



US 20080178920A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Ullo

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2008/0178920 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Jul. 31, 2008**

(54) **DEVICES FOR COOLING AND POWER**

Publication Classification

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(51) **Int. Cl.**

H01L 35/30 (2006.01)

H01L 35/16 (2006.01)

H01L 35/14 (2006.01)

F25B 21/02 (2006.01)

H01L 35/18 (2006.01)

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(52) **U.S. Cl. 136/204; 136/238; 136/239; 136/240;
136/200; 62/3.2**

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

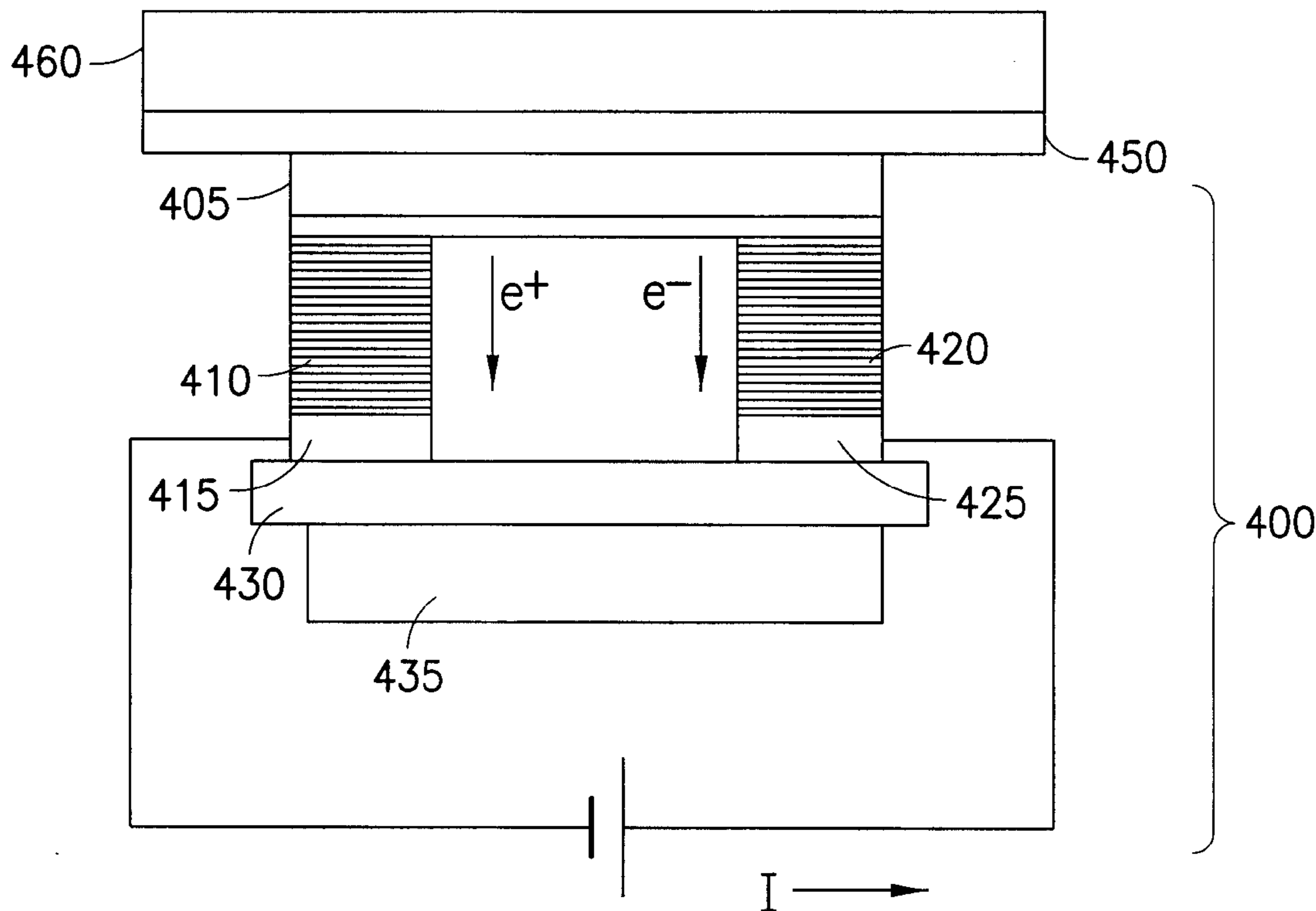
(21) Appl. No.: **11/948,589**

Certain embodiments disclosed herein are directed to devices for cooling. In certain examples, a thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate is disclosed. In some examples, the superlattice includes a first semi-conducting material and a second semi-conducting material coupled to the first semi-conducting material to provide an interface between the first and second semi-conducting materials.

(22) Filed: **Nov. 30, 2007**

Related U.S. Application Data

(60) Provisional application No. 60/882,408, filed on Dec. 28, 2006.



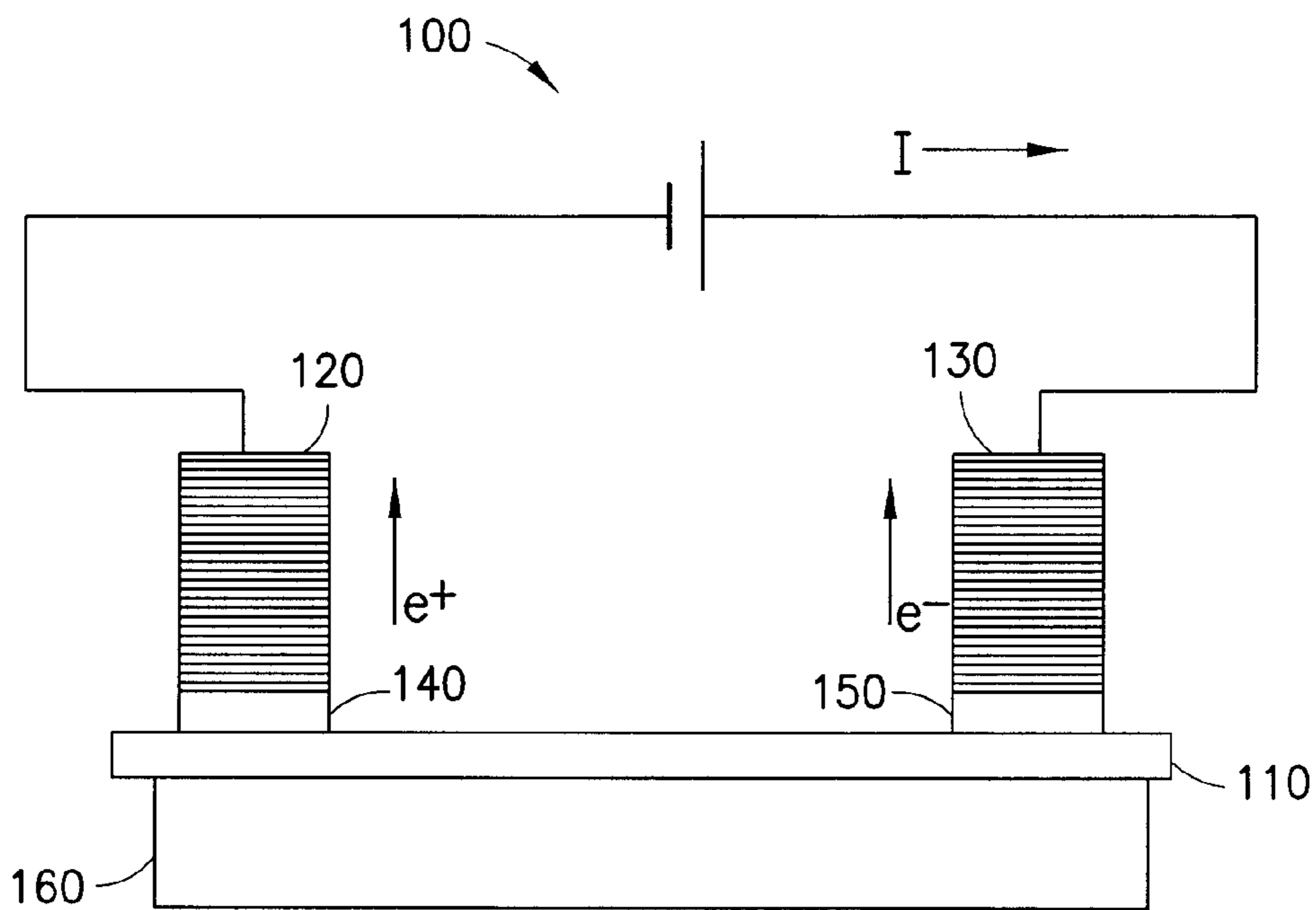
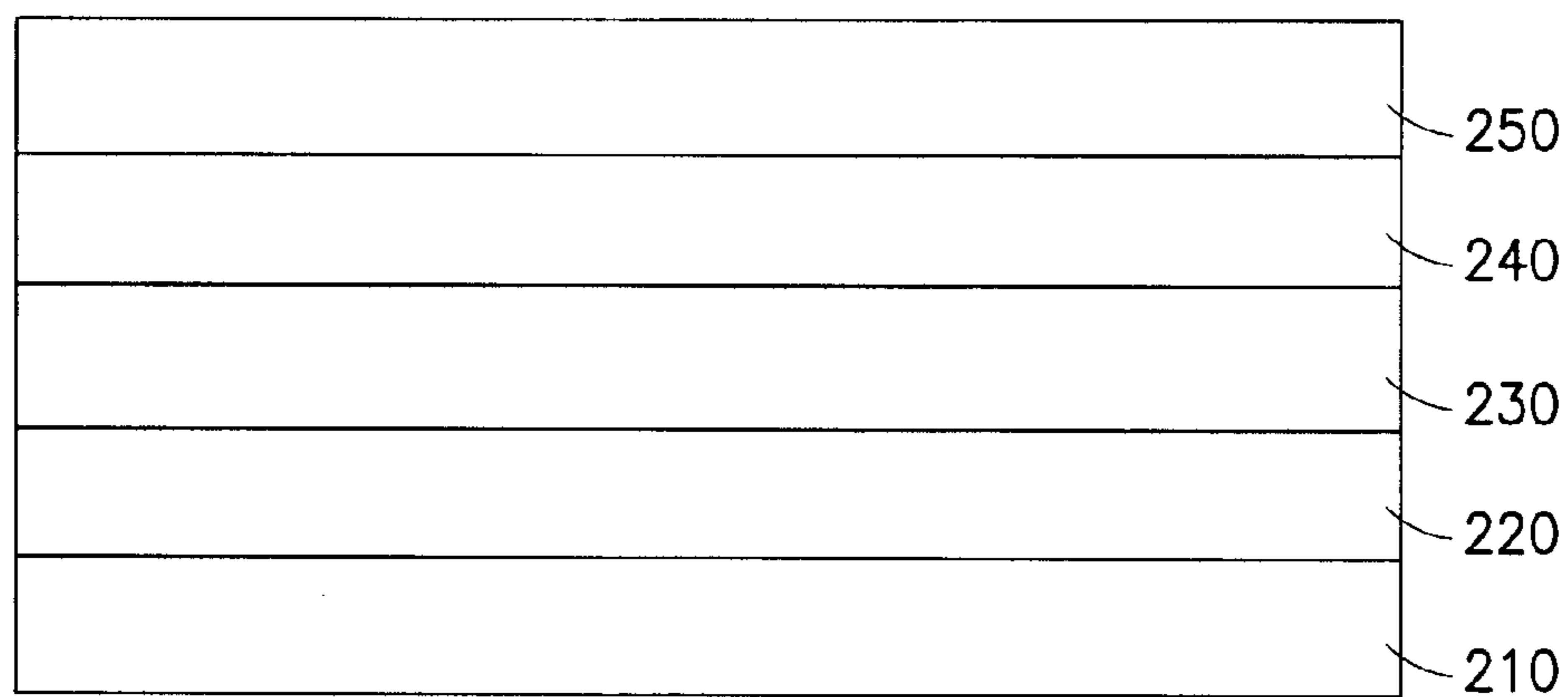


FIG. 1



200

FIG. 2

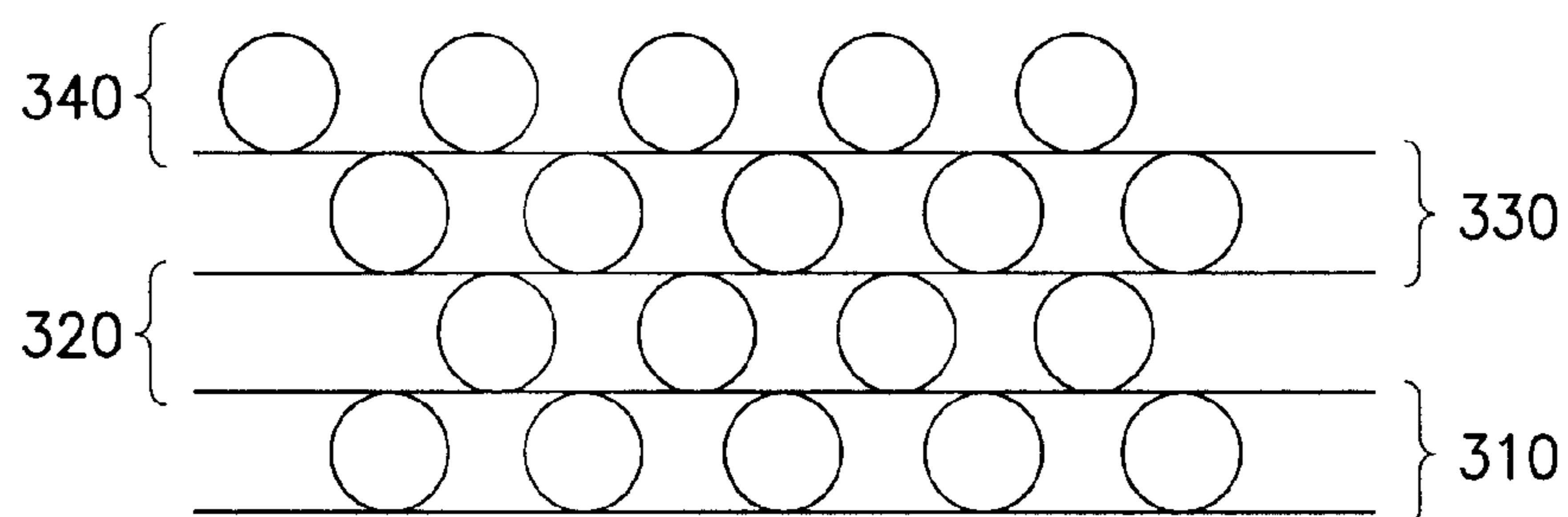


FIG.3

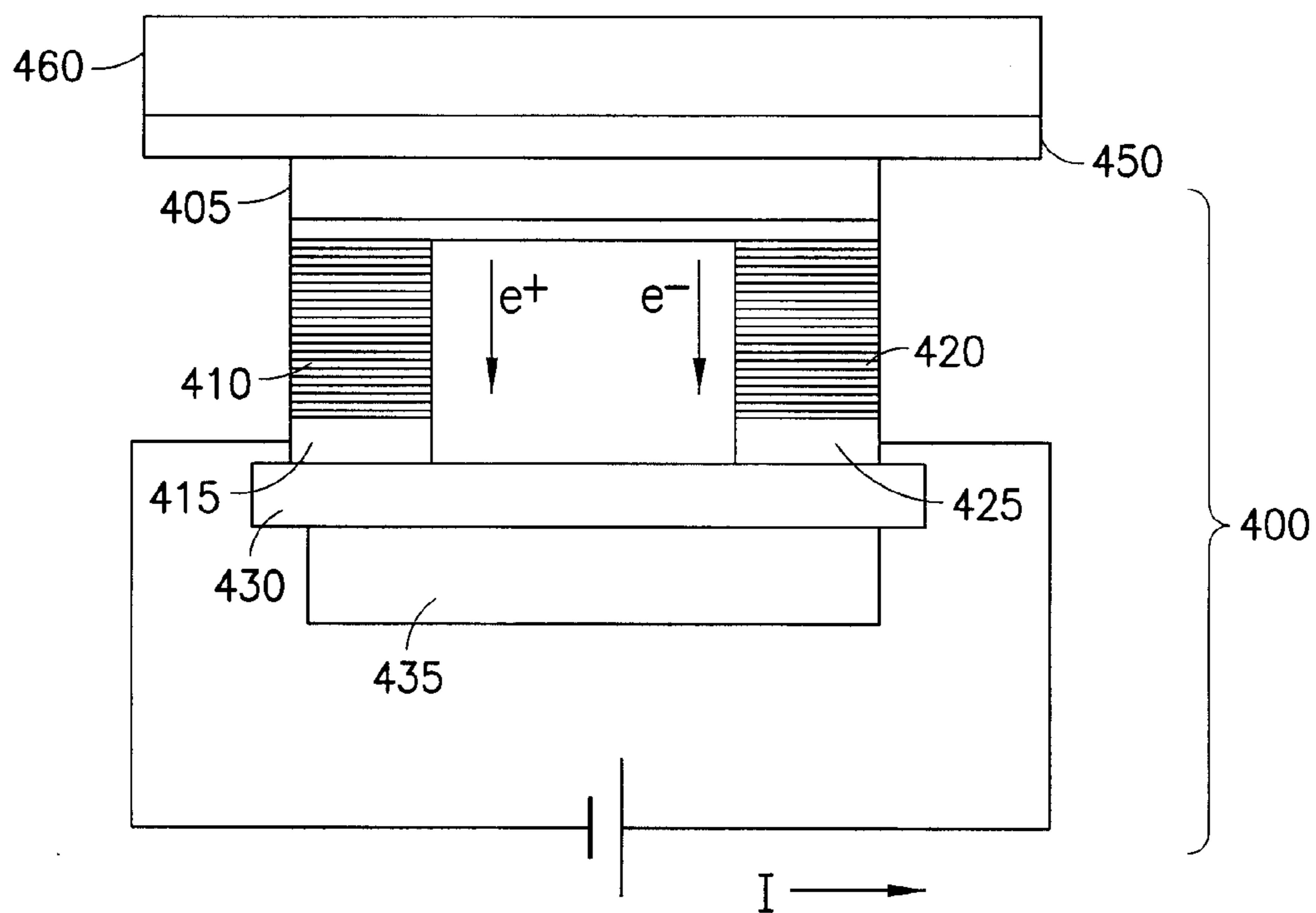


FIG.4

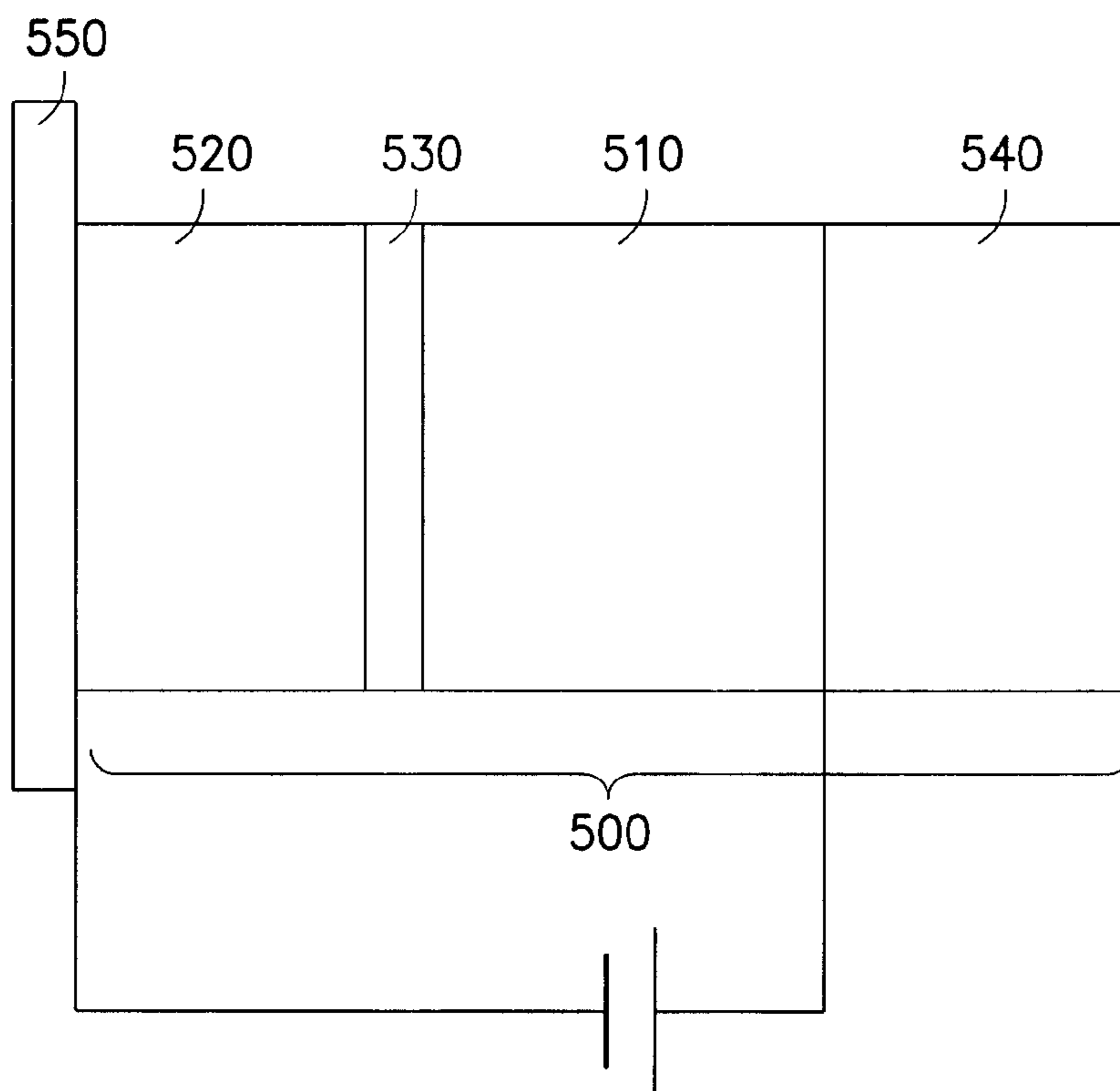
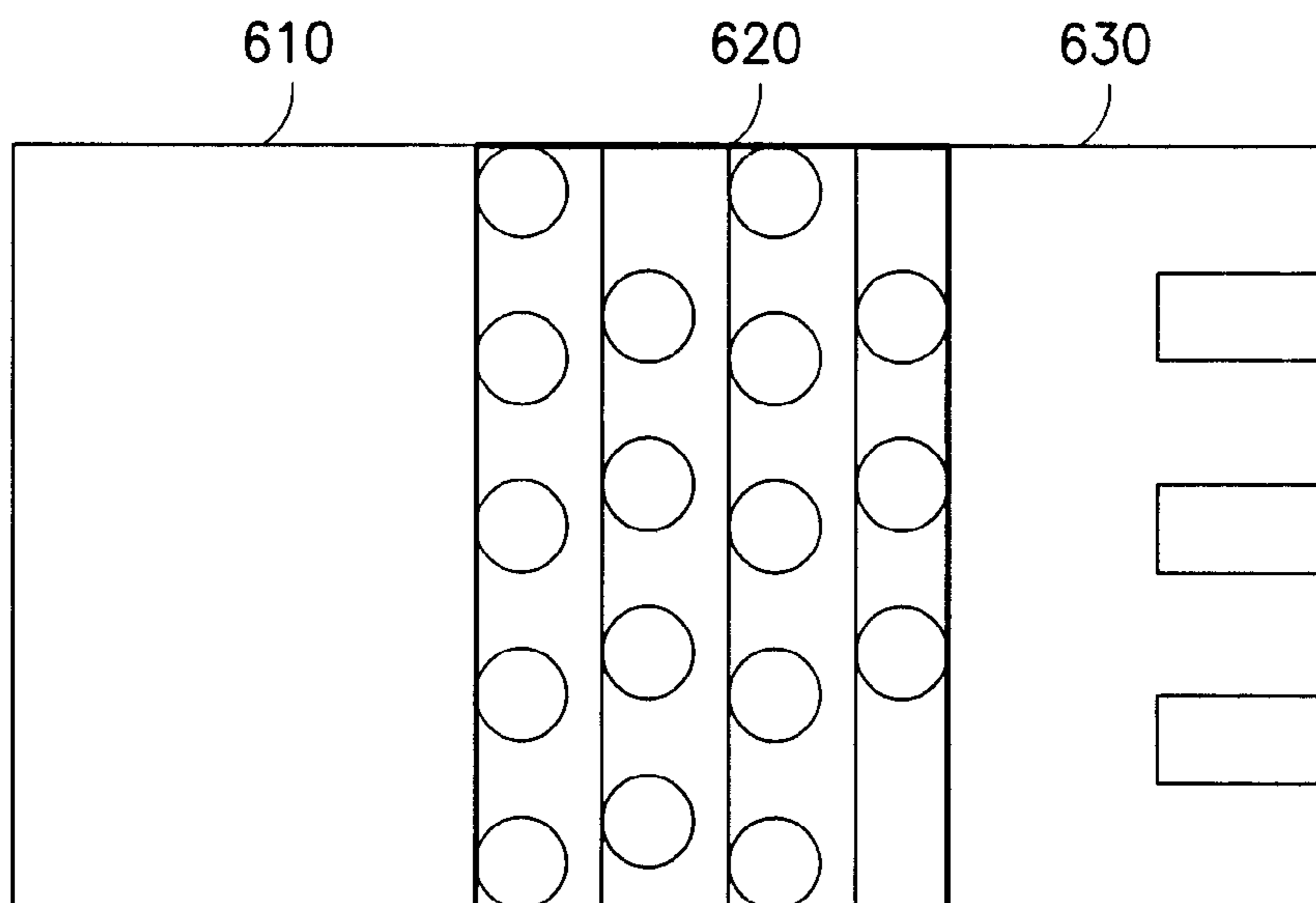


FIG. 5



600

FIG. 6

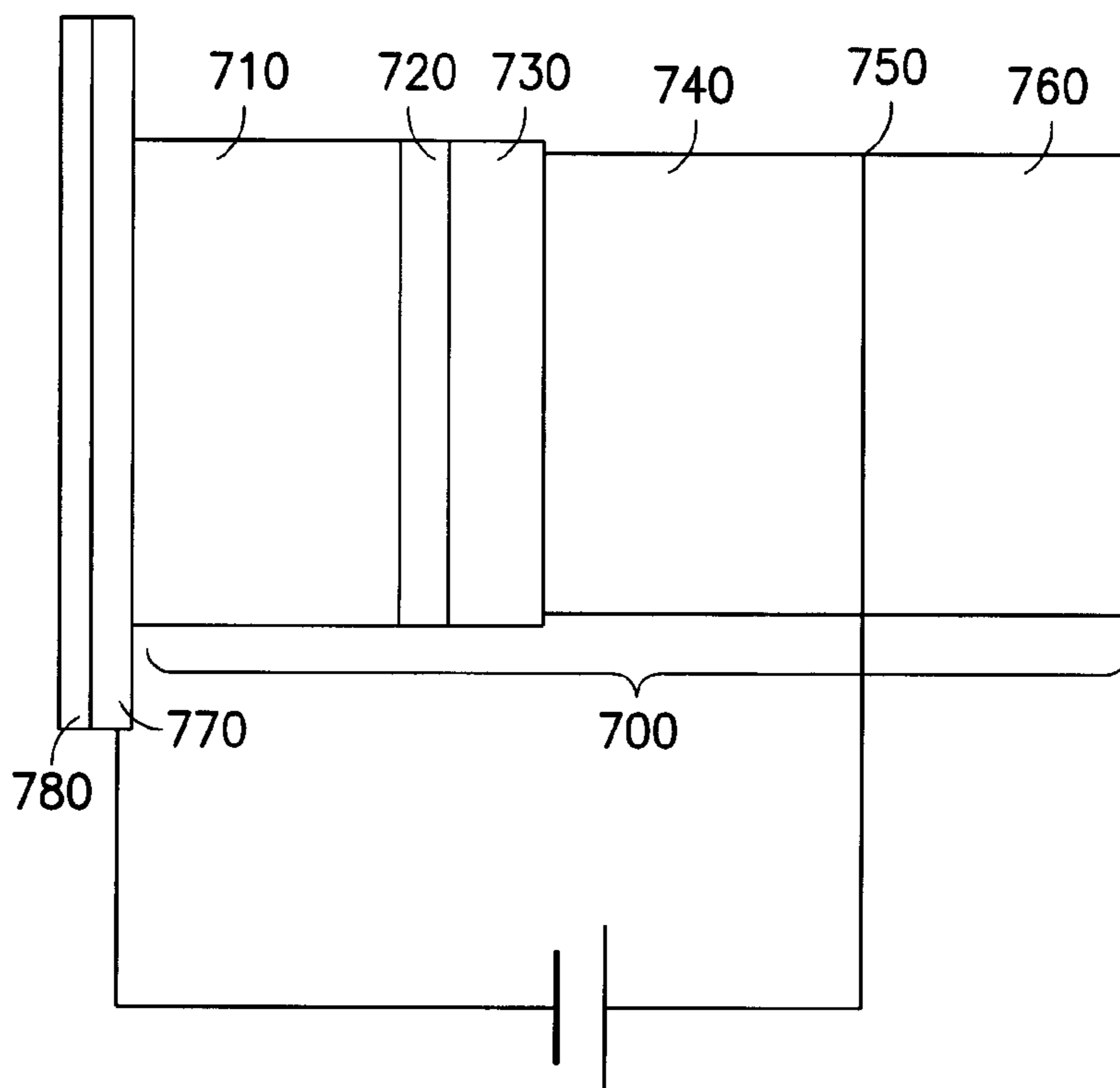


FIG.7

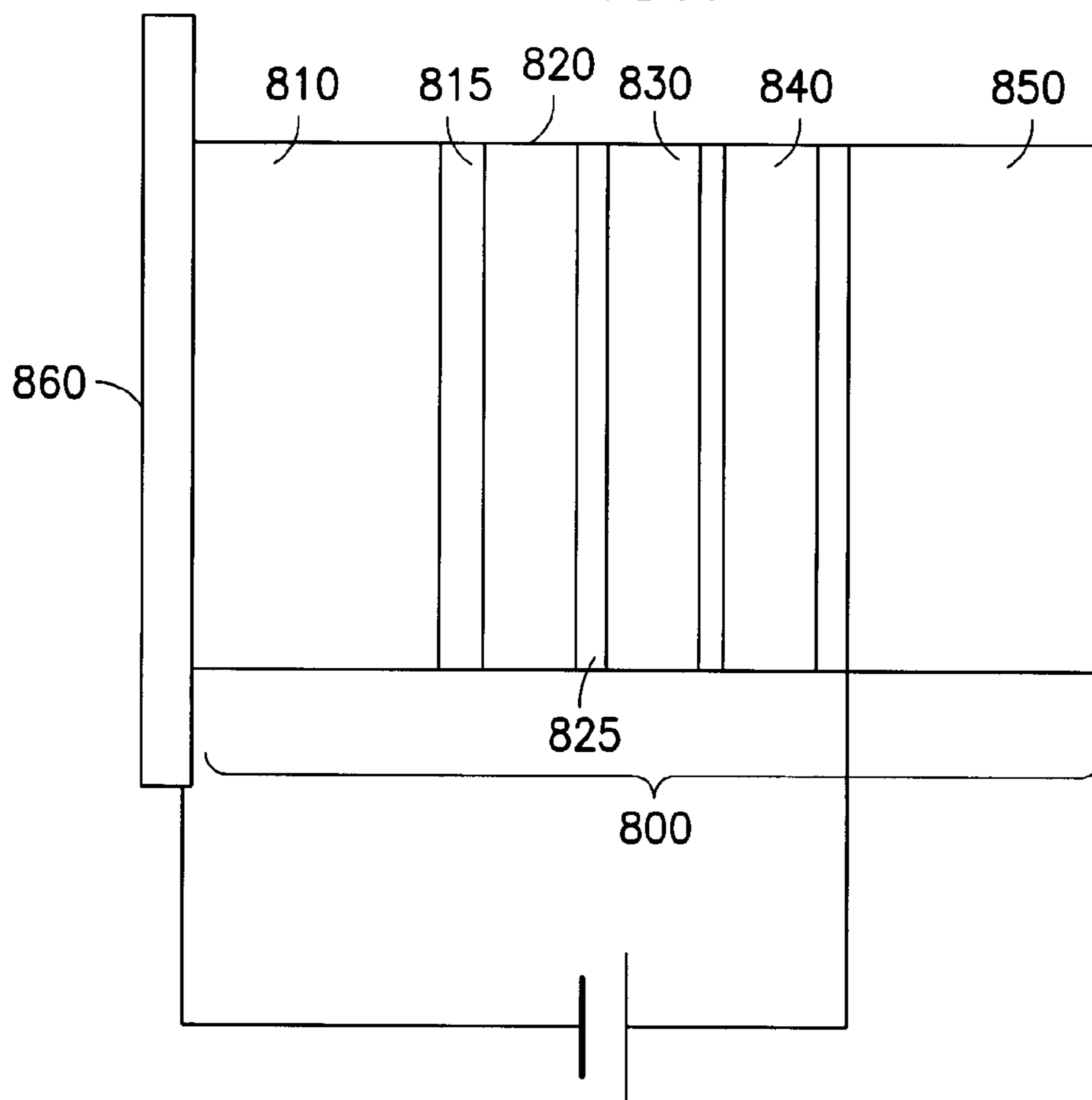


FIG.8

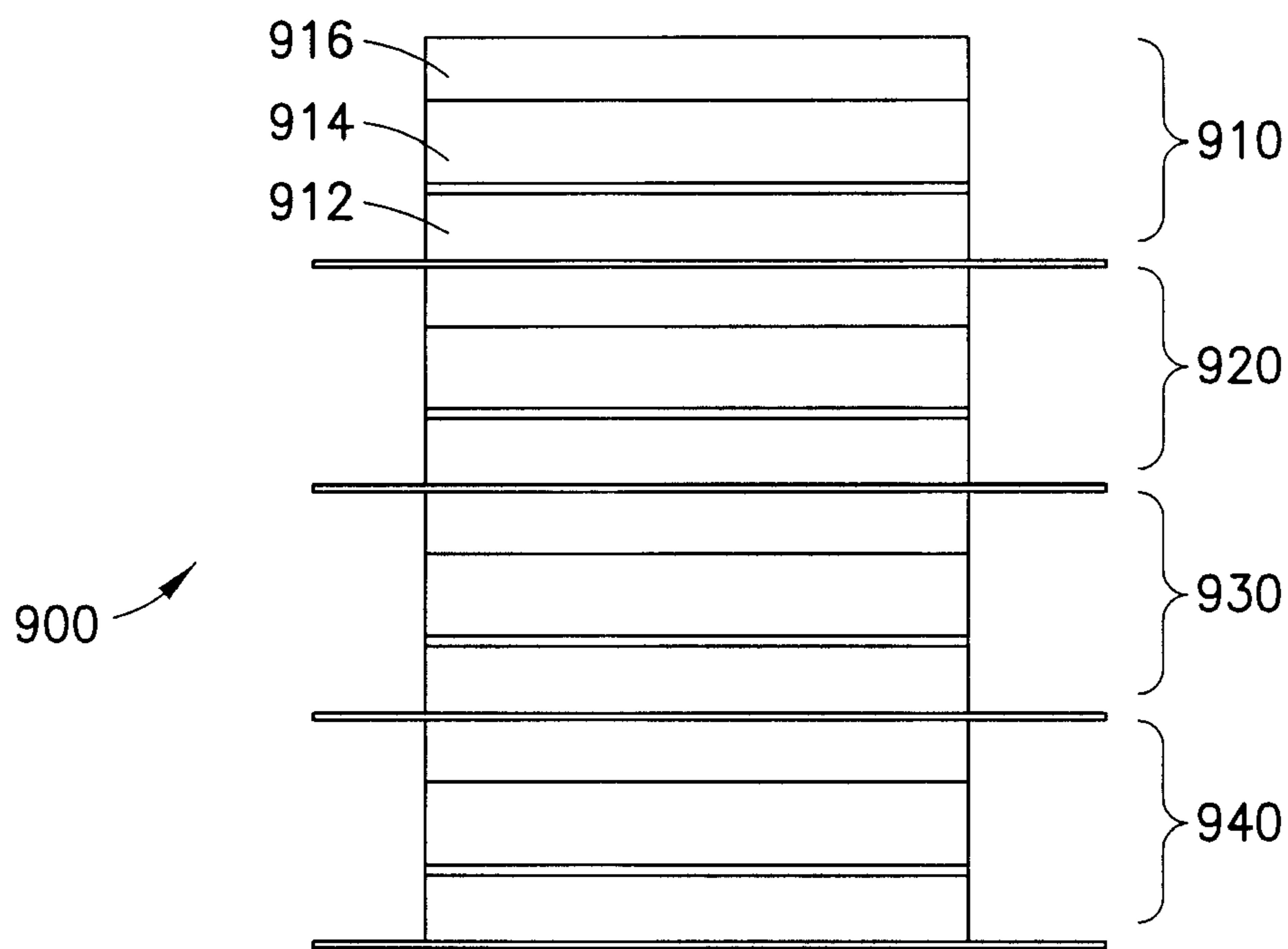


FIG. 9

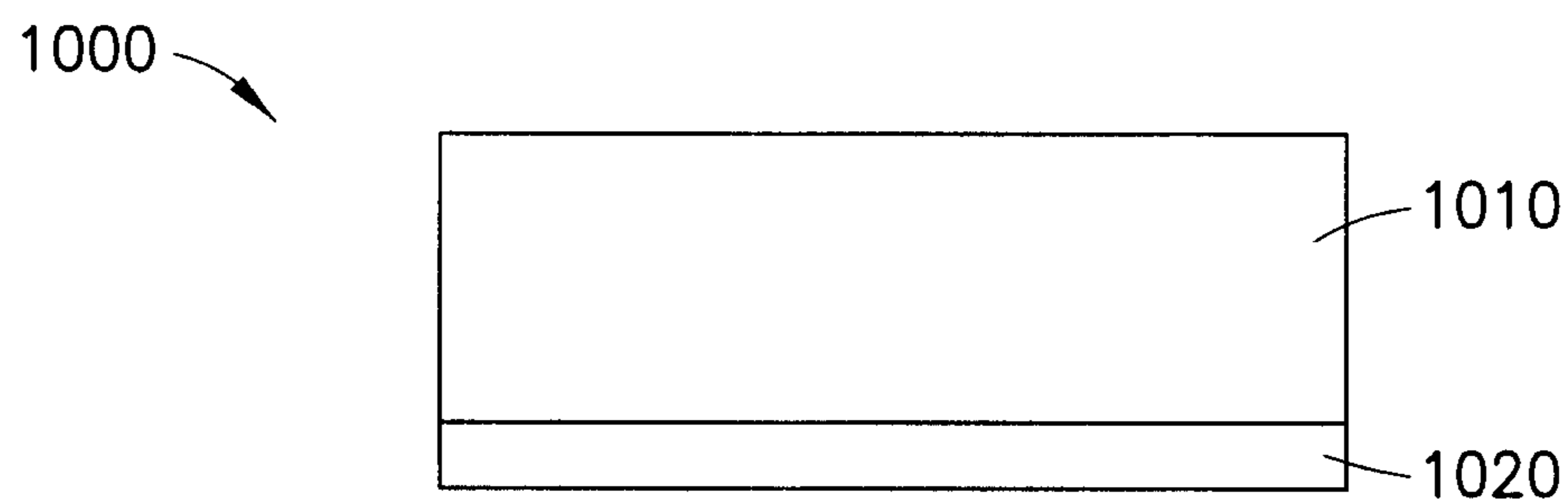


FIG. 10

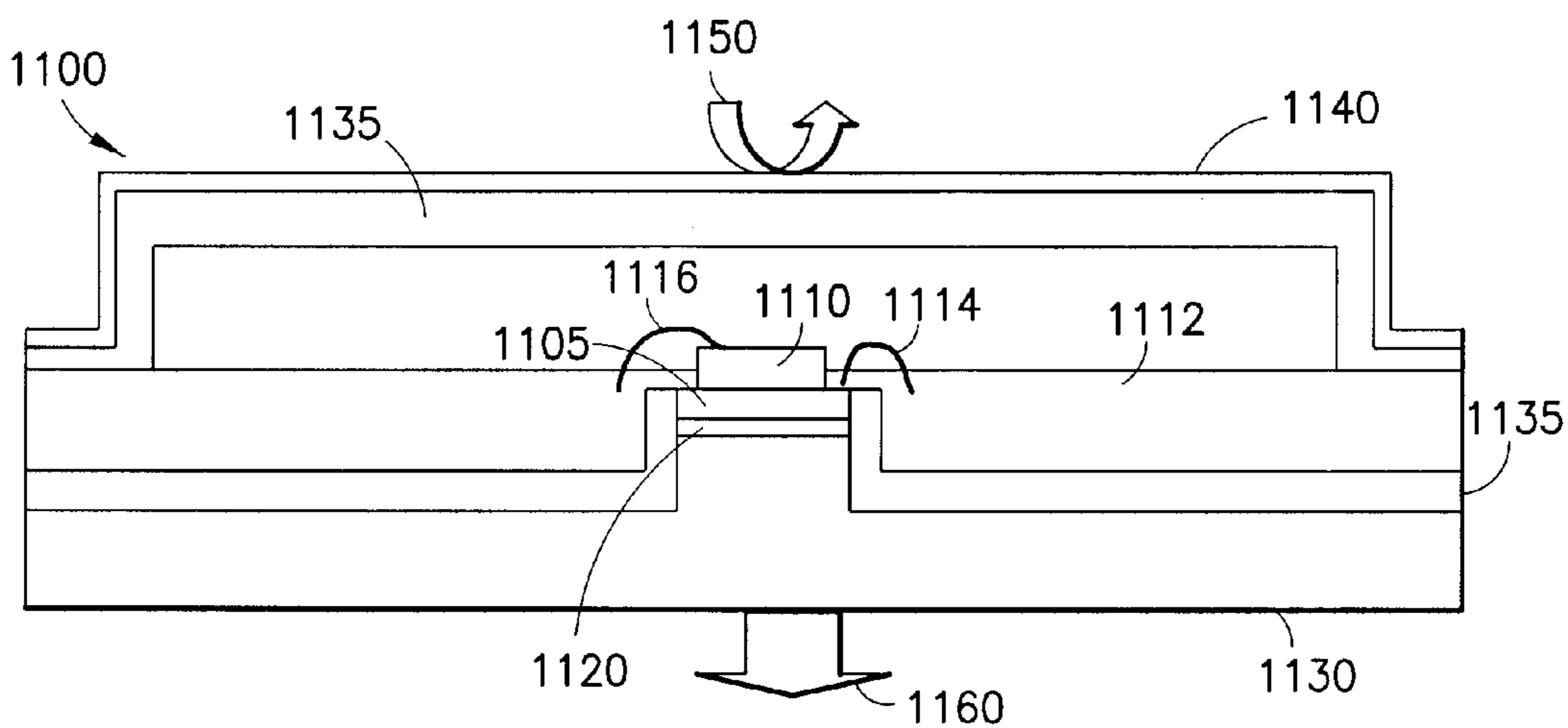


FIG. 11

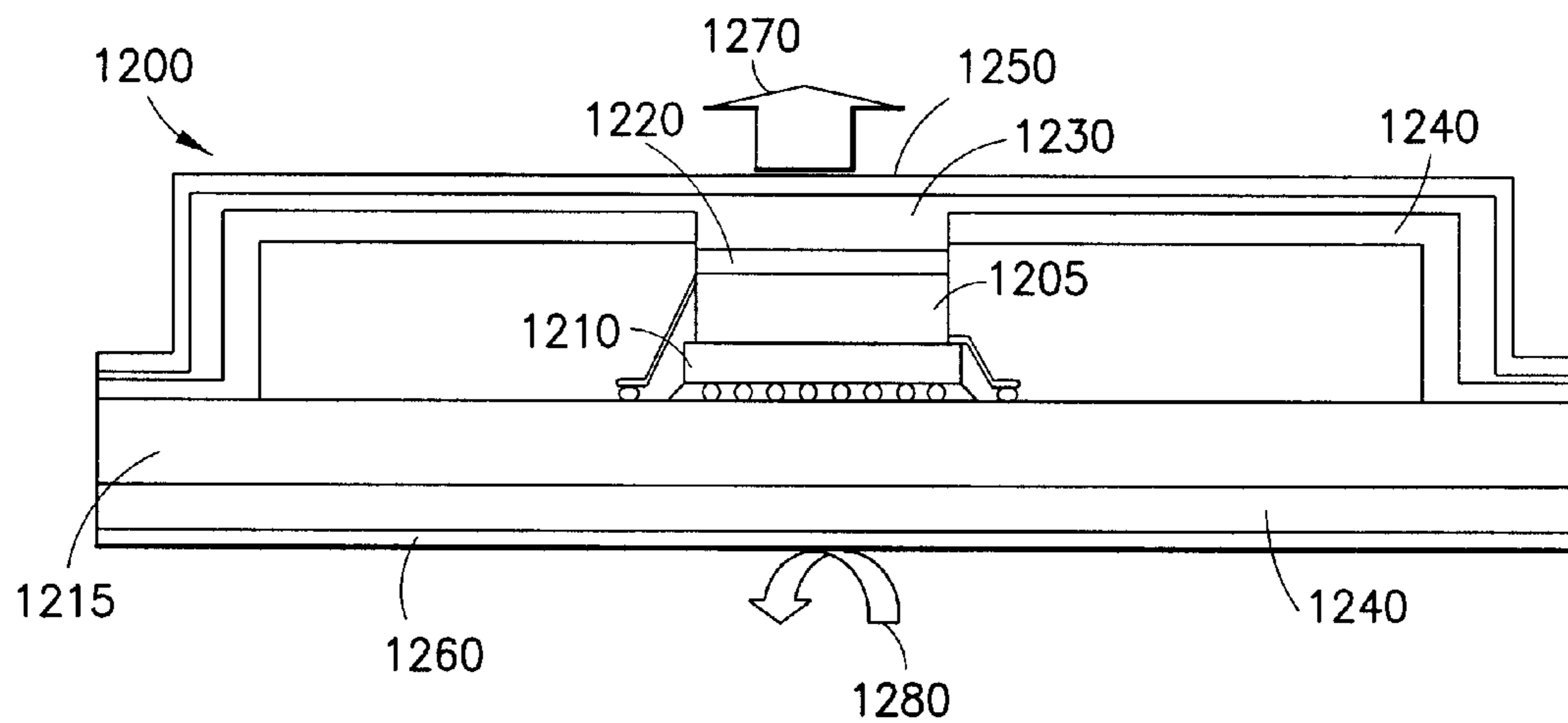


FIG. 12

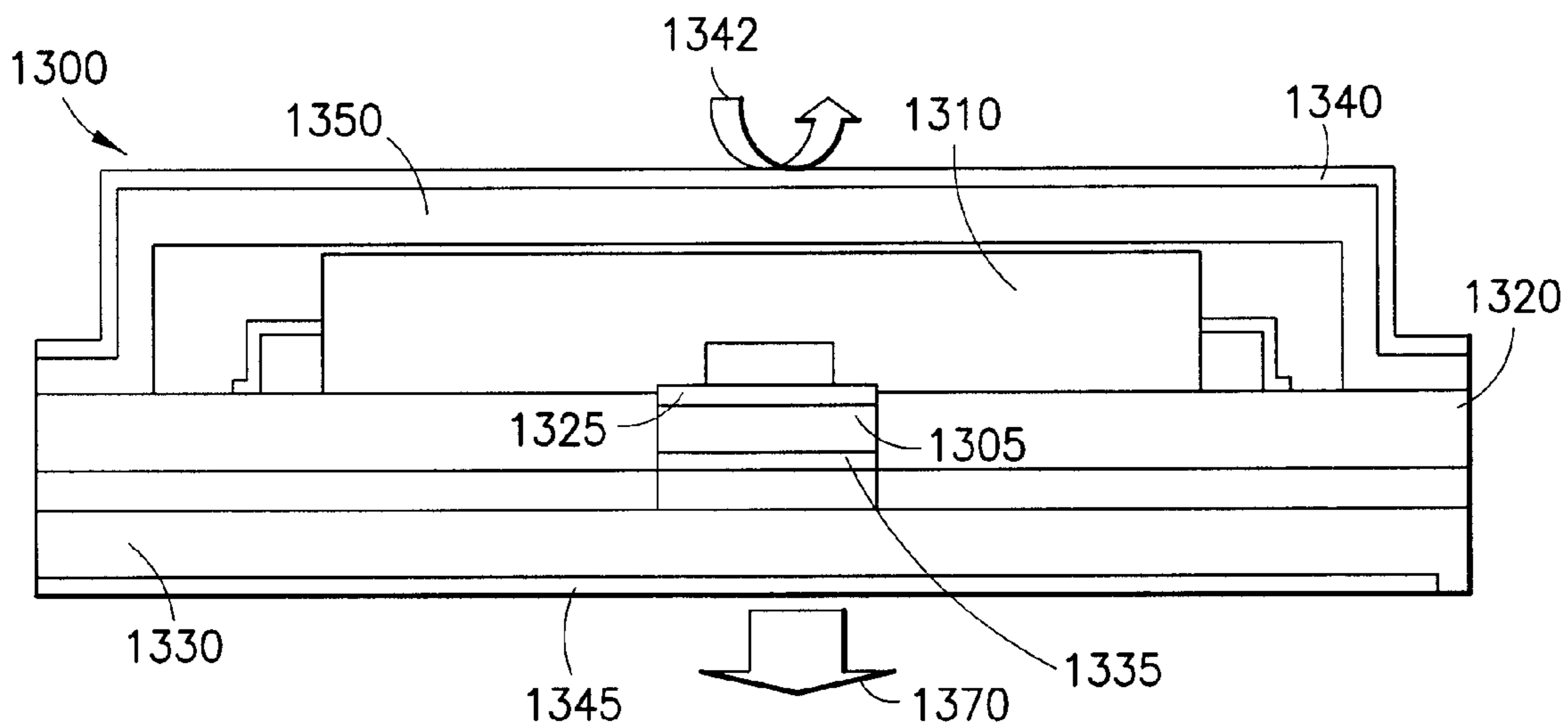


FIG. 13

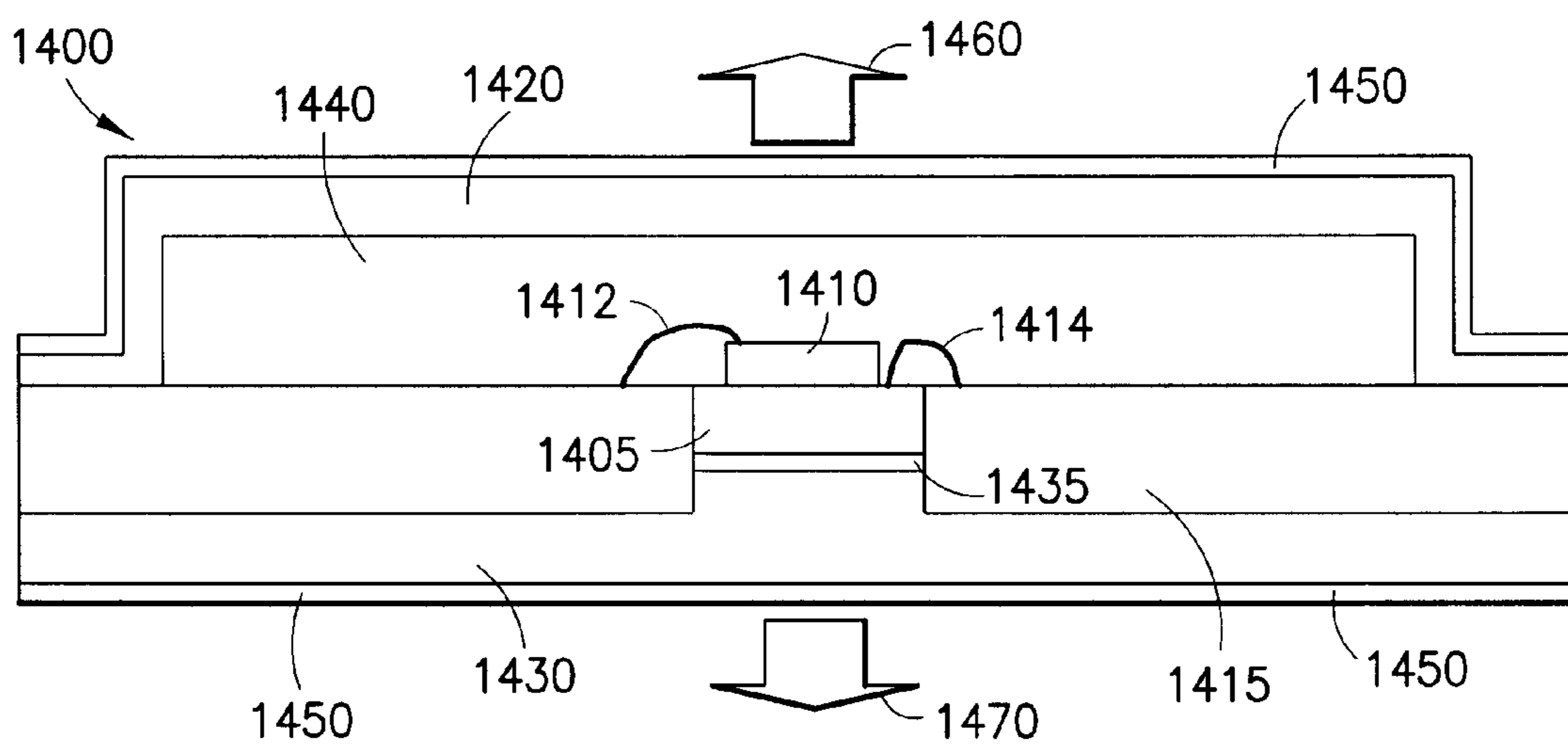


FIG. 14

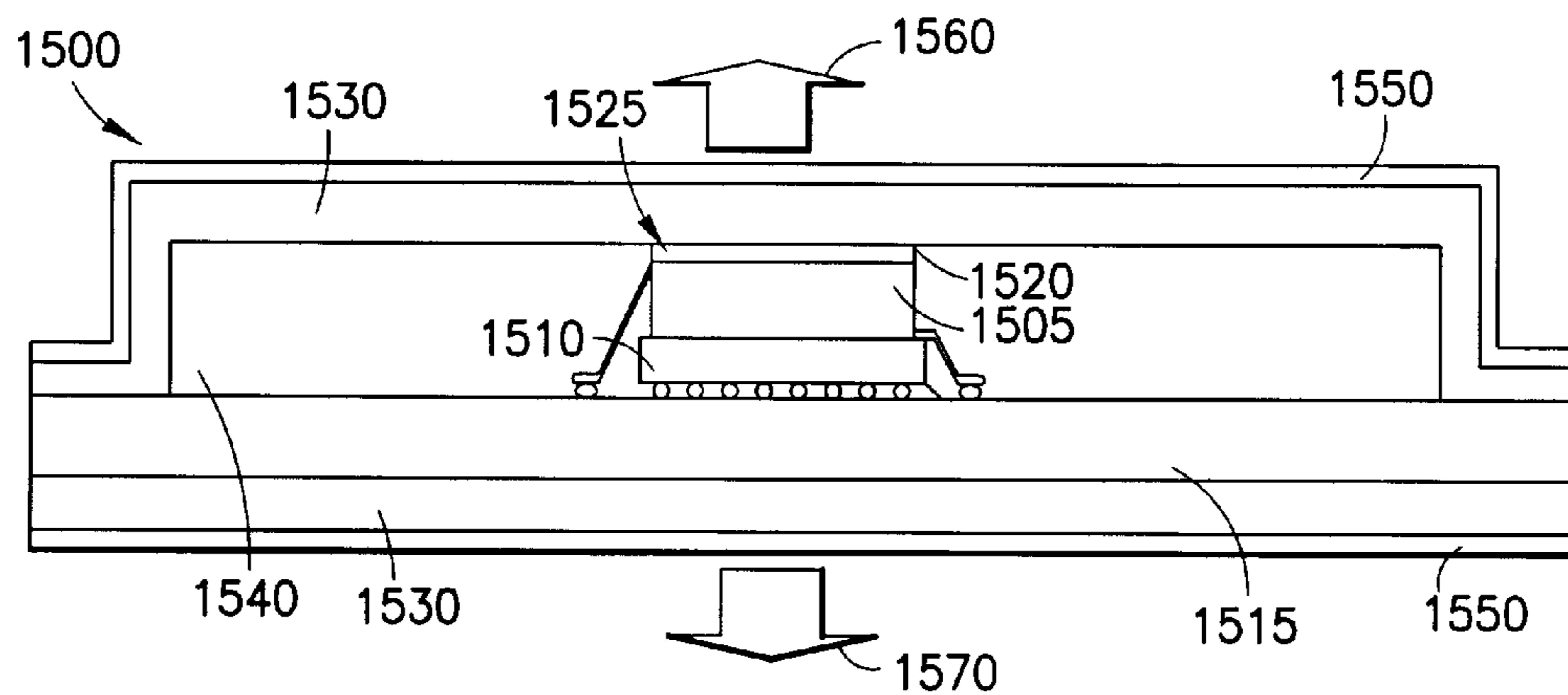


FIG. 15

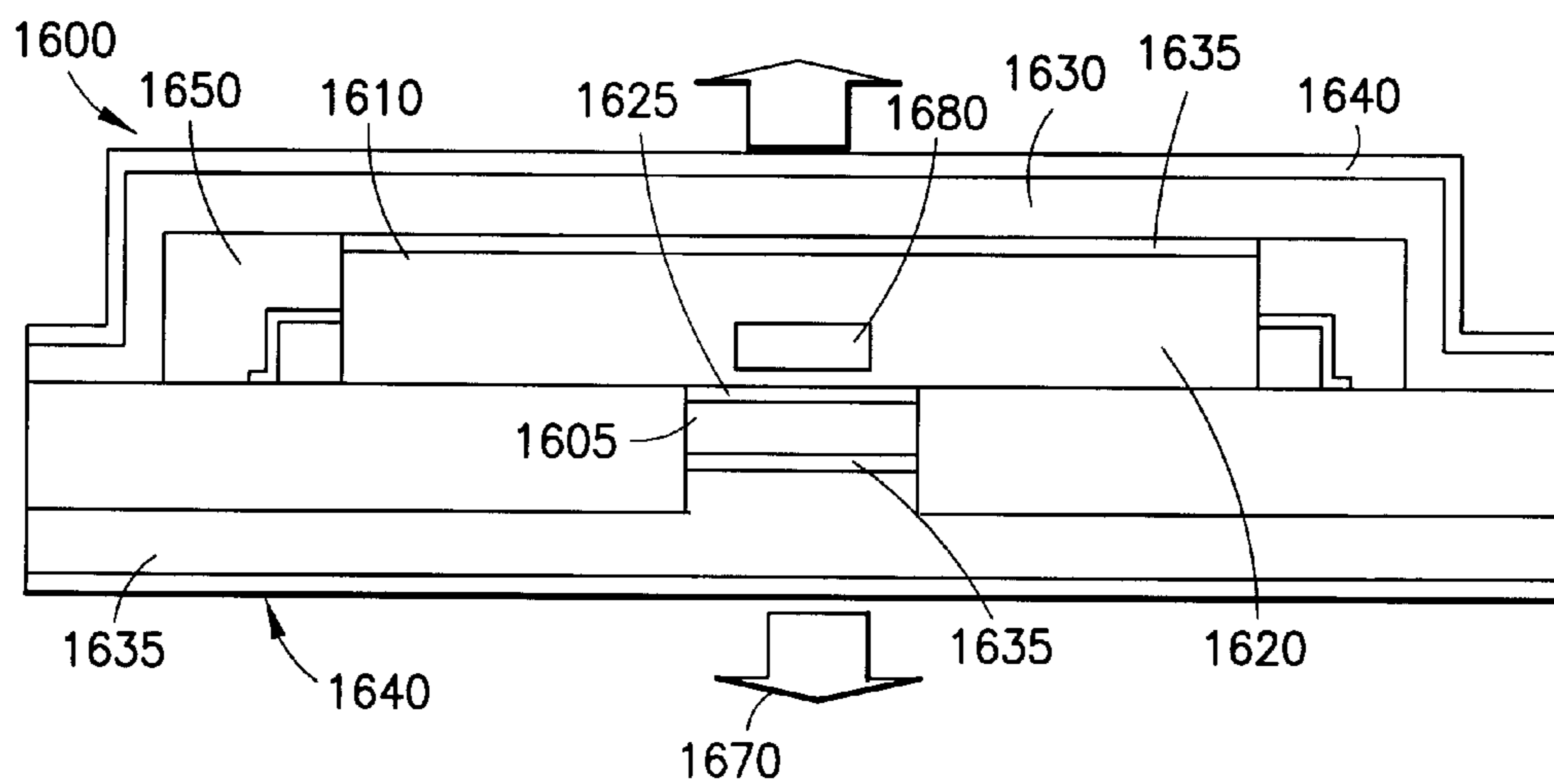


FIG. 16

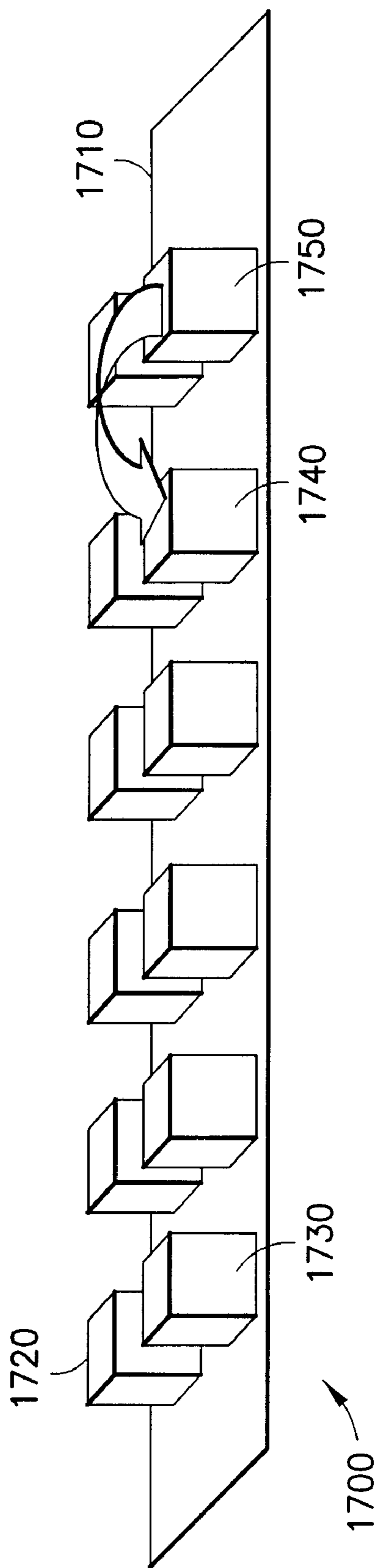


FIG. 17

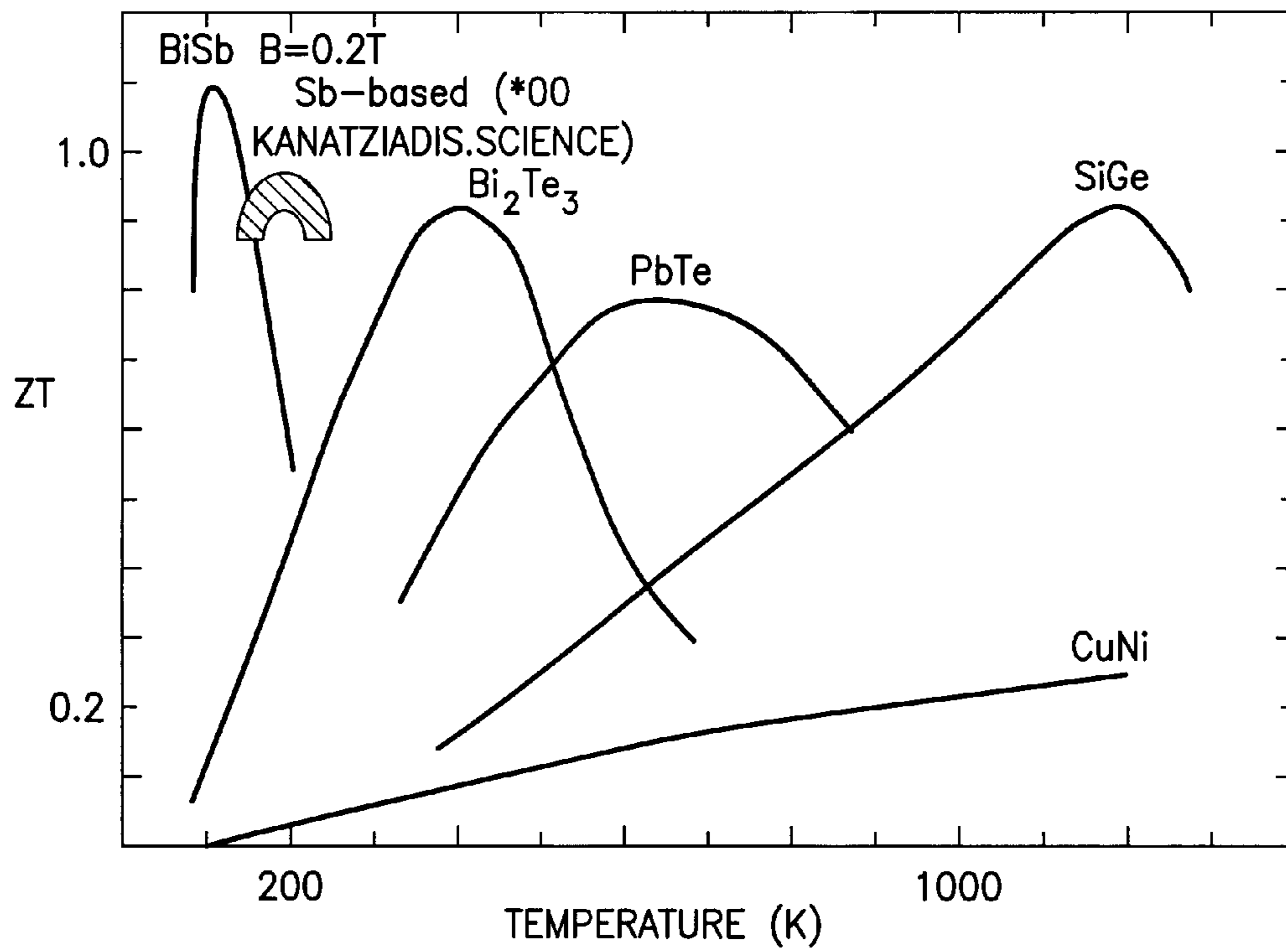


FIG.18

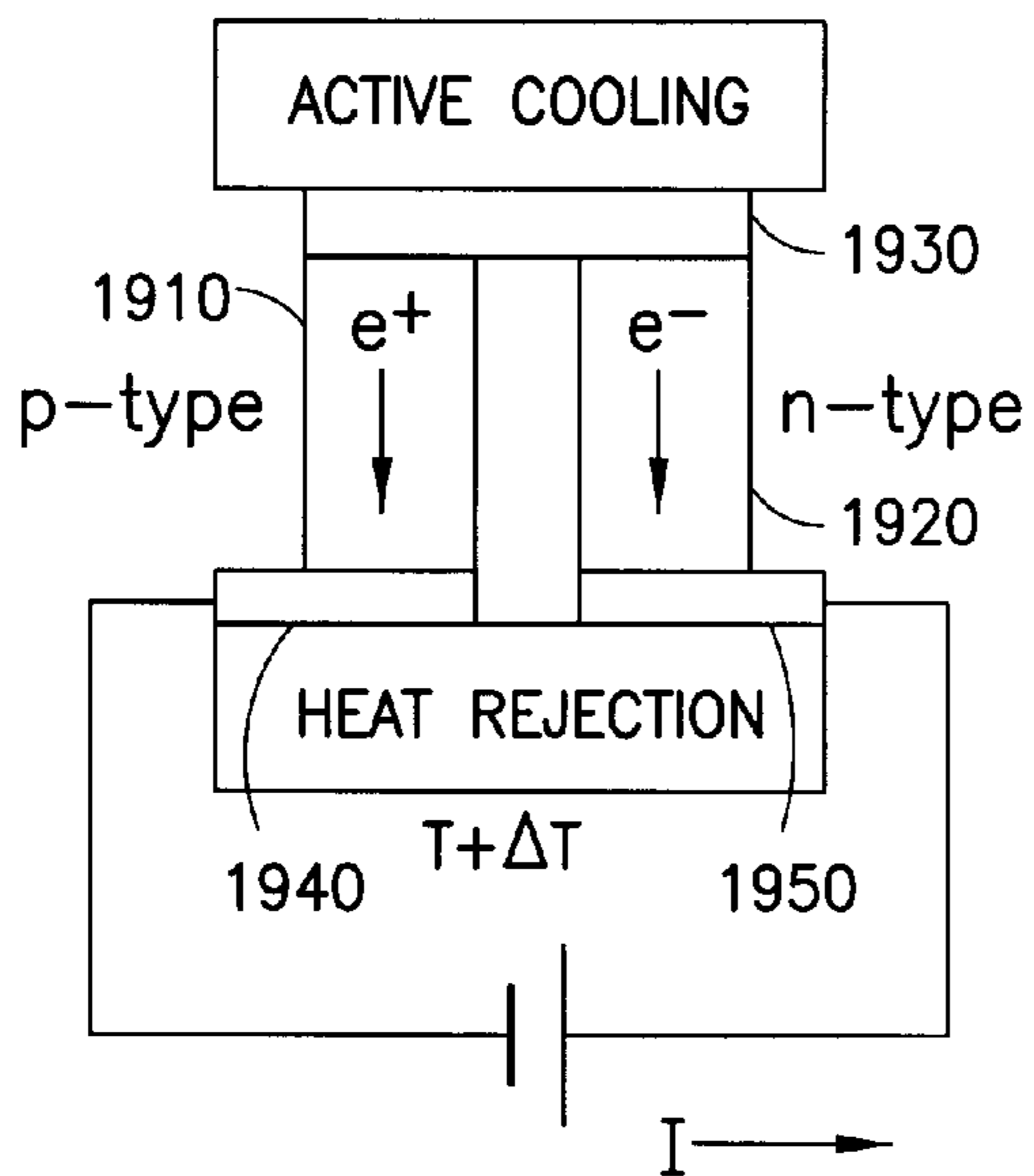


FIG.19A

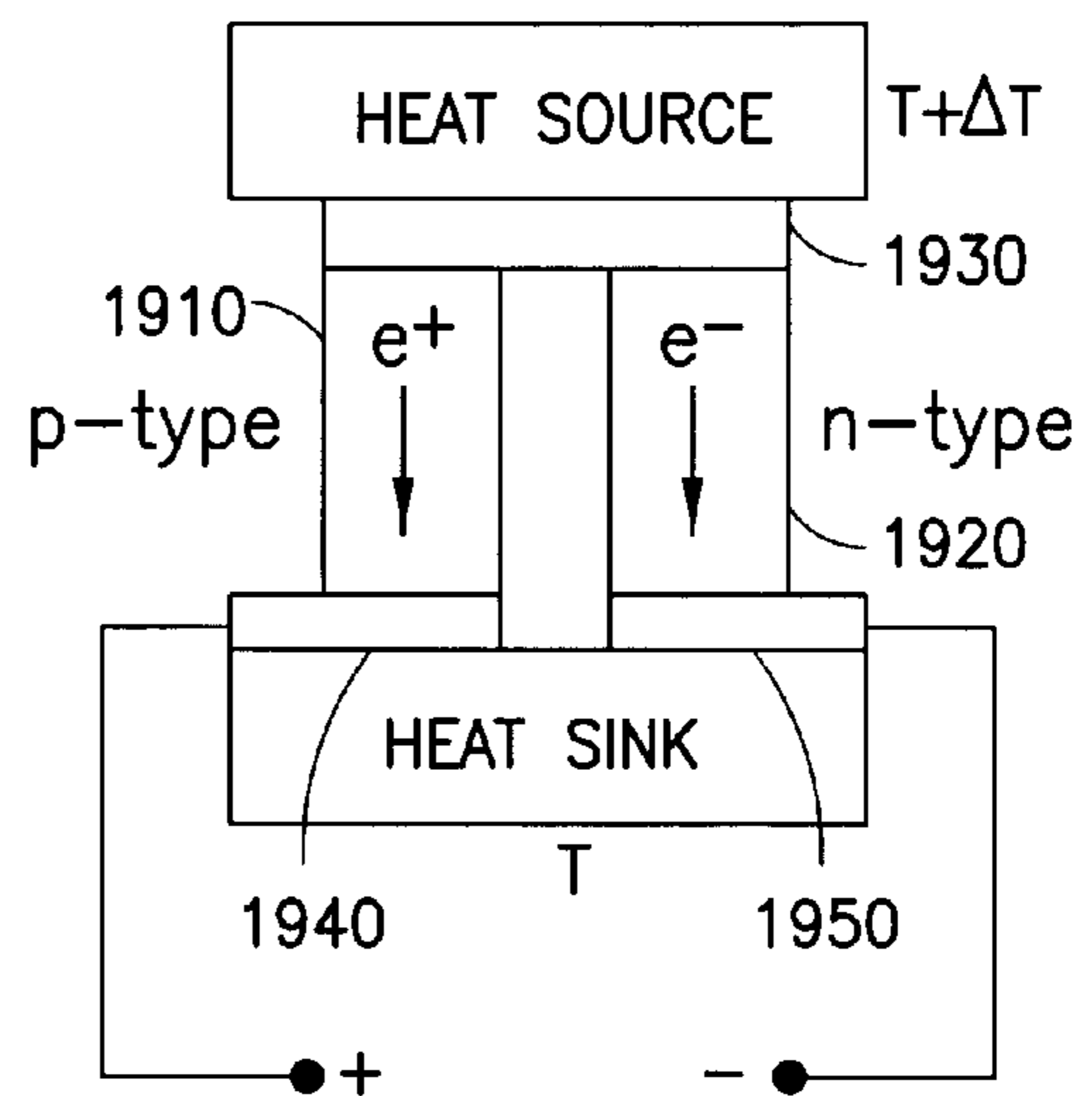


FIG.19B

DEVICES FOR COOLING AND POWER

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This application claims the benefits of priority from Application No. 60/882,408, entitled "DEVICES FOR COOLING AND POWER," filed in the United States of America on Dec. 28, 2006, and which is commonly assigned to assignee of the present invention and hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

FIELD OF THE TECHNOLOGY

[0002] Embodiments of the technology disclosed herein relate generally to devices for cooling and power. More particular, certain embodiments of devices disclosed herein relate to thermoelectric cooling devices having a hybrid structure. On such hybrid structure may include at least one superlattice.

BACKGROUND

[0003] Providing cooling to electrical components in downhole applications, such as sensors or other kinds of devices that operate properly below a certain temperature and are used, for example, in borehole drilling, logging measurements and the like is desirable to reduce equipment failure and improve the accuracy of measurements of physical properties of potential petroleum bearing rock formations. A significant drawback to existing cooling devices is that cooling time may be limited, such as in the case of dewars filled with a cooling fluid. In other configurations, power must be provided to the device downhole. Providing power requires substantial amounts of cabling to provide for electrical coupling between a power source uphole and a device located downhole.

SUMMARY

[0004] For the purpose of clarity, a thermoelectric device having a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate is described. One skilled in the art will readily recognize that the present invention may be practiced with a variety of thermoelectric cooling (TEC) devices having a variety of structural arrangements. For example, a hybrid TEC device may be configured with nano and bulk TECs. As understood by one skilled in the art, existing bulk TEC devices can provide a larger temperature difference as compared to existing nano TEC devices. This said, existing bulk TEC devices have a lower heat pump capacity as compared to existing nano TEC devices. In contrast, as understood by one skilled in the art, nano TEC devices offer a greater heat pump capacity with a lower potential temperature difference as compared to existing bulk TEC devices. In view of this, a hybrid arrangement employing both nano and bulk TEC devices may result in a TEC device capable of a large temperature difference and better efficiency.

[0005] In accordance with a first aspect, a thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate is disclosed. In certain examples, the first superlattice of the thermoelectric device comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In some examples, the thermoelectric device also comprises a power source electrically coupled to first superlattice. In cer-

tain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof.

[0006] In accordance with another aspect, a device comprising a substrate and a plurality of individual superlattices coupled to the substrate is provided. In certain examples, each of the superlattices comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In some examples, the device also includes a power source electrically coupled to at least one of the plurality of individual superlattices. In certain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof.

[0007] In accordance with another aspect, a cooling device comprising a thermoelectric material disposed on a superlattice is disclosed. In certain examples, the device may be configured to cool an electrical component below an ambient temperature. In other examples, the device may be configured to cool an electrical component to an ambient temperature. The cooling device may be used to cool many different types of electrical components, and illustrative electrical components are discussed in more detail below. In certain examples, the material used in the superlattice may be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof.

[0008] In accordance with an additional aspect, a method of cooling a downhole electrical component is disclosed. In certain examples, the method comprises providing thermal communication between a thermoelectric device and the downhole electrical component. In some examples, the thermoelectric device comprises a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain examples, the first superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof. In some examples, the method also includes providing cooling of the electrical component by heat transfer from the electrical component to the thermoelectric device.

[0009] In accordance with another aspect, a method of facilitating cooling of a downhole electrical component is provided. In certain examples, the method comprises providing a thermoelectric device that comprises a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate. In some examples, the first superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof. In certain examples, the method also includes providing instructions for using the thermoelectric device to cool a downhole electrical component.

[0010] In accordance with an additional aspect, a kit for downhole cooling is disclosed. In certain examples, the kit comprises at least one thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain examples, the superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof. In some examples, the kit also comprises instructions for using the thermoelectric device to cool a downhole electrical component.

[0011] In accordance with another aspect, a device for use in a downhole tool is disclosed. In certain examples, the device comprises at least one electrical component and a thermoelectric device coupled to the at least one electrical component. In some examples, the thermoelectric device comprises a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain examples, the superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the first material and the second material may each be a metal, a semi-conducting material or combinations thereof.

[0012] In accordance with an additional aspect, a thermoelectric cooling device for cooling a downhole electrical component is provided. In certain examples, the thermoelectric cooling device comprises a superlattice that includes a material having a figure of merit ZT value of at least about two at 150°C .

[0013] Additional features, aspects and examples are described in more detail below.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE FIGURES

[0014] Certain embodiments are described below with reference to the accompanying figures in which:

[0015] FIG. 1 is an illustrative thermoelectric device, in accordance with certain examples;

[0016] FIG. 2 is a schematic of a superlattice, in accordance with certain examples;

[0017] FIG. 3 is a schematic of a superlattice comprising quantum dots, in accordance with certain examples;

[0018] FIG. 4 is an illustrative packaged thermoelectric device, in accordance with certain examples;

[0019] FIG. 5 is an illustrative thermoelectric device that includes a Schottky barrier, in accordance with certain examples;

[0020] FIG. 6 is an illustrative thermoelectric device comprising quantum dots, in accordance with certain examples;

[0021] FIG. 7 is an illustrative thermoelectric device comprising a vacuum or quantum well, in accordance with certain examples;

[0022] FIG. 8 is an illustrative thermoelectric device comprising a plurality of elements as in FIG. 7;

[0023] FIG. 9 is an illustrative device comprising multiple, stacked thermoelectric devices, in accordance with certain examples;

[0024] FIG. 10 is an illustrative schematic of a hybrid TEC device, in accordance with certain examples;

[0025] FIG. 11 is an illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0026] FIG. 12 is another illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0027] FIG. 13 is an additional illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0028] FIG. 14 is another illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0029] FIG. 15 is an additional illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0030] FIG. 16 is another illustrative schematic of a package for use in cooling applications, in accordance with certain examples;

[0031] FIG. 17 is an array of thermoelectric devices, in accordance with certain examples;

[0032] FIG. 18 is a graph of figure of merit (ZT) versus temperature for several illustrative materials, in accordance with certain examples; and

[0033] FIG. 19A is an illustrative thermoelectric device for cooling and FIG. 19B is an illustrative device for generating power, in accordance with certain examples.

[0034] Certain features shown in the figures may have been enlarged, distorted, altered or otherwise shown in non-conventional manner to facilitate a better understanding of the technology disclosed herein and to provide a more user-friendly version of the figures.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0035] Certain embodiments of the devices and methods disclosed herein provide devices for cooling and power that may be used in many different environments such as, for example, downhole applications, aerospace applications, cooling of a microprocessor or other electrical components on a printed circuit board, cooling of scintillator crystals, cooling of sensor materials, ceramics, semiconductors, polymers and the like. In certain examples, the cooling device is configured for use in a device designed to make optical measurements, e.g., near infrared measurements, fluorescence, visible or ultraviolet absorption measurements, etc., on a sample.

[0036] In certain examples, the devices disclosed herein may be placed or brought in thermal communication with an electrical component to provide cooling of the electrical component. As used herein “thermal communication” refers to the condition where heat may be transferred to the thermoelectric device from the electrical component. The thermoelectric device and the electrical component are not necessarily in direct contact but are suitably positioned relative to each other so that heat may be transferred from the electrical component to the thermoelectric device.

[0037] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device comprising a superlattice structure is shown in FIG. 1. The thermoelectric device comprising a superlattice is solely for illustrative purposes. One skilled in the art will readily recognize that alternative TEC devices may be utilized in practicing the present invention. The hybrid thermoelectric device 100 includes a substrate 110 with superlattice structures 120 and 130 coupled to the substrate 110. In certain examples, the superlattice structure 120 may be suitably doped to provide p-type conduction, and the superlattice structure 130 may be suitable doped to provide n-type conduction. In some examples, either or both of superlattice structures 120 and 130 may be in thermal communication with a heat sink to facilitate heat transfer. The substrate 110 may be a semi-conducting material, a metal or a non-metal, such as a plastic, that may conduct heat. The thermoelectric cooling device 100 may also include electrodes or contacts 140 and 150 to provide electrical coupling of the superlattices to a power source. The p-n couple is effective to provide cooling to a component in thermal communication with the substrate 110. After a current I is applied to the cooling device 100, electron transport is allowed in an applied field along the line shown in FIG. 1. Transport of the electrons provides a temperature difference that may be used to absorb

thermal energy from the device to be cooled and transfer that thermal energy to the external environment. In certain embodiments, a material component, shown as element **160**, may be coupled to the substrate **110** to facilitate transfer of heat from the electrical component (not shown) to the device **100**.

[0038] In accordance with certain examples, the exact material used in the superlattices may vary depending on the intended application of the device, desired cooling or power generation capabilities and the like. In certain examples, the superlattice may comprise alternating layers of semi-conducting materials with an interface between the layers of semi-conducting materials. In other examples, the superlattice may comprise alternating metal layers with an interface between each metal layer. In other examples, the superlattice may comprise alternating layers of a semi-conducting material and a metal with an interface between each semi-conducting material layer and metal layer. In other configurations, any two different materials that provide an interface between them and that provide cooling capabilities or power generation capabilities, as the case may be, may be used in a superlattice. It will be within the ability of the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, to select suitable materials for use in a superlattice.

[0039] In accordance with certain examples, conventional materials for doping to provide p-type conduction depend on the host semiconductor and in the case of Si include, but are not limited to such elements as boron and aluminum. One skilled in the art will readily recognize that numerous alternatives exist which are applicable to the present invention. In view of this those examples recited herein are not intended to be limiting in scope. Superlattices that are doped to provide p-type conduction are referred to in some instances herein as a "p-type superlattice." Conventional materials for doping to provide n-type conduction depend on the host semiconductor, and in the case of Si include, but are not limited to phosphorous, arsenic and antimony. In view of this those examples recited herein are not intended to be limiting in scope. Superlattices that are doped to provide n-type conduction are referred to in some instances herein as a "n-type superlattice." It will be recognized by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, that the exact material used to provide an n-type or a p-type superlattice may depend on the other materials selected for use in the superlattice.

[0040] In accordance with certain examples, the superlattice structures may include alternating layers of semi-conducting materials. For example, the superlattice may include BiTe/SbTe layers, PbSe/PbS layers and PbSe/PbTe layers with the thickness of each of the layers selected to be about 2 nm to about 20 nm, more particularly about 3 nm to about 10 nm. An illustrative superlattice is shown in FIG. 2. The superlattice **200** includes a first layer **210**, a second layer **220**, a third layer **230**, a fourth layer **240** and a fifth layer **250**. One skilled in the art will recognize that the five layer example of FIG. 2 is solely for illustrative purposes and clarity. In practice the superlattice structure may include a plurality of layers as required. In certain examples, alternating layers of the superlattice **200** may be made of the same material or substantially the same material, e.g., layers **210**, **230** and **250** may be the same material. In certain embodiments, the superlattice structure includes alternating material layers with high and low conduction bands (or valence bands in the case of p-type conduction). Electron (e^-) and hole (e^+) transport may be provided in the direction as shown in FIG. 1.

[0041] In accordance with certain examples, the thickness of the layers may be substantially the same, whereas in other examples, the thickness of the layers may each vary and may be different from other layers. In certain examples, the thickness of each layer may be individually tuned or optimized to provide a uniform thickness period, a non-uniform thickness period, reduction of Ohmic heating or other desired physical properties to the thermoelectric device. In certain embodiments, layer thickness may be optimized to block phonons or reduce phonon transport across the superlattice interface so as to reduce or minimize back flow of heat from the hot to cold sides of the cooling device. Without wishing to be bound by any particular scientific theory, it is believed that the interfaces of the materials deflect phonons and reduce phonon transport across the layers of the superlattice.

[0042] In accordance with certain examples, the layers of the superlattice may be coupled to the substrate using many suitable methods. In some examples, the superlattice may be directly coupled to the substrate without any intervening or interstitial materials or layers, whereas in other examples, one or more intervening or interstitial layers, or other selected devices or layers, may be disposed between the substrate and the superlattice. In certain examples, a superlattice may be deposited using, for example, chemical vapor deposition, physical vapor deposition, vapor-phase epitaxy, molecular-beam epitaxy, sputtering, and other methods commonly used to deposit semi-conducting materials and metals on a substrate. In some examples, the superlattice may be coupled to the substrate by brushing, printing, wiping or otherwise disposing the material on the substrate. The layers may be disposed as a monolayer of atoms or may be disposed by bulk application of atoms onto a substrate to provide a desired thickness. In some examples, the layers may be formed in a monolithic fashion. In certain examples, one or more post-deposition steps may be performed to provide a desired thickness or other desired physical property or dimensions. Post-deposition steps include, but are not limited to, sintering, polishing, etching, sand blasting, grit blasting, thermal treatment and the like.

[0043] In certain embodiments, the superlattice may comprise quantum dots. For example and referring to FIG. 3, a plurality of quantum dots are shown arranged in layers **310**, **320**, **330** and **340**. The quantum dots are not necessarily in physical contact with each other. To provide conduction between various quantum dots, electrons may tunnel from one quantum dot to another in accordance with known quantum mechanical tunneling phenomena. The quantum dots may be configured in many different manners including, but not limited to, two-dimensional or three dimensional arrays. Suitable quantum dots for use in the superlattices disclosed herein may include lead salt quantum dots, such as PbTe/PbSe dots doped with TlSe or a lead salt quantum dot doped with Bi_2Te_3 . Additional materials for use in quantum dots include those materials described, for example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,690,807.

[0044] In accordance with certain examples, a thermoelectric device coupled to a surface of a component to be cooled is shown in FIG. 4. The thermoelectric device **400** includes a first superlattice **410** and a second superlattice **420** coupled to a conductive substrate **405**. The substrate **405** is shown as being coupled to the superlattices **410** and **420** through a bonding material. The bonding material may be any suitable metal, or any Ohmic material that is a metal or a non-metal, that may electrically couple the substrate to the superlattices,

and illustrative bonding materials include, but are not limited to, copper, gold, platinum, and silver. The first superlattice **410** and the second superlattice **420** may be electrically coupled to a power source through electrodes **415** and **425**, respectively. The electrodes **415** and **425** may be any suitable conductive material and may be formed or coated on the superlattices using vapor deposition techniques or by bringing the electrodes into electrical communication with the superlattices **410** and **420**. Though the device shown in FIG. 4 is designed for cooling, by reversing the polarity of the current, the device can generate power.

[0045] In the illustrative device shown in FIG. 4, the thermoelectric device also includes a spacer **430** coupled to the electrodes **415** and **425** and a heat sink **435** coupled to the spacer. The spacer **430** is effective to conduct heat from the superlattices to the heat sink **435**. The device **400** is shown coupled to a surface of an electrical component **460** to be cooled. Between the surface to be cooled and the device **400** may be a thermal conducting component **450**. The thermal conducting component **450** is typically attached to a larger electrical device, which is shown schematically as **460** in FIG. 4. In operation, the thermoelectric cooling device **400** provides a temperature gradient such that heat from the electrical component **460** may be transferred down the temperature gradient. Heat may be dissipated to the external environment through heat sink **435**, which may optionally include a fan (not shown).

[0046] In certain examples, the superlattices shown in FIG. 4 provide a p-n couple by configuring the superlattice **410** as a p-type superlattice and configuring the superlattice **420** as an n-type superlattice. For example, each superlattice **410** and **420** may include a first semi-conducting material and a second semi-conducting material coupled to the first semi-conducting material. The second semi-conducting material is usually different from the first semi-conducting material such that an interface is present between the first and second semi-conducting materials. In some examples, however, the first and second semi-conducting materials may be the same and one or more post-deposition steps may be performed to provide an interface between them. For example, a first semi-conducting layer may be deposited followed by a thin interface layer of a conductive material, e.g., a metal. Another layer of the first semi-conducting material may then be deposited on the conductive material. In certain examples, the superlattices each may include alternating semiconductor materials with high and low conduction bands (or valence bands in the case of p-type conduction) that allow electron transport in an applied field along the lines shown in FIG. 4. In some examples, the semi-conducting materials of the superlattices may be one or more of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbTe or other semi-conducting materials. In certain embodiments configured for downhole applications, the semiconductor materials may be based on, for example, alternating layers of BiTe/SbTe, PbSe/PbS, or PbSe/PbTe, alternating metal layers or combinations of metals and semiconductors. In certain examples, the structures may be optimized for layer thickness period in the case of a uniform period, distribution of layer thicknesses for the case of non-uniform periods, number of layers, doping and reduced Ohmic (Joule) heating at the electrodes. The optimization of layer thicknesses may also exploit phonon blocking or reduce phonon transport across the superlattice interfaces so as to minimize backflow of heat from the hot to cold sides.

[0047] In accordance with certain examples, a thermoelectric-like device comprising at least one superlattice is provided. As used herein, the term “thermoelectric-like” refers to devices and materials whose properties may be analyzed in a manner similar to those of thermoelectric materials, e.g., figures of merit ZT, as discussed below, are relied on for performance characteristics. For purposes of this disclosure and the appended claims, the term thermoelectric device is intended to include thermoelectric-like devices. Illustrative thermoelectric-like devices include those described herein that implement field emission and/or thermionic emission. Referring to FIG. 5, a thermoelectric cooling device **500** includes a superlattice **510** coupled to a substrate **520**. As discussed above, the superlattice may include a plurality of alternating layers of semi-conducting materials, quantum dots, metals, combinations thereof or other suitable materials. In one embodiment, the semiconductor layers consist of alternate high and low conduction bands (or valence bands in the case of p-type conduction) that allow electron transport in an applied field from the cathode side to the anode side of the superlattice **510**. In certain embodiments, the semiconductor superlattice may include one or more of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbSe and PbTe. In applications where the cooling device **500** is used to provide downhole cooling, the superlattice may include BiTe/SbTe, PbSe/PbS and PbSe/PbTe, alternating metal layers or combinations of metals and semiconductors. The thickness of each layer and/or the thickness of the overall composite structure may be controlled or optimized to provide for desired physical properties. For example, the thickness of the layers may be adjusted to provide for a uniform thickness period, distribution of layer thickness for the case of non-uniform thickness periods, doping, reduced Ohmic (Joule) heating at the metallic (or semiconductor) contacts, and induced layer surface roughness. The surface roughness may be designed to promote non-conservation of carrier lateral momentum across the planes, as discussed in more detail below, without reducing carrier mobility which can add Joule heating and consequent reduction in device efficiency. The optimization of the superlattice layer thickness or the thickness distribution may also address the reduction of phonon transport at the interfaces so as to minimize or reduce backflow of heat from the hot to cold sides.

[0048] In accordance with certain examples, the substrate **520** and the superlattice **510** may be selected such that a Schottky barrier **530** is promoted between them. Though for illustrative purposes the Schottky barrier **530** is shown as a separate layer in FIG. 5, the Schottky barrier **530** is not an actual layer, but an interfacial energy barrier. A Schottky barrier is an energy barrier created between a metal-semiconductor junction and has rectifying characteristics such as, for example, those commonly found in a diode. In certain examples, the Schottky barrier has a barrier height of less than about 0.5 eV. The substrate **520** is typically a metal, with a metal having a low work function being preferred, e.g., a metal with a work function less than about 1 eV.

[0049] In accordance with certain examples, the device may also include a heat sink **540** coupled to the superlattice **510** to conduct heat from the superlattice **510** to the external environment. As discussed above, the heat sink may include one or more thermally conductive materials such as, for example, copper, gold, platinum, silver and the like. The heat sink **540** may include fins, a fan, or other configurations or devices that can facilitate heat transfer to the surrounding environment. The entire device **500** may be coupled to a

surface **550** to be cooled, such as a surface of an electrical component including, but not limited to, a surface of an integrated circuit.

[0050] In accordance with certain examples, the device shown in FIG. **5** may be configured for downhole cooling in an ambient environment that exceeds 150° C., 200° C. or even 250° C. As discussed in more detail below, the superlattice materials may be selected such that the temperature of the surface to be cooled does not exceed 200° C., more particularly does not exceed 170° C. In certain embodiments, lead based semi-conducting materials may be included in the superlattice to provide a cooling device that keeps an electrical component below about 200° C. In examples where an electrical component is subjected to temperatures above 200° C., it may be desirable to use high temperature solders to electrically couple the electrical component to a larger device, e.g., a printed circuit board, and to prevent reflow of any solder joints.

[0051] In accordance with certain examples, the superlattice **510** used in the cooling device **500** may include quantum dots. For example the superlattice may consist of layers of quantum dots that are not in contact with each other. Electrons can tunnel from one quantum dot to another to provide electrical conductivity. An illustrative device is shown in FIG. **6**. The device **600** includes a metal or semiconductor substrate **610** with a quantum dot superlattice **620** coupled thereto. A heat sink **630** may be coupled to the superlattice **620** to conduct heat away from the superlattice **620** to the external environment. In an alternative configuration, the superlattice **620** may include at least one superlattice wire (SLW), as discussed in more detail below.

[0052] In accordance with certain examples, another example of a thermoelectric-like device is shown in FIG. **7**. The thermoelectric-like device shown in FIG. **7** is configured to use thermal emission to provide cooling. Referring to FIG. **7**, the thermoelectric-like device **700** includes a substrate **710**, a field emitter **730** and a Schottky barrier **720** promoted between the substrate **710** and the field emitter **730**. As discussed above in reference to FIG. **5**, though for illustrative purposes the Schottky barrier **720** is shown as a separate layer in FIG. **7**, the Schottky barrier **720** is not an actual layer as recited previously. The device **700** also includes a vacuum or multi-quantum well structure **740**, an anode **750** and a heat sink **760**. In certain examples, the substrate **710** may be a metal or metal alloy with a low work function being preferable, e.g., having a work function less than about 1 eV. In some examples, the substrate **710** may be a semiconductor such as a degenerate semiconductor. Notwithstanding the makeup of the substrate **710**, the substrate **710** and the field emitter **730** may be selected such that a Schottky barrier **720** is promoted between them. In some examples, the materials are selected such that a Schottky barrier having a barrier height of less than about 0.1-0.2 eV is promoted to mimic a low work function metal. Once electrons are transported to the vacuum or multi-well source, they may migrate under the applied field toward the heat sink **760**. The device **700** is shown in FIG. **7** as being coupled to a thermal conductor **770**. The thermal conductor **770** is in thermal communication with a surface **780** to be cooled. In certain examples, the thermal conductor **770** may be integrated into the device **700** such that the entire structure may be coupled to a surface to be cooled.

[0053] In accordance with certain examples and as discussed in more detail below, the field emitter **730** may be configured to provide thermionic emission injection. In cer-

tain examples, the field emitter **730** is a lattice of current carrying elements manufactured from a material or materials offering ballistic conduction. For example a wide band gap semiconductor or carbon nanotubes may be utilized as the field emitter **730** in accordance with one embodiment of the present invention. In some examples, the wide band gap semiconductor may be one or more of diamond, carbon nanotubes, GaN, SiC or other semi-conducting materials disclosed herein. One preferred property of the field emitter **730** is that it allows for ballistic or near ballistic transport of electrons from the substrate to the vacuum or multi-quantum well structure **740** and to the metal anode **750**.

[0054] In accordance with certain examples, the device **700** may be packaged for use in environments that exceed 150° C. When the device **700** is packaged, it may include thermal conductor **770** integrated into the device **700**. In certain examples, the package may be coupled to a surface to be cooled, e.g., a surface of an electrical component, to provide cooling to the surface and to allow any device in thermal communication with the device **700** to transfer heat to the device **700**. In certain examples, the device **700** provides sufficient cooling such that the surface temperature does not exceed 170° C., more particularly, the surface temperature does not exceed 200° C. The device **700** may be used in downhole applications to provide continuous cooling to electrical components, such as those mounted or integral to a printed circuit board. In particular, the device **700** may be used to cool integrated circuits of downhole devices that are exposed to a surrounding environment greater than about 150° C.

[0055] In accordance with certain examples, another embodiment of a thermoelectric-like device is shown in FIG. **8**. The device **800** includes a substrate **810** with a plurality of superlattices **820**, **830** and **840** coupled to the substrate **810**. As shown in FIG. **8**, each of the superlattices **820**, **830** and **840** may be separated from an adjacent superlattice by a vacuum or quantum-well structure, such as vacuum **825**. The device **800** may also include a heat sink **850** to facilitate transfer of heat from a surface **860** to be cooled through the device **800** and to the external environment.

[0056] In certain examples, the substrate **810** may be a metal or semi-conducting substrate. In some examples, the substrate **810** is a metal having a low work function, e.g., less than about 1 eV. In certain examples, the material for the substrate may be selected to promote a Schottky barrier between the substrate **810** and the first superlattice **820**. Though a Schottky barrier **815** is shown in FIG. **8** as a separate layer or physical component of the device **800**, it will be recognized by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, that the Schottky barrier **815** is an energy barrier between the substrate **810** and the first superlattice **820** and is not an actual layer or physical component of the device **800**.

[0057] In certain examples, each of the superlattices **820**, **830** and **840** may be manufactured from one or more of diamond, carbon nanotubes, GaN, SiC or other conductive or semi-conducting materials. In some examples, the superlattices may each include highly conductive nanowires with corresponding high values of field emission such as, for example, diamond, carbon nanotube wires, fibers and composites. Additional suitable materials for use in the superlattices **820**, **830** and **840** will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure.

[0058] In accordance with certain examples, the device **800** may be configured to allow Schottky barrier injection of electrons and ballistic or near ballistic transport of electrons through the superlattices, and through any vacuum or quantum-well structure separating the superlattices, to the heat sink **850**. In certain examples, the superlattices may be constructed such that the electron paths have a high probability of intersecting the heat sink. For example, superlattices comprising several stages of ordered (aligned) carbon nanotube arrays in an applied field across a gap may be used to intercept emitted electrons and guide them across the gap to the heat sink. This arrangement allows the heat sink to be further removed from the hot surface without excessively increasing the probability of the transported electrons hitting the sides of the thermoelectric device. Such arrays of carbon nanotubes can be fabricated starting with a thin non-conducting material (e.g., a polymer) which has been penetrated across its thickness by an ordered or disordered array of nanopores. The nanotubes may be grown inside the aligned pores furnishing conductive paths in the presence of an applied field. In place of nanotubes, other conductive wire materials, e.g., metals or semiconductors could be used as well.

[0059] In accordance with certain examples, a composite device comprising a plurality of thermoelectric and thermoelectric-like devices stacked on each other is provided. Referring to FIG. **9**, the device **900** comprises a first thermoelectric-like device **910** with a second thermoelectric-like device **920** coupled to the first thermoelectric-like device **910**. In certain examples, the device may also include third thermoelectric-like device **930** and fourth thermoelectric-like device **940**. A surface to be cooled is shown at the bottom region of the thermoelectric-like devices **910**, **920**, **930** and **940**.

[0060] Referring to thermoelectric-like device **910** in FIG. **9**, the thermoelectric-like device **910** includes a substrate **912**, a superlattice **914** coupled to the substrate **912**, and a heat sink **916** coupled to the superlattice **914**. Each of thermoelectric-like devices **920**, **930** and **940** may be constructed similar to thermoelectric-like device **910**. Heat may be transferred from one thermoelectric-like device to another and to the external environment. The device shown in FIG. **9** may be used to provide large scale thermal management to achieve greater temperature reduction than may be achieved using a single thermoelectric-like device.

[0061] In certain examples, the materials for the substrate and the superlattice of the thermoelectric-like devices shown in FIG. **9** may be any one or more of those materials discussed herein for use as a substrate and for use in a superlattice. In some examples, the materials for the substrate and the superlattice may be selected to promote a Schottky barrier between them.

[0062] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device is disclosed. For illustrative purposes this hybrid thermoelectric device will be described as comprising a thermoelectric device disposed on a superlattice. One skilled in the art will recognize, however, that the hybrid device of the present invention may be comprised of various alternative TEC devices, including but not limited to a bulk TEC and a nano TEC devices. The present embodiment of a bulk TEC device disposed on a superlattice is solely for illustrative purposes and it not intended to be limiting in scope of the present invention. Without wishing to be bound by any particular scientific theory, by constructing a cooling device using both a thermoelectric bulk-like material and a superlattice, the advantages of both materials may be utilized. For

example, the high heat capacity (efficiency) of the superlattice and the large temperature differential of the bulk thermoelectric material may be used together to construct a cooling device of high efficiency capable of providing a large change in temperature. An illustrative hybrid device is shown in FIG. **10**. The device **1000** comprises a bulk thermoelectric material **1010** disposed on a superlattice **1020**. The bulk thermoelectric material **1010** may include one or more of InGaZnO, Bi₂Te₃, Zn₄Sb₃, PbTe, SnTe, SiGe, CeFe₄Sb₁₂, CoSb₃, La₂Te₃ and other thermoelectric materials that will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure. The superlattice **1020** may be any one or more of the illustrative superlattices disclosed herein, e.g., nanowires, carbon nanotubes, quantum dots, metals, semi-conducting materials and the like. Additional suitable materials for use in the superlattice **1020** will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure. The thermoelectric material may be disposed on the superlattice using many different techniques including, but not limited to, vapor deposition, sputtering, spin coating and other techniques.

[0063] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** is shown in FIG. **11** in a package **1100**. In the illustration shown in FIG. **11**, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** comprises a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. As set forth previously, this hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** may be composed of a variety of suitable TEC devices, as understood by one skilled in the art. The hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** has been configured in a package **1100** for use in an environment where an electrical component **1110** is to be cooled below an ambient temperature. Such a situation may occur, for example, in a downhole setting where the ambient temperature may exceed a desired operating temperature of the electrical component **1110**. The electrical component **1110** is electrically coupled to a printed circuit board **1112** through interconnects **1114** and **1116**. The hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** is in thermal communication with the electrical component **1110**. A thermal interface **1120** is in thermal communication with the hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** to transfer heat from the hybrid thermoelectric device **1105** to a heat sink **1130**. The package **1100** may also include an insulator **1135** to prevent or retard heat entry into the package **1100** from the ambient environment. The package **1100** may also include a heat reflection treatment **1140** to prevent or retard heat entry into the package **1100** and/or to reflect heat away from the package **1100** as shown by arrow **1150**. In operation, heat may be transferred from the electrical component **1110** to the heat sink **1130** through the thermal interface **1120** and on to the external environment as shown by arrow **1160**. The type of packaging shown in FIG. **11** may be particularly useful for imaging sensors, CCD's and in low power consumption devices. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention a low power consumption device using less than several hundred milliwatts may be cooled to below the ambient temperature. In other embodiments, the package shown in FIG. **11** may be used to cool any electrical component including, but not limited to, optical sensors, microprocessors, memory chips, digital signal processors and the like.

[0064] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1205** is shown in FIG. **12** in a package **1200**. In the illustration shown in FIG. **12**, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1205** comprises a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. One skilled in the art will recognize

that the recitation of a bulk thermoelectric device and a superlattice is solely for illustrative purposes and is not intended to be limiting in scope. In accordance with the present invention a variety of alternative TEC devices may be utilized in creating a hybrid thermoelectric device. The package **1200** shown in FIG. **12** is suitable for use, for example, in environments where the ambient temperature exceeds a desired operating temperature of an electrical component **1210**. In FIG. **12**, the electrical component **1210** is shown as being packaged as a ball grid array and is electrically coupled to a printed circuit board **1215**. A heat sink **1230** is in thermal communication with the hybrid thermoelectric device **1205** through an interface **1220**, which acts to transfer heat from the hybrid thermoelectric device **1205** and to the heat sink **1230**. The package **1200** may also include a thermal insulator **1240** to prevent or reduce heat entry from the ambient environment into the package **1200**. As understood by one skilled in the art, the thermal insulator **1240** may be but is not limited to a material having sufficiently high insulative properties, an air gap, a vacuum or an inert gas. The package **1200** may also include a surface treatment **1250**, wherein the surface treatment is selected to maximize heat transfer. A non-exhaustive list of suitable surface treatments **1250** include the application of a black surface finish suitable for maximizing thermal radiation or the application of a suitable surface roughness or texture again selected to maximize radiation. The package **1200** may also include a reflection treatment **1260** to reflect heat away as shown by arrow **1280**. In operation, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1205** removes heat from the electrical component **1210** and transfers heat to the ambient environment as shown by arrow **1270**. The package shown in FIG. **12** may be used to cool any electrical component including, but not limited to, optical sensors, optical detectors, microprocessors, memory chips, digital signal processors and the like.

[0065] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1305** is shown in FIG. **13** in a package **1300** that is configured to cool a packaged integrated circuit **1310**. In certain examples, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1305** comprises a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. In certain embodiments, the package **1300** is suitable for use, for example, in situations where the ambient temperature exceeds a desired operating temperature for the integrated circuit **1310**. The integrated circuit **1310** is electrically coupled to a printed circuit board **1320**. Between the integrated circuit **1310** and the hybrid thermoelectric device **1305** may be a thermal interface **1325**. Between the hybrid thermoelectric device **1305** and a heat sink **1330** may be a second thermal interface **1335**. The thermal interfaces **1325** and **1335** are designed to facilitate heat transfer away from the integrated circuit **1310**. The package **1300** may also include a reflection treatment **1340** to reflect heat away as shown by arrow **1342** and a surface treatment **1345**. The surface treatment **1345** may be selected to maximize radiant heat transfer as understood by one skilled in the art. The package **1300** may also include a thermal insulator **1350** to prevent or reduce heat entry from the ambient environment into the package **1300**. In operation, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1305** removes heat from the integrated circuit **1310** and transfers heat to the ambient environment as shown by arrow **1370**. The package shown in FIG. **13** may be used to cool any electrical component including, but not limited to, optical sensors, optical detectors, microprocessors, memory chips, and the like.

[0066] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1405** is shown in FIG. **14** as a package **1400**

that is configured to cool an electrical component **1410** that is electrically coupled to a printed circuit board **1415** through interconnects **1412** and **1414**. In certain examples, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1405** comprises a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. One skilled in the art will readily recognize that numerous alternative embodiments, using alternative TEC devices, may be practiced in accordance with the present invention. The package **1400** is suitable for use, for example, where it is desirable to cool the electrical component to an ambient temperature, e.g., to cool a hot electrical component to an ambient temperature. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, a heat generating electric component may be a high power consumption device consuming more than approximately 2 watts of power. The package **1400** includes a first heat sink **1420** and a second heat sink **1430**, which may be the same heat sink in certain configurations. A medium **1440** may surround the electrical component **1410** and may be selected to facilitate heat transfer from the electrical component **1410** to the heat sink **1420**. An optional thermal interface **1435** may exist between the hybrid thermoelectric device **1405** and the heat sink **1430** to facilitate heat transfer. The thermal interface may take several forms including gaseous, liquid or gel based forms selected for facilitating heat transfer. In accordance with one embodiment of the present invention, the thermal interface may be a thermal gel. The package **1400** may also include a surface treatment **1450** selected to maximize heat transfer by radiation. During operation of the electrical component **1410**, heat may be transferred to heat sinks **1420** and **1430** and to the ambient environment as shown in arrows **1460** and **1470**. The package shown in FIG. **14** may be used with any electrical component including, but not limited to, power field effect transistors (FET), digital signal processors, microprocessors, memory chips, and the like which generates sufficient heat to benefit from cooling to an ambient temperature.

[0067] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1505** is shown in FIG. **15** as a package **1500** that is configured to cool an electrical component **1510**, shown as a ball grid array, on a printed circuit board **1515**. The cooling of the electrical component **1510** may be to approximately the ambient temperature. In certain examples, the hybrid thermoelectric device **1505** comprises a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. The package **1500** is suitable for use, for example, where it is desirable to cool the electrical component to an ambient temperature, e.g., to cool a hot electrical component to an ambient temperature. The package **1500** includes heat sinks **1530**, which may be the same or two or more heat sinks. A medium **1540** may surround the electrical component **1510** and may be selected to facilitate heat transfer from the electrical component **1510** to the heat sinks **1530**. An optional thermal interface **1525** may exist between the hybrid thermoelectric device **1505** and the heat sinks **1530** to facilitate heat transfer. During operation of the electrical component **1510**, heat may be transferred to heat sinks **1530** and to the ambient environment as shown in arrows **1560** and **1570**. The package shown in FIG. **15** may be used to cool any electrical component including, but not limited to, power field effect transistors (FET), digital signal processors, microprocessors, memory chips and the like.

[0068] In accordance with certain examples, a hybrid thermoelectric device **1605** is shown in FIG. **16** in a package **1600** that is configured to cool a packaged integrated circuit **1610**. The cooling of the packaged integrated circuit **1610** may be to a temperature approximating the ambient temperature. In

certain examples, the thermoelectric device **1605** comprises, but is not limited to, a bulk thermoelectric disposed on a superlattice. In certain embodiments, the package **1600** is suitable for use, for example, in situations where the operating temperature of the integrated circuit **1610** is substantially the same as the ambient temperature. The integrated circuit **1610** is electrically coupled to a printed circuit board **1620**. Between the integrated circuit **1610** and the thermoelectric device **1605** may be a thermal interface **1625**. Between the thermoelectric device **1605** and a heat sink **1630** may be a second thermal interface **1635**. The thermal interfaces **1625** and **1635** are designed to facilitate heat transfer away from the integrated circuit **1610**. The package **1600** may also include a surface treatment **1640** selected and applied to assist in maximizing heat transfer via radiation. The package **1600** may also include a thermal interface to transfer heat from the integrated circuit **1610** to the heat sink **1630**. In operation, the thermoelectric device **1605** removes heat from the integrated circuit **1610** and preferentially from hot element **1680** and transfers heat to heat sink **1635** to the ambient environment as shown by the illustrated arrow **1670**.

[0069] In accordance with certain examples, various materials may be used in the thermal interfaces described herein such as, for example, the thermal interfaces illustrated in FIGS. **11-16**. Suitable materials include, but are not limited to copper, gold, platinum, thermal grease, thermal paste, copper/carbon nano-tube (CNT) composites and other materials that may be used in, or provide, a heat pipe. Additional suitable materials for use in a thermal interface will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure. Additionally, the hybrid TEC devices of FIGS. **11-16** have been described in the cooling of a device to a temperature below or approximately the ambient temperature. Such a description is not intended to be limiting in scope, as the various embodiments of the present invention described in the FIGS. **11-16** may be practiced to afford cooling to a variety of suitable temperatures.

[0070] In accordance with certain examples, a device comprising a substrate and a plurality of individual superlattices is provided. In certain examples, the plurality of individual superlattices may be arranged to form an array of thermoelectric devices. For example and referring to FIG. **17**, a device **1700** includes a substrate **1710** and a plurality of individual superlattices, such as superlattices **1720** and **1730**, coupled to the substrate **1710**. In FIG. **17**, the device **1700** is configured as an array of two-dimensional elements that form an array of thermoelectric devices. The device **1700** could be used as the Thermoelectric-like device for each of the packages shown in FIGS. **11-16**.

[0071] In certain examples, the device **1700** may also include a power source electrically coupled to one or more of the superlattices. In some examples, the power source may be electrically coupled to all of the superlattices of the array. In certain examples, two or more power sources may be present and electrically coupled to different superlattices such that the cooling capacity of each superlattice may be controlled. In an alternative configuration, it may be desirable to cool certain areas of an electrical component while other areas of an electrical component do not require cooling. For example, a board sized array may be constructed and placed on a printed circuit board. Individual superlattices that overly areas of the printed circuit board that need to be cooled may be powered to provide cooling, while individual superlattices that overly areas of the printed circuit board that do not need to be cooled

continuously may not be provided with power on demand. One or more of the superlattices of the array may also include a heat sink coupled to the superlattice to facilitate heat transfer to the external environment.

[0072] In accordance with certain examples, each of the individual superlattices of the array may include one or more of the semi-conducting materials disclosed herein. In certain examples, each individual superlattice has substantially the same composition as other superlattices in the array. In other examples, different materials may be used in different superlattices to provide differential cooling. For example, a first superlattice may be produced having alternating layers of BiTe/SbTe, and a second superlattice may be produced having alternating layers of PbSe/PbS. The difference in makeup of the superlattices provides for different amounts of cooling performance.

[0073] In accordance with certain examples, two or more of the individual superlattices of the array may be interconnected or coupled to each other. For example and referring to FIG. **17**, a p-type superlattice **1740** may be interconnected to a n-type superlattice **1750** to provide a p-n couple. The p-n couple may be used for example to produce power or to extract heat, depending on the polarity of power provided to the p-n couple. It will be within the ability of the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, to couple two or more superlattices to provide a desired result such as cooling or power generation.

[0074] In accordance with certain examples, the figure of merit value ZT is now discussed to illustrate further the embodiments described herein. Any of the superlattices used in the thermoelectric-like devices disclosed herein may include a material and/or structure having a so-called high figure of merit ZT , which is often used to characterize performance of thermoelectric materials and devices and other thermoelectric-like devices based on thermionic and field emission, such as the illustrative devices described herein. Referring to FIG. **18**, an illustrative graph shows figures of merit ZT for various bulk materials suitable for use in the thermoelectric devices disclosed herein. Without wishing to be bound by any particular scientific theory, thermoelectric energy conversion is related to the Peltier effect whereby an imposed potential difference (ΔV) between dissimilar metals or semiconductors in contact may result in a temperature gradient (ΔT). When an electric current passes through a thermoelectric material (FIG. **19A**), the heat transported by the charge carriers leads to a temperature gradient, with heat being absorbed on the cold side and rejected at the heat sink. The result is electronic refrigeration. Conversely, an imposed ΔT (Seebeck effect) will result in a voltage or current and thus in small-scale power generation, as shown in FIG. **19B**. Thus, depending on the polarity provided to the thermoelectric device, the device may remove heat or provide power. In the configurations shown in FIGS. **19A** and **19B**, the thermoelectric device may include a first superlattice **1910**, e.g., a p-type superlattice, and a second superlattice **1920**, e.g., a n-type superlattice, coupled to substrate **1930**. The device may also include suitable electrodes, such as electrodes **1940** and **1950**, to provide electrical coupling between a power source and the superlattices.

[0075] In accordance with certain examples, the potential of a material for use in the superlattices of the thermoelectric devices disclosed herein may be determined by the material's dimensionless figure of merit, ZT , where T is the temperature and Z is defined by Equation 1

$$Z = S^2 \sigma / \kappa C \quad [1]$$

where S is the Seebeck coefficient or thermopower ($S \sim \Delta V / \Delta T$), of the material, σ is the electrical conductivity and κ is the total thermal conductivity comprised of electronic and lattice components. The electronic component or power factor, $S^2\sigma$, is typically optimized as a function of carrier concentration through doping to give the largest ZT . ZT values may be determined experimentally. High-mobility carriers are most desirable in order to reach the highest electrical conductivity for a given carrier concentration. From Equation 1, a high Z results from high S and σ , and/or a low κ . For many bulk materials S and σ are anti-correlated while σ and κ are correlated, which makes it very difficult to vary Z significantly.

[0076] Referring again to FIG. 18, typical materials used in existing Peltier coolers are an alloy of bismuth and tellurium (Bi_2Te_3), which has a maximum ZT value of about one. From the graph shown in FIG. 18, the maximum ZT value for Bi_2Te_3 occurs, however, at about 250 K, which can partially limit the operating range of Peltier coolers made from Bi_2Te_3 at higher temperatures. In particular, devices that include PbTe, SiGe, and CuNi have maximum ZT values at temperatures substantially above 250 K and are particularly more useful materials for use in the superlattices of the thermoelectric devices disclosed herein.

[0077] In accordance with certain examples and as discussed above, the thermoelectric devices disclosed herein may be designed to act as a cooling device to transfer heat away from an electrical component. A general expression for the amount of heat Q transferred is shown in Equation 2

$$Q = S_{p,n}T_c I - \frac{1}{2}(I^2 R) - K\Delta T \quad [2]$$

where $S_{p,n}T_c I$ represents thermoelectric cooling, $\frac{1}{2}(I^2 R)$ represents Joule heating and $K\Delta T$ represents heat conduction. A coefficient of performance (COP), which expresses the efficiency of heat transfer per unit input power W , may be represented by Equation 3.

$$COP = \frac{Q}{W} = \frac{\{S_{p,n}T_c I - \frac{1}{2}(I^2 R) - K\Delta T\}}{\{S_{p,n}(\Delta T)I + I^2 R\}} \quad [3]$$

[0078] For material parameters ($S_{p,n}$, $\sigma_{p,n}$, $\kappa_{p,n}$), given a geometrical factor and the temperature of the hot and cold junctions (T_h , T_c), Q and COP have their optimum values at different currents I . The current $I_{\text{max}_{cool}}$ gives the maximum cooling, and the current $I_{\text{max}_{COP}}$ gives the maximum COP. In most applications, the current provided to the thermoelectric device may be selected in the range between $I_{\text{max}_{cool}}$ and $I_{\text{max}_{COP}}$ to provide acceptable cooling performance for the thermoelectric device.

[0079] In accordance with certain examples, the use of materials with ZT values of about one alone may not provide acceptable performance in certain applications such as downhole cooling applications. In downhole applications, it may be desirable to produce the devices disclosed herein with superlattice structures comprising combinations of various thermoelectric materials or combinations of thermoelectric materials and metals. For example, two-dimensional thin films, one-dimensional wires, quantum dots and the like may

be used to produce a superlattice of thermoelectric or thermoelectric-like structures for use in the devices and methods disclosed herein. By producing superlattices, the figure of merit ZT may be increased to 2 or more at 150° C. and cooling efficiency may be enhanced.

[0080] In certain examples, a superlattice for use in the devices disclosed herein may be configured into a two-dimensional quantum well structure. The superlattice may include two or more layers of different thermoelectric materials that are disposed parallel to each other. For example, multilayers parallel to an x-y plane with confinement by a wide-gap semiconductor (WGS) in the z-direction may lead to increases in Z with suitable choices of the layer thickness. Illustrative layer thicknesses include, but are not limited to, 2 nm to about 40 nm, more particularly 3 nm to about 20 nm. As discussed in more detail below, an interface may be created between the different thermoelectric materials, and properties of the interface may be used to control heat transfer. For example, increased phonon scattering at the interface may provide for reduced lattice thermal conductivity, which can also act to increase the Z value.

[0081] In accordance with certain examples, studies of low-dimensional systems, such as 1D quantum wires and 2D superlattices, have continued to attract considerable attention, stimulated by the need for smaller and faster electronic devices which demand more efficient local cooling of higher power densities. Zero-dimensional structures such as quantum dots hold even greater promise than 1D and 2D systems. However, unlike 1D or 2D systems, where at least one of the directions is not quantum confined and thus can provide electrical conduction, 0D structures are confined in all directions. To utilize the unique properties of quantum dots in the devices and methods disclosed herein where electron conduction is desired, there desirably exists a path for carrier transport, e.g., tunneling or hopping between individual dots. For this purpose, several structures based on quantum dots that enable transport phenomena exist. See Lin and Dresselhaus, Phys. Rev. B. 68, 075304 (2003) and Lin et al., Phys. Rev. B 62, 4610 (2000).

[0082] Other approaches to increase the ZT value of materials for use in the devices disclosed herein are based on multilayer thermionic emission (MTE), which was first proposed by Mahan et al. See Mahan et al., J. Appl. Phys. 83, 4683 (1998) and Mahan and Woods, Phys. Rev. Lett. 80, 4016 (1998). Heterostructure thermionic emission has been considered by Shakouri and co-workers. See, e.g., Chen and Shakouri, Trans. of the ASME 124, 242 (2002). Any of the configurations disclosed in these citations are suitable for use in the devices disclosed herein.

[0083] In accordance with certain examples, the use of superlattices may provide for additional degrees of freedom to produce improvements in cooling efficiencies over bulk materials. One approach may exploit the interfaces to reduce the thermal conductivity across the lattice planes while maintaining electronic conductivity from low electronic band edge offsets. See Venkatasubramanian et al. Nature 413, 597 (2001) which achieved ZT values between 1.8-3 at room temperature. In addition, theoretical work by Vashaee and Shakouri has suggested that using highly degenerate semiconductor and metal-based superlattices in the quasilinear transport regime can achieve thermoelectric-like power factors exceeding bulk values. See Phys. Rev. Lett. 92, 1061203 (2004) and J. Appl. Phys. 95, 1233 (2004).

[0084] In accordance with certain examples, metal superlattices may also be used in the thermoelectric-like devices disclosed herein. Illustrative metal superlattices are described, for example, in J. Appl. Phys 95, 1233 (2004). Suitable metals for use in the superlattices disclosed herein include, but are not limited to, ternary and quaternary semiconductors.

[0085] In accordance with certain examples, the thermoelectric-like devices disclosed herein may provide cooling by combining thermionic emission and tunneling. Careful tailoring of the applied field and the spatial gap (10-15 nm) may result in electrons above the Fermi level being the dominant tunneling component (tunneling from below the Fermi level would work opposite to cooling) in addition to the thermionic component.

[0086] In accordance with certain examples, the thermoelectric-like devices disclosed herein may provide cooling using field emission. This concept exploits emission through the Schottky barrier at the metal-wide band gap (WBG) semiconductor interface and the fact that the WBG semiconductor will filter the injected electrons in a way that restricts tunneling from states below the Fermi energy. Thus emitted electrons will more likely originate from above the Fermi level which produces more efficient cooling. A key step is that the WBG semiconductor allows ballistic transport of the emitted electrons to vacuum. Calculations showed that cooling rates of several hundred Watts/cm² are potentially achievable.

[0087] In accordance with certain examples, a method of cooling an electrical component is disclosed. In certain embodiments, the electrical component may be a microprocessor, an integrated circuit or other electrical device on a printed circuit board whose performance may benefit from cooling. In certain examples, the electrical component may be located within a housing, such as a computer case, and the thermoelectric device may be placed on the electrical component and coupled to a power source to provide cooling. In some examples, the thermoelectric device may be placed on the electrical component during assembly using, for example, automated pick-and-place equipment. In other examples, the thermoelectric device may be formed on the electrical component using one or more of the deposition techniques described herein to provide an electrical component having an integral cooling device. In certain examples, the electrical component may be located downhole in a tool or device used in borehole drilling and/or logging procedures to identify petroleum bearing formations. Power may be provided to the thermoelectric device to generate a temperature gradient across the device to providing cooling. In other examples, the electrical component may include a scintillator crystal designed to detect emission of X-rays, gamma rays or the like. A thermoelectric device may be in thermal communication with a crystal to reduce thermal noise and to provide a more constant temperature to the crystal to enhance reproducibility. In certain examples, a thermoelectric device may be in thermal communication with an electrical component designed for use in space or other non-terrestrial applications. Additional electrical components that may be cooled using the devices and methods disclosed herein will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure.

[0088] In certain examples, the method includes providing thermal communication between a thermoelectric device and the electrical component and providing cooling of the electrical component by heat transfer from the electrical compo-

nent to the thermoelectric device. In certain configurations, thermal communication may be accomplished by placing a surface of the thermoelectric device in contact with a surface of the electrical component. In other examples, thermal communication may be accomplished by bringing the thermoelectric device within a suitable distance from the electrical component such that a suitable amount of heat may be transferred from the electrical component to allow the electrical component to perform satisfactorily. In certain examples, suitable interstitial materials may be used to provide thermal communication. For example, thermal pastes and greases may be used to provide thermal communication between an electrical component and a thermoelectric device. Conductive spacers may also be used to provide thermal communication between an electrical component and a thermoelectric device. Additional suitable materials to facilitate thermal communication between an electrical component and a thermoelectric device will be readily selected by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure.

[0089] In accordance with certain examples, a kit for downhole cooling is provided. In certain examples, the kit comprises at least one thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain embodiments, the superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the kit may also include instructions for using the thermoelectric device to cool the electrical component. In some examples, the thermoelectric device of the kit may include an additional superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain examples, the additional superlattice may comprise a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain embodiments, the thermoelectric device may further comprise a heat sink coupled to the superlattice and/or the additional superlattice.

[0090] In accordance with certain examples, a device for use in a downhole tool is disclosed. In certain examples, the device comprises at least one electrical component and a thermoelectric device coupled to at least one electrical component. In some examples, the thermoelectric device comprises a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate. In certain embodiments, the superlattice comprises a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials. In certain examples, the electrical component of the downhole tool is an integrated circuit. In other examples, the electrical component of the downhole tool is located on a printed circuit board.

[0091] In accordance with certain examples, a thermoelectric cooling device for cooling a downhole electrical component is provided. In certain examples, the thermoelectric cooling device comprises a superlattice that includes a material having a ZT value of at least about 2 at 150° C. In some examples, the ZT value of a material used in the superlattice is at least about 4, e.g., between about 4 and about 7, at 150° C. In certain embodiments, the thermoelectric cooling device is effective to maintain an electrical component at or below about 200° C., more particularly at or below about 170° C.

[0092] When introducing elements of the examples disclosed herein, the articles “a,” “an,” “the” and “said” are intended to mean that there are one or more of the elements. The terms “comprising,” “including” and “having” are intended to be open-ended and mean that there may be addi-

tional elements other than the listed elements. It will be recognized by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, that various components of the examples can be interchanged or substituted with various components in other examples.

[0093] Although certain aspects, examples and embodiments have been described above, it will be recognized by the person of ordinary skill in the art, given the benefit of this disclosure, that additions, substitutions, modifications, and alterations of the disclosed illustrative aspects, examples and embodiments are possible.

What is claimed is:

1. A thermoelectric device comprising:
 - a substrate;
 - a first superlattice coupled to the substrate, the first superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and
 - a power source electrically coupled to first superlattice.
2. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, wherein the first material and the second material are each independently selected from the group consisting of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbTe, and combinations thereof.
3. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, further comprising a heat sink coupled to the first superlattice.
4. The thermoelectric device of claim 3, further comprising a vacuum between the heat sink and the first superlattice.
5. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, wherein the power source is configured to provide power to the first superlattice to facilitate heat transfer from a surface to be cooled to the substrate.
6. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, wherein the substrate and the first superlattice are selected to promote a Schottky barrier between them.
7. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, further comprising:
 - a second superlattice coupled to the substrate, the second superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and
 - wherein the power source is electrically coupled to the first superlattice and the second superlattice.
8. The thermoelectric device of claim 7, wherein the power source is configured to provide power to the first superlattice and the second superlattice for power generation by the thermoelectric device.
9. The thermoelectric device of claim 5, wherein the first superlattice is a p-type superlattice.
10. The thermoelectric device of claim 9, wherein the second superlattice is a n-type superlattice.
11. The thermoelectric device of claim 5, wherein the first material and the second material of each of the first superlattice and the second superlattice are independently selected from the group consisting of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbTe, and combinations thereof.
12. The thermoelectric device of claim 5, further comprising a heat sink coupled to the first superlattice and the second superlattice, the first superlattice and the second superlattice coupled between the substrate and the heat sink.
13. The thermoelectric device of claim 12, further comprising a spacer coupled between the heat sink and the first and second superlattices.
14. The thermoelectric device of claim 5, wherein the power source is configured to provide power to the first super-

lattice and the second superlattice to facilitate heat transfer from a surface to be cooled to the substrate.

15. The thermoelectric device of claim 5, wherein at least one of the first superlattice and the second superlattice comprises at least one metal layer.

16. The thermoelectric device of claim 1, further comprising:

- an additional substrate coupled to the first superlattice and an additional superlattice coupled to the additional substrate, the additional superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and

wherein the additional substrate and additional superlattice form a vertical stack with the substrate and the first superlattice.

17. The thermoelectric device of claim 16, wherein the first material and the second material of the first superlattice and the additional superlattice are each independently selected from the group consisting of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbTe, and combinations thereof.

18. A device comprising:

- a substrate;
- a plurality of individual superlattices coupled to the substrate, each of the superlattices comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and
- a power source electrically coupled to at least one of the plurality of individual superlattices.

19. The device of claim 18, wherein the plurality of superlattices are arranged to form an array of thermoelectric devices.

20. The device of claim 18, wherein at least two of the plurality of superlattices are interconnected to form a p-n couple.

21. The device of claim 18, wherein the first material and the second material of each of the plurality of individual superlattices are independently selected from the group consisting of BiTe, SbTe, PbSe, PbS, PbTe, and combinations thereof.

22. The device of claim 18, further comprising a heat sink coupled to at least one of the plurality of individual superlattices, wherein the at least one of the plurality of individual superlattices is coupled between the substrate and the heat sink.

23. The device of claim 18, wherein the power source is electrically coupled to each of the superlattices of the plurality of individual superlattices.

24. The device of claim 18, further comprising a plurality of power sources, wherein each superlattice is electrically coupled to a different power source.

25. A thermoelectric device comprising a bulk thermoelectric material disposed on a superlattice.

26. The thermoelectric device of claim 25, further comprising a substrate, wherein the superlattice is disposed on the substrate.

27. The thermoelectric device of claim 25, wherein the superlattice comprises alternating layers of semi-conducting materials.

28. The thermoelectric device of claim 25, wherein the superlattice comprises alternating layers of metals.

29. The thermoelectric device of claim **25**, wherein the superlattice comprises alternating layers of a metal and a semi-conducting material.

30. A method of cooling a downhole electrical component, the method comprising:

providing thermal communication between a thermoelectric device and the downhole electrical component, the thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate, the first superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and

providing cooling of the electrical component by heat transfer from the electrical component to the thermoelectric device.

31. The method of claim **30**, wherein the step of providing cooling comprises providing power to the thermoelectric device to generate a temperature gradient across the thermoelectric device.

32. The method of claim **30**, further comprising forming the thermoelectric device on the downhole electrical component.

33. The method of claim **30**, further comprising coupling a heat sink to the first superlattice to facilitate cooling of the downhole electrical component.

34. The method of claim **30**, wherein the step of providing thermal communication between the thermoelectric device and the downhole electrical component comprises contacting the downhole electrical component with the thermoelectric device.

35. The method of claim **30**, wherein the thermoelectric device further comprises configuring the thermoelectric device with a second superlattice and a power source electrically coupled to the first superlattice and the second superlattice, the second superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials.

36. A method of facilitating cooling of a downhole electrical component, the method comprising:

providing a thermoelectric device that comprises a substrate and a first superlattice coupled to the substrate, the first superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and

providing instructions for using the thermoelectric device to cool a downhole electrical component.

37. The method of claim **36**, further comprising providing instructions for configuring the thermoelectric device with a power source electrically coupled to the first superlattice.

38. The method of claim **36**, further comprising providing instructions for configuring the thermoelectric device with a second superlattice, the second superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials of the second superlattice.

39. The method of claim **38**, further comprising configuring the thermoelectric device with a power source electrically coupled to the first superlattice and the second superlattice.

40. A kit for downhole cooling, the kit comprising:

at least one thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate, the superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials; and

instructions for using the thermoelectric device to cool a downhole electrical component.

41. The kit of claim **40**, wherein the thermoelectric device further comprises an additional superlattice coupled to the substrate, the additional superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials.

42. The kit of claim **40**, wherein the thermoelectric device further comprises a heat sink coupled to the superlattice and the additional superlattice.

43. A device for use in a downhole tool, the device comprising at least one electrical component and a thermoelectric device coupled to the at least one electrical component, the thermoelectric device comprising a substrate and a superlattice coupled to the substrate, the superlattice comprising a first material and a second material coupled to the first material to provide an interface between the first and second materials.

44. The device of claim **43**, wherein the at least one electrical component is an integrated circuit.

45. The device of claim **43**, wherein the at least one electrical component is on a printed circuit board.

46. A thermoelectric cooling device for cooling a downhole electrical component, the thermoelectric cooling device comprising a superlattice that includes a material having a figure of merit ZT value of at least about two at 150°C .

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