

Walmart to pay \$282 million over foreign corruption charges

Associated Press more than \$500,000 to an intermediary in Brazil who was known as a "sorceress" for her uncanny ability to make construction permit problems disappear.

U.S. authorities went after Walmart under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which prohibits American companies operating abroad from using bribery and other illegal methods.

The nation's biggest store chain settled both civil charges brought by the Securities and Exchange Commission and a criminal case built by federal prosecutors in Virginia. It said the two settlements close the books on federal investigations that stretch back to 2012 and have collectively cost the company more than \$900 million.

"We're pleased to resolve this matter," said Walmart President and CEO Doug McMillon in a statement. "Walmart is committed to doing business the right way, and that means acting ethically everywhere we operate. We've enhanced

our policies, procedures and systems and invested tremendous resources globally into ethics and compliance, and now have a strong Global Anti-Corruption Compliance Program."

In the criminal case, Walmart agreed to pay \$138 million to avoid prosecution, while its Brazilian subsidiary, WMT Brasilia, pleaded guilty to violating the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act.

As for the civil case, the SEC announced a \$144 million settlement against Walmart for "failing to operate a sufficient anti-corruption compliance program" in Brazil, China, India and Mexico.

"Walmart valued international growth and cost-cutting over compliance," said Charles Cain, chief of the SEC unit overseeing FCPA violations. "The company could have avoided many of these problems, but instead Walmart repeatedly failed to take red flags seriously and delayed the

implementation of appropriate internal accounting controls."

The criminal case focused on corruption that occurred in Brazil in 2009 and 2010 and involved what authorities said were misdeeds by the subsidiary that led the parent company to submit inaccurate financial records.

The money that went to the intermediary was recorded as payments to a construction company, even though there were numerous red flags indicating the intermediary was actually a government official, authorities said. Walmart Brazil was barred at the time from hiring civil servants.

Court papers do not identify the intermediary but say she became known inside Walmart Brazil as a "sorceress" or "genie" for her "ability to acquire permits quickly by 'sort(ing) things out like magic.'"

A representative of Walmart Brazil had no

comment.

Walmart's foreign practices have been under investigation since 2012.

The New York Times won a Pulitzer Prize for reporting that year that exposed millions of dollars in bribes made by Walmart executives to facilitate growth in Mexico.

According to the SEC, companies including Halliburton, Anheuser-Busch InBev, JPMorgan and Panasonic reached settlements under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act ranging from \$6 million to \$264 million in recent years.

Last year a Brazilian energy company agreed to pay nearly \$1.8 billion.

Bentonville, Arkansas-based Walmart recently reported quarterly earnings of \$3.84 billion. It announced last year that it decided to sell 80% of its stake in Walmart Brazil to Advent International at a loss of \$4.5 billion. At the time, the subsidiary had 438 stores in Brazil.

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ACROSS

1 ___ on (urges)

5 Antelope

8 Colorado Indian

11 Macaw

14 Loose women in London

16 Set of rooms

18 Mayan Indian

19 Actor Glass

20 Observant

21 Muslim's faith

22 Item in Gypsy Rose Lee's closet

23 ___ hat

24 Storm center

28 Paid athlete

29 Desert wanderer's relief

30 Civil War soldier, for short

33 Archway wedge

39 Puts in a postal box

42 "You ___ Live Twice"

44 Hitch in secret

45 Tightly stretched

46 Confidentially

52 Congressman: abbr.

54 ___ brio

55 Merciless

56 ___-Magnon

57 Lacquered, in a way

62 Church communities

65 Tokyo, formerly

66 Marriage

69 Atlas abbr.

70 ___-relief

71 Easy listening

78 Doonesbury's first name

80 Goosebump-inducing

81 ___ to middling

82 Celebrities

84 Gradual, in music

87 "Futurama" delivery boy

88 Augustine of

90 Not quite right

92 What a brat might be

101 Advanced deg.

102 Bling

103 "You're ___ of Me" (Kim

Carnes)

104 "King Lear" character

106 Tattered scrap

107 Frau's emphatic negation

108 Column style

109 Boldness

110 Sooner, to a poet

111 Army chief: abbr.

112 Soak

113 Germ

DOWN

1 Greek alphabet's seventh

2 Storm

3 Color of a Savile Row suit?

4 Throat infection

5 Go on about

6 Blue or White river

7 2002 Olympics site

8 Shadow

9 Lao-tzu's thinking

10 Make feeble

11 ___ Kodesh (Holy Ark)

12 Spade, for Bogart

13 Common connector

15 Baby shower symbol

16 ___-in

17 Australian bird

25 Adversary

26 Tobiko, e.g.

27 SEATO's sphere

30 Hold up

31 Compass pt.

32 Sandwich counter order

34 Wistful thinking

35 Foxlike

36 "Never ___ Late"

37 "Bloom ___ County" penguin

38 Tidy

40 First name in monstrous butlers

41 Metric unit

43 Workout spot: abbr.

47 Very long time

48 World-weariness

49 Alphabetic trio

50 Genetic material: abbr.

51 Epiphany offering

53 Like whole numbers: abbr.

57 One of George Bush's sons

58 His rap was cut from "Hamilton"

59 Assume as a fact

60 Culmination

61 Completed

63 Inhabitant of: suffix

64 Feudal laborer

67 Cooking fat

68 Poverty

71 Deserving

72 Raw mineral

73 Kind of evergreen

74 Steeped drink

75 Yokel

76 Broadcast

77 Dehumidified

79 Mel Brooks muse Madeline

83 Coin

84 Emulate Seuss's Mr. Brown

85 Tennessee Ernie Ford unit

86 More than occasionally

89 Primp's pal

91 Bona ___ (credentials)

92 Burn a little

93 Margin

94 Short-lived craze

95 Milit. addresses

96 Edible rootstock

97 Math subj.

98 Space-saving abbr.

99 Monster of legend

100 Church area

101 Post's opposite

105 Like Bette's dress in "Jezebel"

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