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Fed. Circ. Reverses PTAB Nix Of Synopsys Circuit Patent

By [Ryan Davis](#)

Law360, New York (April 24, 2017, 6:42 PM EDT) -- The Federal Circuit ruled Monday that the Patent Trial and Appeal Board incorrectly invalidated a [Synopsys Inc.](#) circuit patent, reversing a decision favoring ATopTech Inc., which recently filed for bankruptcy after being ordered to pay \$30 million for infringing Synopsys' copyrights.

In a rare instance of the Federal Circuit fully reversing the PTAB, rather than vacating and remanding for further proceedings, the court held that there was not enough evidence for the board's finding in an inter partes review that the claims were invalid as obvious or anticipated.

"Because the board's decision is not supported by substantial evidence, we reverse," the court wrote.

According to statistics compiled by Law360, the Federal Circuit affirmed the PTAB's decisions [72 percent](#) of the time in 2016.

Synopsys sued software company ATopTech in 2013, alleging infringement of the patent, which covers a method for designing the layout of a large integrated circuit, as well as the copyrights related to software for analyzing digital circuits. ATopTech responded by challenging the patent at the PTAB, which found many claims invalid.

The infringement case was bifurcated, with the copyright claims going to trial first, and a California jury [found in March 2016](#) that ATopTech infringed and ordered it to pay \$30.4 million in damages.

In December, Synopsys dismissed the infringement claim on the patent at issue in the PTAB proceeding with prejudice. The following month, ATopTech [filed for bankruptcy](#), listing the \$30.4 million verdict as its largest debt by far.

The PTAB found that some of the claims of Synopsys' patent were invalid as either obvious or anticipated, but the Federal Circuit said those findings did not have support.

The patent describes ways of improving circuit performance by splitting large components into smaller components. While the board found that the method described by the patent was found in two scientific articles, making it invalid as obvious, the Federal Circuit said neither of the articles suggest the methods describe the method found in the patent.

The court also held that contrary to the board's finding that one of the articles disclosed the patent's method of optimal placement of one type of component known as hard blocks, the article in fact only describes a different type of component known as soft blocks.

Attorneys for the parties could not immediately be reached for comment Monday.

The patent-in-suit is U.S. Patent Number [6,567,967](#).

Judges Alan Lourie, Kimberly Moore and Todd Hughes sat on the panel for the Federal Circuit.

Synopsys is represented by Matthew Silveira, Krista Schwartz, Gregory Castanias, David Cochran, Joseph Sauer and Joshua Nightingale of [Jones Day](#).

ATopTech is represented by Philip Marsh, Paul Alexander, Sean Callagy and Willow White Noonan of [Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP](#).

The case is Synopsys Inc. v. ATopTech Inc., case number [2016-1956](#), in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit.

--Editing by Aaron Pelc.

Correction: An earlier version of this story incorrectly stated the name of the firm representing ATopTech. The error has been corrected.

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[Synopsys, Inc. v. ATopTech, Inc.](#)

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[16-1956](#)

Court

Appellate - Federal Circuit

Nature of Suit

-

Date Filed

May 3, 2016

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Patents

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