

MACC to probe Alcatel Lucent bribery allegations
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The Malaysian Anti-Corruption Commission (MACC) said today they will investigate US claims that French-based telecom equipment giant Alcatel-Lucent bribed officials to secure contracts.

The Paris-based firm has been accused by US authorities to have bribed government officials in Latin America and Asia - including Malaysia - between December 2001 and June 2006.

Alcatel on Monday agreed to pay US\$137 million (RM432.4 million) in fines and penalties to settle the charges, after reaching an agreement with the US Justice Department and the Securities and Exchange Commission.

The Justice Department said Alcatel had violated the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act prior to its 2006 merger with US-based Lucent Technologies.

"The MACC viewed the claims seriously and would verify with the relevant parties before deciding on any appropriate actions to be taken," the commission said in a statement.

Consultants funnel bribes

There were no details immediately available on Malaysian officials' involvement in the case.

The SEC has said Alcatel's subsidiaries "used consultants who performed little or no legitimate work to funnel more than US\$8 million in bribes to government officials in order to obtain or retain lucrative telecommunications contracts and other contracts."

Alcatel-Lucent admitted that the company earned some US\$48.1 million (RM148 million) in profits as a result of the actions, officials said.

Alcatel agreed to pay more than US\$45 million (RM139 million) to settle the SEC's charges, and pay an additional US\$92 million to settle criminal charges with the Department of Justice.

Apart from Malaysia, the SEC complaint said Alcatel's bribes also went to government officials in Costa Rica, Honduras and Taiwan.

- AFP

