British pound (\$55,000) deal.

Apple contends that Proview included the mainland Chinese trademark in the sale and says it violated that contract by failing to transfer the trademark rights to Apple.

Proview's lawyers have indicated their company is open to settling its claim to the trademark. In the meantime, the two sides have engaged in legal skirmishes in Hong Kong and in southern China's Guangdong province, where Proview's main office is based.

There, lower courts have sided with Proview in two cases. The Guangdong High Court is due to hear Apple's appeal of the first decision on Feb. 29.

Proview International Holdings was once one of the world's leading makers of computer monitors, with sales in 50 countries and more than 7,000 employees in factories in Taiwan and China.

But the company's main focus on manufacturing cathode-ray tube displays — the boxy monitors that have since been replaced by LCD screens — appears to have hurt its performance.

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The company's website now says it makes LCD displays, LCD televisions and LED lights. But Proview is deep in debt and faces its shares being removed from the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

The company developed what it said was an "iFamily" range of products, including iTV, iWeb and iPAD. It launched its iPAD in 2000, but unlike Apple's 2010 tablet computer, Proview's earlier version failed to hit the market sweet spot that might have made it a hit.

Proview has sought to have commercial authorities in many Chinese cities stop sales of Apple's iPad. In suspending the case being heard in Shanghai, Pudong District Court rejected a demand for an injunction to stop iPad sales in Shanghai, where Apple has three big stores.

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