

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA

GOOGLE INC.,

Plaintiff,

v.

ROCKSTAR CONSORTIUM U.S. LP,
MOBILESTAR TECHNOLOGIES, LLC,

Defendants.

No. C 13-5933 CW

ORDER DENYING
MOTION TO DISMISS
OR, IN THE
ALTERNATIVE, TO
TRANSFER

(Docket No. 20)

United States District Court
For the Northern District of California

Google Inc. filed this declaratory judgment action for non-infringement of seven patents owned by Defendants Rockstar Consortium U.S. LP (Rockstar) and MobileStar Technologies, LLC (MobileStar). Defendants now move to dismiss or, in the alternative, to transfer the action to the Eastern District of Texas, where the action could be consolidated with several other actions filed by Defendants against Google's customers. Google opposes the motion or, in the alternative, requests jurisdictional discovery. The Court held oral argument on March 13, 2014. After considering the papers and the arguments of counsel, the Court DENIES the motion to dismiss or transfer.

BACKGROUND

Google is a corporation located in Mountain View, California. Docket No. 1 ¶ 2. Google produces the Android mobile platform, an open-source operating system that is used by many original equipment manufacturers around the world. Id. at ¶¶ 1-2.

1 Nortel Networks was a prominent Canadian telecommunications
2 provider headquartered in Ottawa, Canada. See Madigan Decl., Exs.
3 1-2. Nortel had offices throughout the United States, including
4 one in Santa Clara, California. See id., Ex. 2. On January 14,
5 2009, Nortel filed for bankruptcy. Id., Exs. 3-4. The bankruptcy
6 court ordered an auction of Nortel's patent licensing operations,
7 including a portfolio of over 6,000 patents "spanning wireless,
8 wireless 4G, data networking, optical, voice, internet, service
9 provider, semiconductors" and many other aspects of
10 telecommunications and Internet search. Id., Exs. 4-6. Around
11 the same time, five of the world's largest technology companies --
12 Apple, Microsoft, Research in Motion, Sony, and Ericsson --
13 jointly created and funded an entity called "Rockstar Bidco LP," a
14 Delaware limited liability partnership. See id., Exs. 7-8. Apple
15 contributed approximately \$2.6 million to Rockstar Bidco. Id.,
16 Ex. 9 at 34. Both Google and Rockstar Bidco bid on the Nortel
17 patent licensing operation at the June 2011 auction, but Rockstar
18 Bidco ultimately prevailed with a bid of \$4.5 billion. Id.,
19 Ex. 7.

20 Rockstar Bidco transferred around 2,000 patents to its
21 owners, with at least 1,147 going to Apple. Id., Exs. 7, 14.
22 Rockstar Bidco then reorganized itself into Rockstar, a Delaware
23 limited partnership which claims a principal place of business in
24
25
26
27
28

1 Plano, Texas. Id., Exs. 7, 15.¹ Led by former Nortel executive
2 and current Rockstar CEO John Veschi, Nortel's patent portfolio
3 and licensing team of about forty employees immediately moved to
4 Rockstar. Id., Exs. 10-12. Rockstar's CFO and CTO had also been
5 executives at Nortel. Id. Veschi and the rest of his team remain
6 in Nortel's old headquarters in Ottawa, Canada. Id., Ex. 12.
7 According to its own website, Rockstar produces no products, but
8 operates a "patent licensing business that owns and manages a
9 portfolio of more than 4,000 patents developed by" Nortel. Id.,
10 Ex. 13.

11 Rockstar has worked with Mark Wilson, an independent
12 contractor in California who provides Rockstar with "licensing
13 consulting services." Dean Decl. ¶ 34. In Rockstar organization
14 charts appearing in a news article to which Rockstar contributed
15 and which it featured on its own website, Wilson was named as a
16 "licensing executive" in senior management. Madigan Decl., Exs.
17 12-13. This suggestion of an employee relationship has now been
18 deleted from the website and Wilson has removed "Rockstar
19 Consortium" from his professional profile. See id., Exs. 12-13,
20
21

22 ¹ Although Defendants assert that they both have principal
23 places of business in Texas, they have not named any executives or
24 employees who reside or work there. Rockstar's website and the
25 declaration of Afzal Dean, Rockstar Vice President and President
26 of MobileStar, identifies officers and board members who represent
27 both Defendants and who are almost all based in Canada, except one
28 in Colorado. See, generally, Dean Decl; see also Madigan Decl.,
Exs. 10, 19, 23. Rockstar's "nerve center," or the place where
its "officers direct, control, and coordinate the corporation's
activities," thus appears to be in Ottawa, Canada. Hertz Corp. v.
Friend, 559 U.S. 77, 92-93 (2010).

1 37. Defendants assert that Wilson's patent licensing duties do
2 not encompass enforcement of the patents-in-suit.

3 On October 30, 2013, Rockstar created MobileStar, a wholly-
4 owned subsidiary and Delaware limited liability corporation
5 claiming a principal place of business in Plano, Texas. Dean
6 Decl. ¶ 5. A day later, on October 31, 2013, Defendants filed
7 suit in the Eastern District of Texas against ASUS, HTC, Huawei,
8 LG, Pantech, Samsung, and ZTE, alleging each company infringes
9 seven patents: U.S. Patent Nos. 6,037,937 (the '937 patent),
10 6,463,131 (the '131 patent), 6,765,591 (the '591 patent),
11 5,838,551 (the '551 patent), 6,128,298 (the '298 patent),
12 6,333,973 (the '973 patent), and 6,937,572 (the '572 patent). (the
13 Halloween actions). In each of the Halloween actions, Rockstar
14 and MobileStar alleged infringement by "certain mobile
15 communication devices having a version (or adaptation thereof) of
16 Android operating system," which is developed by Google. See Dean
17 Decl., Exs. A-H. Rockstar owns two of the seven patents-in-suit
18 and transferred the remaining five patents to MobileStar shortly
19 before filing litigation, but retained an exclusive license to
20 those patents. See Dean Decl. ¶¶ 5, 15, 24.

21 On December 23, 2013, Google filed the present action in the
22 Northern District of California. In this action, Google seeks a
23 declaration that its Android platform and products (the Nexus 5,
24 Nexus 7, and Nexus 10) do not infringe the seven patents held by
25 Defendants that were asserted in the Halloween actions. See
26 Docket No. 1.

27 On December 31, 2013, Defendants responded with a New Year's
28 Eve amendment to one of the Halloween actions to include

1 allegations that Google infringes three of the asserted patents at
2 issue in this case: the '937, '131, and '591 patents. Rockstar v.
3 Samsung, Case No. 13-0900 (E.D. Tex.), Docket No. 19. Defendants
4 did not, however, assert that Google infringed the four additional
5 patents at issue in the Halloween actions and in this case: the
6 '551, '298, '973, and '572 patents. See id. On March 10, 2014,
7 Defendants moved to amend their complaint in the Texas case to
8 allege that Google infringed these four additional patents. Case
9 No. 13-0900, Docket Nos. 45-46.

10 LEGAL STANDARDS

11 Under Rule 12(b)(2) of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure,
12 a defendant may move to dismiss for lack of personal jurisdiction.

13 In a declaratory action for non-infringement, because the
14 jurisdictional issue is intimately connected with substance of
15 patent laws, Federal Circuit law applies. Avocent Huntsville
16 Corp. v. Aten Int'l Co., Ltd., 552 F.3d 1324, 1328 (Fed. Cir.
17 2008).

18 Where the court decides the personal jurisdiction question
19 based on affidavits and other written materials, and without an
20 evidentiary hearing, a plaintiff need only make a prima facie
21 showing that a defendant is subject to personal jurisdiction.
22 Nuance Commc'ns, Inc. v. Abby Software House, 626 F.3d 1222, 1231
23 (Fed. Cir. 2010); Electronics For Imaging, Inc. v. Coyle, 340 F.3d
24 1344, 1349 (Fed. Cir. 2003). Uncontroverted allegations in the
25 complaint must be taken as true. Id. If both the plaintiff and
26 the defendant submit admissible evidence, conflicts in the
27 evidence must be resolved in the plaintiff's favor. Trintec
28

1 Indus., Inc. v. Pedre Promotional Products, Inc., 395 F.3d 1275,
2 1282 (Fed. Cir. 2005).

3 There are two independent limitations on a court's power to
4 exercise personal jurisdiction over a non-resident defendant: the
5 applicable state personal jurisdiction rule and constitutional
6 principles of due process. Electronics For Imaging, Inc., 340
7 F.3d at 1349. Because California's jurisdictional statute is co-
8 extensive with federal due process requirements, jurisdictional
9 inquiries under state law and federal due process standards merge
10 into one analysis. Id.

11 The "constitutional touchstone" for the exercise of personal
12 jurisdiction "remains whether the defendant purposefully
13 established minimum contacts" in the forum state such that
14 "maintenance of the suit does not offend traditional notions of
15 fair play and substantial justice." Burger King Corp. v.
16 Rudzewicz, 471 U.S. 462, 474 (1985); Int'l Shoe Co. v. Washington,
17 326 U.S. 310, 316 (1945). Although the application of this
18 doctrine has evolved to keep pace with the increasingly national
19 and international nature of modern business affairs, the Supreme
20 Court has repeatedly stressed that there must always be "some act
21 by which the defendant purposefully avails itself of the privilege
22 of conducting activities within the forum state, thus invoking the
23 benefits and protections of its laws." Avocent Huntsville Corp.,
24 552 F.3d at 1329 (quoting Hanson v. Denckla, 357 U.S. 235, 253
25 (1958)). "This purposeful availment requirement ensures that a
26 defendant will not be haled into a jurisdiction solely as a result
27 of random, fortuitous, or attenuated contacts, or of the
28

1 unilateral activity of another party or a third person." Id.
2 (quoting Burger King Corp., 471 U.S. at 475).

3 Personal jurisdiction may be either general or specific.
4 General jurisdiction exists when the defendant maintains
5 "continuous and systematic" contacts with the forum state, even if
6 the cause of action is unrelated to those contacts. Helicopteros
7 Nacionales de Colombia, S.A. v. Hall, 466 U.S. 408, 415-16 (1984).
8 Specific jurisdiction is satisfied where the defendant has
9 "purposefully directed his activities at residents of the forum,
10 and the litigation results from alleged injuries that 'arise out
11 of or relate to' those activities." Burger King Corp., 471 U.S.
12 at 472.

13 I. Personal Jurisdiction over Rockstar through MobileStar

14 As a preliminary matter, Defendants argue that jurisdiction
15 over Rockstar and MobileStar should be assessed independently
16 because they are separate corporate entities. Google disagrees,
17 contending that Rockstar's contacts should be imputed to
18 MobileStar.

19 The Court must begin from "the general rule that the
20 corporate entity should be recognized and upheld, unless specific,
21 unusual circumstances call for an exception." 3D Sys., Inc. v.
22 Aarotech Labs., Inc., 160 F.3d 1373, 1380 (Fed. Cir. 1998). One
23 exception is where the parent and subsidiary are not really
24 separate entities and are alter egos of each other. Doe v. Unocal
25 Corp., 248 F.3d 915, 926 (9th Cir. 2001); see also Danjaq, S.A. v.
26 Pathe Commc'ns Corp., 979 F.2d 772, 775 (9th Cir. 1992) (finding
27 that many courts have discussed whether a parent's citizenship can
28 be imputed to the subsidiary and recognized that it can where the

1 subsidiary is the alter ego of the parent). Courts have invoked
2 this exception where the plaintiff makes a prima facie case that
3 (1) there is a unity of interest and ownership such that the
4 separate personalities of the two entities no longer exist and
5 (2) failure to disregard the separate identities "would result in
6 fraud or injustice." Doe, 248 F.3d at 926.

7 In a similar situation, the Federal Circuit found that the
8 parent-subsidary relationship between a parent company and its
9 wholly-owned subsidiary holding company justified imputing the
10 parent company's California contacts to the subsidiary. Dainippon
11 Screen Mfg. Co., Ltd. v. CFMT, Inc., 142 F.3d 1266, 1271 (Fed.
12 Cir. 1998). The court observed:

13 Stripped to its essentials, CFM contends that a parent
14 company can incorporate a holding company in another state,
15 transfer its patents to the holding company, arrange to have
16 those patents licensed back to itself by virtue of its
17 complete control over the holding company, and threaten its
18 competitors with infringement without fear of being a
19 declaratory judgment defendant, save perhaps in the state of
20 incorporation of the holding company. This argument
21 qualifies for one of our "chutzpah" awards. See Refac Int'l,
Ltd. v. Lotus Dev. Corp., 81 F.3d 1576, 1584, 38 USPQ2d 1665,
1671 (Fed. Cir. 1996); Checkpoint Sys., Inc. v. United States
Int'l Trade Comm'n, 54 F.3d 756, 763 n. 7, 35 USPQ2d 1042,
1048 n.7 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (noting that "chutzpah" describes
22 "the behavior of a person who kills his parents and pleads
23 for the court's mercy on the ground of being an orphan").

24 Id. (reversing district court's finding that it lacked personal
25 jurisdiction because of CFMT, the newly-formed subsidiary). With
26 these observations in mind, the Federal Circuit determined that it
27 would be "reasonable and fair" to find jurisdiction over both CFM
28 and CFMT because of their parent-subsidary relationship. Id.
The court reasoned that, while a "patent holding subsidiary is a

1 legitimate creature . . . , it cannot fairly be used to insulate
2 patent owners from defending declaratory judgment actions in those
3 fora where its parent company operates under the patent and
4 engages in activities sufficient to create personal jurisdiction
5 and declaratory judgment jurisdiction." Id.²

6 The facts in this case are at least as strong as those in
7 Dainippon. As in Dainippon, MobileStar here had some contact with
8 the forum state: it met with Google in California to attempt to
9 negotiate a license. See id. ("Moreover, CFMT's attempts to
10 negotiation a sublicense with Dainippon in California further
11 strengthen CFMT's contacts with that state."). More
12 fundamentally, as in Dainippon, the circumstances here strongly
13 suggest that Rockstar formed MobileStar as a sham entity for the
14 sole purpose of avoiding jurisdiction in all other fora except
15 MobileStar's state of incorporation (Delaware) and claimed
16 principal place of business (Texas). A mere day before it
17 initiated litigation against Google's customers, Rockstar freshly
18 minted MobileStar, with no California contacts, and assigned the
19
20

21 _____
22 ² Defendants initially attempted to argue that Dainippon's
23 holding was based "first and foremost" on its determination "that
24 the subsidiary itself had minimum contacts with the forum, and
25 those contacts (not the parent's contacts) justified the
26 imposition of personal jurisdiction," insinuating the rest was
27 dicta. Defendants' Reply at 3 (internal quotation marks and
28 italics omitted). However, Defendants later conceded that
Dainippon stood for the proposition that one valid ground for
setting aside corporate formalities for purposes of assessing the
interests of fair play and substantial justice was if the
defendants engaged in "a deliberate attempt to manipulate
jurisdiction." Id. at 4.

1 asserted patents to that subsidiary. Dean Decl. ¶ 15. Other
2 evidence suggesting MobileStar maintains no independent identity
3 is the fact that all MobileStar employees also work for Rockstar.
4 MobileStar has three officers (President Afzal Dean, Vice
5 President Chad Hilyard, and Corporate Secretary Mike Dunleavy) and
6 one board member (Director of the Board John Veschi); all serve on
7 Rockstar's board as well. Dean Decl. ¶ 10. MobileStar
8 purportedly operates out of the same office suite listed for
9 Rockstar. Dean Decl. ¶¶ 5, 15. Although Rockstar asserts that
10 "there is no hint whatsoever of any manipulation" and that
11 "MobileStar was created for legitimate reasons having nothing to
12 do with personal jurisdiction," Rockstar does not actually provide
13 any evidence supporting this point. Defendants' Reply at 4.
14 Because the evidence presented supports Google's allegation that
15 Rockstar created MobileStar solely to dodge jurisdiction, the
16 traditional notions of fair play and justice would not be offended
17 if the Court considers the two entities jointly for purposes of
18 jurisdiction and imputes Rockstar's contacts to the forum state to
19 MobileStar.³
20
21
22
23
24

25 ³ Cf. In re Microsoft, 630 F.3d 1361, 1364-65 (Fed. Cir.
26 2011) (for purposes of a motion to transfer, ignoring the impact
27 of litigation-driven incorporation under the laws of Texas, which
28 occurred sixteen days before filing suit); In re Zimmer Holdings, Inc.,
609 F.3d at 1381 (rejecting connections to Texas as "recent,
ephemeral, and an artifact of litigation").

1 II. General Jurisdiction

2 General, or "all-purpose" personal jurisdiction, subjects a
3 defendant to suit in a forum only where a defendant's contacts
4 with that forum "are so continuous and systematic as to render
5 them essentially at home in the forum State." Daimler AG v.
6 Bauman, 134 S. Ct. 746, 754 (2014) (quoting Goodyear Dunlop Tires
7 Operations, S.A. v. Brown, 131 S. Ct. 2846, 2851 (2011)). The
8 "paradigm bases for general jurisdiction" for a corporation are
9 its place of incorporation and principal place of business. Id.
10 at 760.

11
12 Both Rockstar and MobileStar are incorporated in Delaware and
13 claim to have principal places of business in Plano, Texas. Dean
14 Decl. ¶ 5, 15. Neither Defendant is licensed to do business in
15 California, nor do they own real or personal property, pay taxes,
16 maintain offices, or file lawsuits in California. Dean Decl.
17 ¶¶ 6-9, 16, 22-24, 29-33.

18
19 Google nevertheless contends that Rockstar has stepped in the
20 shoes of its predecessor, Nortel, and assumed its jurisdictional
21 position.⁴ Although Nortel was a Canadian company, it maintained
22

23 _____
24 ⁴ See Doe, 248 F.3d at 926 (explaining requirements for alter
25 ego theory and agency theory for imputing contacts of one
26 corporation to another). See also Katzir's Floor & Home Design,
27 Inc. v. M-MLS.com, 394 F.3d 1143, 1150 (9th Cir. 2004) ("The
28 general rule of successor liability is that a corporation that
purchases all of the assets of another corporation is not liable
for the former corporation's liabilities unless, among other
theories, the purchasing corporation is a mere continuation of the
selling corporation.").

1 its primary United States campus in Santa Clara and designated a
2 registered agent for service of process in California. See
3 Madigan Decl., Exs. 3, 27. Nortel routinely brought suits and
4 defended them in California. See, e.g., Times Networks, Inc. v.
5 Nortel Networks Corp., Case No. 06-00532 (N.D. Cal.) and Nortel
6 Networks Inc. v. State Bd. of Equalization, 191 Cal. App. 4th 1259
7 (2011).

8
9 Google does not allege that Rockstar maintained Nortel's
10 Santa Clara presence in California. Google contends instead that,
11 although the bulk of Rockstar's employees operate out of Canada,
12 Rockstar nevertheless pursues a significant patent licensing
13 business aimed at the technology industry in the Silicon Valley,
14 in California. As Rockstar has stated on many occasions to the
15 press and others, Rockstar is exclusively "a patent licensing
16 business" and operates by reverse-engineering products on the
17 market and proposing that the companies which offer those products
18 purchase licenses. Madigan Decl., Ex. 7, 13; Dean Decl. ¶¶ 18-21.
19 Rockstar does not currently sell any products; commercialization
20 of its significant patent portfolio is its only business. Because
21 the Silicon Valley technology industry is Rockstar's main target,
22 as acknowledged by Rockstar's CEO, Rockstar naturally would have
23 to come into constant contact with the forum state. Madigan
24 Decl., Exs. 16, 35. Rockstar confirmed that, as of May 2012, it
25 had "started negotiations with as many as 100 potential licensees"
26 and has since approached many more. Id., Exs. 7, 17. At least a
27
28

1 couple of these meetings were in California. See Dean Decl. ¶ 18.
2 Rockstar has one employee or independent contractor in California,
3 Wilson, who contacts potential licensees in California. See
4 Madigan Decl. Ex. 17.

5 Google's showing is insufficient to render Defendants
6 "essentially at home" in California. Even if it is true that
7 Defendants engage in "continuous and systematic" business in the
8 forum state, that does not mean that Defendants' presence in the
9 forum state is so substantial that it should fairly be subject to
10 suit "on causes of action arising from dealings entirely distinct
11 from those activities." Daimler AG, 134 S. Ct. at 761.

12 II. Specific Jurisdiction

13
14 Specific jurisdiction exists where the cause of action arises
15 out of the defendant's contacts with the forum state, even if
16 those contacts are isolated and sporadic. Red Wing Shoe Co., Inc.
17 v. Hockerson-Halberstadt, Inc., 148 F.3d 1355, 1359 (Fed. Cir.
18 1998) (citing Burger King Corp., 471 U.S. at 471-77). Even a
19 single act may support a finding of personal jurisdiction so long
20 as it creates a "substantial connection with the forum, as opposed
21 to an attenuated affiliation." Id. The Federal Circuit has
22 developed a three-factor test to determine whether specific
23 jurisdiction exists: "whether (1) the defendant purposefully
24 directed its activities at residents of the forum state, (2) the
25 claim arises out of or relates to the defendant's activities with
26 the forum state, and (3) assertion of personal jurisdiction is
27
28

1 reasonable and fair." Electronics For Imaging, Inc., 340 F.3d at
2 1350.

3 Here, Defendants sued seven Google customers, alleging that
4 they infringed by making and selling "certain mobile communication
5 devices having a version (or adaptation thereof) of Android
6 operating system" which is developed by Google. See Dean Decl.,
7 Exs. A-H. Both Defendants met with Google in California to
8 discuss licensing of the patents-in-suit. Rockstar also met in
9 California with a few of the Google customers sued in the
10 Halloween actions to discuss licensing of the patents-in-suit.
11 These contacts with Google and its customers in California created
12 a cloud of patent infringement charges over Google's Android
13 platform. Google's causes of action for declaratory judgment of
14 non-infringement, which are intended to "clear the air of
15 infringement charges" targeting Google's Android platform, "arise
16 out of or relate to" Defendants' contacts with the forum. See Red
17 Wing Shoe Co., Inc., 148 F.3d at 1360 (holding that "cease-and-
18 desist letters are the cause of the entanglement and at least
19 partially give rise to the plaintiff's action").
20
21

22 Defendants argue that imposing jurisdiction based on the act
23 of sending cease-and-desist letters alone violates the principles
24 of fair play and substantial justice. Id. The Federal Circuit
25 has explained that exercising personal jurisdiction over a
26 patentee based solely on the sending of cease-and-desist letters
27 would be unfair under the second prong of the traditional due
28

1 process inquiry: "whether the maintenance of personal jurisdiction
2 would comport with fair play and substantial justice." Id. at
3 1361 (quotation marks omitted). This is because due process
4 "afford[s] the patentee sufficient latitude to inform others of
5 its patent rights without subjecting itself to jurisdiction in a
6 foreign forum." Id. An offer to license may sometimes be "more
7 closely akin to an offer for settlement of a disputed claim rather
8 than an arms-length negotiation in anticipation of a long-term
9 continuing business relationship," and, if so, by itself may be
10 insufficient to justify exercising specific jurisdiction. Id.
11 Accordingly, to find specific jurisdiction, the Federal Circuit
12 has required that a showing that a defendant engaged in "other
13 activities" in the forum state related to the action at hand.
14 Id.; Avocent Huntsville Corp., 552 F.3d at 1334. These activities
15 need not be limited to those directed at Google itself, but must
16 be related in some way to the patents-in-suit. Avocent Huntsville
17 Corp, 552 F.3d at 1334.

18
19
20 Courts have held that such "other activities" may include
21 forming obligations with forum residents that relate to
22 enforcement of the asserted patents. Some examples of "other
23 activities" that courts have recognized include "initiating
24 judicial or extra-judicial patent enforcement within the forum, or
25 entering into an exclusive license agreement or other undertaking
26 which imposes enforcement obligations with a party residing or
27
28

1 regularly doing business in the forum." Id.⁵ A review of Federal
2 Circuit case law reveals that the relationship must extend beyond
3 the mere payment of royalties or cross-licensing payments, "such
4 as granting both parties the right to litigate infringement cases
5 or granting the licensor the right to exercise control over the
6 licensee's sales or marketing activities." Breckenridge Pharm.,
7 Inc. v. Metabolite Labs., Inc., 444 F.3d 1356, 1366 (Fed. Cir.
8 2006). The defendants must create "continuing obligations between
9 themselves and residents of the forum," forming a "substantial
10 connection" that proximately results from the defendants' own
11 actions such that it would not be "unreasonable to require
12 defendants to submit to the burdens of litigation in that forum as
13 well." Electronics For Imaging, Inc., 340 F.3d at 1350.

14
15
16
17 ⁵ See Campbell Pet Co. v. Miale, 542 F.3d 879, 886 (Fed. Cir.
18 2008) (finding jurisdiction over a patentee who conducted extra-
19 judicial patent enforcement by enlisting a third party in the
20 forum to remove defendant's products from a trade show); Genetic
21 Implant Sys., Inc. v. Core-Vent Corp., 123 F.3d 1455, 1458 (Fed.
22 Cir. 1997) (holding that specific jurisdiction existed over
23 patentee because it had appointed an in-state distributor to sell
24 a product covered by the asserted patent, which was a business
25 relationship "analogous to a grant of a patent license" and
26 created obligations to sue third-party infringers); Akro Corp. v.
27 Luker, 45 F.3d 1541, 1548-49 (Fed. Cir. 1995) (because defendant
28 had entered into an exclusive licensing agreement with one of the
alleged infringer's competitors, which meant that defendant had
"obligations . . . to defend and pursue any infringement" against
the patent, specific jurisdiction was proper); SRAM Corp. v.
Sunrace Roots Enter. Co., Ltd., 390 F. Supp. 2d 781, 787 (N.D.
Ill. 2005) (specific jurisdiction was proper where defendant had
"purposefully directed its activities" at residents of the forum
by marketing a product that directly competed with the alleged
infringer).

1 Google contends that Defendants have accepted substantial
2 obligations to Apple, a forum resident, which require Defendants
3 "to defend and pursue any infringement against" their patents.
4 Akro Corp., 45 F.3d at 1543. Google alleges that Apple is a
5 majority shareholder of Defendants and exerts substantial control
6 over them, and as a result Defendants are obliged to act on
7 Apple's behalf in a campaign to attack Google's Android platform.⁶
8

9 In support of this allegation, Google submits strong evidence
10 that Apple is indeed the majority shareholder of Defendants based
11 on Apple's majority investment in Rockstar's predecessor entity,
12 Rockstar Bidco.⁷ Currently, Rockstar is a Delaware limited
13 partnership which lists "Rockstar Consortium LLC" located in New
14 York as general partner. Id., Exs. 32-33; Dean Decl. ¶ 15. But
15 Apple contributed \$2.6 billion, or fifty-eight percent of the \$4.5
16 billion total investment in Rockstar Bidco. Madigan Decl., Ex. 9
17 at 34. Although Rockstar Bidco reorganized itself to become
18
19
20

21 ⁶ Defendants contend that Google has not proven that alter
22 ego or agency theories apply, and thus Apple's contacts with the
23 forum cannot be imputed to Defendants. See Defendants' Reply
24 at 11. Defendants misunderstand Google's argument. Google does
25 not seek to impute to Defendants Apple's contacts with the forum
26 state, but instead argues that Defendants have undertaken a
27 substantial obligation to Apple related to the asserted patents
28 that makes it reasonable to impose specific jurisdiction.

⁷ As previously noted, Rockstar wholly owns MobileStar and
the Court considers the two entities jointly for purposes of
jurisdiction because it is likely that MobileStar was created
solely for litigation purposes.

1 Rockstar, it does not appear that any ownership interests changed,
2 nor do Defendants assert otherwise.

3 Even if Apple is a majority shareholder of Rockstar, if
4 Defendants were able to demonstrate that Apple is a mere passive
5 shareholder and takes no part in patent assertion strategy, then
6 the relationship between Apple and Defendants might not be
7 sufficient to uphold specific jurisdiction. Cf. Breckenridge
8 Pharm., Inc., 444 F.3d at 1366. Google alleges that Apple's role
9 extends beyond the mere receipt of profits. Rockstar's CEO Veschi
10 stated that he does not talk to its shareholders about potential
11 licensing partners or infringement suits, but admitted that he has
12 to show them "progress and that real work is being done." Madigan
13 Decl., Ex. 12 at 4-5. Veschi holds periodic calls and meetings
14 with the owners, primarily with their intellectual property
15 departments, and Veschi acknowledges that they "work well
16 together." Id. at 5. Although Veschi states they avoid talking
17 about details, it does appear at least telling that Veschi speaks
18 directly and periodically with the owners' intellectual property
19 departments to demonstrate that "work is being done." Id. at 4-5.

22 Google demonstrates a direct link between Apple's unique
23 business interests, separate and apart from mere profitmaking, and
24 Defendants' actions against Google and its customers. Google and
25

1 Apple's rivalry in the smartphone industry is well-documented.⁸
2 Apple's founder stated that he viewed Android as a "rip off" of
3 iPhone features and intended to "destroy" Android by launching a
4 "thermonuclear war." Id., Ex. 31. Defendants' litigation
5 strategy of suing Google's customers in the Halloween actions is
6 consistent with Apple's particular business interests. In suing
7 the Halloween action defendants, Defendants here limited their
8 infringement claims to Android-operating devices only, even where
9 they asserted a hardware-based patent. See, e.g., Dean Decl.,
10 Ex. A and the '551 patent. This "scare the customer and run"
11 tactic advances Apple's interest in interfering with Google's
12 Android business. See Campbell, 542 F.3d at 887 (finding
13 jurisdiction where the patentee "took steps to interfere with the
14 plaintiff's business").
15

16
17 In sum, with conflicts in the allegations and evidence
18 resolved in its favor, Google has shown that it is likely that
19 Defendants have created continuing obligations with a forum
20 resident to marshal the asserted patents such that it would not be
21 unreasonable to require Defendants to submit to the burdens of
22 _____

23 ⁸ See, e.g., Madigan Decl., Ex. 24 (Rockstar's "stockpile was
24 finally used for what pretty much everyone suspected it would be
25 used for -- launching an all-out patent attack on Google and
26 Android"); Ex. 25 ("This is an all out assault on Google and the
27 Android smartphone ecosystem and it would be fair to say that most
28 experts expected those patents would rear their ugly head sometime
in the future"); Ex. 26 (new attention focused on Rockstar
"largely because it gives the appearance that three leading
competitors to Android are teaming up against it"); Ex. 27
(further detailing Apple's anti-Android litigation campaign).

1 litigation in this forum. Electronics For Imaging, Inc., 340 F.3d
2 at 1350. Defendants have purposefully directed activities to
3 residents of this forum in a way which relates materially to the
4 enforcement or defense of the patent, which is sufficient to
5 establish specific jurisdiction. Avocent Huntsville Corp., 552
6 F.3d at 1338.⁹

7
8 III. Jurisdiction under Declaratory Judgment Act

9 The Declaratory Judgment Act provides, "In a case of actual
10 controversy within its jurisdiction, any court of the United
11 States . . . may declare the rights and other legal relations of
12 any interested party seeking such declaration, whether or not
13 further relief is or could be sought." 28 U.S.C. § 2201. The
14 declaratory judgment plaintiff must establish that the "facts
15 alleged under all the circumstances show that there is a
16 substantial controversy between parties having adverse legal
17 interests of sufficient immediacy and reality to warrant the
18 issuance of a declaratory judgment." Micron Tech., Inc. v. Mosaid
19 Technologies, Inc., 518 F.3d 897, 901 (Fed. Cir. 2008) (citing
20 MedImmune, Inc. v. Genentech, Inc., 549 U.S. 118, 126 (2007)
21 (holding that there was a real and substantial controversy based
22 on threatening letters and public statements showing an "intent to
23 continue an aggressive litigation strategy"))).

24
25
26 ⁹ Because the Court finds personal jurisdiction over
27 Defendants is proper, venue is also proper. Trintech Indus., 395
28 F.3d at 1280 ("Venue in a patent action against a corporate
defendant exists wherever there is personal jurisdiction").

1 Even when declaratory judgment jurisdiction is present,
2 courts have some discretion to decline to exercise that
3 jurisdiction. Wilton v. Seven Falls Co., 515 U.S. 277, 289-90
4 (1995). In order to decide whether to exercise jurisdiction under
5 the Declaratory Judgment Act, the court "must determine whether
6 hearing the case would serve the objectives for which the
7 Declaratory Judgment Act was created." Capo, Inc. v. Dioptics
8 Med. Products, Inc., 387 F.3d 1352, 1355 (Fed. Cir. 2004). When
9 the objectives of the Declaratory Judgment Act are served by the
10 action, dismissal is rarely proper. Id. "There must be well-
11 founded reasons for declining to entertain a declaratory judgment
12 action." Id.

14 The present suit serves the purposes of the Declaratory
15 Judgment Act, which "in patent cases is to provide the allegedly
16 infringing party relief from uncertainty and delay regarding its
17 legal rights." Micron Tech., Inc., 518 F.3d at 902. A real and
18 substantial controversy existed when Google filed suit.
19 Defendants had sued a number of Google's customers, based in part
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

1 on their use of the Android platform developed by Google.¹⁰
2 Defendants did not, however, name Google as a defendant. This
3 tactic of targeting the customers instead of the manufacturer
4 "infects the competitive environment of the business community
5 with uncertainty and insecurity." Electronics for Imaging, Inc.
6 v. Coyle, 394 F.3d 1341, 1346 (Fed. Cir. 2005). In response to
7 the uncertainty caused by Defendants' actions, Google filed this
8 declaratory judgment action to "clear the air of infringement
9 charges." Avocent Huntsville Corp., 552 F.3d at 1329. That
10 uncertainty still exists in part because, although Defendants
11 later amended one of the Halloween actions to implicate Google
12 directly, they accused Google of infringing only three of the
13 seven of the patents at issue here. Case No. 13-0900, Docket
14 No. 19. Although Defendants recently sought to include the final
15 four other patents in the Texas case, leave to amend has not yet
16
17

18 ¹⁰ Defendants filed a Statement of Recent Decision calling the
19 Court's attention to Microsoft Corp. v. DataTern, Inc., 2013-1184,
20 2014 WL 1327923 (Fed. Cir. Apr. 4, 2014). The Federal Circuit
21 noted that, although suits against customers do not "automatically
22 give rise to a case or controversy regarding induced
23 infringement," there is a case or controversy if "there is a
24 controversy between the patentee and the supplier as to the
25 supplier's liability for induced or contributory infringement
26 based on the alleged acts of direct infringement by its
27 customers." Id. at *2-3. The vast majority of the claims brought
28 in the Halloween actions appear to be targeted specifically at
Android features; the exception is the '551 patent, with which it
is not clear if Android is specifically involved. It is also not
clear if Defendants approached Google to license the '551 patent.
See id. at *2. Because the DataTern court had the benefit of
claim charts to discern the details of the patentee's infringement
theories, the Court may revisit the inclusion of the '551 patent
at a later date.

1 been granted. Case No. 13-0900, Docket Nos. 45-46. Because the
2 patent owners failed to "grasp the nettle and sue," Google was
3 justified in bringing the present action. Electronics for
4 Imaging, Inc., 394 F.3d at 1346.

5 IV. Motion to Transfer

6 A. First-to-File Rule

7 When cases between the same parties raising the same issues
8 are pending in two or more federal districts, the general rule is
9 to favor the forum of the first-filed action, regardless of
10 whether it is a declaratory judgment action. Micron Tech., Inc.,
11 518 F.3d at 904. The court of the actual first-filed case should
12 rule on motions to dismiss or transfer based on exceptions to the
13 first-to-file rule or on the convenience factors. See id. The
14 parties dispute which is the first-filed action. Google argues
15 that the first-filed action is the present suit, which was filed
16 before Google faced charges in the Eastern District of Texas due
17 to Defendants' New Year's Eve amendment. Defendants argue that
18 the Halloween actions themselves constituted the first-filed
19 suits. Defendants' Motion to Dismiss at 5, 19-24. Although the
20 Halloween actions did not name Google specifically, Defendants
21 contend that they should be considered first-filed suits against
22 Google because they involved "substantially the same" parties as
23 those implicated here. Id. (citing Futurewei Techs., Inc. v.
24 Acacia Research Corp., 737 F.3d 704, 706 (Fed. Cir. 2013)).
25
26
27
28 However, the present situation is not equivalent to the

1 "substantially similar" parties that were implicated in Futurewei,
2 which were a patent owner, its exclusive licensee, and the
3 licensee's wholly-owned subsidiary/assignee. Id. at 705-06. By
4 contrast, the relationship between Google and the Halloween
5 defendants is one of manufacturer and customer. Google and the
6 Halloween defendants are not in privity. Cf. Microchip Tech, Inc.
7 v. United Module Corp., 2011 WL 2669627, at *3 (N.D. Cal.)
8 ("similar" parties were parent and its wholly-owned subsidiary).
9

10 Even if the parties were substantially similar in the
11 Halloween actions and this one, the customer-suit exception to the
12 first-to-file rule would apply. Codex Corp v. Milgo Elec. Corp.,
13 553 F.2d 735, 737 (1st Cir. 1977) ("an exception to the first-
14 filed rule has developed in patent litigation where the earlier
15 action is an infringement suit against a mere customer and the
16 later suit is a declaratory judgment action brought by the
17 manufacturer of the accused devices"). Because the determination
18 of the infringement issues here would likely be dispositive of the
19 other cases, and the manufacturer presumably has a greater
20 interest in defending against charges of patent infringement than
21 the customers, the present suit takes precedence. Kahn v. Gen.
22 Motors Corp., 889 F.2d 1078, 1081 (Fed. Cir. 1989); Cf.
23 ContentGuard Holdings, Inc. v. Google, Inc., Case No. 14-0061
24 (E.D. Tex.), Docket No. 37, at 6.
25

26
27 B. Convenience Factors

28 The Court could make an exception to the general rule giving

1 preference the first-filed case if doing so would be "in the
2 interest of justice or expediency, as in any issue of choice of
3 forum." Micron Tech., Inc., 518 F.3d at 904. To resolve disputes
4 of "competing forum interests" between accused infringers and
5 patent holders, the court may consider the "convenience factors"
6 under the transfer analysis of 28 U.S.C. § 1404(a), including: the
7 convenience and availability of witnesses, the absence of
8 jurisdiction over all necessary or desirable parties, the
9 possibility of consolidation with related litigation, and
10 considerations relating to the interests of justice. Id. at 902-
11 05. See Reflex Packaging, Inc. v. Audio Video Color Corp., 2013
12 WL 5568345, at *2 (N.D. Cal.) (listing additional transfer
13 factors).

14
15 1. Convenience and availability of witnesses

16 The convenience and availability of witnesses is "probably
17 the single most important factor" in the transfer analysis. In re
18 Genentech, Inc., 566 F.3d 1338, 1343 (Fed. Cir. 2009). This
19 factor favors California because Google's Android products, the
20 target of this infringement action, were designed and created
21 here. Many of the witnesses who can testify to the design and
22 development of the accused Android platform's features reside near
23 Google's headquarters in Mountain View, California. Dubey Decl.
24 ¶¶ 3-8. Other witnesses, such as the inventors of the patents-in-
25 suit, are likely to be in Canada. Defendants do not name any
26 witnesses in Texas essential to the suit.
27
28

1 2. Jurisdiction over parties to this action and
2 possibility of consolidation with related
3 litigation

4 Defendants argue that this Court lacks jurisdiction over some
5 of the customer defendants to the Halloween actions in Texas.
6 Defendants contend those customers necessarily would be
7 indispensable parties to this litigation because their rights in
8 the patents-in-suit are at play. However, those parties are not
9 essential to resolution of claims between Defendants and Google.
10 It cannot be said that any customer who uses the technology at
11 issue is an indispensable party.

12 The Halloween actions might not and need not be transferred
13 here.¹¹ They might be stayed in Texas and be reopened upon
14 completion of this suit, which likely will resolve some of the
15 infringement issues there. If the Texas actions are transferred
16 here, they can be consolidated with this case at least for
17 pretrial purposes.

18 3. Other factors

19 Other factors that may be considered include: the plaintiff's
20 choice of forum, the convenience of the parties, the ease of
21 access to the evidence, the familiarity of each forum with the
22 applicable law, the local interest in the controversy, the
23
24
25

26 ¹¹ In each of the remaining Halloween actions, the defendant
27 has filed a motion to stay or, in the alternative, to transfer the
28 case to this district. See Docket Nos. 46, 48, 50-51, 55.

1 relative court congestion, and the interests of justice. Reflex
2 Packaging, Inc., 2013 WL 5568345, at *2.

3 Defendants argue that they are the true plaintiffs and
4 accordingly, their choice of forum should take precedence. The
5 Court finds this factor at best to favor Defendants only slightly
6 because each side accuses the other of forum shopping. Indeed,
7 Defendants have not identified any witnesses residing in Texas,
8 their primary operations and headquarters are in Canada, and they
9 admit that many of the inventors of the patents-in-suit were
10 listed at least years ago as being from Canada. Defendants'
11 argument of their own convenience is similarly attenuated because,
12 again, their operations appear to be based in Canada, not Texas.

14 The Northern District of California has the greater interest
15 in this litigation because the claims here will "call into
16 question the work and reputation of several individuals residing
17 in or conducting business in this community." In re Hoffman-La
18 Roche, 587 F.3d 1333, 1336 (Fed. Cir. 2009). Courts in the
19 Eastern District of Texas have recognized that the "Northern
20 District of California has an interest in protecting intellectual
21 property rights that stem from research and development in Silicon
22 Valley." Affinity Labs of Texas v. Samsung Elecs. Co., Ltd., 2013
24 WL 5508122, at *3 (E.D. Tex.). Although Defendants claim to have
25 substantial ties to Texas, their headquarters appear to be in
26 Canada. The interest of the Eastern District of Texas in this
27
28

United States District Court
For the Northern District of California

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28

controversy is therefore outweighed by the compelling interests in California.

The remaining factors are either neutral or favor Google. Because Google, the accused infringer, resides in California, much of the evidence is here. Some of the evidence may be in Canada or other states; however, that does not make Texas the more convenient forum. Each forum is familiar with patent law, and both have similar court congestion and time to trial. All of the cases are in early stages.

On balance, the factors do not weigh in favor of transferring the action to the Eastern District of Texas.

CONCLUSION

The motion to dismiss or transfer is DENIED.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Dated: 04/17/2014



CLAUDIA WILKEN
United States District Judge