

# netinfo

## microsoft vs. world - a timeline

**9:32am 13.Jan.98.PST**  
Today's hearing in the Microsoft Regulators Raid MSoft's antitrust case is just the latest installment of a stormy long-running drama starring regulators and the software titan. A brief history of significant antitrust action against Microsoft.

**June 1990:** The Federal Trade Commission launches a probe into possible collusion between Microsoft and IBM in the PC software market.  
An Online Human Rights Fete  
**August 1993:** Frustrated by two FTC deadlocks in the investigation, the Justice Department takes over, focusing on Microsoft's DOS marketing practices.

**September 1993:** On the heels of similar action across the Atlantic, the European Commission launches its own anti-trust investigation of Microsoft after receiving a complaint from Novell, which alleges that Microsoft's restrictive licensing arrangements with computer manufacturers constitute monopolistic practices under European Community law.

**July 1994:** Microsoft settles antitrust charges with the Justice Department, signing on to a consent decree that forbids Microsoft from using its operating system dominance to squelch competition. Just days prior to the decree, Microsoft also settled charges with the European Commission, which has cooperated with the Justice Department in an unprecedented manner.

**April 1995:** The Justice Department files suit to block a proposed merger between Microsoft and Intuit, claiming the marriage would quash competition in the electronic checkbook market. Within weeks, Microsoft scraps merger plan.

**August 1995:** After months of legal wrangling, US District Court Judge Thomas Jackson officially approves the 1994 consent decree.

**19 August 1997:** Two years after the consent decree, the Justice Department announces it has its sights set on Microsoft again - this time to determine whether the software-maker's US\$150 million investment in Apple Computer, or its equity stakes in three companies that develop Internet streaming technologies, would squelch competition.

**15 October 1997:** The European Union's competition commissioner, Karel Van Miert, tells reporters that the European Commission will hold hearings on Microsoft's trade practices before year's end, based on a complaint it has received from an undisclosed competitor.

**20 October 1997:** The Justice Department files a complaint demanding a US\$1-million-a-day fine against Microsoft for alleged violation of the 1995 consent decree. The complaint claims that Microsoft overstepped its bounds by requiring PC manufacturers to bundle the Internet Explorer browser with their hardware products in order to obtain a license for Microsoft's Windows 95 operating system.

**11 November 1997:** An unabashed Microsoft files a formal response to the government's allegations, stating it "retains unfettered freedom" to add new functions - including Web browsing - to Windows, and claiming it had long planned to integrate Explorer. In fact, it says, the integration is complete and irreversible: Windows and Explorer are one and the same.

**20 November 1997:** The Justice Department fires back, citing

internal Microsoft documents that contradict the company's claim that browser integration into Windows had been long planned. Microsoft began integrating the browser for one reason, claims Justice: to crush Netscape.

**5 December:** US District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson hears opening arguments in the case.

**11 December 1997:** In a preliminary injunction, Judge Jackson orders Microsoft to immediately stop requiring PC-makers to bundle Explorer with Windows 95, but waives the US\$1 million fine demanded by the Justice Department. He defers final judgment until 1998, appointing a special master, Harvard law professor Lawrence Lessig, to examine the issues and present findings to the court.

**15 December 1997:** Microsoft, in an appeal marked by an arrogance that galvanizes foes in the Justice Department, dismisses Judge Jackson's preliminary injunction as a matter beyond his jurisdiction and comprehension. They further fan the flames of oppositional fury by offering three non-alternative alternatives to their current practice of bundling Explorer and Windows 95: to ship an Explorer-stripped version of Windows that will not work; to ship an outdated, pre-Explorer version of Windows 95; or to ship the existing integrated Explorer/Windows package.

**17 December 1997:** The Justice Department demands that Microsoft be held in contempt of court for spurning the dictates of the preliminary injunction. In a separate action, attorneys general from nine states hold a secret meeting to discuss pressing their own antitrust claims against Microsoft.

**26 December 1997:** Microsoft

files a motion to have special master Lessig dismissed on grounds of bias against Microsoft, citing an email to a Netscape employee in which Lessig complained that Explorer had "screwed up" his browser bookmarks.

**8 January 1998:** Sensing a backlash of public opinion on the heels of its December courtroom antics and the eve of its next hearing, Microsoft issues a formal apology for any possible disrespect it might have shown Judge Jackson or the Justice Department. In the same breath, Microsoft makes it clear that though its tone may change, its position will not.

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