

3/4/20 REUTERS LEGAL 00:35:37

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March 4, 2020

IN BRIEF: Hetronic wins \$114 mln verdict in IP fight with ex-distributor

Jan Wolfe

(Reuters) - Heavy machinery equipment company Hetronic Inc and its lawyers at Jenner & Block won a \$114 million jury verdict against a former European distributor they accused of selling counterfeit products.

A federal jury in Oklahoma City on Monday sided with Hetronic on claims that the distributor, known as Abitron Germany GmbH, and related defendants breached a distribution agreement and infringed trademarks, among other claims.

Hetronic, an Oklahoma-based subsidiary of Methode Electronics, manufactures radio remote control systems for cranes and other industrial machinery.

Abitron (formerly Hetronic Germany) was a distributor for Hetronic's radio remote control products. A distribution agreement between the companies allowed Abitron to assemble and distribute Hetronic-branded products that contained genuine Hetronic parts.

Hetronic sued in 2014, alleging Abitron substituted counterfeit parts made by unknown and nonapproved suppliers in violation of their contractual agreements.

The defendants, represented by the Oklahoma City law firm Rupert Steiner & Free, argued that Hetronic had acquiesced to their conduct and waived its right to sue.

The verdict, issued following an 11-day trial before U.S. District Judge Stephen Friot, awarded Hetronic approximately \$102 million in compensatory damages and \$12 million in punitive damages.

The case is Hetronic International Inc v. Hetronic Germany in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Oklahoma.

For Hetronic: Debbie Berman and Wade Thomson of Jenner & Block

For Defendants: Geren Steiner of Rupert Steiner & Free

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Company: HETRONIC HOLDING LLC; HETRONIC INTERNATIONAL INC; JENNER AND BLOCK LLP; METHODE ELECTRONICS INC

News Subject: (Counterfeit Consumer Goods (1CU07); Intellectual Property (1IN75); Judicial Cases & Rulings (1JU36); Legal (1LE33))

Region: (Americas (1AM92); Central Europe (1CE50); Europe (1EU83); Eurozone Countries (1EU86); Germany (1GE16); North America (1NO39); Oklahoma (1OK58); U.S. Southwest Region (1SO89); USA (1US73); Western Europe (1WE41))

Language: EN

Other Indexing: (Abitron Germany GmbH; Hetronic Germany; Rupert Steiner) (Debbie Berman; Stephen Friot; Wade Thomson; Geren Steiner)

Keywords: ip; fedlit (OCC:OLRTXT); (N2:US)Keywords:

Word Count: 252

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