

ADMINISTRATIVE PANEL DECISION

Valero Energy Corporation, Valero Marketing and Supply Company v.
Renee Peterson
Case No. D2026-0736

1. The Parties

The Complainants are Valero Energy Corporation, and Valero Marketing and Supply Company, United States of America ("United States"), represented by Fasthoff Law Firm PLLC, United States. Unless otherwise specified, the Complainants shall be collectively referred herein as "the Complainant".

The Respondent is Renee Peterson, United States.

2. The Domain Name and Registrar

The disputed domain name <valero-corp.com> is registered with Wild West Domains, LLC (the "Registrar").

3. Procedural History

The Complaint was filed with the WIPO Arbitration and Mediation Center (the "Center") on February 20, 2026. On February 23, 2026, the Center transmitted by email to the Registrar a request for registrar verification in connection with the disputed domain name. On February 23, 2026, the Registrar transmitted by email to the Center its verification response disclosing registrant and contact information for the disputed domain name which differed from the named Respondent ("John Doe") and contact information in the Complaint. The Center sent an email communication to the Complainant on February 24, 2026, providing the registrant and contact information disclosed by the Registrar, and inviting the Complainant to submit an amendment to the Complaint. The Complainant filed an amended Complaint on February 24, 2026.

The Center verified that the Complaint together with the amended Complaint satisfied the formal requirements of the Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Policy" or "UDRP"), the Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Rules"), and the WIPO Supplemental Rules for Uniform Domain Name Dispute Resolution Policy (the "Supplemental Rules").

In accordance with the Rules, paragraphs 2 and 4, the Center formally notified the Respondent of the Complaint, and the proceedings commenced on February 25, 2026. In accordance with the Rules, paragraph 5, the due date for Response was March 17, 2026. The Center received an email communication from the email address associated with the disputed domain name on March 3, 2026. On March 19, 2026, the Center notified the Parties of the Commencement of the Panel Appointment Process.

The Center appointed Clark W. Lackert as the sole panelist in this matter on March 24, 2026. The Panel finds that it was properly constituted. The Panel has submitted the Statement of Acceptance and Declaration of Impartiality and Independence, as required by the Center to ensure compliance with the Rules, paragraph 7.

4. Factual Background

The Complainant is one of the largest global independent petroleum refiner, and a leading producer of renewable fuels in North America. The Complainant has continuously used the VALERO trademark (the “Mark”) in commerce for at least 40 years. During this time, the Complainant has spent tens of millions of dollars advertising, marketing, and promoting the Mark in the United States, and throughout the world, in a wide variety of media formats, including print, television, radio, Internet, billboards, and signage, among others.

As a result of the Complainant’s significant monetary investment and continuous use of the Mark to advertise, market and promote its brand over more than three decades, the Mark has developed goodwill and consumer recognition. The second Complainant has registered the Mark in the United States as follows:

Trademark	Jurisdiction	Registration Number	Registration Date
VALERO	United States	4216650	October 2, 2012
VALERO	United States	1314004	January 8, 1985
VALERO & V DESIGN	United States	2927757	February 22, 2005
VALERO & V DESIGN	United States	2938790	April 5, 2005

The Complainant further has continuously owned and operated an Internet website under the domain name <valero.com>, registered on February 21, 1996, for many years, and utilizes that domain name for company email addresses through which it communicates internally, with customers, vendors, and the public in general.

The disputed domain name was registered on February 8, 2026, and does not resolve to an active page. The Complainant has provided evidence that the disputed domain name has been used in connection with fraudulent emails impersonating one of the Complainant’s employees.

5. Parties’ Contentions

A. Complainant

The Complainant contends that it has satisfied each of the elements required under the Policy for a transfer of the disputed domain name. Notably, the Complainant contends:

The Respondent’s Domain Name is Confusingly Similar to Complainant’s Mark.

More than 50 other Panels have previously determined that the Complainant has rights in the Mark, and cites e.g., *Valero Energy Corporation v. Domain Admin*, WIPO Case No. [D2019-1708](#); *Valero Energy Corporation v. David Wayne*, WIPO Case No. [D2016-1461](#); *Valero Energy Corporation v. Bargin Register*, WIPO Case No. [D2012-2399](#); *Valero Energy Corporation v. ICS INC.*, WIPO Case No. [D2012-2398](#); *Valero Energy Corporation v. Privacy Protect.org/Maying Joe*, WIPO Case No. [D2012-0939](#), among others. The Mark is both distinctive and famous.

The disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the Mark owned by the Complainant because it is comprised of the Complainant’s Mark in its entirety, plus the word generic word “corp” along with the generic Top-Level Domain “.com”.

The Respondent Has No Rights or Legitimate Interests in the Domain Name

The Respondent has no rights or legitimate interests in or to the disputed domain name. The Respondent has never been commonly known by the disputed domain name; has not used or made demonstrable preparations to use the disputed domain name; and is not making a legitimate noncommercial or fair use of the disputed domain name without intent for commercial gain. The Complainant has not licensed to the Respondent the right to use the Mark, and the Respondent is not otherwise authorized to act on the Complainant's behalf.

To the contrary, the disputed domain name is being actively used to perpetrate a business email compromise scheme targeting third-party companies. As evidenced by an email exchange, the Respondent used the disputed domain name to impersonate an actual employee of the Complainant purporting to hold the title of “Director of Purchasing and Sales”. Using the email address “[...]@valero-corp.com”, the Respondent initiated contact with a third party, a legitimate industrial components manufacturer, by submitting an inquiry through that company’s website expressing interest in purchasing high-end electromagnetic systems. After a sales representative responded in good faith with detailed information about the company’s capabilities and proposed a follow-up call, the Respondent replied by directing the third party representative to download files via a “We Transfer” link, ostensibly containing technical specifications and order details. The Respondent’s scheme was designed to exploit the goodwill and reputation of the Complainant’s Mark by creating the false impression that the communications originate from a legitimate procurement officer from the Complainant, thereby inducing recipients to trust the correspondence and click on potentially malicious file-sharing links. The Respondent has incorporated the Complainant’s famous Mark into the disputed domain name, paired it with a generic corporate suffix “corp”, and deployed it with a professional-looking email signature complete with the Complainant’s actual corporate address, and phone number, all to lend an air of authenticity to a fraudulent solicitation and phishing scheme.

Evidence of the Respondent's Bad Faith Registration and Use

The Respondent was aware of the Complainant's prominence in the business world when it registered the disputed domain name. Notwithstanding the Respondent's knowledge of the fame associated with the Mark, the Respondent intentionally registered, for commercial gain, a domain name that is comprised of the Complainant's Mark. The disputed domain name is being actively used to perpetrate a business email compromise scheme targeting third-party companies, as described in detail above.

In addition to the unlawful conduct and non-use of the disputed domain name for a website, it is well established that:

the concept of a domain name “being used in bad faith” is not limited to positive action; inaction is within the concept. It is possible, in certain circumstances, for inactivity by the Respondent to amount to the disputed domain name being used in bad faith and the Complainant cites *Telstra Corporation Limited v. Nuclear Marshmallows*, WIPO Case No. [D2000-0003](#). Here, the Respondent has registered a domain name that prevents the Complainant from registering a domain name that embodies the Mark owned by the Complainant.

Further, the Respondent has provided false contact information to the Registrar in an attempt to conceal his or her true identity, both of which constitute bad faith under the UDRP.

Lastly, the disputed domain name resolves to an inactive page. There “is nothing on the record showing that Respondent presently is preparing to use the corresponding disputed domain name for any legitimate purpose, given the full incorporation of Complainant’s mark in the disputed domain name, and the fact that Respondent is totally unrelated to Complainant”, citing *Arkema France v. Arkema Global, Arkema Group, Arkema Corp and Arkema Cloud*. WIPO Case No. [D2014-2010](#)..

B. Respondent

The Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's contentions. An email communication from an email address associated to the disputed domain name was sent to the Center purporting to be coming from the Director of Purchasing and sales Valero Energy Corp, inviting to click on a link under the concept "we transfer", and with the text "technical specifications and order details for the product we are interested in purchasing from your company".

6. Discussion and Findings

A. Identical or Confusingly Similar

It is well accepted that the first element functions primarily as a standing requirement. The standing (or threshold) test for confusing similarity involves a reasoned but relatively straightforward comparison between the Complainant's trademark and the disputed domain name. WIPO Overview of WIPO Panel Views on Select UDRP Questions (["WIPO Overview 3.1"](#)), section 1.7.

The Complainant has shown rights in respect of a trademark or service mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.2.1.

The entirety of the mark is reproduced within the disputed domain name. Accordingly, the disputed domain name is confusingly similar to the mark for the purposes of the Policy. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 1.7.

The Panel finds the first element of the Policy has been established.

B. Rights or Legitimate Interests

Paragraph 4(c) of the Policy provides a list of circumstances in which the Respondent may demonstrate rights or legitimate interests in a disputed domain name.

Although the overall burden of proof in UDRP proceedings is on the complainant, panels have recognized that proving that a respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in a domain name may result in the difficult task of "proving a negative", requiring information that is often primarily within the knowledge or control of the respondent. As such, where a complainant makes out a prima facie case that the respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests, the burden of production on this element shifts to the respondent to come forward with relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the domain name (although the burden of proof always remains on the complainant). If the respondent fails to come forward with such relevant evidence, the complainant is deemed to have satisfied the second element. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.1.

Having reviewed the available record, the Panel finds the Complainant has established a prima facie case that the Respondent lacks rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name. The Respondent has not rebutted the Complainant's prima facie showing and has not come forward with any relevant evidence demonstrating rights or legitimate interests in the disputed domain name such as those enumerated in the Policy or otherwise.

The Panel notes that the disputed domain name has been used to send fraudulent emails impersonating one of the Complainant's employees. Panels have categorically held that the use of a domain name for illegal activity, such as impersonation and phishing/identity theft, can never confer rights or legitimate interests on a respondent. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 2.13.1.

The Panel finds the second element of the Policy has been established.

C. Registered and Used in Bad Faith

The Panel notes that, for the purposes of paragraph 4(a)(iii) of the Policy, paragraph 4(b) of the Policy establishes circumstances, in particular, but without limitation, that, if found by the Panel to be present, shall be evidence of the registration and use of a domain name in bad faith.

In the present case, the Panel notes that the Respondent has engaged in a bad faith conduct and has intentionally attempted to attract, for commercial gain, Internet users by creating a likelihood of confusion with the Complainant's mark in violation of Policy, paragraph 4(b)(iv).

Panels have held that the use of a domain name for illicit and illegal activity, here, claimed as phishing/identity theft constitutes bad faith. [WIPO Overview 3.1](#), section 3.4. Having reviewed the record, the Panel finds the Respondent's registration and use of the disputed domain name constitutes bad faith under the Policy.

The Panel finds the third element of the Policy has been established.

7. Decision

For the foregoing reasons, in accordance with paragraphs 4(i) of the Policy and 15 of the Rules, the Panel orders that the disputed domain name <valero-corp.com> be transferred to the Complainant.

/Clark W. Lackert/

Clark W. Lackert

Sole Panelist

Date: April 8, 2026